

MEDIA ADVISORY: May 14, 2004

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## **MAY 20: BIGGEST DC AIDS PROTEST IN A DECADE**

### **ACTIVISTS, FRONT-LINE PROVIDERS DEMAND CANDIDATES, CONGRESS, ADMINISTRATION "WAKE UP" AND ACT TO END AIDS – *ELECTION YEAR ISSUE FOCUS***

*Hundreds to march at Republican and Democratic HQs;  
100+ in non-violent civil disobedience planned at Capitol*

**WHAT:** Major AIDS service and advocacy groups from around the country are carrying out final preparations for an angry election-year march and civil disobedience in Washington, D.C. next Thursday, May 20, representing the largest effort in over a decade.

**WHEN:** Thursday, May 20, 2004, 11:00am

**WHERE:** This rally will begin at Folger Park (3<sup>rd</sup> and D, SE), move to the Democratic National Headquarters, continue to Republican National Headquarters and end with civil disobedience on the steps of the Capitol.

**WHY:** "Every 11 seconds, someone dies of AIDS," said Charles King, CEO of Housing Works, the nation's largest community-based AIDS group. "This relentless tide of death could be prevented with real leadership and resources. My anger at this senseless loss is echoed by voices across the country and worldwide – eight percent of voters say that HIV/AIDS is their number-one health issue and that could swing the election."

Organizers say that the Executive Directors, Presidents and Chairs from leading AIDS groups will join other people living with AIDS and HIV, their family members and supporters in non-violent civil disobedience.

"The history of the AIDS movement is marked by direct actions that have galvanized public and private responses to the epidemic," said Terje Anderson, Executive Director of the 21 year-old National Association of People with AIDS. "It's time to put our bodies on the line again – we've got to wake these folks up."

Marchers will urge the presidential candidates and Congress to take action on specific global and domestic initiatives including:

- Full funding of domestic and global efforts to provide lifesaving HIV medications to millions who can't get them
- Full funding of the domestic and global HIV/AIDS public health infrastructure;
- Support of real-world, comprehensive and honest HIV prevention efforts;
- An end to politically-motivated attacks on scientific research on HIV/AIDS; and
- Full funding for AIDS housing programs.

Organizers will urge action on the full set of global and domestic recommendations included in the AIDSVote platform ([www.aidsvote.org/platform.html](http://www.aidsvote.org/platform.html)), endorsed by 187 AIDS groups from around the country and around the world. AIDSVote.org has requested that presidential candidates give them a statement on HIV/AIDS issues; they have received a statement from Senator Kerry and have not received anything from President Bush.

"Our next President and Congress must take action to end the AIDS epidemic – and we know what it takes to save millions of lives," said Waheedah El-Shabazz of ACT UP Philadelphia. "There are concrete steps within our reach that will save millions of lives. People need medication, supportive services, housing and real-world prevention. If they get these things, they live; if they don't, they die. It's that simple."