

President George Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear President Bush,

At your September 17 press conference, you indicated that more federal funding for AIDS would not alter the course of the epidemic. While you may be right in stating this as it regards basic AIDS research, there is a great need to apply federal funding to the tools to prevent further infections and progression to disease which research has already developed. We now know how to prevent transmission and how to help people who are already infected to live longer more productive lives. We need support to do this.

The federal government's role in disaster relief and in controlling epidemics has long been established. Consider the enormous effort expended on Toxic Shock Syndrome and Legionnaires' Disease in recent years. Why should AIDS be different? Certainly fewer Americans were affected by the other diseases. The death count for AIDS (now over 87,000) is greater than that for the Viet Nam conflict. With such a dangerous virus, why should the federal government be so hesitant to do what is needed?

What is needed? Right now there are two prevention and treatment gaps which, if filled by the federal government, would go a long way in curbing the epidemic. First, public health agencies must ensure that every HIV positive person has access to long-term confidential follow-up. We must fund early intervention programs which delay progression to disease in order to extend productive life, and at the same time, support behavior change to prevent transmission. Second, public health agencies must ensure that all injection drug users who want to enter drug treatment programs have immediate and continuing access to them.

We, the members of the public-private partnership trying to mount responses to this dangerous epidemic, have strained our resources to their limit and are convinced that our efforts will fail without further federal assistance. Full funding of the Ryan White/C.A.R.E. Act would assist greatly in meeting the first need. Reallocation of some drug enforcement funds to drug treatment would greatly assist meeting the second.

Finally, Mr. President, please do not be put off by a few militant activists who are merely voicing the frustrations that many of us feel. Their actions while inappropriate are well meant and basically harmless.

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Please, Mr. President consider the 87,000 Americans who have already died, the many more who will die, and, more importantly, the millions who might be saved. Please increase federal support for AIDS quickly and substantially.

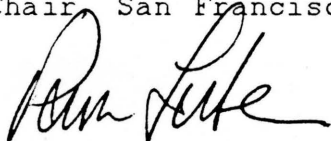
Sincerely,



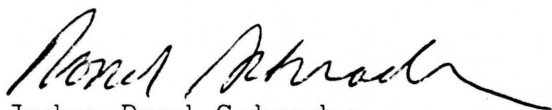
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