Plan to Strengthen Civil Rights

November 21, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

There are some noteworthy updates relating to LGBT civil rights and HIV/AIDS on Change.gov, the official website of the Office of the President-Elect. Click on “Agenda” in the horizontal navigation bar and then click “Civil Rights” on the pull-down menu.

The “Plan to Strengthen Civil Rights” section at the beginning of the “Civil Rights” page has an impressive set of general goals. “Support for the LGBT Community” immediately follows that section and takes up more than half of the page.

That section starts with this quote:

> “While we have come a long way since the Stonewall riots in 1969, we still have a lot of work to do. Too often, the issue of LGBT rights is exploited by those seeking to divide us. But at its core, this issue is about who we are as Americans. It’s about whether this nation is going to live up to its founding promise of equality by treating all its citizens with dignity and respect.”
>
> -Barack Obama, June 1, 2007

A list of goals follow the quote, including expanding hate crimes statutes, fighting workplace discrimination, supporting federal rights for LGBT couples, opposing a federal anti-same-sex marriage amendment, repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and expanding adoption rights.

Below are excerpts of his HIV/AIDS goals:

Promote AIDS Prevention: In the first year of his presidency, Barack 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. Obama 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. Obama also supports lifting the federal ban on needle exchange, which could dramatically reduce rates of infection among drug users. Obama has also been willing to confront the stigma -- too often tied to homophobia -- that continues to surround HIV/AIDS. He will continue to speak out on this issue as president.

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. Barack 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.

There’s no doubt that these promises are encouraging, but we must all remember to hold the new president accountable.

Click here to read an analysis of Obama’s promises by Queerty, an LGBT blog.

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