More Guns, No Abortions and School Prayer

As we learned from the early days of the HIV epidemic, we must fight while also being gutted by the realities of the moment.

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More guns, no abortions, and school prayer. So what's next for America? This week the world watched history as one of the pillars of government let us down in an unprecedented reversal of constitutional rights. How do you lead when the world is going crazy? While I'm not saying panic, this is a moment to be concerned.

We live in a representative democracy, where citizens elect officials to represent them in Washington, DC. This November is a call to the ballot box! The America we want can only happen if we get people who believe in choice, equality, housing, and healthcare to vote in their interests. As leaders, our job is to educate our communities. To help them understand that this really is a fight for the soul of America.

We must stay together! It is too easy to pick off causes as a strategy to create community infighting. There are real enemies, and it's not each other. Some feel protected because of their urban bubbles. Please understand no one is safe. Justice Thomas clearly telegraphed next steps. He literally gave state Attorneys General a roadmap for the next issues to bring to the Court. There is no secret agenda. It is all out in the open.

His confidence comes from the nature of Supreme Court rules. They are appointed for life so, even with the first Black women to be on the court, it is a numbers game, and they have the justices to radically change our world. Our only recourse is Congress and the Presidency. That is why November is so important. We all have a part to play in this fight.

There are very specific rules for nonprofits including federal, state, county, and city regulations. NMAC would never suggest illegal activities, but now is the time to walk that line. Ending the HIV epidemic in America requires funding at a level that only the federal government can provide. Private HIV donors should consider supporting voter registration and getting out the vote activities in HIV, STD, and hepatitis organizations. Without financial support, it is difficult to ask already over stretched nonprofits to take on more work.

It starts by getting staff, clients, and donors to register to vote. Given the divisive nature of the issues, there is little middle ground. Both sides have outlined their priorities and now it is a fight

for the hearts and soul of Americans. Can we get people to care enough about our issues to vote? Unfortunately, we must lean into the trauma of not voting.

SCOTUS decisions put November in play. People are pissed, and we need to channel that energy into voter turnout. We don't need to stoke the fire; the urgency is self-evident when you watch the news. Just give our constituents constructive options that can lead to lasting change.

As we learned from the early days of the HIV epidemic, we must fight while also being gutted by the realities of the moment. After Trump, flipping the Supreme Court, COVID, Black Lives Matter, climate change, immigration, the election, Jan. 6, wildfires, gun violence, police killing Black men, record number of murders, Asian violence, don't say gay, withdrawal from Afghanistan, inflation, gas prices, BA2 variants, one million Americans dead from COVID, a war in Ukraine, recession, and Supreme Court decisions on guns, abortion, and school prayer, we have more than enough justification. "Fighting for Our Lives" is the theme for the 2022 United States Conference on HIV/AIDS. Our HIV legacy speaks to the current moment.

Yours in the Struggle,

Paul Kawata

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