

**MAXINE WATERS**

MEMBER OF CONGRESS  
35TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEES:

BANKING, FINANCE AND  
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NEWS RELEASE

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**CONGRESSWOMAN MAXINE WATERS HAILS AIDS COMMISSION REPORT,  
CALLS RACISM OBSTACLE TO FIGHT AGAINST THE DISEASE**

Congresswoman Maxine Waters (Democrat--35th District, California) today praised the findings of the National Commission on AIDS report on HIV in minority communities as "a significant breakthrough in recognizing that racism is a major obstacle to confronting AIDS in communities of color in America."

The report, entitled "The Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Communities of Color," was released today at a Capitol Hill news conference by the Presidential Commission. It was the result of three years of public hearings and site visits that examined the spread of the disease in the African-American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American communities. The report casts a critical eye on federal government efforts to battle the deadly malady in those communities.

As of September 1992, 47.5 percent of all AIDS cases involved individuals from communities of color while only 24.3 percent of 250 million Americans are from those communities.

"The continuing widespread stigmatization of people of color creates enormous difficulties for effectively combatting the HIV/AIDS epidemic," the report states. "For these communities, disproportionate representation (among those infected) raises the fear that they will be saddled with the disease--blamed for it, stigmatized by it, and left to deal with it on their own."

"For people of color already battling this epidemic, continuing racism is the double whammy," said Rep. Waters. "We can't fight AIDS without, at the same time, taking on racism because that racism is an obstacle to our work."

(more...)

"In this 103rd Congress, I will be authoring legislation designed to implement the recommendations of this Commission report.

"We want effective and equitable policy, program, and funding by federal, state, and local governments in communities of color using --to the greatest extent possible-- community-based organizations with established links to our communities.

"We need public health officials and researchers to better understand the cultural and socio-economic factors in HIV transmission, in the disease process, and in access to treatment. We need to encourage the development of bio-medical researchers from our communities.

"We need full funding for the Ryan White CARE Act, as has been promised by President-Elect Bill Clinton. We need to bolster primary care infrastructures that serve communities of color, including the National Health Service Corps, community and migrant health centers, inner-city public hospitals, and the Indian Health Service.

"We have to think of the children here. The federal government should work side-by-side with states to establish foster-care programs for HIV-infected children and non-infected youth orphaned by the loss of their parents to the HIV disease. Families too need more help in caring for HIV-infected children.

"Finally, we need to target persons of color who engage in high-risk behaviours for special access to prevention information and treatment opportunities. This also means dealing with homophobia. To fight against racism without also fighting homophobia is to continue to battle this AIDS menace with one hand tied behind our backs."

Congresswoman Waters is beginning her second term in the House of Representatives and represents south-central Los Angeles and the communities of Inglewood and Hawthorne.

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