

## President Bush Signs HIV/AIDS Legislation May 27, 2003

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**MALE VOICE 1:** Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

(Applause).

**SECRETARY COLIN POWELL:** Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Good afternoon. Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. President, I'm very honored to again welcome you to your State Department, and I also want to welcome the distinguished members of the House and Senate who are here with us today, the distinguished Ambassadors behind me, Senator Thompson and our many other guests who are here today to witness this very, very important and historic signing ceremony.

As the President has said, the advance of freedom and hope is challenged by the spread of AIDS. With President Bush's leadership and the overwhelming bipartisan support of the Congress, the United States continues to be the world's most powerful force for freedom and for hope.

The spread of political and economic liberties and breakthroughs in technology permit us to truly envision a day in this century when most of humanity can be freed from tyranny and poverty. Yet these promising trends which America has done so much to advance can be reversed if AIDS is left to rage.

HIV is one of the biggest killers on the face of the earth. It is more devastating than any army, any conflict, or any weapon of mass destruction. Responding to HIV/AIDS is not

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only a humanitarian and a public health issue. HIV/AIDS also carries profound implications for prosperity, democracy, and security.

President Bush's leadership in the international campaign against AIDS is a dramatic demonstration of his deep commitment to work at home and abroad for a safer, freer, better world for all people.

As the President has said, seldom has history offered a greater opportunity to do so much for so many. And the passage by Congress of the U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003 helps us seize that opportunity.

I want to especially thank Senator Bill Frist for his skillful stewardship of the legislation and for his passion as both a statesman and physician in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

I also want to thank Congressman Tom Lantos and Chairman Henry Hyde, who is not here with us today but is here with us in spirit, as well as the leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations committee for their energetic efforts to see the bill successfully through both houses of Congress.

The initiatives funded by this path-breaking legislation are in the best tradition of the American people. I am pleased to have so many ambassadors here. AIDS is a challenge for all of our countries and the United States will be your partner in this fight.

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My colleague, Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson, has been a tireless advocate for this legislation. He has seen firsthand the catastrophic effects of AIDS, and I could not ask for a more determined or effective colleague in the President's campaign against HIV/AIDS than Tommy Thompson.

And so now it is my pleasure to introduce to you all, the Secretary of Health and Human Services and my good friend, Secretary Tommy Thompson.

(Applause).

**SECRETARY TOMMY THOMPSON:** Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you, Secretary Powell. And I want to thank all of the members from Congress and the ambassadors for their tremendous support of this legislation.

But like Colin and all of our colleagues, I am very proud to work for a President who cares so much about health that he exercises and eats right. (Laughter). He encourages our fellow Americans to develop healthy habits.

Best of all, he encourages Congress and State Legislators to ensure that Americans have more choices for health insurance and healthcare, and the high quality of care that such competition provides.

Thanks to people like him, Americans have an optimistic view of their health. We're living longer and living better, and we like it.

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Until very recently that view in Africa and the Caribbean was just the opposite, particularly when it comes to AIDS. The spirit I saw there could only be described as hopelessness. As recently as a few months ago the Health Ministers of those affected nations waged a lonely and doomed fight.

Look at what they confronted. In Sub-Saharan Africa almost 9% of adults have HIV/AIDS. That's already more than 25 million people, including 3 million younger than 15. Every day more than 14,000 additional Africans contract the virus, and every day almost 8,500 die from it.

Experts projected that over the next 20 years it killed over 55 million Africans. In ten years there would be 40 million orphans. In Botswana 38% of adults have the virus and life expectancy has fallen below 40 years.

AIDS ruthlessly strikes peoples down before their time, destroys economies, families, orphans, childrens, and breeds despair. This year the spirit and the reality have changed.

Last week in Geneva I met with the Health Ministers from the countries included in the President's plan. Their eyes were glowing, their plans were energetic, and for the first time in years hope was in their hearts.

And they give the credit to the willingness of one nation and one President to fight beside them to prevent and to treat and to turn the tide against AIDS. And as Chairman of

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Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis, I share their passion, their gratitude, and their thanks. And every one of them says please tell the President thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

So I am very privileged today to introduce a wonderful leader, a great friend, a person leading on a very noble cause - ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the United States of America.

(Applause).

