# Obama’s First 100 Days: HIV/AIDS

April 29, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

What has President Obama achieved for HIV/AIDS in his first 100 days? He appointed Jeffrey Crowley as director of the Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP) and nominated Eric Goosby as the U.S. global AIDS coordinator, who will run the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

After years of inactivity, ONAP has a leader. After years of abstinence-only restrictions, PEPFAR is poised to support other options. These are great developments, but they are only steps in the right direction. (For example, how about the Department of Health and Human Services finally lifting the HIV travel ban?) The heavy lifting is yet to come.

Here’s a reminder of what Obama has promised us on HIV/AIDS (from WhiteHouse.gov):

- Promote AIDS Prevention: In the first year of his presidency, President Obama will develop and begin to implement a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy that includes all federal agencies. The strategy will be designed to reduce HIV infections, increase access to care and reduce HIV-related health disparities. The President will support common sense approaches including age-appropriate sex education that includes information about contraception, combating infection within our prison population through education and contraception, and distributing contraceptives through our public health system. The President also supports lifting the federal ban on needle exchange, which could dramatically reduce rates of infection among drug users. President Obama has also been willing to confront the stigma -- too often tied to homophobia -- that continues to surround HIV/AIDS.

- Empower Women to Prevent HIV/AIDS: In the United States, the percentage of women diagnosed with AIDS has quadrupled over the last 20 years. Today, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses. President Obama introduced the Microbicide Development Act, which will accelerate the development of products that empower women

in the battle against AIDS. Microbicides are a class of products currently under development that women apply topically to prevent transmission of HIV and other infections.

I hope that Obama follows through on all of these promises, but especially his commitment to “develop and begin to implement” a national AIDS strategy this year. We can’t afford to wait a moment longer.

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