

**Congressional Leadership Awards in the Fight Against
HIV/AIDS
Global AIDS Alliance Fund and AIDS Action Council
August 25, 2008**

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REP. DONALD PAYNE (D-NJ): - we just decided that we had to bring this PEPFAR to another height and I agree. We need to have a PEPFAR program for the U.S.A. We have to really start to put the focus, but the \$15 billion that was authorized in '03, '02 when the reauthorization was coming down the pike, I heard that there was a lot of level funding and so I've decided that we need to talk about doubling it so at least we could get some increase in case they wanted to simply have level funding and low and behold at 30 billion caught on.

As a matter of fact, President Bush then mentioned it a year later in his State of the Union Address to double the 15 to 30. When I heard that, I knew I made a mistake [laughter]. We didn't ask for enough [laughter]. So we need to up to 50. You know if you say something enough then it starts to be thought of as durable and I talked to [inaudible] when he said you can't do anything with less than \$50 billion.

So that's the number we put out there and we didn't retreat and to be truthful, I was one of the most surprised individuals in the world. That \$50 billion kept going through but our team is fantastic. We will be dealing with malaria. we will be dealing HIV and TB, the MDX and XDR TB, the new multiple strain that's difficult to deal with, we will be doing health professionals as Barbara thought we should build that

in, a number of the children's things that Donna's put in and also nutrition.

Finally we said to the PEPFAR people, we should have a nutrition component and they said we'd love to except that the food costs more than the medicine. So how are we going to do it? So that's why I introduced a bill that will make nutrition a part of the PEPFAR program, a real part of it [applause].

So let me just thank the organization. We have to go for the gold, we have to do better. We have to do like they did with the U.S. basketball team. We always have the best players in the world but they couldn't win the championship because they just didn't have a plan. This time, they decided to have a plan. It was a three-year plan. You had to make a commitment that you're going to stay together for these three years and you see what the results are. We need a plan to bring the gold back and defeat HIV and AIDS. Thank you very much [applause].

PAUL ZEITZ: Thank you Congressman Payne. I'm glad to see dessert is being served, three little bowls of sustaining food as we're moving into the final phases of this exciting event. So I hope that that nourishment will help you.

And I also just want to move forward with the program and it's a great honor for me to introduce a dear friend of mine and inspiration mentor, Senator Thurman who served as the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy during the second term of the Clinton administration.

As everyone knows, Sandy started her work in Atlanta working with community groups and mobilizing a full throttle response in Atlanta for people living with AIDS and those affected by AIDS. When she came into the White House, she continued her leadership by expanding the national response, but also made a deal with then President Clinton that she was going to take this effort global.

It was only with her leadership that through trips to Africa that I know Congresswoman Lee was on and others and that's where she met me in the field in Zambia where she helped us all be inspired to do more and go faster and be bold and to step out of the comfort zone and challenge the status quo and that's what Senator Thurman did in the White House and she was appointed by President Clinton as the first presidential envoy for AIDS cooperation.

I don't think we've had leadership like hers over the last eight years but we sat together a couple of weeks ago at the White House and it was an exciting moment to see where the trajectory, where that seed of leadership had started during the Clinton administration had grown, that seed that Sandy planted, that first breakthrough that she achieved with the life initiative, the leadership in the fight against the epidemic that got launched before in 1999 as part of President Clinton's legacy. So Sandy it's so great and we're honored to

have you here today and we welcome you to give your comments.
Thank you [applause].

SANDRA THURMAN: Thank you Paul and thank you so much for having us here today. This is an extraordinary event to be with these great leaders. It's also a real honor to be together with so many members of the Congressional Black Caucus who helped us lead the effort to start a global AIDS program and it wasn't easy in the early days.

I was thinking when I was writing some notes this morning that back in the late '90s when we were working with the Congressional Black Caucus to focus more of our attention on HIV and AIDS, it was not as popular as it is now and that country song, *I Was Country Before Country Was Cool* kept sort of going around and around in my head. These people were on HIV and AIDS in the developing world long before it was fashionable and I want to recognize all of them for that.

