



President Signs \$15 Billion Emergency AIDS Bill

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In an effort to fight the continuing HIV and AIDS crisis on the African continent and in the Caribbean, President Bush on Tuesday signed a bill to spend \$15 billion on prevention and treatment programs over the next five years.

Flanked by ambassadors and other officials from African and Caribbean nations, President Bush told the audience at a press conference that the U.S. has a moral obligation to help.

"Across Africa, this disease is filling graveyards and creating orphans and leaving millions in a desperate fight for their own lives," he said. "They will not fight alone."

How the money will be spent

The bill provides funding for prevention programs and medical care for those dying from the disease. It would also provide drugs, known as anti-viral treatments, for about 2 million of those infected with HIV in Africa and the Caribbean.

The entire \$15 billion package directs 55 percent of the aid to treatment programs, 20 percent to prevention programs, 15 percent to palliative care -- care meant to ease AIDS related suffering -- and 10 percent to helping children whose parents have died from the disease, according to a CNN report.

The American effort comes as the epidemic continues to ravage part of the globe. In Sub-Saharan Africa more than 25 million people are infected with HIV and AIDS. In the Caribbean, 390,000 people suffer from the virus, according to the Office of National AIDS Policy.

Countries that will benefit from the package include Haiti and Guyana in the Caribbean; and Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Botswana, South Africa, the Ivory Coast, Namibia, and Nigeria in Africa.

Critics say president must secure funds

AIDS activists say the president's bill is not enough to meet the need in Africa, and critics of the plan say next year's budget allocates only half the money allotted to fight AIDS.

"Everyone needs to watch the president and make sure that he gets the funding to implement the bill, or else it's a lot of empty rhetoric," Paul Zeitz, executive editor of the Global AIDS Alliance, told the Reuters News Service.

Mr. Bush will also call on European countries to join the U.S. in pledging financial support to fight the disease.

"I will remind them that time is not on our side," the president said. "Every day of delay means 8,000 more AIDS deaths in Africa and 14,000 more infections."

In the U.S., about 900,000 people have HIV/AIDS. In 2000, the U.S. spent more than \$10 billion on healthcare, research and prevention to fight the disease domestically.

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