

# **U.S. Policy on LGBT Issues**

**– Selected Documents and Speeches –**



**U.S. Department of State**





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**U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C.**

**April 2013**

*"The most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall... Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well."*

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA  
JANUARY 21, 2013



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# **U.S. Policy on LGBT Issues – Selected Documents and Speeches –**



## **Factsheet: The Obama Administration's Commitment to Winning the Future for the LGBT Community**

*The Obama Administration has taken decisive actions and made historic strides to advance Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender equality and strengthen LGBT families and communities, and continues to do so. Some of these accomplishments include:*

### **Preventing bullying and hate crimes against LGBT Americans**

- President Obama signs the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law – the first federal civil rights legislation to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity”
- President Obama, Vice President Biden and other Administration officials record “It Gets Better” videos to address the issue of bullying and suicide among LGBT teens
- The President and First Lady Michelle Obama host the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention
- The Department of Education issues guidance to support educators in combating bullying in schools by clarifying when student bullying may violate federal education anti-discrimination laws

### **Supporting LGBT families**

- Following a directive from the President, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) requires all hospitals receiving Medicare or Medicaid funds to allow visitation rights for LGBT patients; the President also directs HHS to ensure that medical decision making rights of LGBT patients are respected
- HHS creates the National Resource Center for LGBT Elders
- The Department of Labor clarifies that the Family Medical Leave Act ensures that LGBT parents can provide care for their children in the event of illness
- The State Department clarifies that transgender applicants can obtain, under certain conditions, passports that accurately reflect their gender



- The Justice Department clarifies that persons with HIV and persons with AIDS are covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act and that it would be illegal to exclude them from occupational training and state licensing
- The Justice Department issues a memo stating that federal prosecutors should enforce criminal provisions in the Violence Against Women Act in cases involving gay and lesbian relationships
- HHS's Administration for Children and Families issues a memorandum to ensure that LGBT and questioning youth in foster care are protected and supported
- The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness releases "Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness," the nation's first comprehensive strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, including LGBT homeless youth
- The Obama Administration works to ensure that the Census provides a fair and accurate count of all Americans, including LGBT couples

### Ensuring equal access to housing for LGBT families

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announces the first ever national study of discrimination in housing against LGBT persons
- HUD proposes new regulations to ensure that housing programs are open to all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity
- HUD requires grant applicants to comply with state and local anti-discrimination laws

### SUPPORTING LGBT HEALTH

- President Obama releases the first-ever National HIV/AIDS Strategy
- President Obama urges Americans to get tested for HIV
- President Obama signs the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act
- HHS issues recommendations to improve the health and well-being of LGBT communities
- Despite challenging budgetary times, the President's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget not only maintains, but increases domestic HIV/AIDS funding
- Veterans Affairs issues a directive to ensure respectful and non-discriminatory care for transgender veterans



### Supporting job creation among LGBT-owned businesses

- The Department of Commerce signs a Memorandum of Understanding with National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce to support federal contracting and exporting

### Setting precedents in hiring and benefits for LGBT Americans

- The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announces that gender identity is a prohibited basis of discrimination in federal employment
- President Obama expands federal benefits for same-sex partners of federal employees
- OPM allows same-sex domestic partners to apply for long-term care insurance
- President Obama sends the first U.S. Executive branch official to testify in support of an inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) before Congress
- President Obama continues to appoint LGBT Americans to positions at every level throughout his Administration

### Repealing the discriminatory “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Law

- President Obama signs the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act of 2010, which allows gay, lesbian and bisexual service members to serve openly and with integrity

### Providing global leadership on LGBT issues

- The U.S. lifts the discriminatory entry ban for individuals with HIV
- President Obama and his administration play active roles in protecting LGBT populations in Uganda, Honduras, Malawi and other countries
- The U.S. leads an effort at the United Nations resulting in 85 countries supporting a resolution to end violence and human rights violations related to sexual orientation and gender identity
- The White House announces major three-year investment in combating global AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria



### Honoring LGBT history

- President Obama honors the 40th Anniversary of Stonewall riots
- President Obama awards the Medal of Freedom to Harvey Milk and Billie Jean King

### Supporting LGBT Progress

- President Obama has called for the Congressional repeal of the discriminatory “Defense of Marriage Act” and has announced that in his view, Section 3 of DOMA is unconstitutional
- President Obama also continues to support legislation that would directly impact the LGBT community, including an inclusive ENDA and the Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations Act
- President Obama believes that all students should be safe and healthy and learn in environments free from discrimination, bullying and harassment; that we must ensure adoption rights for all couples and individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation; and that Americans with partners from other countries should not be faced with a painful choice between staying with their partner or staying in their country

Source: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/LGBT\\_factsheet\\_092611.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/LGBT_factsheet_092611.pdf) (03/12/2012)

President Barack Obama signs the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 during a ceremony at the Interior Department in Washington, D.C., December 22, 2010





## Presidential Memorandum – International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
December 6, 2011

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES**  
SUBJECT: International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons

The struggle to end discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons is a global challenge, and one that is central to the United States commitment to promoting human rights. I am deeply concerned by the violence and discrimination targeting LGBT persons around the world whether it is passing laws that criminalize LGBT status, beating citizens simply for joining peaceful LGBT pride celebrations, or killing men, women, and children for their perceived sexual orientation. That is why I declared before heads of state gathered at the United Nations, “no country should deny people their rights because of who they love, which is why we must stand up for the rights of gays and lesbians everywhere.” Under my Administration, agencies engaged abroad have already begun taking action to promote the fundamental human rights of LGBT persons everywhere. Our deep commitment to advancing the human rights of all people is strengthened when we as the United States bring our tools to bear to vigorously advance this goal.