AIDS has been with us for a quarter of a century. It will be with us for another quarter of a century. It will be a long time before we end this epidemic and we have to put this in perspective when we talk about our long-term commitment and that we're not at the beginning of the end of this epidemic. We may be at the end of the beginning but we're not yet at the beginning of the end and so this is something that we have to commit to for the long haul.

This is a long-term commitment and with the courage and the leadership of the Democrats and the Congress and with a Democratic President in the White House, I know that we can continue to make the kind of progress that we have made in the last several years in the fight against AIDS worldwide.

The bold and sustained response is what we need and the really great news is that the American people understand it. They understand we live in a global community and they will support the members of Congress and the administration in that effort. I think that's really, really exciting but we have to keep our promises.

Now it's wonderful that we just passed a comprehensive HIV and AIDS bill but that won't mean a thing to us unless we have the funding necessary to make our promises real for real people who are in need of our support [applause].

That's why I'm so excited about the pledge campaign that AIDS Action Council and the Global AIDS Alliance Fund has put together and I hope that all of the candidates running for Congress end of cycle will sign on to the pledge to implement sound policies and reform foreign assistance.

I want to repeat that, and reform foreign assistance for those of us who have had to work in that world, we need to reform foreign assistance but the elements of the pledge include ensuring that the U.S. enables a comprehensive and evidence-based national AIDS strategy to achieve improved and

more equitable results. We all have heard about that today. I can't emphasize that enough. One of our greatest challenges in the Clinton administration years was our inability to design and implement a comprehensive AIDS strategy and I can't tell you how important this is.

We need to ensure that Congress provides at least \$48 billion by 2013 for the global fight against HIV, TB, and malaria. Again, we have to put our money where our mouth is and we have to do it for the long-term. This can't be a one-off proposition when we look at the impact of AIDS in Africa. I want to say that it was not easy and Michael Eskowitz [misspelled?] who worked for Senator Kennedy and worked with us at the White House is here and worked to design that mission; it was not easy to get people to agree to come with us.

I just want to say the first person to sign on the dotted line when we said go was Barbara Lee and we were [inaudible] by Sheila Jackson Lee and by Carolyn Kilpatrick. So I just want to note that in the beginning, you all, it was women who stepped up to the plate with this but [applause] with the support of a few extraordinarily enlightened men like Chairman Payne, we couldn't have done it without him. So you are now part of the sorority sir. I have to tell you that. You're part of our sorority. There's no doubt about it.

It was also Barbara who spoke to us and said that fact-finding missions were good but delivering for those who were

dying was even better and we never forgot that as we began to develop a plan to address AIDS globally.

It was also Barbara and the group of women who said to us that if we didn't create an AIDS response that worked for women and girls, it would not work at all. As usual, they were right and she was right and she partnered with her colleague, Jim Leach, to actually start the first work on what came to be the Global Fund.

So Barbara, long before anyone else, knew what a global fund was, was calling for coordinated international effort to make sure that we could address this in a way that was comprehensive. So I want to recognize her for that starting back in 1999. So thank you for your leadership [applause] on that issue [applause].

For women and girls around the world and I just want to make just a sort of sidebar comment around this. I was watching CNN this morning, I'm sure many of you were as well, and some of what I heard in the talk about what's going on here in Denver really made me unhappy that we have people who are in one camp or another who are deciding and they're not going to vote for this one because they didn't like that one or somebody wasn't treated well and all of that and I understand everybody's angst about that.

No one in the world would be happier than I would to be here to see us nominate the first woman candidate for the

presidency of the United States but I just want to say that for the women and girls here and around the world, I want to urge us all to get past our in-fighting [applause]. If you think it was bad during the last eight years, wait until we have John McCain as President.

I've got to tell you if you're a woman and you care about women's issues and a woman's right to choose and reproductive health issues, I believe you ought to go back and read that platform and listen to those speeches again because a John McCain presidency is not going to do anything but set us back for a really long time.

So we need to stop our fussing and our whining and we need to focus on winning instead because the women infected and affected by HIV and AIDS around the world can't wait on us. I just want to make that sidebar [applause] comment [applause].

