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Patsy Fleming Speeches - April 1996

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Remarks

Patricia S. Fleming

National AIDS Policy Director

to

Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS

April 25, 1996

GOOD MORNING:

It's a pleasure to join you this morning at the third meeting of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS. In less than a year, you have helped us focus on the emerging demands of this epidemic. You have honed our federal response and helped us communicate with the American people about the very real needs of people living with HIV and AIDS. For all of that, we are very grateful.

The creation of this council is but one of a long list of actions taken by President Clinton and his Administration toward our ultimate goal -- an end to this horrible epidemic.

I am proud of the record of accomplishment of this Administration. Working with our allies in the community we have taken a great number of important strides forward. We have increased our overall commitment to AIDS research, prevention, and care by nearly 40 percent at a time when virtually all government programs have been frozen or cut. We have more than doubled our commitment to the Ryan White CARE Act, bringing medical care and social services to more than 300,000 Americans living with HIV or AIDS. We have strengthened the Office of AIDS Research and appointed a world-class immunologist to run that office. We have unlocked the shackles on community-based organizations so that they can develop and carry out creative and effective prevention programs. And we have used our enforcement authority to confront AIDS-related discrimination wherever it appears.

We have accelerated the AIDS drug approval process so that new drugs -- including the protease inhibitors -- are being approved in record time. And we have recognized the fact that simply approving a new drug is not enough. Not when the prices of those drugs are often out of reach of far too many people living with HIV or AIDS. That is why the President requested \$52 million in additional funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. And we got every dime of that request.

The Vice President's meeting with pharmaceutical manufacturers has spurred a new level of communication and cooperation in that industry as we search for vaccines, therapeutics, microbicides, and other treatments. And later this summer officials from around the country will gather in Atlanta to tackle the very important issue of coordinating AIDS prevention and substance abuse prevention.

The President recognizes the need for him to use his personal leadership to continually educate the nation about the pressing needs of this epidemic. The White House Conference on HIV and AIDS began a process of outreach to the community not only here in Washington but around the country. Senior Administration officials are joining with the members of this council to visit local communities, visit with AIDS service organizations, and hear directly from those who are on the front lines of this epidemic. Again, not everything we hear is pleasant, but all of it is important.

We are trying to bring new attention to the people who are most vulnerable for HIV infection. That includes women, communities of color, and young people, especially young gay and bisexual men. I have been tremendously pleased by the reaction to the report to the President on youth and HIV. It has sparked discussion on this topic all over our country. More than 30,000 copies of this report have already been requested by individuals, schools, churches, synagogues, and community organizations across the U.S.

Have we done enough? Have we done everything that can be done? The answer, of course, is no. Not as long as our brothers and sisters continue to die of this terrible disease. Not as long as 200 or more Americans are becoming infected every day of the year. And not as long as we do not have a vaccine and a cure.

There is much that we still must do and we have to do it together. If we have learned anything over these last few months it is that united we are a very powerful force for good. Divided we have very little ability to move the agenda in our direction.

You come to Washington at a very opportune time. Today, on Capitol Hill, lawmakers from both houses of Congress will meet to put the finishing touches on a fiscal 1996 budget. In this case, the old expression better late than never is very much in evidence. In a town that views a 10-second soundbite as five seconds too long, it is understandable that short-term memory loss is quite common.

But let's think back to where we were just a year ago when this council was just being created. At that time, it was common wisdom in Washington that AIDS spending would be under constant attack. There were dire predictions of budget cuts, block grants, and program eliminations. The President and his Administration were written off as irrelevant to the legislative process.

But those of us in the Administration were determined to be players and to make sure that the needs of people living with HIV and AIDS were met. We put our heads down and our shoulders to the wheel and we got to work. When the President proposed his 1996 budget it was generally considered to be dead on arrival. Our request for a substantial increase in Ryan White CARE Act funds and in AIDS research dollars were viewed as pie in the sky optimism. There were some early attempts to cut Ryan White spending or to freeze it at 1995 levels. The President made clear that he would veto any such legislation and, in fact, he did just that. Funding for AIDS care was on the President's short list of priorities when this year started and it was there when these negotiations ended.

So it is with great pride that I announce to you that the Congress has agreed to increase funding for the Ryan White CARE Act to \$735.5 million, an increase of more than \$100 million over 1995. This money will bring care to tens of thousands of Americans who would otherwise be left out in the cold.

We have also been successful in getting the President's full request for funding for AIDS research and we have staved off any attempts at cutting AIDS prevention and housing funds.

We did not get everything we wanted but it was not for lack of trying. We continue to believe that AIDS prevention funding should be increased and we will be back at the table in the coming weeks making that argument for the 1997 budget. And we absolutely believe that the Office of AIDS Research at NIH needs its full authority to set budget priorities and spend the money that Congress appropriates.

And, of course, we must -- we must -- continue to fight for the future of the Medicaid program. The President has stood up to tremendous pressure from the Republicans in Washington and those around the country in the states who want to dismantle Medicaid and leave it in shambles. He has vetoed legislation and has promised to do it again and again. And with your support and the support of the people of this country he has won those battles. But believe me, the war isn't over yet. The Republican leadership in Congress is determined to destroy Medicaid and we must continue to stand together in opposition.

