



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

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Commission Cites Tragic Insufficiency Of Administration's AIDS Efforts

The National Commission on AIDS today said that President Bush and the Department of Health and Human Services have "failed to meet fully their responsibilities in leading the national response to the monumental human suffering and economic loss from the HIV/AIDS epidemic."

The Commission, which is an independent, bipartisan body appointed by Congress and the White House, made this assessment last night after leaving a 90 minute meeting with the Secretary of HHS, Louis M. Sullivan, M.D., and a number of other high ranking HHS and Public Health Service Officials.

On September 25, 1991, the Commission released a comprehensive report, *America Living With AIDS*, that included 30 recommendations for immediate action. The report communicated the findings from two years of study, numerous site visits and hearings across the country, plus testimony from hundreds of public health and health care workers and persons living with AIDS.

Despite a review of the report's recommendations ordered by Dr. Sullivan, and a December 9, 1991 meeting with Dr. Sullivan and President Bush where the President specifically referred to the report

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and asked for suggestions on what more could be done to stop AIDS in America, the Commission yesterday "reluctantly concluded that the Administration is not prepared to undertake any significant new actions against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and that current efforts fall tragically short of what is needed."

June E. Osborn, M.D., Chairman of the Commission, said, "It is hard to attack a whole Administration when there are so many health professionals and researchers who have been working flat out. Nevertheless, the sad fact is this is an epidemic of historic proportions which has not been met by appropriately historic measures."

David E. Rogers, M.D., Vice Chairman of the Commission, said, "We need very forceful leadership and we need clear articulation that we have a crisis. We're not getting either. From all that flows the need for a genuine national plan to combat this epidemic, better care, drug treatment programs, research and prevention efforts untainted by politics. Little of that is coming, and sadly the problem starts at the top."

The Commission's statement describing the meeting late yesterday and the events that lead up to it is attached.

The statement provides more detail on the Administration's failure at leadership against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, failure to advance a genuine national plan, failure to develop a national prevention strategy, failure to fully fund emergency health care measures (Ryan White CARE Act), failure on HIV-immigration and travel related issues, and failure to realistically deal with the "twin epidemics" of HIV and substance abuse.

Also enclosed is a May 15, 1992 letter from Secretary Sullivan to the Commission that includes a "Summary of Departmental Responses to National Commission Recommendations" that were in *America Living With AIDS*. The Commission is making that document public for the first time today.

Over the next several months the Commission will be releasing reports on issues of HIV transmission in the health care workplace, the housing crisis and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, tuberculosis, and communities of color.

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