We need Democrats to stay with us in this fight not to give up to AIDS fatigue because, as we all know, this is a long time effort and it's going to take us a long time to get this work done. We need to focus on prevention, also on treatment, and as my colleague said, we can't treat our way out of this epidemic. So we need to find that balance between prevention and treatment to take us the distance.

We need that leadership for universal access including in our own country and if we can't do the work here, how in the world can we go help or tell anybody else how to do it

overseas? We wonder why people don't like us. It's not hard to figure out.

We, as Democrats, need to ensure that AIDS programs are fully funded both here and abroad. The Democrats control the Congress and hopefully will soon control the White House but it falls on Democrats, no matter what, to deliver on the funding and policies that we need to turn the tide in this epidemic. Again I want to thank you all for being here. Thank you for your extraordinary work and look forward to working with you all when we have a new and Democratic administration. Thank you [applause].

PAUL ZEITZ: Thank you Sandy and thank you for all your words about Congresswoman Barbara Lee. If people could stand and give Barbara Lee a round of applause for her leadership as our next honoree [applause] and our final speaker [applause]. We know that Barbara Lee is always the first one to sign on the dotted line, so she's agreed to step forward today and be one of the first members or candidates for Congress to sign the Congressional pledge to combat AIDS here at home and around the world and combat global poverty. Whew [applause]. We're going to keep that sharpie [applause].

I also want to acknowledge Barbara Lee's new book that's being released here at the DNC, Renegade for Peace and Justice. It's a personal biography that she's authored and is releasing here with a preview edition that's available outside

for sale. It's an amazing personal journey that she shares in a very courageous and very bold way and I can't top what has already been said about you except to say that you are our inspiration. You are our force. You are what keep us all going. So thank you Congresswoman Lee for your leadership [applause].

REP. BARBARA LEE (D-CALIF.): Thanks. Let me just say to all of you thank you here on the front lines each and every day and it's because of you and the vision and your commitment to life that we are here today and Paul, I just have to thank you and the Global AIDS Alliance and the staff, AIDS Action Council, Ronald Johnson, all of you for never giving up even when it looked pretty dismal in Washington, D.C. but you get it.

You understand that this is one of the greatest humanitarian, national security, public health crisis in the world and I'm so pleased and I guess excited by the fact that we've been talking about this is a global pandemic. It's international and domestic and the Global AIDS Alliance is one of the very first organizations to come out and really embrace that notion that this is about the world community and the world family.

So thank you again Paul. Thank you all, Marjorie, all of you for so much of your leadership and for what you've been doing. Sandy, yes it was a woman, you who were [inaudible] you were over at that White House there when we were saying we've

got to do something. We've got to do something and I have to tell you we miss you, God I'm so glad to see that you're still on the case. Because of the work that, I mean you did pave the way for all of us and so I salute you and honor you and thank you so much.

Dr. Ringera, thank you. You were so inspiring for us today to listen to your words. We know what we have to do, sometimes we get bogged down, we get depressed, we get frustrated, we get pessimistic but I think listening to you today has given us the hope that we need to move forward.

And Danny, of course, my brother who could be doing a lot of other things, but every issue as it relates to human rights and peace and justice, you're on. Whether it's Darfur, condemning the genocide in Sudan, whether it's call for normal relations with Cuba, regardless of what issue it is, you're there and you could be doing many, many other things. So thank you for sharing your life with the world, Danny Glover [applause].

Let me say to my colleagues, those who are still with us and those who have left, Senator Boxer, Congresswoman McCollum, Congresswoman Waters, Congresswoman Christensen, Congressman Payne, we couldn't do it without us together at all. What we do inside sometimes, people look at us like why are you doing this? There's no constituency out there.

This is not a priority, I mean you know but Donna and Don and Maxine and Betty and Barbara and there are a few more who continue to beat the drum and I have to say that I'm asking today that we just pause for a moment and remember Stephanie Tubbs Jones who was right there with us on all of these struggles. She was just working very recently on a bill with regard to STDs with young African American teenagers.

I mean Stephanie, her death has shocked us all and has really forced us to really understand and come to grips with what her life was about in the context of health care. She wanted to be on the Ways and Means Committee because she wanted to take on the health care crisis in this country. So can we just pause for one minute and remember Stephanie? Thank you very much.