By this memorandum I am directing all agencies engaged abroad to ensure that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons. Specifically, I direct the following actions, consistent with applicable law:

**Section 1. Combating Criminalization of LGBT Status or Conduct Abroad.** Agencies engaged abroad are directed to strengthen existing efforts to effectively combat the criminalization by foreign governments of LGBT status or conduct and to expand efforts to combat discrimination, homophobia, and intolerance on the basis of LGBT status or conduct.



**Sec. 2. Protecting Vulnerable LGBT Refugees and Asylum Seekers.** Those LGBT persons who seek refuge from violence and persecution face daunting challenges. In order to improve protection for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers at all stages of displacement, the Departments of State and Homeland Security shall enhance their ongoing efforts to ensure that LGBT refugees and asylum seekers have equal access to protection and assistance, particularly in countries of first asylum. In addition, the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security shall ensure appropriate training is in place so that relevant Federal Government personnel and key partners can effectively address the protection of LGBT refugees and asylum seekers, including by providing to them adequate assistance and ensuring that the Federal Government has the ability to identify and expedite resettlement of highly vulnerable persons with urgent protection needs.

**Sec. 3. Foreign Assistance to Protect Human Rights and Advance Nondiscrimination.** Agencies involved with foreign aid, assistance, and development shall enhance their ongoing efforts to ensure regular Federal Government engagement with governments, citizens, civil society, and the private sector in order to build respect for the human rights of LGBT persons.

**Sec. 4. Swift and Meaningful U.S. Responses to Human Rights Abuses of LGBT Persons Abroad.** The Department of State shall lead a standing group, with appropriate interagency representation, to help ensure the Federal Government's swift and meaningful response to serious incidents that threaten the human rights of LGBT persons abroad.

**Sec. 5. Engaging International Organizations in the Fight Against LGBT Discrimination.** Multilateral fora and international organizations are key vehicles to promote respect for the human rights of LGBT persons and to



bring global attention to LGBT issues. Building on the State Department's leadership in this area, agencies engaged abroad should strengthen the work they have begun and initiate additional efforts in these multilateral fora and organizations to: counter discrimination on the basis of LGBT status; broaden the number of countries willing to support and defend LGBT issues in the multilateral arena; strengthen the role of civil society advocates on behalf of LGBT issues within and through multilateral fora; and strengthen the policies and programming of multilateral institutions on LGBT issues.

**Sec. 6. Reporting on Progress.** All agencies engaged abroad shall prepare a report within 180 days of the date of this memorandum, and annually thereafter, on their progress toward advancing these initiatives. All such agencies shall submit their reports to the Department of State, which will compile a report on the Federal Government's progress in advancing these initiatives for transmittal to the President.

**Sec. 7. Definitions.** (a) For the purposes of this memorandum, agencies engaged abroad include the Departments of State, the Treasury, Defense, Justice, Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Export Import Bank, the United States Trade Representative, and such other agencies as the President may designate. (b) For the purposes of this memorandum, agencies involved with foreign aid, assistance, and development include the Departments of State, the Treasury, Defense, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security, the USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Export Import Bank, the United States Trade Representative, and such other agencies as the President may designate.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

The Secretary of State is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.

BARACK OBAMA

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/06/presidential-memorandum-international-initiatives-advance-human-rights-1> (03/13/2012)



## Presidential Proclamation – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
May 31, 2011

**BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A PROCLAMATION**

The story of America’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community is the story of our fathers and sons, our mothers and daughters, and our friends and neighbors who continue the task of making our country a more perfect Union. It is a story about the struggle to realize the great American promise that all people can live with dignity and fairness under the law. Each June, we commemorate the courageous individuals who have fought to achieve this promise for LGBT Americans, and we rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.



President Barack Obama delivers remarks at an event observing LGBT Pride month in the East Room of the White House, June 29, 2011

Since taking office, my Administration has made significant progress towards achieving equality for LGBT Americans. Last December, I was proud to sign the repeal of the discriminatory “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. With this repeal, gay and lesbian Americans will be able to serve openly in our Armed Forces for the first time in our Nation’s history. Our national security will be strength-



ened and the heroic contributions these Americans make to our military, and have made throughout our history, will be fully recognized.

My Administration has also taken steps to eliminate discrimination against LGBT Americans in Federal housing programs and to give LGBT Americans the right to visit their loved ones in the hospital. We have made clear through executive branch nondiscrimination policies that discrimination on the basis of gender identity in the Federal workplace will not be tolerated. I have continued to nominate and appoint highly qualified, openly LGBT individuals to executive branch and judicial positions. Because we recognize that LGBT rights are human rights, my Administration stands with advocates of equality around the world in leading the fight against pernicious laws targeting LGBT persons and malicious attempts to exclude LGBT organizations from full participation in the international system. We led a global campaign to ensure “sexual orientation” was included in the United Nations resolution on extrajudicial execution – the only United Nations resolution that specifically mentions LGBT people – to send the unequivocal message that no matter where it occurs, state-sanctioned killing of gays and lesbians is indefensible. No one should be harmed because of who they are or who they love, and my Administration has mobilized unprecedented public commitments from countries around the world to join in the fight against hate and homophobia.

