

Written Responses by Candidates Vying for Statewide Office and Cook County Board President

Candidates for statewide office and for Cook County Board President were invited to submit statements regarding their HIV/AIDS positions. Their statements are provided, verbatim, below.

Candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor

Rod Blagojevich and Pat Quinn (D)

"Since I became Governor, I have boosted spending for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) by \$3 million to a total of \$36 million to allow more people with HIV or AIDS who meet eligibility requirements to be served and to increase the number of life saving medicines from 74 to 80. I filed emergency rules to implement HIV/AIDS rapid testing statewide. The emergency rules are effective for 150 days, starting on September 14, 2005. The Department will file a permanent rule before the temporary rule expires. We have been able to cover more uninsured families through expansions of the KidCare and FamilyCare programs, including those families with an HIV positive parent.

Healthcare and prevention have been my top priorities. As noted in my answers [on the questionnaire], while increasing funds for these programs will always be a goal, the overall budget of the state is a factor in determining appropriate funding for these types of programs. I have urged Congress to and support the reauthorization and increase federal appropriations for the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act - the nation's largest source of federal funding for HIV/AIDS-related services. In addition, the Illinois Department of Public Health has allotted \$250,000 to help fund the HIV/AIDS Policy and Research Institute at Chicago State University. The institute, which was started with a \$350,000 grant in fiscal year 2004, is conducting research on why the African-American population is so disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS and ways to affect behavioral change. The Illinois Department of Public Health will also hold more than 20 HIV/AIDS testing and awareness events across the state. We have also negotiated price concessions from drug manufacturers which will net the state \$1 million for its drug assistance program for people with HIV and AIDS. In September we launched a comprehensive HIV/AIDS awareness campaign called BASUAH, Brothers and Sisters United Against HIV/AIDS, to address the alarming trend of infection among the state's African-American churches, colleges and universities to encourage HIV/AIDS testing, coordinated faith-based community meetings to develop a strategic plan for fighting HIV/AIDS, and participated in a twinning partnership and knowledge exchange with South Africa."

Judy Baar Topinka and Joe Birkett (R)

No Response

Rich Whitney (No Response) and Julie Samuels (G)

"Thank you for allowing me to respond to your thoughtful questions. I have learned a great deal about your concerns from your questions. Because your organization has done the research and has the experience, you will know the most about this issue. You are therefore the authorities on the nature of the problems, and the solutions to them. I believe that the Green Party's support for a single-payer universal health care program for all Illinois residents is the first step to solving the problems you have identified. We also support and I will work to achieve the decriminalization of drugs and treatment on demand for substance abusers. Addictive drug use is a public health problem, not a criminal justice problem and should be treated as such. This would prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS through sharing of needles and provide appropriate health care to treat addiction. Illinois schools should be fully educating students on age-appropriate sex education and healthy lifestyles. This is only one of many ways that our schools are failing our students and this can only be improved by fully funding Illinois schools by passing HB 750. I will work to support the passage of that bill. If special funding is still required for health education, I will work to add that to the bill. Finally, the Green Party and I support and will work for full civil rights for everyone in Illinois. This includes young and old, rich and poor, all races and all individuals of all sexual orientations. Same-sex partners deserve the right to share in the benefits that all married

couples share and this is especially important when it comes to health benefits. A universal health care bill that we work to pass will contain language to guarantee that this happens. Thank you and good luck in your important work. I hope to be able to provide real assistance to your endeavors once Rich Whitney and I are successful in the November election."

Candidates for Attorney General

David Black (G)

"I have been a strong supporter of the needle exchange program in Winnebago County and through the Unitarian Universalist of Rockford HIV-AIDS Task Force have been involved in fundraising for AIDS treatment programs as well as picnics and Christmas parties for AIDS patients and their families."

