

# The AIDS Foundation of Chicago's 2004 Candidate Questionnaire

## Primary Races for the United States Senate

**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.

### **Gery Chico:**

The ravages of AIDS cannot be denied, yet the true tragedy is that this disease could be contained if only adequate resources and education were provided worldwide.

As I found during my time at the Chicago Public Schools and as Chief of Staff to Mayor Daley, resources and education are powerful tools for change. In both capacities, I found that people are far too often paralyzed by fear of controversy to enact programs that not only make sense, but significantly improve the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of people. In the case of HIV/AIDS prevention, this inaction costs lives.

At the City of Chicago, we responded to the AIDS crisis proactively. The City of Chicago Public Health Department designated clinics and provided resources for confidential and anonymous testing and counseling. Additionally, HIV/AIDS treatment was made available for low-income Chicago residents at HIV Primary Care Community Health Centers. These clinics were in neighborhoods across Chicago to serve as many HIV/AIDS positive residents as possible.

I firmly believe in providing youth with the information they need to practice safe sex, if they choose to become sexually active. At the Chicago Public Schools, I invited Planned Parenthood into the classrooms to teach scientifically-accurate sexual education, including HIV/AIDS prevention. Despite the public protests of numerous conservative groups, the program was enacted and has successfully reduced the number of unintended pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Realizing the tremendous healthcare needs of teenage parents, we opened a number of clinics in Chicago Public high schools. The clinics not only provide post-natal care to the mothers and babies, but provide safe sex and birth control options.

As a U.S. Senator, I will continue to provide resources and promote education to prevent the spread of HIV and aid those with HIV/AIDS both domestically and abroad. As we have seen in parts of Africa, this disease is rampant when education is lacking, and devastating when treatment is lacking.

I would support measures to reduce the cost of antiviral drugs domestically and abroad; provide funding for vaccine and treatment research; provide scientifically-accurate sexual education domestically and abroad (including the lifting of the global gag rule); and support anti-discrimination measures in federal and state administered.

### **Blair Hull:**

The centerpiece of my campaign for the United States Senate is the fight for affordable health care for every American, and such a plan must include attacking the AIDS pandemic within this country and indeed in the world. In addition to increased funding for research, treatment, and support services, I am a strong advocate for evidence-based prevention policy and the use of clinically-based management strategies. Studies have shown that by investing in preventive measures we can save lives and financial resources. My Health American plan also focuses on expanding options for the chronically ill and allowing anyone to buy into a newly created health insurance pool at no more than 7/5% of their income.

I believe the most crucial part in the fight against the global AIDS pandemic is ensuring that poor countries have access to affordable, life-saving drugs. This is not only the humane course of action, but one that advances United States interests in global stability and the elimination of new strains of HIV. Thus, I will strive to address this issue in two main ways. First, I will support increased U.S. funding for prevention counseling

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and medication in poor countries through *appropriated funds* as opposed to hollow promises from the Bush Administration. Secondly, I will oppose free trade agreements which seek to curtail the ability of poor nations to produce generics to fight epidemics. I believe that it is imperative that the world's rich nations and pharmaceutical companies work together and each do their share to overcome this worldwide health crisis.

### Dan Hynes:

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you on the public health crisis of HIV/AIDS. I am deeply concerned about the impact the HIV virus is having on our citizens, as well as people around the world. In the United States, despite years of public health warnings and prevention efforts, the disease continues to spread, and it shows no signs of abating. Around the world, the disease is spreading at exponential rates due to inadequate health care, ineffective prevention programs, and poverty. The result is that AIDS is killing entire villages of people.

It is our human and ethical duty to do everything we can to bring the pandemic under control, to equip every person with the knowledge to protect themselves from the virus, and to stop its spread. Although the United States has made great progress in fighting HIV/AIDS, there is much left to be done.

First, our commitment of resources to fighting the global spread of HIV/AIDS is inadequate. UNAIDS reports that in 40 million people, including 2.5 million children, are living with the HIV virus. Disturbingly, 5 million of this total represents persons infected this year. The United States should commit substantially more resources to relieving the medical crisis that health care providers face as they try to treat the sick without adequate drugs, without enough clinics, and without enough personnel. My wife Christina, who is a doctor, traveled to Ghana in 2001 in order to spend time treating HIV-positive patients at a rural health clinic. Her experience, as well as my work as an honorary board member of Pediatric AIDS Chicago, brought home to both of us the severity and pervasiveness of the crisis. It is unacceptable that 11 million children have lost at least one parent to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and that the epidemic has made orphans of nearly 12% of all children in Zambia.

Second, the Bush Administration's abstinence-only prevention programs are both naïve and ineffective. We should be investing in "abstinence-plus" programs that recognize and emphasize the benefits of abstinence as the only guarantee against infection, but that also educate people unwilling to abstain about alternative methods of prevention.

