UPDATE: Dallas HIV Advocate Venton Jones Elected as State Representative

"Growing up a Black, gay, HIV-positive man, I never thought I would be able to serve my community in this capacity," says Venton Jones.

November 11, 2022 By Trent Straube

UPDATE: Dallas advocate Venton Jones, who is Black, gay and HIV positive, won his race for Texas Congress. He'll serve as the representative for House District 100, which includes parts of Dallas and Dallas County. He posted the following announcement on Facebook:

> Thank you to the voters of House District 100 for electing me as the next State Representative for House District 100. When I first started this race 330 days ago, I ran to serve the community that gave everything for my story to be possible.
>
> Growing up as a Black, gay, and HIV-positive man from Oak Cliff, I never would have thought I would be able to serve my community in this capacity...EVER. The faith that my community put in me to serve is something that I never took lightly and it will be the fuel that will drive my fight to represent the people of HD 100 in Austin.
>
> Special thanks to my team, my family, and anyone that helped make this win possible.
>
> Now the work begins, I look forward to serving HD 100 and the State of Texas during the 88th Legislative Session. Let's do this work and work hard to put COMMUNITY FIRST!

POZ interviewed Jones earlier this year while he was on the campaign trail. That February 14 article is below.

You were born and raised in Texas House District 100—which includes parts of Dallas and Dallas County—and now you want to represent that community in the Texas legislature (the Democratic primary is March 1). You have worked in HIV advocacy, and you announced your candidacy on World AIDS Day. How has HIV prepared you for elected office?

I learned one of my most valuable lessons through my HIV advocacy and policy work: to never be afraid to own my power! As a person who lives at the intersection of being Black, gay and a person living with HIV, I learned to be fearless not only in fighting for my own life but also in fighting for

the lives of the people around me, my village.

(Ballot Box) istock

My policy work was so much deeper than just HIV. It was about ending racism and discrimination, improving economic outcomes and social justice and building bridges for communities to have their seat at the tables of power and influence.

Tell us about your district and your campaign for state representative.

This majority-minority district has a population of almost 200,000 people, of which 80% are constituents representing communities of color. The issues I am championing during my campaign

are: health care, public education, jobs, the economy, infrastructure (including our power grid) and civil and voting rights. It's time for the next generation of leaders to represent and serve communities of color in Austin [the state capital], especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, civil and social unrest and the harmful legislation attacking our public health care and our right to vote. I see the political and nonprofit work as one and the same, with the overall goal of impacting positive change in communities.

Is the public open to your message and advocacy?

Yes! Something has changed, and a majority of people are paying closer attention to policies and to the public health as a human right conversation. People are realizing it is not something we can put off. We must be the generation to act.

Finally, in June, you'll mark 15 years of living with HIV. How are you doing?

I feel my HIV journey is going very well. I recently switched over to a medication that allows me to take it only once a month, and that has been great. I have learned so many lessons about how I navigate my public and physical health. I work hard to remain undetectable and regularly check in with my care team to keep myself healthy and happy. I am honored to say I am only two years away from the age of 40 and excited and blessed that I get to ask myself, What do I want for the next 40 years of my life?

To read more about the Southern Black Policy and Advocacy Network, which Venton Jones leads, see "SBPAN Mobilizes the South" and "Look Who's Organizing to End Black HIV Now [VIDEO]."

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/putting-hiv-ballot