

EAST BAY TIMES

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Congress must keep promise to save lives

Dec. 1 was World AIDS Day. Each year on the first of December, World AIDS Day, a red ribbon hangs on the North Portico of the White House to commemorate the 35 million people who have lost their lives to the disease.

This year, advocates and public health experts hope that the new Congress and administration continues not just that symbolical gesture but that they will carry out the U.S. commitment to invest in the continued fight against AIDS worldwide.

Thanks, in part, to citizen advocacy, the U.S. made a bold promise of a \$4.3 billion matching fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria over the next three years. Millions of lives have been saved and millions more will be if the program is funded.

Susan Oehser
Oakland

Improving education improves everyone

While ignorance is bliss, it sometimes prevents hope and pride. Surveys show Americans think the federal government spends far more on foreign aid than the 1 percent it actually does. What should give us hope and pride, however, is how effective that aid has been when properly invested in programs making a difference.

For example, programs educating young children, especially girls, is like adding yeast to dough. For every year of school girls get above grade three or four, their income rise by 20 percent and their country's GDP by 0.58 percentage points. In 1999, 106 million children could not go to elementary school. By 2016 that number had dropped to 61 million because the U.S. and other developed countries helped countries less fortunate. The U.S. benefited too, since more than half our exports now go to less developed countries.

In Congress, the House already passed the Education for All Act. The Senate should do the same before it adjourns next month. Improving education improves everyone's future.

Jim Driggers
RESULTS group leader

