



Center for  
**Global Health Policy**  
*Promoting Evidence-based US Action on Global HIV and Tuberculosis*

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## **Disease Experts Applaud Move to Overturn HIV Entry Ban** *Discriminatory Rule Has No Medical or Scientific Basis*

The Infectious Diseases Society of America, the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), and the Center for Global Health Policy strongly support the Obama administration's move to lift the two-decades-old ban on travel and immigration to the U.S. by HIV-positive individuals.

"This rule is unnecessary and discriminatory," said HIVMA Chair-elect Michael Saag, MD, FIDSA, professor and chair of the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "There is no scientific or public health rationale for excluding people with HIV infection from the U.S. HIV infection is a manageable condition not transmitted through casual contact. The travel ban actually serves to undermine public health by discouraging people from determining or disclosing their HIV status."

Overturning the ban would simply put HIV-positive people on a level playing field with any other foreigner wanting to visit or immigrate to the U.S. This long-overdue move would bring the U.S. in line with current science and international standards of public health practice and diminish the stigma and discrimination suffered by HIV-positive people.

At issue is a prohibition on travel and immigration to the U.S. by people with HIV, put in place in the late 1980s. Congress overturned this law last summer, in legislation signed by President George W. Bush that also reauthorized the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Despite that move, the ban has remained in place because HIV is still classified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a "communicable disease of public health significance."

In the coming days, the Obama administration is expected to publish a new regulation that would remove HIV from that list of diseases. The CDC supports the move, saying that HIV does not pose a risk to the general population and that removing it from the disease list reflects "public health best practices."

"These changes reflect current scientific knowledge and public health best practices and will have the benefit of removing stigmatization of and discrimination against people who are HIV infected," the CDC states. "While HIV infection is a serious health condition, it does not

represent a communicable disease that is a significant threat for introduction, transmission, and spread to the United States population through casual contact. An arriving alien with HIV infection does not pose a public health risk to the general population through casual contact.”

For more information on this topic or to arrange an interview with an HIV/AIDS expert, please contact Deirdre Shesgreen at 703-740-4954 or [dshesgreen@idsociety.org](mailto:dshesgreen@idsociety.org).

*The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) is a professional society representing more than 8,600 infectious diseases physicians and scientists devoted to patient care, education, research, prevention, and public health. The HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) is the professional home for more than 3,600 physicians, scientists and other health care professionals dedicated to the field of HIV/AIDS. Nested within IDSA, HIVMA promotes quality in HIV care and advocates policies that ensure a comprehensive and humane response to the AIDS pandemic informed by science and social justice.*

*The Center for Global Health Policy is an organization of physicians and scientists dedicated to promoting the effective use of U.S. funding for addressing the global HIV/AIDS and TB epidemics by providing scientific and policy information to policymakers, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the media. The Center is a project of IDSA and HIVMA. All three organizations are based in Arlington, Va.*