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### Election 2008 | Obama's Campaign Discusses Candidate's Plans for Addressing HIV/AIDS in U.S.

[Oct 20, 2008]

Democratic presidential nominee Sen. [Barack Obama's](#) (Ill.) campaign on Thursday during a conference call discussed the candidate's plans to combat HIV/AIDS in the U.S., the [Advocate](#) reports. According to the [Advocate](#), Obama's plans include increasing funding for research, care and prevention and developing a national strategy within the first year of his administration.

Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) during the conference call said that Obama's health care plan requires insurance companies to cover everyone regardless of health histories or pre-existing conditions, which is "critical to the HIV/AIDS community," she said. "One of the most important differences is going to be leadership on public health issues that are facing America, in particular the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic," DeGette said.

Sandra Thurman, former director of the [Office of National AIDS Policy](#) under former President Clinton, said she "can't imagine anything more important than having a national AIDS strategy, the likes of which we have never had in the history of the epidemic for over a quarter of a century." She also noted that the [Ryan White Program](#) has been underfunded. She said, "We have an epidemic in the United States, which in many ways has not slowed down. We haven't had an increase in support and funding that's commensurate with the challenges that we're facing in communities that already have serious issues to deal with."

According to the [Advocate](#), Obama's campaign has pledged to increase funding for the Ryan White Program, although they did not provide specific amounts. Neera Tanden, domestic policy director for Obama's campaign, said, "We want to make sure we work with Congress to come up with the right number as we go forward." She added that increased spending on a national level would help limit urban and rural areas competing for Ryan White funding. "We don't need to have this divisive strategy of pitting one area against another," she said, adding, "We should add additional funding." DeGette said that Republican presidential nominee Sen. [John McCain](#) (Ariz.) has suggested enacting a "spending freeze" that could affect programs like Ryan White. "If you cut the Ryan White [Program,] you'd be cutting from a program that's already underfunded," DeGette said.

During the conference call, campaign representatives also emphasized that rather than focus on abstinence-only approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention, Obama would use a "science-based" approach to prevention. DeGette said, "With all of the billions of dollars that have been given to HIV/AIDS prevention around the world" under the Bush administration, most of that money has been given to, in the past, religious organizations that will not give condoms out. Now that just isn't going to work" (Eleveld, [Advocate](#), 10/17).