Where Do We Go From Here

November 10, 2016 By Paul Kawata

We always said that it doesn't matter who is in the White House, we still have to fight an epidemic. Now we are being tested. President-elect Trump will be inaugurated in 70 days. 12,000 jobs will turn over with the new administration; this includes many positions that have oversight to the federal government's HIV portfolio.

While we are upset, angry, confused and worried, this is our test. To provide leadership in a time of great transition. Our movement is made up of diverse communities that don't always agree. This diversity is our strength. We understand the need for multiple conversations and multiple approaches. Given limited access to the new administration, no one knows the best way to proceed. These are some options to start the conversation, we encourage everyone to have a variety of discussions about the best next steps.

- Pivot USCA Planning Meeting slated for Nov 17 to be a discussion about working with the new administration;
- Add workshops at the National HIV PrEP Summit to discuss specific recommendations on biomedical HIV prevention for the Trump administration;
- FAPP Dec. 7th meeting to discuss their Transition Document; and
- Coming together during AIDS Watch, March 27-28 in Washington, DC.

These are just four of what we hope will be multiple opportunities for our movement to figure out its next steps. We've divided the issues into three categories;

HIV-Specific Issues:
This includes the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, Ryan White Care Act, HOPWA, PEPFAR, Biomedical HIV Prevention, HIV Research, Finding a Cure/Vaccine, as well as a commitment to a White House Office of National AIDS Policy and a US Global AIDS Coordinator.

HIV Impacted Issues:
The immediate concern is the new administration's commitment to get rid of Obamacare. The future of Obamacare will have a profound impact on the lives of people living with HIV.

Other Policy Issues:

The HIV movement is committed to a variety of social justice issues that intersect with HIV. The list of policy challenges is long and diverse. With a movement as diverse as the HIV community, we understand that folks will naturally gravitate to those issues that are part of their core beliefs.

Our organizations are primarily focused on federally funded domestic HIV issues. As a result, those discussions will be our priority. That does not mean the other issues are not important or that the HIV community is not committed to broader issues, but we believe Obamacare, Supreme Court appointments, Immigration Policies, Black Lives Matter, Planned Parenthood, LGBT challenges and rising STD rates all need to be discussed in forums larger than HIV. We encourage everyone to be part of these other discussions and to bring back information to the HIV meetings.

Our first meeting is next week on Thursday, Nov 17th at 11 AM at NASTAD (444 North Capitol St NW). This was to be a USCA planning meeting, but given the election results, we all agreed on the need to pivot to discuss federal support and working with the new administration on domestic HIV issues. We intend for these discussions to dovetail with those taking place in other settings, particularly the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership (FAPP) and its working groups, and will work with FAPP leadership to ensure that our messaging and strategies are in concert. We hope to also have reports from intersecting movements to better understand how the domestic HIV community can better support their work.

You are welcome to join us via conference call, 641-715-3580 (code 215641#). This meeting is a private community discussion, not open to the press and off the record. Please RSVP to Tara Barnes (tbarnes@nmac.org) by noon on Nov 16th. If you RSVPed for the USCA Planning Meeting, we already have your name on the list.

Yours in the struggle,

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