We are better prepared for the battles ahead because of the work we are doing to establish and keep a partnership between government and the affected community. You are but one element of that partnership. Look around this table and you see the kind of diversity that I mean. Men and women. HIV-positive and HIV-negative. African-American,

Hispanic, caucasian, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander. Each of us has a stake in what we are doing and each of us has a responsibility to advance our cause.

Part of this partnership has involved opening up the government's activities to outside scrutiny. We have invited the community inside to take a look at agencies like CDC and NIH and asked them to give us a frank assessment of what we are doing well and what needs improvement. As a result, we have reformed our prevention programs so that ideas percolate up from the community rather than down from Washington. And we have the Levine Committee report that provides a blueprint for the future on research.

I frequently point out that I spent six years of this epidemic standing on the outside of the White House shouting for action. Now, not only are people like me and Jeff Levi on the inside, so are hundreds of other activists -- including you -- on advisory panels and review committees. I'll be frank with you, we may not always like the tenor of the comments we receive, but we listen closely to the advice that is given, weigh it carefully, and move on those items with which we agree. And, when we don't agree we know that you deserve an explanation of why we disagree.

We are mindful that the job is not finished. Until there is a cure, until there is a vaccine, until there is a microbicide, until we have truly success prevention programs, until there is assured access to services, and until the ethical treatment of persons living with HIV is assured -- our job is not done.

Some of the challenges ahead -- that you have already been discussing and I know you will discuss as you develop your plans for the next six months:

- How to provide quality care and services in a changing delivery system -- not just by protecting Medicaid and increasing Ryan White CARE Act funding, but also by addressing a host of issues associated with the trend toward managed care.
- How to more effectively address the twin epidemics of HIV and substance abuse.
- How to slow the epidemic among young people -- especially young gay men of color.
- How to further strengthen our research effort -- by implementing the Levine report, by reauthorizing OAR, and by forcing the Congress to restore OAR's budget authority.
- How to assure that housing needs are addressed -- so that our programs keep pace with the epidemic.
- How, in a climate increasingly hostile toward international aid and cooperation, we can maintain our support for the international effort against AIDS.

I know that these are not small tasks. But I also know that you and I are up to the task and will be working together as we face these challenges.

Thank you.

Talking Points

Patricia S. Fleming

National AIDS Policy Director

to

Town Hall Meeting

April 18, 1996

I Greetings and Acknowledgements

A. To Darwin Davis and Equitable for providing us this wonderful space.

B. To the National AIDS Fund, Funders Concerned About AIDS, and the Council of Fashion Designers of America for helping us put this together.

C. And to all of you for making the time in your busy schedules to meet with us today.

II Why We Are Here

A. In December, the President held the first-ever White House Conference on HIV and AIDS. A remarkable day of discussion about the very real needs of our country during this epidemic. We are determined to keep this dialogue going.

I have been traveling across the country to big cities and small towns and rural areas listening to people involved in or affected by AIDS.

B. This visit is one of a series of regional meetings with community leaders, providers, and activists to update you on our activities and to hear from you what needs to be addressed.

C. Good public servants know that listening is more important than talking. You are the experts. You are on the front lines. You can give us real-world advice.

D. Today we are seeking a dialogue with you. We are hear to listen as much as we are hear to talk.

III WHCA Follow Up

A. Let me say a few words about some of the things we have been doing since the December 6 conference.

Legislation

- 1. Fighting for Medicaid**
- 2. Fighting for Ryan White CARE Act funding**
- 3. Fighting for OAR**

Research Agenda

- 1. VEEP's meeting 2/20**
- 2. Bill Paul's consolidated research plan -- in final review**

IV Introduce Roberta Achtenberg

- A. With me today is one of the finest public officials it has been my pleasure to know.**
- B. Roberta Achtenberg has been a leader and a champion of justice. Her work in San Francisco and now in Washington has made a real difference in the lives of many, many Americans.**

C. Ladies and Gentlemen, Roberta Achtenberg.

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- B. Donna Shalala is a fighter. She fights for people who don't have the voices they need to fight for themselves. She fights for the programs that people need to live full lives. And she fights for the tools we need to win the battle against AIDS.**
- C. I had the honor of serving with Secretary Shalala at HHS for the first two years of the Clinton Administration. We were faced with the task of turning around a government response to AIDS that was, at best, apathetic and, at worst, hostile. She has breathed new life and enthusiasm into that effort and into the thousands of public servants who are working day in and day out to put an end to AIDS.**
- D. Ladies and gentlemen, Donna Shalala.**

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April 17, 1996

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- A. ~~To~~ the New York Board of Standards and Appeals for
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- B. ~~To~~ Ron Johnson and the Mayor's office for hosting this event.**

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- B. I'd like also to thank Joyce Bove and the National AIDS Fund; Richard Turner and Funders Concerned About AIDS; and Stan Herman and the Council of Fashion Designers of America.**
- C. I bring you greetings from President Clinton, a strong and compassionate leader, especially in the fight against AIDS.**

- D. Now I'd like to introduce four wonderful members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS -- Stephen Abel, Mary Boland, Tonio Burgos, Debra Frazer-Howze (ask them to stand to be recognized)**

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