Ron Paul, Chris Wallace Need AIDS Education

January 3, 2012 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

In his 1987 book *Freedom Under Siege*, current Republican presidential candidate and U.S. Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) wrote this about people with AIDS: “The individual suffering from AIDS is certainly a victim, frequently a victim of his own lifestyle, but this same individual victimizes individual citizens by forcing them to pay for his care.”

In a January 1 interview with Chris Wallace on Fox News, Paul was asked if he still supported that position and basically said yes. Wallace then asked him if people with AIDS should be denied health insurance. Paul said no, but he directly implied that people with AIDS should pay more for their health insurance.

Paul points out that smokers are often asked to pay more for their health insurance, which is true. What he fails to see is that the smoking comparison doesn’t really apply. Should the people who did not acquire HIV through unprotected sex pay more? Most people who acquired HIV through unprotected sex (like myself) did not intend to be harmed. Most people who smoke do so fully aware of the health risks. By Paul’s logic, it seems to me that he should be in favor of higher health care costs for all people who have had unprotected sex.

Paul’s beliefs notwithstanding, perhaps the most appalling thing in this interview was how Wallace asked Paul about health insurance for people with AIDS: “Congressman, do you think someone who suffers from AIDS should not be entitled to health insurance as opposed to, let’s say, somebody who has a homo, heterosexual transmitted disease?”

Wallace committed many no-nos with this question. On style, enough with the “suffers from AIDS” phrase, please. Saying “has AIDS” is sufficient, thank you very much.

Just to back up my annoyance, here’s the entry on AIDS from the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) stylebook:

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a medical condition that compromises the human immune system, leaving the body defenseless against opportunistic

infections. Some medical treatments can slow the rate at which the immune system is weakened. Do not use the term “full-blown AIDS.” Individuals may be HIV-positive but not have AIDS. Avoid terms such as “AIDS sufferer” and “AIDS victim” because they imply powerlessness. Use “people with AIDS” or, if the context is medical, “AIDS patients.”

On substance, Wallace made an even more egregious error. By saying a “heterosexual transmitted disease” (I’m sure he meant “heterosexually”), he directly implies that HIV is essentially a gay thing. His slip up of including “homo” before “heterosexual” seems to underscore this belief.

Obviously gay people are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS, but the virus does not discriminate by sexual orientation. Wallace should know better. All journalists should know better.

Watch the interview (AIDS comments begin at 3:08):
Watch the latest video at video.foxnews.com

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