

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2004

Honorable Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson,

News reports indicate that HHS, at your insistence, will limit attendance at July's XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, to 50 federal employees at a cost of \$500,000, down from the \$3.6 million spent to send 236 people to the 2002 conference in Barcelona, Spain.

We applaud you for your leadership in working to scale back the largess of the federal involvement at these international conferences. Spending a half a million dollars to send 50 federal employees to a conference (an average of \$10,000 per employee) still seems like an enormous expense, though we recognize it is significantly reduced from the cost and attendance at the Barcelona conference. We have expressed our concern about the costs of the Barcelona conference, and we appreciate your ongoing efforts to change the way the conference and travel system works at HHS.

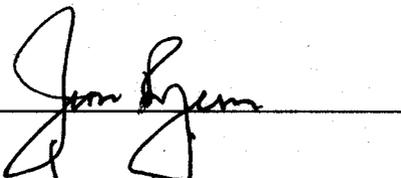
Total annual U.S. HIV/AIDS spending in 2004 is at an all-time high of \$18.5 billion (more than any nation in the world), and Congress recently passed a five-year, \$15 billion initiative to combat global HIV/AIDS. Clearly, focusing resources on AIDS treatment and effective HIV prevention programs should be a higher priority for HHS than spending millions of dollars on a single AIDS conference.

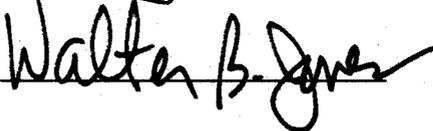
In light of HHS's financial support for many similar conferences this year, please provide us with:

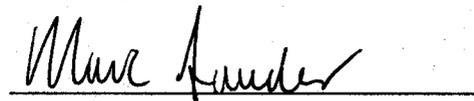
- the number of conferences related to HIV/AIDS and STDs to which HHS will provide direct financial support and/or in-kind donations during calendar year 2004 (listing conferences by subject, location and date);
- an itemized list of the funding for each of these conferences; and
- a comparison between the number of HIV/AIDS and STD-related conferences supported by HHS (through direct financial and/or in-kind costs) and the amount and cost to HHS for conferences related to other health concerns, such as heart disease and breast cancer?

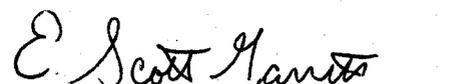
Thank you again for your leadership against HIV/AIDS and for your efforts at fiscal restraint. We look forward to working with you in your efforts to encourage even more restraint on expensive and excessive travel and to prioritize AIDS treatment over AIDS conferences.

Sincerely,









Al
Fla 24

John Hostettler

Tim Murphy

Paul Smith

Bill Perry

Mark Smith

Sam Johnson

Jim Gettemelt

John Morley

Art Bony

John Pitt

Virgil Goode

Barber

Jim DeMott

John Klein

Joe Wilson

Steve Obit

Lee Myrick

Steve King

W. Todd

John Spaulding

John Bell

Robert B. Anderson

John P.

Tan Tanselo
