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424347

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July 14, 2000

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The American public has become increasingly aware of the severe AIDS epidemic in Africa especially in the sub-Saharan region. The fact that this disease is drastically reducing the life expectancy of adults in Zambia from 56 to 37 years and in South Africa from 60 to 40 years is heart wrenching. Also, disheartening is the finding in the *Report on the Presidential Mission on Children Orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa* that almost 600,000 African children are infected each year with HIV either at birth or through breastfeeding despite the prevention of these types of transmissions being simple and inexpensive. It is my hope that we can provide financial assistance to sub-Saharan countries through dedicated funds and drug therapy by assisting either in their procurement of discounted drugs or aiding in their attempts to lessen patent protections so that they may manufacture these drugs.

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Throughout time, the continent of Africa has been wrought with civil wars and uprisings with billions of dollars spent on weaponry while people have died by means of starvation or illness. The use of dedicated funds will serve to prohibit governments from funding wars with the money intended to save its people. The government of countries would only receive aid after entering into an agreement that monies shall only be used for the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS and any other use of these funds shall forfeit further aid.

In addition, dedicated funds can be allocated for programs designed specifically for each country depending on its needs. This initiative could provide a two-fold benefit to countries in the form of capitalization and program development.

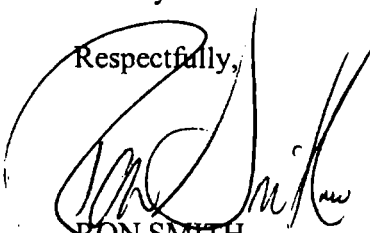
The Director of UNAIDS, the United Nations program was quoted as saying, " We need, at a minimum, \$3 billion per year for Africa alone in basic prevention and basic care. And this figure is 10 times what is being spent today", *CNN.com "Future Africa likely a land of the elderly and orphaned" July 10,2000*. I would like to see America provide at least \$200 million of this money.

Perhaps the greatest amount of assistance that these countries can receive is in the form of pharmaceutical discounts or the release of patent protection on HIV/AIDS drugs. The technology in this field was designed to benefit people not profit margins.

The current administration's commitment to acting on behalf of Africans has been commendable. The Africa Growth Opportunity Act and efforts of the U.S. Surgeon General have acted as a tremendous first step in raising the American consciousness concerning the devastating effects this disease has on the countries of Africa. However, in order to be effective we must continue in this effort.

I would appreciate hearing from you personally regarding this issue and the initiatives this country has and will initiate in an effort to respond to this global plague.

Respectfully,



RON SMITH
Alderman, 20th Ward

RS/rmw