WhiteHouse.gov

January 21, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

The LGBT blogosphere was quite excited yesterday (here, here and here, for example) about the updates to WhiteHouse.gov that detail President Obama's commitment to LGBT civil rights.

Promises include expanding hate crimes statutes, fighting workplace discrimination, supporting full civil unions and federal rights for LGBT couples, opposing a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage, repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and expanding adoption rights.

Here are two additional HIV-related promises:

Promote AIDS Prevention: In the first year of his presidency, President 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. The President 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. The President also supports

lifting the federal ban on needle exchange, which could dramatically reduce rates of infection among drug users. President Obama has also been willing to confront the stigma -- too often tied to homophobia -- that continues to surround HIV/AIDS.

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. President 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 is no doubt that these promises are encouraging for LGBT and HIV-positive Americans. However, in a previous post from two months ago, I highlighted that then President-elect Obama had included these promises on his Change.gov site. Nothing has changed since then (well, they did replace “Barack

Obama” with “President Obama”).

All that happened was that text was rolled over from the Change.gov site to the WhiteHouse.gov site. Perhaps I’m being harsh, but I’ll save my excitement for when President Obama signs into law (or at least publicly advocates for) any and hopefully all of these promises.

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