



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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ACTION ALERT

DATE: October 16, 2012
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, NAACP Washington Bureau

NAACP Supports Congressional Efforts To The Stop The Spread Of HIV/AIDS In U.S. Prisons And Jails

PRISON HIV INFECTION RATE IS FOUR TIMES HIGHER THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION

THE ISSUE:

Currently there are 2.4 million people in jail or prison in the United States and roughly 1.5% of inmates in state and federal prisons are living with HIV or AIDS, a percentage about four times higher than the infection rate of HIV in the general population. This is especially important to the NAACP, given the disparate rate of racial and ethnic minorities who currently occupy our nation's jails and prisons (more than 60% of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities. For African American males in their thirties, 1 in every 10 is in prison or jail on any given day. These trends have been intensified by the disproportionate impact of the so-called "war on drugs," in which two-thirds of all persons in prison for drug offenses are people of color.) Recognizing that over 700,000 former inmates returned to our communities last year alone further raises the urgency to address this crisis. Being HIV positive unquestionably exacerbates the problems faced by men and women who have left prison or jail and are trying to reenter society.

To aggressively address this problem, several bills have been introduced to try to identify and stop this growing problem, and to ensure the safe and humane treatment of prisoners who are HIV positive or have the AIDS virus. Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA) has introduced H.R. 3053, the *Repeal Existing Policies that Encourage and Allow Legal HIV Discrimination Act (REPEAL HIV Discrimination Act)*. This legislation encourages laws that do not place unique burdens on individuals solely as a result of their HIV status. Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA) has introduced H.R. 3547, the *Stop AIDS in Prison Act of 2011*. This legislation would develop a comprehensive policy to provide HIV testing, treatment, and prevention for inmates in federal prisons and upon reentry into the community. It would require prisons to test inmates upon intake and offer counseling, as well as conduct HIV testing of prisoners annually, upon request, or upon exposure to HIV. In addition, the *Stop AIDS in Prison Act* would require frequent HIV/AIDS educational programs for all inmates. In short, this bill would result in the necessary HIV education, prevention services and treatment in order to improve HIV health care in prisons.

THE NAACP SUPPORTS THE *REPEAL EXISTING POLICIES THAT ENCOURAGE AND ALLOW LEGAL HIV DISCRIMINATION ACT (REPEAL HIV DISCRIMINATION ACT)* AND THE *STOP AIDS IN PRISON ACT OF 2011* AS URGENT AND NECESSARY LEGISLATION TO TRY TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS IN OUR

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact your Representative and both your Senators and **URGE THEM TO SUPPORT LEGISLATION SUCH AS H.R. 3085 AND H.R. 3547 TO WSTOP THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS IN PRISON.** To contact your Senators and Representative, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators and your Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators'/Congressman's offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:
The Honorable (name of Senator)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

To write a letter to your Representative, send it to:
The Honorable (name of Representative)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**A SAMPLE
LETTER IS
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' or Representative's offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to www.senate.gov; click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses. To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to www.house.gov, and click on "*Write Your Representative*" (on the left hand side, just under "find your Representative"). This will help you identify who your congressman is and how to contact him/her.

REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!

THE MESSAGE

- Currently there are 2.4 million people in jail or prison in the United States, roughly 40% of whom are African American. Roughly 1.5% of all inmates in state and federal prisons are living with HIV or AIDS. This is about four times higher than the prevalence rate of HIV in the general population.
- This is especially important to the NAACP, given the disparate rate of racial and ethnic minorities who currently occupy our nation's jails and prisons (more than 60% of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities, and more than 40% are African American).
- Furthermore, the fact that over 700,000 former inmates returned to our communities last year alone further raises the urgency to address this crisis.
- Being HIV positive unquestionably exacerbates the problems faced by men and women who have left prison or jail and are trying to reenter society.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!

If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.

To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit www.naacp.org

Sample

(date)

The Honorable _____
United States Senate / House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510 / 20515

**RE: SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO THE STOP THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS
IN PRISON**

Dear Senator / Representative _____;

As your constituent, I am writing to let you know of my strong support for tough federal action to identify and stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in prison and to assist those who are infected with the disease in a humane, non-discriminatory manner. Specifically, I support legislation such as H.R. 3053, the *Repeal Existing Policies that Encourage and Allow Legal HIV Discrimination Act (REPEAL HIV Discrimination Act)* and H.R. 3547, the *Stop AIDS in Prison Act of 2011*. The former bill encourages laws that do not place unique burdens on individuals solely as a result of their HIV status and the later would develop a comprehensive policy to provide HIV testing, treatment, and prevention for inmates in federal prisons and upon reentry into the community. I am counting on you, as my elected representative, to lead the fight in decreasing the rate of HIV infection in America's prisons and the spread of the disease in the general public.

Currently there are 2.4 million people in jail or prison in the United States and roughly 1.5% of inmates in state and federal prisons are living with HIV or AIDS, a percentage about four times higher than the prevalence rate of HIV in the general population. This is especially important to the NAACP, given the disparate rate of racial and ethnic minorities who currently occupy our nation's jails and prisons (more than 60% of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities. For African American males in their thirties, 1 in every 10 is in prison or jail on any given day. These trends have been intensified by the disproportionate impact of the "war on drugs," in which two-thirds of all persons in prison for drug offenses are people of color.) Recognizing that over 700,000 former inmates returned to our communities last year alone further raises the urgency to address this crisis. Being HIV positive unquestionably exacerbates the problems faced by men and women who have left prison or jail and are trying to reenter society.

Thank you for your attention; I look forward to working with you in the upcoming months and years to reduce the spread of HIV in our nation's prisons and communities. Please contact me soon to let me know what you are doing to address this very real problem, and to let me know what more I can do to help you in this struggle.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and
remember to include your address)

***Remember to contact your
Representative and BOTH
your Senators.***