At home, we are working to address and eliminate violence against LGBT individuals through our enforcement and implementation of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. We are also working to reduce the threat of bullying against young people, including LGBT youth. My Administration is actively engaged with educators and community leaders across America to reduce violence and discrimination in schools. To help dispel the myth that bullying is a harmless or inevitable part of growing up, the First Lady and I hosted the first White House Conference on Bullying Prevention in March. Many senior Administration officials have also joined me in reaching out to LGBT youth who have been bullied by recording “It Gets Better” video messages to assure them they are not alone.

This month also marks the 30th anniversary of the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has had a profound impact on the LGBT community. Though we have made strides in combating this devastating disease, more work remains to be done, and I am committed to expanding access to HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Last year, I announced the first comprehensive



National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States. This strategy focuses on combinations of evidence-based approaches to decrease new HIV infections in high risk communities, improve care for people living with HIV/AIDS, and reduce health disparities. My Administration also increased domestic HIV/AIDS funding to support the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and HIV prevention, and to invest in HIV/AIDS-related research. However, government cannot take on this disease alone. This landmark anniversary is an opportunity for the LGBT community and allies to recommit to raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and continuing the fight against this deadly pandemic.

Every generation of Americans has brought our Nation closer to fulfilling its promise of equality. While progress has taken time, our achievements in advancing the rights of LGBT Americans remind us that history is on our side, and that the American people will never stop striving toward liberty and justice for all.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2011 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. I call upon the people of the United States to eliminate prejudice everywhere it exists, and to celebrate the great diversity of the American people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth.

BARACK OBAMA

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/31/presidential-proclamation-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-pride-mon> (03/13/2012)



## Statement by the President on the Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
September 20, 2011

Today, the discriminatory law known as 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is finally and formally repealed. As of today, patriotic Americans in uniform will no longer have to lie about who they are in order to serve the country they love. As of today, our armed forces will no longer lose the extraordinary skills and combat experience of so many gay and lesbian service members. And today, as Commander in Chief, I want those who were discharged under this law to know that your country deeply values your service.

I was proud to sign the Repeal Act into law last December because I knew that it would enhance our national security, increase our military readiness, and bring us closer to the principles of equality and fairness that define us as Americans. Today's achievement is a tribute to all the patriots who fought and marched for change; to Members of Congress, from both parties, who voted for repeal; to our civilian and military leaders who ensured a smooth transition; and to the professionalism of our men and women in uniform who showed that they were ready to move forward together, as one team, to meet the missions we ask of them.

For more than two centuries, we have worked to extend America's promise to all our citizens. Our armed forces have been both a mirror and a catalyst of that progress, and our troops, including gays and lesbians, have given their lives to defend the freedoms and liberties that we cherish as Americans. Today, every American can be proud that we have taken another great step toward keeping our military the finest in the world and toward fulfilling our nation's founding ideals.

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/20/statement-president-repeal-dont-ask-dont-tell> (03/13/2012)



## Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010

H.R.2965 *One Hundred Eleventh Congress of the United States of America AT THE SECOND SESSION* Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the fifth day of January, two thousand and ten.

An Act to amend the Small Business Act with respect to the Small Business Innovation Research Program and the Small Business Technology Transfer Program, and for other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010'.

### **SECTION 2. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POLICY CONCERNING HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE ARMED FORCES.**

(a) Comprehensive Review on the Implementation of a Repeal of 10 U.S.C. 654-

(1) **IN GENERAL** - On March 2, 2010, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum directing the Comprehensive Review on the Implementation of a Repeal of 10 U.S.C. 654 (section 654 of title 10, United States Code).

(2) **OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF REVIEW** - The Terms of Reference accompanying the Secretary's memorandum established the following objectives and scope of the ordered review:

(A) Determine any impacts to military readiness, military effectiveness and unit cohesion, recruiting/retention, and family readiness that may result from repeal of the law and recommend any actions that should be taken in light of such impacts. (B) Determine leadership, guidance, and training on standards of conduct and new policies. (C) Determine appropriate changes to existing policies and regulations, including but not limited to issues regarding personnel management, leadership and training, facilities, investigations, and benefits. (D) Recommend appropriate changes (if any) to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. (E) Monitor and evaluate existing legislative proposals to repeal 10 U.S.C. 654 and proposals that may be introduced in the Congress during the period of the review. (F) Assure appropriate ways to monitor the workforce climate and military effectiveness that support successful



- follow-through on implementation. (G) Evaluate the issues raised in ongoing litigation involving 10 U.S.C. 654.
- (b) Effective Date- The amendments made by subsection (f) shall take effect 60 days after the date on which the last of the following occurs:
    - (1) The Secretary of Defense has received the report required by the memorandum of the Secretary referred to in subsection (a).
    - (2) The President transmits to the congressional defense committees a written certification, signed by the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stating each of the following:
      - (A) That the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the recommendations contained in the report and the report's proposed plan of action.
      - (B) That the Department of Defense has prepared the necessary policies and regulations to exercise the discretion provided by the amendments made by subsection (f).
      - (C) That the implementation of necessary policies and regulations pursuant to the discretion provided by the amendments made by subsection (f) is consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention of the Armed Forces.
  - (c) No Immediate Effect on Current Policy- Section 654 of title 10, United States Code, shall remain in effect until such time that all of the requirements and certifications required by subsection (b) are met. If these requirements and certifications are not met, section 654 of title 10, United States Code, shall remain in effect.
  - (d) Benefits- Nothing in this section, or the amendments made by this section, shall be construed to require the furnishing of benefits in violation of section 7 of title 1, United States Code (relating to the definitions of 'marriage' and 'spouse' and referred to as the 'Defense of Marriage Act').
  - (e) No Private Cause of Action- Nothing in this section, or the amendments made by this section, shall be construed to create a private cause of action.
  - (f) Treatment of 1993 Policy-
    - (1) TITLE 10 - Upon the effective date established by subsection (b), chapter 37 of title 10, United States Code, is amended –
      - (A) by striking section 654; and
      - (B) in the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter, by striking the item relating to section 654.



