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House OKs big boost in AIDS spending

\$50 billion would go to fighting diseases in Africa, elsewhere

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Associated Press

April 3, 2008

WASHINGTON - The House voted yesterday to triple, to more than \$10 billion a year, U.S. humanitarian spending on fighting AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Africa and other parts of the world.

About \$41 billion of the \$50 billion that would be spent over five years would be devoted to AIDS, significantly expanding a program credited with saving more than 1 million lives in Africa in the largest U.S. investment ever to fight a single disease.

Every day, 6,000 people are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus, said Rep. [Howard L. Berman](#), a California Democrat who is chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "We have a moral imperative to act and to act decisively," he said.

The House voted 308-116 to extend and broaden the \$15 billion President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which [President Bush](#) promoted and Congress enacted in 2003. It has been hailed as a foreign policy success of the Bush presidency.

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[The White House](#), which backs the House bill, said the program is supporting anti-retroviral treatment for about 1.45 million people and is on track to meet its goals of supporting treatment for 2 million, preventing 7 million new infections and providing care for 10 million people, including orphans and other vulnerable children.

In 2007, 33 million people worldwide were living with HIV and AIDS, according to the [United Nations](#).

Rep. [Ileana Ros-Lehtinen](#) of Florida, the top Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee, said the program is based on altruism but has strengthened U.S. security.

AIDS "will continue to spread its mix of death, poverty and despondency that is further destabilizing governments and societies, and undermining the security of entire regions," she said.

The compromise bill was one of the last endeavors of Rep. [Tom Lantos](#), a California Democrat who died of cancer in February. The measure is named for Lantos and his predecessor as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. [Henry Hyde](#), who died last year. They worked together on the 2003 law.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has approved a similar bill that also calls for \$50 billion in spending, and the legislation is thought to have a good chance of passing in an election year during

which few major bills will reach the president's desk.

To advance the legislation, conservatives gave up a provision in the 2003 law that requires

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one-third of HIV-prevention funds to be spent on abstinence programs. The new legislation directs the administration to promote "balanced funding for prevention activities" in target countries.

Liberals accepted restrictions on the participation of family-planning groups in AIDS programs. Conservatives, concerned that money might be diverted to promoting abortion, pushed for a provision that would allow the use of funds for HIV/AIDS testing and counseling services in family-planning programs supported by the U.S. government.

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