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Presidential Candidates Polled on AIDS-related Policy Positions

WASHINGTON, DC, Jan. 22 — The results of a survey polling presidential candidates on their specific plans to combat HIV/AIDS were made public today on AIDSVote.org.

General Wesley Clark, Governor Howard Dean, Senator John Edwards, Senator John Kerry, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and Senator Joe Lieberman completed the survey and included statements about their specific HIV/AIDS plans, if elected president. President George W. Bush and Reverend Al Sharpton did not respond to the AIDSVote invitation to participate.

“The candidates’ responses illustrate their understanding of the critical leadership role the White House must play in the fight against AIDS,” said Michael Kink of Housing Works in New York. “We hope this information will help the electorate understand that critical role as well.”

The survey was based on a model presidential HIV/AIDS platform that has been endorsed by scores of organizations and individuals from across the country. Dozens of the nation’s leading HIV/AIDS advocacy organizations launched AIDSVote.org late last year as a candidate and voter educational campaign.

Significant among the responses was strong support for federal healthcare programs and HIV prevention interventions. All respondents indicated support for Medicaid as an entitlement program and increased funding for the Ryan White CARE Act. The candidates also registered support for comprehensive, science-based HIV prevention strategies, including needle exchange, which remains under-utilized in the U.S. as a result of a longstanding ban on federal funding for this proven HIV prevention intervention. Respondents reported support for lifting the ban if elected president.

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On immigration, the candidates indicated support for efforts to overturn a law barring HIV-positive foreigners from entering the country. The measure has received opposition by prominent public health and business leaders that contend that it produces no public health benefits and results in the U.S. losing business to other countries where HIV-positive individuals may visit freely.

“This outdated and discriminatory law serves no public health purpose,” said Terje Anderson, executive director of the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA). “I am encouraged that candidates for the highest office of the land recognized that our country should not close its doors to visitors just because of their HIV status.”

Dozens of AIDS Vote supporters traveled to New Hampshire this week to talk to candidates and their staff about the AIDSVote.org platform. The activists, including many living with HIV/AIDS, are joining with global AIDS advocates already working in the state to draw attention to the AIDS crisis at home and around the globe, and to secure the candidates’ commitments to fight the pandemic.

“The AIDS Vote message is gaining strength, one community endorsement at a time,” said David Ernesto Munar of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. “As people affected by AIDS, we have a responsibility to tell candidates our concerns and educate everyone about the challenges ahead in battling this devastating pandemic.”

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Created in 2003 by a national coalition of AIDS advocacy organizations, AIDSVote.org promotes a full set of domestic and global HIV/AIDS policy recommendations to educate presidential candidates and voters of the critically important policies needed to make progress against the pandemic. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals have endorsed the AIDSVote.org non-partisan platform.