Of the People, By the People

November 7, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Barack Obama has wasted no time as president-elect to get ready for his inauguration. Neither should the HIV/AIDS community. If we want his attention during the first 100 days of his presidency, we'll need to demand it.

Sen. Obama made it clear during the campaign that he intends on implementing a national AIDS strategy. Despite his best intentions, I'm sure that two wars and the economy will be his main priorities and may keep him from many other issues.

Health care will most likely remain a top priority for him in general, but it'll be up to all of us to make it clear to him that HIV/AIDS needs to be included in particular.

How? Start by visiting Change.gov, the official website of the Office of the President-Elect. Click on "Agenda" in the horizontal navigation bar and then click "Healthcare" on the pull-down menu.

HIV/AIDS is not mentioned on the health care page. AIDS is mentioned on the "Women" page (with some specific HIV/AIDS items), the "Additional Issues" page (no specific items) and the "Faith" page (no specific items).

This is not good enough. Thankfully, we have someone in Obama that believes in listening to the people. On the health care page, he has a link to a page called "Of the People, By the People" to tell the transition team what we think is important.

I submitted my personal email address, my first name and last name and my ZIP code (they're required). In the "issues most important to you" section, I clicked the "Healthcare" box. I typed in "HIV/AIDS" in the "another issue" field. Finally, I typed in "National AIDS Strategy" in the "your ideas" field.

It took me a lot longer to explain that than it did for me to actually do it. I encourage everyone reading this blog post to take a few minutes to do the same. It may not seem like much, but it can potentially have an impact if enough of us do it.

UPDATE: As of Nov. 17, there have been a few additions to their HIV/AIDS agenda.

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