(2) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT**- Upon the effective date established by subsection (b), section 571 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994 (10 U.S.C. 654 note) is amended by striking subsections (b), (c), and (d).

Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate.

Source: <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h2965/text> (03/13/2012)

President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden shake hands with people in the audience after signing the Don't Ask Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C. December 22, 2010



## **Factsheet:** **The Department of State's Accomplishments Promoting the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People**

*"Gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights, once and for all."*

– Secretary Hillary Clinton, June 2010, Washington, D.C.

Human rights are inalienable and belong to every person, no matter who that person is or whom that person loves. Since January 2009, Secretary Clinton has directed the Department to champion a comprehensive human rights agenda – one that includes the protection of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The Department uses its full range of diplomatic and development tools to press for the elimination of violence and discrimination against LGBT people worldwide, particularly those forced to flee their homes or countries.



The Department continues to counter efforts globally that discriminate against, criminalize, and penalize members of the LGBT community. The United States recognizes the unflagging efforts and courage of advocates and organizations fighting to promote equality and justice around the world, especially in countries where doing so puts their lives and their families at risk. At the same time, u.s. personnel policies must protect the human rights of all LGBT people, and consular and other tools must be used to provide equal access and equal rights to LGBT people.

u.s. leadership on advancing human rights for LGBT people is consistent with the Obama Administration's policy of principled engagement with the world and our commitment to uphold universal standards that apply to everyone. By supporting the inherent dignity of each person we help to foster a just world for all people and we lead by example, enhancing u.s. strategic interests as we advance our values.

Under the Secretary's leadership, the Department's recent accomplishments include:

**Bilateral and Regional Engagement:**

- The Department has included the status of the human rights of LGBT people in each country included in the Department's annual Human Rights Report.
- The State Department works with u.s. embassies, civil society, and multi-lateral mechanisms, agencies, and forums to encourage countries to repeal or reform laws that criminalize LGBT status.
- Alongside Ugandan civil society's strong and sustained outreach to parliamentarians and the Uganda Human Rights Commission, and advocacy of other governments, u.s. Government advocacy against Uganda's proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill established a precedent for the United States, the international donor community and civil society to collaborate to counter efforts to criminalize same-sex conduct.
- The u.s. Ambassador called on the Honduran government to investigate a rise in violence and the unsolved murders of over 30 LGBT individuals. With u.s. Government support, Honduras created a special unit to investigate crimes against vulnerable groups, including women, LGBT people, and journalists. A u.s. prosecutor and senior detective collaborated with the unit to prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes.



- The Bureau of African Affairs compiled a complete analysis of the LGBT environment for every country on the continent, which includes comprehensive information on discriminatory laws, NGOs, societal attitudes, and prosecutions of LGBT individuals. This analysis will guide U.S. diplomatic efforts to promote the human rights of LGBT persons across the continent.
- In the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Chiefs of Mission are speaking publicly on behalf of human rights of LGBT people, engaging with local media on LGBT issues, and building strong partnerships with NGOs. When many European countries celebrated the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in May and LGBT Pride Month in June, U.S. embassies engaged robustly, with Ambassadors marching in Pride parades and Embassy staff securing high-profile speakers and advocates for LGBT Pride events.
- The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) authored the Department's first regional strategy on LGBT engagement after analyzing criminalization of and discrimination against LGBT persons. The strategy promotes expanding public outreach, and awareness of human rights of LGBT people, by creating and leveraging partnerships and utilizing multilateral venues like the United Nations and the Organization of American States. WHA holds regular roundtables with LGBT groups and civil society organizations and, in March, hosted the first interagency conference on LGBT communities. The U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica constantly raises LGBT issues in conversations with Jamaican officials and media. During Pride Month, the Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs met in San Salvador with LGBT civil society organizations from 21 countries.
- The Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs continues to promote LGBT issues through advocacy, outreach, and high-level engagement. Embassy Jakarta organized a meeting between LGBT rights groups and Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero in July 2011.

### Successfully Promoting LGBT Human Rights In Multilateral Forums

- At the UN Human Rights Council's (HRC) June 2011 session, the United States, South Africa, and Latin American and European Union countries led efforts to pass the first-ever UN resolution on the human rights of LGBT persons.



- At the HRC’s March 2011 session, the United States co-chaired efforts of a core group of countries to issue a statement entitled “Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.” The statement garnered the support of 85 countries, including 20 that had never before supported similar statements on the promotion of LGBT persons’ rights.
- In December 2010, the State Department led efforts at the UN General Assembly to reinsert language on sexual orientation into a resolution on extrajudicial, summary, and arbitrary executions, after the language’s removal in committee. The amendment was approved by a 93–55 margin.
- The State Department is working to establish a special rapporteur on the protection of the human rights of LGBT people within the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, after President Obama raised the importance of LGBT issues in a meeting with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff earlier this year.
- The United States also partnered with Brazil and others to secure adoption of a resolution on human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity at the Organization of American States General Assembly in June.