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** Thank you all very much. Thanks. Please be seated. Thank you all very much. It's - I'm so pleased that so many could be here to witness this historic moment as our nation sets forth a great mission of rescue.

The United States of America has a long tradition of sacrifice in the cause of freedom. And we've got a long tradition of being generous in the service of humanity. We are the nation of the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and the Peace Corps. And now we're the Nation of the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

(Applause).

HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest medical challenges of our time. The disease has killed more than 20 million people. Today 42 million more are living with HIV. Across Africa this disease is filling graveyards, and creating orphans, and

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leaving millions in a desperate fight for their own lives. They will not fight alone, because they will have the help and the friendship of the United States of America.

(Applause).

The legislation I signed today launches an emergency effort that will provide \$15 billion over the next five years to fight AIDS abroad. This is the largest single up-front commitment in historic for an international public health initiative involving a specific disease.

America makes this commitment for a clear reason directly rooted in our founding. We believe in the value and dignity of every human life.

(Applause).

In the face of preventable death and suffering we have a moral duty to act and we are acting.

I want to thank Tommy Thompson and Colin Powell for their leadership on this crucial issue. There are no better people than to trust in seeing that the great heart and compassion of America is recognized in our world through accomplishment.

I appreciate - Tony Fauci is here. Tony's been on the front line of the war against HIV/AIDS for a long time and I appreciate you representing the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases.

(Applause).

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I appreciate Rich Carmona as U.S. Surgeon General for joining us. Thank you for being here, Rich.

(Applause).

I want to thank a member of my staff, the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy, Dr. Joseph O'Neill, for his leadership.

(Applause).

It is my honor to recognize Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, the former President of Zambia, is with us today as well.

(Applause).

I'm grateful that the ambassadors and senior officials from African and Caribbean nations are with us. I appreciate their leadership. Send the message back home that we are earnest and determined to help you wipe out AIDS in your country.

(Applause).

I want to thank all of the faith-based and community activists and leaders who are here, who share our passion and desire to help those who suffer. Your efforts took place long before we arrived here in Washington -- or at least I arrived here in Washington -- and all we want to do is stand by your side as we march down a - the road of hopeful tomorrow for people who suffer.

I want to thank the members of the House and the Senate who are here. Bill Frist has been a leader on this issue and

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he, along with Senator Richard Lugar and Senator Joe Biden, Senate Foreign Relations Committee delivered. Mr. Lugar, thank you.

(Applause).

I appreciate my friend, Congressman Tom Lantos, for being here. He represents the House Foreign Relations Committee. Chairman Hyde is not here but nevertheless the two worked really well together.

(Applause).

I'm pleased to see Senator Santorum and DeWine are here. Thank you all for coming and thank you for your leadership on this issue.

I also want to thank members of the House, Congressman Pitts, Smith, King, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee for joining us as well. Thank you all for your interest and thanks for coming.

(Applause).

When I stood in front of the Congress four months ago I was confident that the U.S. Congress would respond. I was confident that they would hear the call for a bold initiative. And they responded. And they have my gratitude and they have the gratitude of millions around the world for their leadership on this issue. And I want to thank you all very much.

(Applause).

This act of Congress addresses one of the most urgent

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needs of the modern world. Because of the AIDS pandemic a child born today in Sub-Saharan Africa has a life expectancy of 47 years. This disease falls most heavily on women and children.

Nearly 60% of those infected by HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa are women. Three million African children under 15 have the AIDS virus -- three million -- and the disease has left 11 million orphans - more children than live in the entire state of California.

Behind these numbers are names. There's Imbingonani (misspelled?), a 15-year-old boy who lost both his mother and father to AIDS and now struggles to feed his two siblings and two nephews.

There's Leonara (misspelled?), the mother of five in Kenya who cares for five other children she has taken into her home. All of them AIDS orphans. All of who would be on the streets without her love.

There's Ruth, a young mother dying of AIDS at 24, ostracized by her late husband's family, asking who will take care of my children?

This is the daily reality of a continent in crisis, and America will not look away. This great nation is stepping forward to help.

The fight against AIDS is difficult, but not hopeless. We know how to prevent AIDS and we know how to treat it. The

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cost of effective medicines has fallen dramatically. And we've made progress here in our own country where we've increased spending for domestic HIV prevention and care and treatment by 7% in next year's budget.