Third, the United States must improve and better manage the resources available to care for HIV-positive individuals, as well as eliminate the cultural stigmas that rob them of dignity. HIV/AIDS patients need quality medical care that ensures that they do not suffer needlessly, they are able to work and be productive for as long as possible, and they have access to medical care and other services that allow them to remain at home during their illness.

Finally, we must enable our scientists and health researchers to fight the battle against HIV/AIDS by sufficiently funding research and removing prohibitions against processes that might hold the key to a cure.

As a U.S. Senator, I will fight for the United States to take a greater role in fighting HIV/AIDS around the world and alleviating the devastation in Africa. I will also work to end the Bush Administration's abstinence-only policies and to improve the resources and care available to Americans suffering from HIV and AIDS. Finally, I will fight to end politically-motivated restrictions on scientific research that might hold the cure to severe diseases like HIV/AIDS.

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### **Barack Obama:**

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.

### **Maria Pappas:**

As a former participant in AIDS support organizations and a participant in the 2002 500-mile AIDS Ride, I believe strongly in expanding funding to find treatments, and moreover, a cure to this dread disease.

To address the AIDS epidemic effectively, we must increase our commitment to treatment and care. In addition, our strongest hopes for defeating this horrible disease involve research and prevention. This is a core theme of my entire campaign: directing funding to the priorities of education, health care and jobs by getting rid of the wasteful giveaways to the lobbyists and special interests, and the ridiculous tax breaks to the wealthy. We can afford expanding Medicare coverage and other assistance and treatment programs if we scale back Washington's waste.

Throughout my career, I have been and remain the leading advocate of education programs for children ages 0-6, especially full funding of Head Start, Early Head Start and new funding for parenting-skills training. These are strategies with long-term yields. We have to help our children start school with a feeling that they belong, that they are part of the community. Our children must possess the knowledge and self-assurance to feel encouraged as they progress in the classroom and through life. By that, I mean encouraged to participate fully in school and utilize every opportunity available—not to learn just how to pass a test or how to make a living, but to learn how to make a life.

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As a private counselor, attorney, county commissioner, and as the county treasurer, I have spoken clearly and consistently on the need to work with children in the formative years. A discouraged child becomes a misbehaving child, and these are the children most likely to fall into cycles of despair: poverty, crime, substance abuse, other at-risk activities, homelessness or imprisonment. Dropping out of school, failing to be able to find their own success, failing to realize and achieve dreams—these are matters we must approach as a society on the prevention side. On every front, we must do more in prevention, which is the proven best method of success and the route that radical conservatives have refused to finance even as we build more prisons and fewer care facilities for those whom society has let down.

I am the candidate with a proven record of reform, I will go to Washington to get our spending priorities in line with what is best for our society.

### **Nancy Skinner:**

What is required to respond to the AIDS epidemic in the United States is a combination of leadership and courage.

Leadership to set out a plan of action for containing the spread of the disease through treatment, education and contraception. Determination to fully fund the research and drug trials necessary to find the vaccines and ultimately a cure.

And the courage to fight those forces who would promote ignorance over education. Comprehensive science-based sex education and worldwide family planning is our best defense against the spread of AIDS and our best hope for a healthy population.

### **Joyce Washington:**

There have been many advances in the fight against HIV/AIDS over the last two decades such as the development of anti-retrovirals, but those advances have not reached the developing world, especially sub-Saharan Africa. This is especially tragic because HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa is destroying the fabric of societies as the infection rate spirals out of control. In Botswana, for instance, more than one-third of the population is infected with this disease.

This is one of the great moral tests of our time. History will judge the compassion and humanity of our people in part based on how we react to this Holocaust.

We must encourage governments in sub-Saharan Africa to get anti-retrovirals to those with HIV/AIDS through parallel importing (importing generic versions of patent-protected drugs in compliance within WTO rules for health emergencies) and compulsory licensing (producing generic versions of patent-protected drugs in compliance within WTO rules). Despite objections from pharmaceutical manufactures, this is not a threat to their profits since virtually no people in these countries will ever be able to afford Western anti-retrovirals.

As the next U.S. Senator from Illinois I will fight for policies that encourage compulsory licensing and parallel importing in fighting HIV/AIDS in the developing world. I will also support increased funding for education to prevent the spread of the disease and increased funding for treatment in the developing world.

Domestically, I will push for increased funding for research, treatment, education, and social services to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, and to help those with the disease.

### **Jonathan Wright:**

The only way to combat AIDS is to promote abstinence. There is no such thing as "safe sex". Government needs to combat illicit drug use, not subsidize it through free needle programs.

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