### Protecting LGBT Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants

- The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is working to improve the security of LGBT refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants by implementing a comprehensive LGBT refugee protection strategy developed in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health and Human Services, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs.
- Progress includes additional funding to UNHCR in places such as Turkey to help with resettlement of LGBT refugees, training for staff working on refugee protection, and the expansion of PRM’s NGO guidelines to ensure partners know that LGBT refugees and asylum seekers are a priority population of concern.
- PRM is also funding new programs in this area, including research to develop best practices for serving LGBT refugees in urban areas and a pilot initiative in Costa Rica on the needs of LGBT migrants.



### Supporting LGBT Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Groups

- To strengthen civil society groups, support advocates, and increase public dialogue, the Department of State is launching the Secretary's Global Equality Fund, a public-private partnership initiative to advance the human rights of LGBT people. The State Department is contributing more than \$3 million to this important effort, and will seek partnership commitments from donor governments, corporations, and foundations.
- The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) will support programming through the Global Equality Fund in the following priority areas:
  - a) *Advance Justice*: Support programs that document violations of the human rights of LGBT individuals, provide legal assistance, and enhance NGO capacity to advocate before host governments and in multilateral forums to ensure policy and practice conform to international human rights standards.
  - b) *Support Advocates*: Provide emergency assistance to NGOs and human rights defenders facing governmental or societal threats, and increase organizational capacity to respond to security concerns.
  - c) *Increase Public Dialogue*: Support programs that enhance public awareness and further positive dialogue, such as inclusive civic education and cultural activities, and build diverse human rights coalitions around public messaging.
- The Fund will complement DRL's existing programs, which include a project in Sierra Leone to increase the capacity of the LGBT community and a regional documentation project in Eastern and Southern Africa to monitor, document, and address human rights violations and abuses in their communities.
- The personal security of LGBT human rights defenders remains a top priority for the Department. The Fund will enhance the Department's efforts to provide human rights defenders with legal representation, security, and, when necessary, relocation support. Since 2010, the Department has provided emergency assistance to over 40 LGBT advocates in 11 countries throughout Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.



### Championing Human Rights through Public Diplomacy

- U.S. Embassies worldwide are declaring support for the human rights of LGBT people through innovative public diplomacy.
- In Slovakia, where the 2010 Pride parade ended in violence, Embassy staff brought together more than 20 Ambassadors from other nations to sign a public statement of support for the march and hosted a debate. The U.S. Ambassador marched in the 2011 parade next to the mayor of Bratislava, Slovakia's capital.
- U.S. Embassy staff efforts helped convince pop artist and LGBT advocate Lady Gaga to perform at EuroPride Rome in June 2011. Secretary Clinton's quote, "Gay rights are human rights and human rights are gay rights," was included in the event's opening remarks and seen throughout the crowd on tee shirts and stickers.
- In Guinea, the U.S. Embassy hosted a public screening of the Guinean film *Dakan*, the first known film on LGBT themes made in Africa.
- In Serbia, the U.S. Ambassador published an op-ed in the high-circulation publication *Blic*, writing, "[I]f you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, know that the United States stands with you, and we are unwavering in our commitment."
- In India, the U.S. Embassy hosted a public discussion with Mayur Suresh, one of the lawyers who successfully challenged the section of the Indian Penal Code that made homosexuality a punishable offense.
- In Jamaica, El Salvador and Panama, local media widely published U.S. Ambassadors' op-eds on the rights of LGBT persons.

### Strengthening The Department's Personnel and Consular Policies

- As one of her first acts in office, Secretary Clinton directed a review of whether the State Department could extend additional benefits to domestic partners. Following President Obama's 2009 memorandum on same-sex domestic partners' benefits, the State Department announced extension of the full range of legally available benefits and allowances to same-sex domestic partners of Foreign Service staff serving abroad.
- In June 2010, Secretary Clinton revised State Department equal employment opportunity policy. As the previous policy prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation, the new policy explicitly added protection



against discriminatory treatment of employees and job applicants based on gender identity.

- The State Department revised its Foreign Affairs Manual to allow same-sex couples to obtain passports under the names recognized by their state through their marriages or civil unions.
- In June 2010, the Bureau of Consular Affairs announced new procedures for changing the sex listed on a transgender American's passport, streamlining the process and simplifying requirements to ensure greater dignity and privacy for the applicant.

Source: <http://www.humanrights.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Expanded-Factsheet-on-the-Human-Rights-of-LGBT-People.pdf> (03/13/2012)

### Factsheet:

## U.S. Department of State Engagement on the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR

Washington, D.C.

December 6, 2011

*“Gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights, once and for all.”*

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, June 2010, Washington, D.C.

Human rights are inalienable and belong to every person, no matter who that person is or whom that person loves. Since January 2009, Secretary Clinton has championed a comprehensive human rights agenda that includes the protection of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Under Secretary Clinton's leadership, the Department is:

- *Engaging* bilaterally and regionally in conjunction with U.S. embassies, civil society, and multilateral agencies to encourage countries to repeal or reform laws that criminalize LGBT conduct or status.