We'll also help the people across African who are struggling against this disease and those who have proven on a day-by-day basis the battle can be won.

We see hope in the work of individuals like the former President of Zambia, who lost his son to AIDS - a son who left several children to the care of their grandfather. The good President turned his grief to good works and created the Kenneth Kaunda Children of Africa Foundation. His foundation pays for food and medical care and schooling for AIDS orphans.

Mr. President, we honor you for your service and for the example you have shown to others who live on your ravaged continent. Thank you for coming today, sir.

(Applause).

We see hope in the many religious and educational institutions that are doing effective work on the front line of the AIDS crisis. Catholic Medical Mission Board for example runs 15 clinics in Southern Africa and Haiti, where more than 20,000 pregnant women each year receive HIV testing and counseling and drug therapy to prevent the transmission of the virus to their children.

I want to thank Jack Galbraith for the fine work of

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Catholic Medical Mission, and I want to thank all of you all who've heard that call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Thank you for your service to those who suffer. May God continue to bless your work.

(Applause).

We see hope in the actions of African governments that are acting responsibly and aggressively to fight AIDS. The nation of Uganda is pursuing a successfully strategy of prevention, emphasizing abstinence and marital fidelity, as well as the responsible use of condoms to prevent HIV transmission.

The results in Uganda have been remarkable. The AIDS infection rate has fallen sharply since 1990 and in some places the percentage of pregnant women with HIV has been cut in half. The Uganda plan is provide - proving that major progress is possible, and now we must spread that progress to suffering nations throughout the world.

By the legislation I will sign today the United States of America will take the side of individuals and groups and governments fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa and other parts of the world. We will provide unprecedented resources to the effort and we will keep our commitment until we have turned the tide against AIDS.

(Applause).

Under this legislation America will provide additional

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money for the Global Fund for AIDS Relief, and additional funding for our efforts in many countries to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the disease. And we will focus our efforts on 12 African and two Caribbean countries where HIV/AIDS is heavily concentrated.

We will purchase low-cost antiretroviral medications and other drugs that are needed to save lives. We will set up a broad and efficient network to deliver drugs to the farthest reaches of Africa, even by motorcycle or bicycle.

We will train doctors and nurses and other healthcare professionals so they can treat HIV/AIDS patients. We will renovate and where necessary build and equip clinics and laboratories. We will support the care of AIDS orphans by training and hiring childcare workers. We'll provide home-based care to ease the suffering of people living with AIDS.

We'll provide HIV testing throughout all regions of the targeted countries. We'll support abstinence-based prevention education for young people in schools and churches and community centers.

We will assist faith-based and community organizations to provide treatment, prevention, and support services in communities affected by HIV/AIDS.

We're developing a system to evaluate and monitor this entire program. So we can truly say to people we care more about results than words. We're interested in lives saved and

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lives will be saved.

(Applause).

This comprehensive program has the potential in this decade to prevent 7 million new HIV infections, provide life-extending drugs to at least 2 million infected people, give humane care to 10 million HIV sufferers and AIDS orphans. This is a massive undertaking and the dedicated men and women of the United States government are eager to get started.

To coordinate this effort I will soon nominate a Global AIDS Coordinator who will have the rank of ambassador. This coordinator will work closely with the Departments of State and Health and Human Services, as well as with USAID and the Centers for Disease Control to direct the efforts in the worldwide fight against AIDS.

I'm going to Europe here at the end of this week and I will challenge our partners and our friends to follow our lead and to make a similar commitment made by the United States of America so we can save even more lives.

(Applause).

I will remind them that time is not on our side. Every day of delay means 8,000 more AIDS deaths in Africa and 14,000 more infections every day. Fourteen thousand more people will be infected. I'll urge our European partners in Japan and Canada to join this great mission of rescue, to match their good intentions with real resources.

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The suffering in Africa is great. The suffering in the Caribbean is great. The United States of America has the power and we have the moral duty to help. And I'm proud that our blessed and generous nation is fulfilling that duty.

(Applause).

Now it is my honor and high privilege to sign this lifesaving piece of legislation. God bless you all.

(Applause).

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