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# Sadly, No!

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June 08, 2004

## As you recall isn't as it was

[Atrios](#) links to this snow-moon post that debunks some [National Review](#) supplied bunk:

According to Deroy Murdock writing in [The National Review](#):

"President Reagan's February 6, 1986 State of the Union address included this specific passage where he says the word 'AIDS' five times:" [...]

A transcript, as delivered by Reagan, is [here](#):

Reagan never mentions AIDS in the 1986 SOTU address, delivered on February 4, 1986.

Is that the only fact-like item included in the article? *Sadly, No!* Murdock also has this whopper:

"As I recall, from 1984 onward — and bear in mind that the AIDS virus was not identified until 1982 — every Reagan budget contained a large sum of money specifically earmarked for AIDS," says Peter Robinson, a former Reagan speechwriter and author of *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life*.

Oh Pete, whatever shall we do with you? AIDS spending per year, starting with FY1982 ([PDF file](#)):

FY1982: \$8 million.

FY1983: \$44 million.

FY1984: \$103 million

FY1985: \$205 million

FY1986: \$508 million

FY1987: \$922 million

FY1988: \$1,615 million

FY1989: \$2,322 million

Some (yes, we're looking at you [Andrew Sullivan](#)!) would give Reagan credit for spending \$5.7 billion on AIDS during his presidency. What Andrew won't say (or acknowledge) is that barely half (56%) of this was discretionary spending, the bulk of the remainder the result of entitlements (primarily Medicare & Medicaid.) In 1984, Robinson's "large sum of money specifically earmarked for AIDS" was a whopping \$60 million. Discretionary spending on AIDS did not exceed \$1 billion until FY1989 (at \$1.3 billion.)

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Please don't ever use my name like that again.

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Posted by: [Pete M.](#) at June 8, 2004 06:22 PM

Not to defend the stooge who wrote that crap in the National Review, or anything, especially given that they've had more than six months to fix their error and they were too lazy to fact-check it in the first place.

Reagan did say exactly what he was quoted as saying, but it wasn't in the SOTU, it was a few weeks later, on February 6, 1986, in a [Message to the Congress on America's Agenda for the Future](#).

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Posted by: [Sid the Fish](#) at June 8, 2004 08:47 PM

Sid the fish (great name!)

This "message to congress" was not "delivered by Reagan" in any speech. It was one of several documents- in writing- submitted to Congress after the SOTU. If you'll read the document, it's clear that it's not a speech and it was not a document intended for public consumption. It's a memo pieced together by a variety of budget and policy staff to add substance after the fact to a SOTU address devoid of any specifics on policy.

While "message to congress" was, in the distant past, the name given to the president's annual address to the congress, the term now has become a catch-all to describe any number of a constant stream of essentially policy and budget memos- sometimes as addenda to speeches for details that were not considered suitable or important enough to include for public consumption. At times, it might include additional items to be cited later- perhaps for political cover.

The words were not a part of any speech delivered by Reagan; the American public never heard them. If you follow the links in the post, you'll discover that there were several such messages submitted throughout February 1986 on a variety of topics- several between Feb 1 and Feb 6--none of them a part of the SOTU address.

TimesWatch should be commended for their "update," (that you cited), but it's far from complete- and it's still misleading to call it, as they do, a "speech."

The bottom line is that it was not considered urgent or important enough to include any mention of AIDS in the spoken, televised SOTU on February 4, 1986. The brief passage on AIDS that is cited in the written memo of Feb 6 is buried deep within the document- without emphasis--as one of several items in a laundry list of healthcare issues.

The National Review report is incorrect; the Time Watch update is incomplete.

And you are recycling, perhaps inadvertently, what is likely a typical talking point to trivialize any criticism of this sort of revisionist reporting.

Why do you think they chose to write the article in the first place- digging up obscure documents from the Reagan library to support their thesis? Because the public record did not support what they wanted to put forward.

Times Watch knows the truth- it's probably just hard for Clay to admit - as a self-appointed watchdog of media- that one of his allies is lying and using him as a propagandist.

The truth, as is widely reported- and supported by the public record of the time, is that Reagan did not mention AIDS in a speech until April 1987. To write that he was actually paying attention 14 months earlier is an attempt to rewrite history- and dishonors all who fought, suffered and died as a result of Reagan's inaction.

Thousands could have been saved in this period of time- if treatment research and prevention efforts had been fully funded as public health professionals were requesting. The National Review knows this- their hero was "asleep at the wheel" and they will continue their attempts rewrite history.

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Posted by: [glassfrequency](#) at June 9, 2004 03:09 AM

"As I recall, from 1984 onward — and bear in mind that the AIDS virus was not identified until 1982..."

actually...

couldn't let this one pass-

French researchers first isolated a virus (LAV) in 1983;

American researchers, using a French sample, tried to claim the discovery as their own in 1984- and renamed it HTLV-III;

a test that was able to actually detect antibodies to this virus wasn't developed until 1985;

and the name HIV, the result of an international, political compromise, didn't appear until 1986.

In 1982? We only "suspected" that AIDS "might" be caused by some as-yet-unknown "infectious agent," and we were still entertaining dozens of wild theories including such discarded ideas as a "gay gene" and the "use of poppers" (amyl nitrate).

... but who would expect accuracy from a Reagan speechwriter?

Do the National Review reporters just write whatever crap the Republican's feed them?

(Of course they do.)

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Posted by: **glassfrequency** at June 9, 2004 04:58 AM

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