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PENCE: ABSTINENCE MEASURES SAVE LIVES

House Passes President's AIDS-Fighting Bill

Washington, May 21, 2003 - Washington, D.C.— Congressman Mike Pence today voted to send a bill to the President's desk that promotes abstinence and faith-based protections to combat the global AIDS pandemic. Pence worked with other members of Congress to ensure that abstinence and fidelity within marriage were emphasized over condom distribution in the bill.

"Thanks to President Bush's leadership, we have a bill that will save lives because it is based on methods that work," said Pence. "The House not only acted quickly, but responsibly. The bill follows the Uganda model, which places abstinence and faithfulness to your spouse ahead of condom distribution.

"Reports show that African nations that prioritize condom distribution have a much higher level of infection than nations that prioritize abstinence and monogamy," said Pence. "This is a major victory in the fight to stop the spread of this deadly disease."

In the last decade in Uganda, the overall proportion of the population infected with HIV dropped from 15 percent to 5 percent, and the proportion of childbearing women who were HIV positive dropped from 22 percent to less than 7 percent, according to the Medical Institute for Sexual Health.

Background

H.R. 1298 authorizes \$15 billion over the next five years (\$3 billion a year, FY 2004-08) for

HIV/AIDS care, treatment and prevention in those countries already facing an emergency of unprecedented proportions, and also in those countries with alarming recent increases in HIV prevalence. The bill also creates a more responsive, coordinated and effective approach among the various agencies of the U.S. Government involved in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. The bill includes an amendment that sets aside at least one-third of prevention money authorized under this bill for abstinence-until-marriage programs.

Furthermore, the bill promotes a multisectoral approach that:

- Provides funds for antiretroviral therapy for people living with HIV;
- Encourages a strategy that extends palliative care for people living with AIDS;
- Supports efforts to find vaccines for HIV/AIDS and malaria;
- Emphasizes the need to keep families together, with particular focus on the assistance needs of children and young people with HIV;
- Contributes to multilateral initiatives that leverage the funds of others;
- Endorses wider application of the successful “ABC” (Abstinence, Be faithful, and then Condoms) prevention program; and
- Plays a critical role in building capacity within affected countries to educate youth and society at large of the tremendous risk that AIDS creates to agricultural production, the education sector, and national defense.

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