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U.S. Positive Women's Network Statement on Appointment of Jeffrey Crowley as Director of Office of National AIDS Policy

Last Thursday President Barack Obama announced his appointment of Jeffrey S. Crowley to head the Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP), the White House Office tasked with coordinating government efforts to prevent and treat HIV. The appointment has been heralded by many as a welcome sign of the Obama Administration's intention to comprehensively address the domestic HIV epidemic by reducing new infections and ensuring those living with HIV in the U.S. have access to lifesaving treatment.

"We are pleased that the Administration appointed someone grounded in the HIV community, and particularly an individual who understands how a comprehensive, outcomes-oriented National AIDS Strategy must fit into the national health care reform agenda." said Naina Khanna, Coordinator of the U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN), a national membership body of HIV-positive women. "Now it is our hope that Mr. Crowley will build a diverse team of staff and advisors that includes HIV-positive leadership from the communities most impacted by HIV -- women of color and men of color who have sex with men."

Mr. Crowley formerly worked at the National Association for People With AIDS (NAPWA) and is known as a champion for Medicaid and Medicare reform. "Both NAPWA and the Positive Women's Network are here to serve as a resource to Mr. Crowley and we look forward to sharing our expertise as individuals living with HIV and working directly in communities devastated by HIV," said Pat Migliore, founding member of the BABES Network in Seattle, WA and Positive Women's Network Regional Organizer.

It has become common knowledge among HIV advocates that the HIV epidemic has changed severe racial, gender, and class disparities continue to plague HIV prevention and treatment efforts. The U.S. HIV epidemic has changed dramatically over the past 30 years, and according to recent statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV continues to represent the leading cause of death for African American women aged 25 to 34. People of color and those living in poverty are disproportionately likely to test positive for HIV and experience worse health outcomes once diagnosed -- disparities which a National AIDS Strategy

will have to address.

Advocates see the Administration's commitment to a National AIDS Strategy and President's 2010 Budget outline, also released last week, as key opportunities to invest in scaling up programs that are working, and let go of less effective programs.

"We are very glad to see President Obama's FY 2010 budget refer to increasing resources for HIV prevention, testing and treatment -- in addition to the importance of medically accurate, age appropriate sexuality education. Kids who don't get the information they need wind up getting more STDs and having higher rates of teen pregnancy. Treating our way out of this epidemic is very expensive, and we just can't afford to invest in programs that aren't working," said Waheedah Shabazz-El, trainer at the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP).

The U.S. Positive Women's Network is a project of WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease) in Oakland, CA. We are a national membership body building the strategic power of women living with HIV in the United States. For more information please visit: www.womenhiv.org/positivewomen