- *Reinforcing* the human rights of LGBT people in multilateral fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). In June 2011, the United States joined South Africa and a cross-regional group of co-sponsors in passing the first-ever UN HRC resolution on the human rights of LGBT persons.
- *Promoting* human rights worldwide. U.S. embassies are declaring the United States' support for the human rights of LGBT people through innovative public diplomacy. Ambassadors and embassies host public discussions and private roundtables, publish op-eds and support Pride events.
- *Supporting* LGBT human rights defenders and civil society groups, with programmatic and financial assistance, including efforts to document human rights violations; build advocacy skills; provide advocates with legal representation; and, when necessary, relocation support.
- *Reporting* on the conditions of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in each of its annual, country-specific Human Rights Reports.
- *Strengthening* the Department's personnel and consular policies. The Secretary extended the full range of legally available benefits and allowances to same-sex domestic partners of foreign service staff serving abroad. The United States also incorporated gender identity into federal equal employment opportunity policies in 2010.
- *Protecting* LGBT refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants through a protection strategy developed with other U.S. Government agencies, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and NGOs.

Source: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/178565.pdf> (03/13/2012)



## 2011 Celebration of LGBT Pride Month: Remarks by Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State

Co-Hosted by the Department of State and Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA)  
Dean Acheson Auditorium  
Washington, D.C.  
June 27, 2011

*(Applause.)* Thank you all. Thank you. Thank you all very much. Thank you. Well, this is an especially momentous and extraordinary time for us to meet for the State Department's annual Pride celebration, the third event we've had here at State since I became Secretary, and the first following the historic vote in New York, which I think gives such visibility and credibility to everything that so many of you have done over so many years, because I look out at this audience and I see a lot of familiar faces of people who have been on the frontlines for many years and have worked so diligently and smartly for the progress that we are seeing.

I do want to recognize, in addition to John, Patrick, and Arturo, who have already been mentioned, Under Secretary Otero and Assistant Secretary Posner and USAID Deputy Director Steinberg and Deputy Assistant Secretary Baer and all who have led our efforts, including Counselor Mills, to protect the rights and well-being of LGBT people worldwide. And I thank Jon Tollefson and GLIFAA for being an invaluable partner in coordinating personnel and policy matters here at State. I'm very honored to receive this award. It really belongs to all of you and so many others in recognition of the work that we've had the opportunity to do together to advance equality around the world.

It is an inspiration, however, to keep working, because we have a long way to go toward a world that affords all people the respect, dignity, and equality that they are entitled to. So in that vein, I wanted to share just a few stories from the past year that I hope will keep us going because they are stories of perseverance and creativity by our Foreign Service officers and civil servants who are representing the United States.

In Honduras, as many of you know, anti-gay violence increased significantly in 2009 and 2010. More than 30 LGBT people were murdered and the



investigations into those crimes appeared to be going nowhere. Then our Embassy team got involved. They publicly called on the Honduran Government to solve the murders, bring the perpetrators to justice, do more to protect all Hondurans from harm. Soon after, the government announced it was creating a taskforce to investigate and prevent hate crimes. And with the help of a United States prosecutor and detective, which our Embassy arranged to be made available to assist in this effort, we are making progress. And I particularly want to thank and recognize Assistant Secretary Valenzuela, because it was his leadership on this issue that really made a difference.

In Slovakia, the country's first-ever Pride parade last year ended in violence. So this year, our Embassy staff worked overtime to help make the parade a success. They brought together more than 20 chiefs of mission from other nations to sign a public statement of support for the march. They hosted a respectful, productive debate on LGBT rights. And on the day of the parade, our ambassador marched in solidarity right next to the mayor of Bratislava.

And then there is the work that our Embassy team in Rome has been doing. Two weeks ago, they played an instrumental role in bringing Lady Gaga to Italy for a EuroPride concert. (*Laughter.*) Now, as many of you know, Lady Gaga is Italian American and a strong supporter of LGBT rights. And the organizers of the EuroPride event desperately wanted her to perform, and a letter to her from Ambassador Thorne was instrumental in sealing the deal. Over 1 million people attended the event, which included powerful words in support of equality and justice.

And then there is the tremendous work that our diplomats have been doing in regional and international institutions to strengthen a shared consensus about how governments should treat their citizens. And we've made the message very consistent and of a high priority. All people's rights and dignity must be protected whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In March, President Obama and Brazilian President Rousseff announced their shared support for the creation of a special rapporteur for LGBT rights within the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights. And we have our Bureau for Western Hemisphere Affairs and our permanent mission to the OAS to thank for that.

Also in March, the United States led a major effort at the Human Rights Council in Geneva to get other countries to sign on in support of a statement on ending violence and criminalization based on sexual orientation and



gender identity. In the end, 85 countries signed the statement, 18 more than ever had signed onto any previous UN statement on LGBT rights.

And in the very next session of the Human Rights Council, just two weeks ago after another major push by American diplomats in Geneva as well as our teams from IO, DRL, EUR, WHA, and other bureaus, the Council passed the first ever UN resolution recognizing the human rights of LGBT people worldwide. And it was especially meaningful that we had South Africa cosponsoring that resolution with us. And with that we took a huge step forward in our work to refute the hateful suggestion that LGBT people are somehow exempt from human rights protections, and we made it absolutely clear that, so far as the United States is concerned and our foreign policy, and our values - that gay rights are human rights and human rights are gay rights.