Lisa Madigan (D)

"As a public servant, I have consistently supported measures to increase education and prevention services to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS. For example, as a State Senator, I supported legislative measures to expand comprehensive sex education for youth, provide for needle exchange program to help stop the spread of HIV, and increase resources for organizations that provide necessary support to those living with HIV and AIDS. I have continued to support these efforts as Attorney General. Additionally, during my first term as Illinois Attorney General, I have launched an aggressive fight against methamphetamine. To help stem the flow of methamphetamine from rural areas to urban areas and across state lines, I have proposed and passed legislation to make it more difficult for meth manufacturers to get the ingredients they need to make the drug and I have held workshops about methamphetamine for law enforcement so that they have all the tools they need in the fight against meth. Meth has become particularly troubling in the gay community where there are significant concerns that its use will increase the spread of HIV/AIDS because of its tendency to lead users to unsafe sex practices. To that end, I have worked with many organizations in the GLBT community to explore the issues presented by meth and to make sure that my office is effectively involved in the fight against meth in the gay community. As Illinois Attorney General, I am proud to continue my collaboration with legislators, community organizations like the AIDS Foundation, and members of the public to support people living with HIV and to expand HIV/AIDS prevention and education efforts."

Stewart Umholtz (R)

No Response

Candidates for State Treasurer

Alexander Giannoulis (D)

No Response

Christine Radogno (R)

No Response

Dan Schlorff (G)

"I am the first openly gay candidate (and first Asian) to run for statewide office in Illinois. Additionally, members of my campaign staff are HIV-positive and thriving. The Green Party fully and enthusiastically supports AIDS Foundation of Chicago and the policies you espouse!"

Candidates for Comptroller

Daniel Hynes (D)

"To put it simply, our government is not committing sufficient resources to alleviate the suffering of those coping with HIV infection, or to curb the spread of this devastating illness. We have a full understanding of how the disease is contracted and an ability to effectively prevent virtually all new infections through adequate community education and prevention programs such as needle exchanges. Therefore, it is a public atrocity that the disease continues to reach new victims. We must commit to adequately educating our public - and especially our youth - and commit adequate resources to public health and prevention programs, to end the scourge of AIDS."

Carole Pankau (R)

No Response

Alicia Snyder (G)

No Response

Candidates for Cook County Board President

Todd Stroger (D)

“HIV/AIDS is an issue that must be addressed actively and aggressively by Cook County. Eighty percent of Illinois’ HIV positive people live in Cook County, and we have to focus on both treatment for them and on matters of prevention and education. Cook County must make routine, voluntary rapid HIV testing available in the County’s hospitals, health clinics, and jails to identify HIV-positive individuals who do not know they are infected and provide them with medical care. In addition, we must do more to prevent new HIV/AIDS cases – particularly in south suburban Cook County, where HIV/AIDS cases have doubled in four years.

Prevention of HIV/AIDS should include engaging African-American churches and community groups in AIDS awareness and education since the African-American community is the most impacted today, with African-American men and women comprising half of all people living with HIV/AIDS both nationally and within Chicago. We must also provide HIV prevention and care services to former detainees and prisoners who are returning to the community.

Caused in part by reductions in the Medicaid Intergovernmental Transfer, the Cook County Bureau of Health Services is facing a deficit of as much as \$70 million. Be it following Commissioner Forrest Claypool’s proposal of expanding neighborhood services for the uninsured and partnering with non-profit hospitals and agencies to provide specialty services, or investigating Northwestern University’s recently released report calling for a blue-ribbon panel to review the finances and structure of the Cook County health system, the deficit must be addressed.

Bluntly put, we know how to stop HIV/AIDS – we need the political will to make it happen – by speaking frankly and openly about how the virus is transmitted, fighting AIDS stigma and homophobia, encouraging early testing and treatment, and providing high-quality medical care and social services for people who are infected, we can end the disease. I plan to bring that political will to Cook County. It is unacceptable that people infected with HIV are fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes, and rejected by their families because they have the virus. Although we cannot force a family to more openly accept their loved ones, we as a community can and must impact the co-factors that fuel the disease, including poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, AIDS stigma, homophobia, racism, and sexually transmitted infections.

Tony Peraica (R)

No Response