

## US HIV travel ban to be lifted – but not yet

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US President George Bush signed into law the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) on July 30 after it was passed by the US Congress.

The bill authorises \$US48 billion to provide life-saving HIV treatment to people in developing countries and has won huge praise from governments and community advocates alike for its commitment to improving global access to treatment, possibly for as many as three million people.

The bill also includes language which repeals a 1993 US immigration ban that prohibits HIV-positive visitors from entering the country and bars most foreigners with HIV from gaining immigration status. This legal change, however, must also be accompanied by an administrative action from the US Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Mike Leavitt, to remove HIV from the list of communicable diseases that are considered a threat to the US population.

HIV-community advocates are concerned that it may take months for this administrative change to happen because it has not met a deadline set by the Bush administration that all proposed new regulations must be submitted to them by June 1 with exceptions only being allowed in "extraordinary circumstances". It may be that the travel ban will not be lifted until a new president is sworn in next year.

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