Now, it is not just momentous achievements like the Human Rights Council resolution that contribute to progress; it is the day-to-day work of our embassies and AID missions around the world to increase engagement around the issues affecting LGBT rights, especially in those places where people are at risk of violence, discrimination, or criminalization. That's a concern that Johnnie Carson, our assistant secretary for African Affairs, who is currently on travel to Africa, raises regularly with his African leader counterparts; the op-ed that our ambassador to Barbados wrote in support of LGBT rights; the work that our Eric Schwartz, our assistant secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration is doing to lead the training of humanitarian workers to better protect and assist LGBT refugees and asylum seekers; the discussions that undersecretary Maria Otero led about the human rights of LGBT people in our first Global Issues Dialogue with Norway.

And so I want to applaud all of our diplomats and our development experts who continue to reach out to those advocating around the world in Uganda, Malawi, Russia, Turkey, China, and so many other places. Our colleagues are meeting with human rights activists, health authorities, youth activists, sex workers, the full range of people who are involved in and working to protect LGBT people's rights and lives. This is people-to-people diplomacy at its best.

Now, all this progress is worth celebrating, but we cannot forget how much work lies ahead. Because let's just face the facts: LGBT people in many places continue to endure threats, harassment, violence - including sexual violence - in public and private. They continue to flee their homes and nations and seek asylum because they are persecuted for being who they are. They continue



to be targeted for trying to build public support through pride activities such as parades. And what we have long thought is becoming the case, and that is if we can convince people to speak out about their own personal experiences, particularly within their own families, it does begin to change the dialogue.

If you followed closely, which I'm sure all of you did, the debate in New York, one of the key votes that was switched at the end was a Republican senator from the Buffalo area who became convinced that it was just not any longer fair for him to see one group of his constituents as different from another. Senators stood up and talked about nieces and nephews and grandchildren and others who are very dear to them, and they don't want them being objectified or discriminated against. And from their own personal connections and relationships, they began to make the larger connection with somebody else's niece or nephew of grandchild and what that family must feel like.

So we have to continue to stand up for the rights and the well-being of LGBT people, and sometimes it's hard when you're in the middle of a long campaign to see where you're getting. But I've always believed that we would make progress because we were on the right side of equality and justice. Life is getting better for people in many places, and it will continue to get better thanks to our work. So I ask all of you to look for ways to support those who are on the front lines of this movement, who are defending themselves and the people they care about with great courage and resilience. This is one of the most urgent and important human rights struggles of all times. It is not easy, but it is so rewarding.

Pride month is a time for gratitude, for joy, and of course, for pride – pride in ourselves, in our families and friends, in our colleagues, in our community. And at the State Department, there are so many reasons for pride, and the same is true for all of our foreign affairs agencies represented here, from AID to the Peace Corps and others, because we do have so many talented people, and we have so many who are LGBT serving our nation with honor, courage, and skill. And shortly, our military partners will be able to say the same.

So think of the amazing work that has been done in the last year or two, because it truly is a great tribute to those who have fought for these rights, for those who have sacrificed for them, and mostly for our country, because it is our country and our values that truly are being put at the forefront.



And so I say to all of you, thank you. You make our country proud and you make me proud as the Secretary of State to work with you and serve with you every day. But please don't forget that for every proud moment we can share together, there are so many around the world who live in fear, who live in shame, who live in such difficult circumstances. And our work must continue until they have the same opportunity that all of you and so many other Americans have, which is to be recognized for who you are and to be given the respect that you so richly deserve.

Thank you all very much. (*Applause.*)

Source: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/06/167144.htm> (03/13/2012)

Secretary Clinton speaks at the 2011 LGBT Pride Month Celebration event co-hosted by the State Department and GLIFAA





## Remarks in Recognition of International Human Rights Day by Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State

Palais des Nations  
Geneva, Switzerland  
December 6, 2011

Good evening, and let me express my deep honor and pleasure at being here. I want to thank Director General Tokayev and Ms. Wyden along with other ministers, ambassadors, excellencies, and UN partners. This weekend, we will celebrate Human Rights Day, the anniversary of one of the great accomplishments of the last century.

Beginning in 1947, delegates from six continents devoted themselves to drafting a declaration that would enshrine the fundamental rights and freedoms of people everywhere. In the aftermath of World War II, many nations pressed for a statement of this kind to help ensure that we would prevent future atrocities and protect the inherent humanity and dignity of all people. And so the delegates went to work. They discussed, they wrote, they revisited, revised, rewrote, for thousands of hours. And they incorporated suggestions and revisions from governments, organizations, and individuals around the world.

At three o'clock in the morning on December 10th, 1948, after nearly two years of drafting and one last long night of debate, the president of the UN General Assembly called for a vote on the final text. Forty-eight nations voted in favor; eight abstained; none dissented. And the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. It proclaims a simple, powerful idea: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. And with the declaration, it was made clear that rights are not conferred by government; they are the birthright of all people. It does not matter what country we live in, who our leaders are, or even who we are. Because we are human, we therefore have rights. And because we have rights, governments are bound to protect them.

In the 63 years since the declaration was adopted, many nations have made great progress in making human rights a human reality. Step by step, barriers that once prevented people from enjoying the full measure of liberty, the full experience of dignity, and the full benefits of humanity have fallen away.



In many places, racist laws have been repealed, legal and social practices that relegated women to second-class status have been abolished, the ability of religious minorities to practice their faith freely has been secured.

In most cases, this progress was not easily won. People fought and organized and campaigned in public squares and private spaces to change not only laws, but hearts and minds. And thanks to that work of generations, for millions of individuals whose lives were once narrowed by injustice, they are now able to live more freely and to participate more fully in the political, economic, and social lives of their communities.

