

## POSITION STATEMENTS BY CANDIDATES FOR GOVERNOR

AFC invited gubernatorial candidates Rod Blagojevich (D), Marseillis Brown (I), Jim Ryan (R), and Cal Skinner (L) to submit policy position statements on HIV/AIDS issues.

### **Rod Blagojevich (D)**

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"AIDS is a public health crisis in Illinois, and I am committed to ensuring that the state government plays a leadership role in combating this disease. Illinois has the sixth highest number of cases in the nation, 25,000 of our residents have been diagnosed with AIDS and it has taken the lives of 15,000 of them. We must act in partnership with local and federal entities and community-based organizations in responding to the nation's HIV/AIDS crisis.

While much progress has been made in the fight against AIDS, much more remains to be done so that we can save lives and prevent the spread of this disease. The state's current HIV infection rate, approximately 1,500 cases per year, remains unacceptably high. The epidemic disproportionately affects people of color and young adults -- populations also affected by other serious health concerns.

Because of remarkable medical advances, which have slowed mortality trends for people with AIDS, more Americans are living with HIV/AIDS than ever before. As a member of Congress, I have worked with leaders, such as the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, to support full funding for the Ryan White CARE Act, the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program, HIV prevention programs funded through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institute of Health (NIH) in an effort to respond appropriately to the AIDS pandemic.

As governor, I will continue this fight. The state must pursue an array of HIV prevention, care and surveillance measures, including supporting scientifically rigorous and evidence-based HIV prevention programs in order to stem the spread of HIV, and also increase funding for addiction treatment services, harm reduction services and HIV risk-reduction programs for all at-risk populations, including injection drug users, who continue to account for a large share of new infections.

In addition, I will seek increased funding for targeted HIV prevention programs tailored for high-risk populations, with a focus on youth. As a candidate for governor, I have called for full expansion of the Family Care program to provide health insurance to as many as 300,000 working parents of children enrolled in the Kid Care program -- this is estimated to provide insurance to over 1,000 parents with AIDS. And, I will work to find ways to help people with HIV/AIDS in non-urban and rural areas of the state access prevention and care services in their communities. Earlier this year, I also spoke out against Governor George Ryan's shortsighted veto of a \$2.25 million appropriation for HIV prevention services in communities of color and made a pledge to do more, not less, for communities under siege by this epidemic.

In addition, I believe that the state should explore the application of a federal waiver to allow the state to expand Medicaid eligibility on a trial basis to a portion of the HIV-positive population. Such targeted service expansions in other states are helping people with HIV maintain their health, while helping to minimize long-term costs to Medicaid and other government assistance programs."

### **Marseillis Brown (L)**

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No response

### **Jim Ryan (R)**

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No response

### **Cal Skinner (L)**

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No response