Republican Gov. Mike Dewine is No Stranger to Pandemics, or HIV/AIDS #COVID-19

March 17, 2020 By Shawn Decker

"When a house is on fire, you don't look for someone to blame. You grab a hose and put the fire out."
And the Band Played On - Randy Shilts

Governor Mike Dewine of Ohio started to make swift changes to the way of life before the first recorded case of coronavirus was registered in his state. When he cancelled a bodybuilding contest that brings in $50 million he was called an alarmist. Soon thereafter, he was the first governor to shut down schools. He saw the NCAA tournament's opening rounds as a threat to the health of his citizens, as well as NBA and NHL games. Thankfully those organizations cancelled or postponed all events after an NBA player tested positive for coronavirus, which expedited peoples' thinking and allowed them to catch up to Dewine.

Today the Democratic Primary in Ohio was all set to have Democrats lined up asses to elbows to choose which grumpy old man will go wrinkled forehead-to-forehead with Trump come November... but Dewine stepped up again, ordering that the Primary be postponed for obvious health reasons. A Franklin County judge refused to sign off on the request—be sure to look for him in a future edition of The Jackoffs of the Coronavirus trading cards set. Thankfully the Ohio Supreme Court played a quick round of Whack-a-Quack and allowed Dewine's postponement plan to go through.

Dewine's compassion and emotional intelligence is no stranger to the hemophilia community. In 1997, alongside then Democratic Senator Bob Graham from Florida, Mike was a co-sponsor of The Ricky Ray Relief Fund Act, which was named after a boy with hemophilia and HIV. Before he passed, Ricky faced tremendous discrimination in the 1980s after he and his two brothers (also hemophiliacs) tested positive for HIV. In 2012 I blogged about the Rays: 25 Years Ago Yesterday: The Ray Brothers' Home Burned Down

In short, in its own words, The Ricky Ray Relief Fund provided $125,000: "to provide for compassionate payments with regard to individuals with blood-clotting disorders, such as hemophilia, who contracted human immunodeficiency virus due to contaminated blood products, and for other purposes."

POZ's January 1997 issue was all about how HIV, corporate greed and activism had decimated- and then reshaped- the hemophilia community. There's also a great op-ed from Sean Strub about how everyone with HIV should seek reparations from a government that willfully placed its citizens lives in harm's way, and then did little-to-nothing when things got worse. There's also a handsome young man on the cover of that 1997 issue of POZ. He's kinda young, dumb and full of cum but some of what he says makes sense even to this day. (Hint: it's me.)

Anyhoo, there are heroes among us. There are people doing their best to protect lives. I know my life was changed by the compassionate payment that Dewine, as a Republican senator, fought for. The townhouse I live in was paid for in part by and sustained by that payment. From a safe home base just twenty miles from my family, I was able to discover who I was as an adult—and how I could best contribute to society. Dewine and his colleagues helped provide me with an independence that would have been hard to come by otherwise, especially in those days when my health was way more precarious then I realized and was going to get worse before it got better.

Heroes should be applauded. It's belated, but thank you, Governor Dewine. Not just for what you did over twenty years ago—but by what you are doing now and every moment in between when you placed the health of the public over economic gain and the misguided concerns of others.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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