I'm just going to make a few remarks about first Mexico City and this PEPFAR bill, which all of us worked on and Don, thank you for keeping the bug in the President's ear about \$50 billion. I mean we have to work this from all fronts but in the PEPFAR bill, Don mentioned we were able to get the \$140,000 for health care workers, a very, I think robust infrastructure piece in this last PEPFAR bill but we were able to repeal the abstinence [inaudible] policy might bear the responsible education about life back [misspelled?] would get rid of it in the United States [applause]. So we're working on that too, working on that.

Another provision of the bill was the repeal of the travel ban. You know when I was in Toronto at the AIDS Conference, I said you know, this is crazy. I want to have our AIDS activists and scientists and doctors and all those working on this pandemic come to America. Let's try to get an AIDS Conference in [inaudible] and my staff reminded me, Barbara, there's a travel ban that's been in place since 1990. Come on stop looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. I said well let's get ready to travel back and they said no we can't do it. I said yes we can. Yes we can.

So I want you to know with Senator Kerry's help in the Senate, we were able to repeal the travel ban. And so now, I'm saying [applause] that we want, once the administration issues the regulations and I said this in Mexico City, that the next AIDS Conference, international AIDS Conference hadn't been scheduled, I want it in my district in Oakland, California [laughter] but it's important that Americans benefit from the wonderful work of the world in addressing this very devastating pandemic.

I have to say to our speaker in her absence that she was out there addressing HIV and AIDS. She was the lone voice in the wilderness for many, many years and there is nothing we could do. I remember going to the AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa whenever that was in the late '90s, 2000, came back and she wasn't speaker then but she said they took away

\$42 million out of the AIDS budget and Nancy said look, we've got to get this back into the budget. You run with it.

I'm going to show you how to do this and I had just been elected to Congress and do you know we got that \$42 million restored that night when I got back from the International AIDS Conference and it was because then our leader Nancy Pelosi, now Speaker Pelosi, really helped us do that. So she has been phenomenal and I just wanted to acknowledge her and salute her in her absence because do we have [inaudible] she has been really an amazing leader. So give our speaker a round of applause [applause].

Okay. Okay. We're going to accept it for Nancy but let me just conclude by just saying how important this moment is in the life of our community and in the life of the country and the world. Donna, to work to get the platform language to include a national AIDS strategy, I mean that's phenomenal. Donna Christensen is our medical doctor. She gets it and she works day and night, day and night on this issue.

Her bill to close health care disparities, she travels all around the country and the world to build support for that and I know that under President Obama not only are we going to have a national AIDS strategy and plan but we're going to have that bill that you've been working on since the day I got to Congress to close health care disparities. So thank you Donna very much for your leadership.

I want to say this about my colleagues because they work, I see them day and night how they work on this stuff and the press is naturally is not going to cover much of what we do. So I just want to thank all of you who are here today to recognize all of us because these awards are really awards about those individuals that we're trying to empower and to help and to allow for the decent quality of life that they deserve free from HIV and AIDS.

So we are committed to stamping this dreadful disease from the face of the earth. So thank you very much. My sister's here from Texas [inaudible] just have to acknowledge that her first convention. So thank you very much for being here and God bless you [applause].

PAUL ZEITZ: Thank you Congresswoman Lee. I just would like to acknowledge a few special guests. We have the African Methodist Episcopal Bishop here from Los Angeles. Thank you ma'am for being here [applause]. I'm sorry, the card I got was wrong, the Louisiana and Mississippi Bishop thank you. Thank you for being here. Thank you Ray from OxFan [misspelled?]. Phil Wilson was here. You mentioned him from the AIDS Institute. We appreciate all the support and partnership.

I want to remind people that there are these little beaded red ribbons and please wear them around the convention if you can and I also want to ask you to be aware of an envelope for the Global AIDS Alliance Fund who sponsored this

lunch. If you have an ability to help us out or connect us with people that can help us continue this work, we would gratefully appreciate that.

So again, I just want to thank all the speakers, Sandy, Karambu, Sandy, Barbara, Marjorie, David for your co-moderation. Thank you all for coming. Have a great week. Yes, we can win the battle against global AIDS [applause].

[END RECORDING]