

## **As a Senator, how will you respond to the AIDS epidemic in the United States and across the world?**

Answers are listed in their entirety, alphabetically by candidates' last names.

### **Albert J. Franzen (I):**

No response

### **Alan Keyes (R):**

No response

### **Jerry Kohn (L):**

No response

### **Barack Obama (D):**

As Chairman of the Illinois Senate Committee on Public Health, I have consistently fought to advance policies and programs that improve Illinois strategies to fight HIV/AIDS. I recently sponsored a bill that has since become law that mandates healthcare workers provide HIV counseling and offer HIV testing to pregnant women. I also championed increased funding for AIDS prevention services targeted at high-risk populations. Further, I supported a bill that allows individuals to purchase hypodermic syringes from pharmacies without a doctor's prescription, because of overwhelming scientific evidence that increased access to sterile syringes effectively prevents HIV without increasing drug use. As a United States senator, I will bring this commitment and leadership to the federal government to further advance HIV/AIDS prevention, care, research, housing, and global programs.

I believe the federal government must expand the Ryan White CARE Act and strengthen its commitment to Medicaid and Medicare. Among the changes I will champion are (1) increasing the proportion of funding allocated for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), and (2) allowing states the option to provide Medicaid eligibility to non-disabled and income-eligible people with HIV. Federal rules deny Medicaid coverage for non-disabled people with HIV, forcing many to become completely disabled and destitute before the program will help them provide the very medications that would have prevented disability in the first place.

I will also champion targeted funding for high-risk groups at the federal level, just as I have in Illinois. I will work to significantly increase funding for the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) in order to directly address the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on people of color by allocating specific funds for programs under the Ryan White CARE Act, community-based prevention activities at the CDC, and services at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration specifically for people of color.

I believe the Americans with Disabilities Act must be strengthened, so that people living with HIV/AIDS and other disabilities are afforded adequate protection against discrimination. I supported similar legislation as an Illinois senator, and will continue to do the same in the United States Senate.

To further our efforts against HIV/AIDS, I will join Illinois's senior senator, the Honorable Dick Durbin, in championing efforts to develop a safe, effective, affordable, and easy-to-use microbicide product to give women and men at-risk an HIV prevention alternative to condoms.