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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2004

## Bush Plays Politics With AIDS

by Michael in New York on 6/23/2004 08:33:00 PM

As widely reported, President Bush decided to extend a helping hand to Vietnam, a country ravaged by AIDS. Bush also tossed \$20 million at a funding crisis affecting AIDS patients on waiting lists all across the country.

Obviously, \$20 million is a pittance by government standards. But the sad truth is that health organizations say \$40 million is needed immediately to fend off the crisis. Bush won't do that, letting people suffer and die instead.

The reports also mention Bush's widely lauded pledge to spend \$15 billion fighting AIDS around the world. What they don't mention: Bush has failed to keep his funding pledge this year. Further, instead of using the money through effective and fair international relief organizations, he has DEFUNDED many of those groups and insisted any international groups emphasize abstinence. The result is a net LOSS in the money the US has pledged to fight AIDS around the world this year.

This makes his reference to the policy of ABC (abstinence; be faithful; use condoms) insultingly disingenuous. If Bush truly believed condoms were a reasonable tool in fighting the spread of AIDS, he wouldn't be defunding the groups that promote their use.

Further, Bush is kowtowing to deep-pocketed pharmaceuticals by insisting the US money that has gone out be used only for name-brand drugs (AZT, etc.) instead of the generic counterparts that had been purchased in the past. These name brand drugs cost literally three times as much. For every person saved, two people will die who didn't have to die. Bush has literally got X number of dollars that could save X number of lives and he'd rather let two-thirds of those people die than go against Big Business. Shameless.



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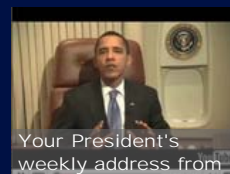
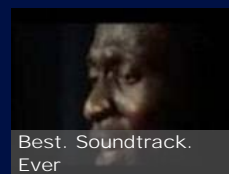
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