AIDS IN THE WHITE HOUSE?

October 15, 2008 By Regan Hofmann

I'm sitting in my office in New York with an eye on the clock knowing that I need to leave soon to be home in time to watch the final debate between the presidential candidates. (As if I need any further proof of my choice...but I would like to see Obama strike a final blow...) Before I head out, I wanted to share this video with you in case you haven't seen it. Click here to see a CBS News segment comparing the presidential candidates' positions on HIV/AIDS hosted by Dr. Sanjay Gupta. (How much do we love Sanjay for his continual and well informed coverage of HIV? A lot. I will never forget my interview with Paula Zahn. We were talking face-to-face in the studio and suddenly...I could hear Dr. Gupta's voice in the air ((he was in CNN's Atlanta studio, joining us by live feed)) and all my anxiety melted away.)

In the video, Dr. Gupta points out that while both Senator Obama and Senator McCain have said they will continue to support the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR, currently slated at $48 billion), they differ greatly on how they will address the domestic AIDS epidemic.

McCain's "sex education" plan is to emphasize abstinence (an approach that has been documented to result in higher levels of STD transmission and unwanted pregnancy). He says he will guarantee access to care for those with preexisting conditions and will reduce the cost of drugs through market competition. And he will offer a $2,500 tax credit for expenses related to health (hello! $2,500 is about 2 months worth of meds if you don't have a prescription plan and are on antiretroviral drugs to fight AIDS).

Obama, who actually said the words "HIV" and "AIDS" more than once, also said he is committed to offering universal health care, that he will actively prevent HIV, that he is in support of comprehensive sex education nationwide and HIV testing initiatives in minority communities. He is also prepared to develop a National AIDS Strategy.

Any further questions?

If you haven't already read the current issue of POZ yet, please read the feature story about a National AIDS Strategy for America here. It highlights our recommendations to the next inhabitant of the Oval Office for how to save tens of thousands of lives during the first 100 days of the next presidency.

Never before has the full support of the HIV community been so critical to ensuring our future health, civil rights and longevity. So, be sure you are registered to vote! And get out to those polls! There are approximately 750,000 of us living with HIV in the United States of America. And that's a pretty big swing vote...

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