

## HIV / AIDS

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#### **Critic Blasts Reagan for Inaction on AIDS March 27, 1987**

##### **The Chicago Tribune**

By Ronald Kotulak

WASHINGTON- President Reagan's failure to act decisively on the AIDS crisis has slowed progress in curbing the epidemic and could be costing lives, Rep. Henry Waxman (D., Calif.) charged Thursday.

Waxman, chairman of the House subcommittee on health and the environment, joined a growing chorus of critics, which includes public health officials as well as politicians, who say Reagan's reluctance to speak openly about AIDS is preventing an all-out public assault against the disease.

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome already has affected more than 33, 000 Americans and has been reported in 99 countries.

"In the long run, the Reagan administration will not be remembered for the tax bill, 'Star Wars' or maybe even the Iran-contra issue," Waxman said at an international meeting on the socio-economic impact of AIDS on health care systems, sponsored by Project Hope. "I think the administration will be remembered for its continued and stubborn refusal to deal with AIDS."

Although administration officials have recommended widespread counseling and testing for the AIDS virus, they have not provided the hundreds of millions of dollars that such programs would cost, nor have they provided any money to educate people about how to protect themselves from the disease, Waxman said.

Scientists agree that the disease, which destroys a victim's ability to fight infections, is not transmitted through casual contact but by sexual intercourse or sharing of intravenous drug needles, he said.

Of the 33,000 Americans diagnosed as having AIDS, more than half have died. The federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta estimates that 1.5 million Americans have been infected with the virus that causes AIDS. By 1991, 270,000 people in this country will have been diagnosed as having the disease, the centers said.

"Everyone agrees that we should take on this national educational effort and yet we've lost time," Waxman said. "The administration has been vague as to whether we should teach morals or whether we ought to talk about medicine. I'm very frustrated about people who want to evaluate their moral message and take so much time doing it that people are undoubtedly losing their lives in the meantime."

Dr. Edwin Froehlich, a Republican adviser to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, said that because the AIDS epidemic is so new and so different from other epidemics, care must be taken when advising the population.