Now, there is still, as you all know, much more to be done to secure that commitment, that reality, and progress for all people. Today, I want to talk about the work we have left to do to protect one group of people whose human rights are still denied in too many parts of the world today. In many ways, they are an invisible minority. They are arrested, beaten, terrorized, even executed. Many are treated with contempt and violence by their fellow citizens while authorities empowered to protect them look the other way or, too often, even join in the abuse. They are denied opportunities to work and learn, driven from their homes and countries, and forced to suppress or deny who they are to protect themselves from harm.

I am talking about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, human beings born free and given bestowed equality and dignity, who have a right to claim that, which is now one of the remaining human rights challenges of our time. I speak about this subject knowing that my own country's record on human rights for gay people is far from perfect. Until 2003, it was still a crime in parts of our country. Many LGBT Americans have endured violence and harassment in their own lives, and for some, including many young people, bullying and exclusion are daily experiences. So we, like all nations, have more work to do to protect human rights at home.



Now, raising this issue, I know, is sensitive for many people and that the obstacles standing in the way of protecting the human rights of LGBT people rest on deeply held personal, political, cultural, and religious beliefs. So I come here before you with respect, understanding, and humility. Even though progress on this front is not easy, we cannot delay acting. So in that spirit, I want to talk about the difficult and important issues we must address together to reach a global consensus that recognizes the human rights of LGBT citizens everywhere.

The first issue goes to the heart of the matter. Some have suggested that gay rights and human rights are separate and distinct; but, in fact, they are one and the same. Now, of course, 60 years ago, the governments that drafted and passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were not thinking about how it applied to the LGBT community. They also weren't thinking about how it applied to indigenous people or children or people with disabilities or other marginalized groups. Yet in the past 60 years, we have come to recognize that members of these groups are entitled to the full measure of dignity and rights, because, like all people, they share a common humanity.

This recognition did not occur all at once. It evolved over time. And as it did, we understood that we were honoring rights that people always had, rather than creating new or special rights for them. Like being a woman, like being a racial, religious, tribal, or ethnic minority, being LGBT does not make you less human. And that is why gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights.

It is violation of human rights when people are beaten or killed because of their sexual orientation, or because they do not conform to cultural norms about how men and women should look or behave. It is a violation of human rights when governments declare it illegal to be gay, or allow those who harm gay people to go unpunished. It is a violation of human rights when lesbian or transgendered women are subjected to so-called corrective rape, or forcibly subjected to hormone treatments, or when people are murdered after public calls for violence toward gays, or when they are forced to flee their nations and seek asylum in other lands to save their lives. And it is a violation of human rights when life-saving care is withheld from people because they are gay, or equal access to justice is denied to people because they are gay, or public spaces are out of bounds to people because they are gay. No matter what we



look like, where we come from, or who we are, we are all equally entitled to our human rights and dignity.

The second issue is a question of whether homosexuality arises from a particular part of the world. Some seem to believe it is a Western phenomenon, and therefore people outside the West have grounds to reject it. Well, in reality, gay people are born into and belong to every society in the world. They are all ages, all races, all faiths; they are doctors and teachers, farmers and bankers, soldiers and athletes; and whether we know it, or whether we acknowledge it, they are our family, our friends, and our neighbors.

Being gay is not a Western invention; it is a human reality. And protecting the human rights of all people, gay or straight, is not something that only Western governments do. South Africa's constitution, written in the aftermath of Apartheid, protects the equality of all citizens, including gay people. In Colombia and Argentina, the rights of gays are also legally protected. In Nepal, the supreme court has ruled that equal rights apply to LGBT citizens. The Government of Mongolia has committed to pursue new legislation that will tackle anti-gay discrimination.

Now, some worry that protecting the human rights of the LGBT community is a luxury that only wealthy nations can afford. But in fact, in all countries, there are costs to not protecting these rights, in both gay and straight lives lost to disease and violence, and the silencing of voices and views that would strengthen communities, in ideas never pursued by entrepreneurs who happen to be gay. Costs are incurred whenever any group is treated as lesser or the other, whether they are women, racial, or religious minorities, or the LGBT. Former President Mogae of Botswana pointed out recently that for as long as LGBT people are kept in the shadows, there cannot be an effective public health program to tackle HIV and AIDS. Well, that holds true for other challenges as well.

The third, and perhaps most challenging, issue arises when people cite religious or cultural values as a reason to violate or not to protect the human rights of LGBT citizens. This is not unlike the justification offered for violent practices towards women like honor killings, widow burning, or female genital mutilation. Some people still defend those practices as part of a cultural tradition. But violence toward women isn't cultural; it's criminal. Likewise with slavery, what was once justified as sanctioned by God is now properly reviled as an unconscionable violation of human rights.



In each of these cases, we came to learn that no practice or tradition trumps the human rights that belong to all of us. And this holds true for inflicting violence on LGBT people, criminalizing their status or behavior, expelling them from their families and communities, or tacitly or explicitly accepting their killing.

Of course, it bears noting that rarely are cultural and religious traditions and teachings actually in conflict with the protection of human rights. Indeed, our religion and our culture are sources of compassion and inspiration toward our fellow human beings. It was not only those who've justified slavery who leaned on religion, it was also those who sought to abolish it. And let us keep in mind that our commitments to protect the freedom of religion and to defend the dignity of LGBT people emanate from a common source. For many of us, religious belief and practice is a vital source of meaning and identity, and fundamental to who we are as people. And likewise, for most of us, the bonds of love and family that we forge are also vital sources of meaning and identity. And caring for others is an expression of what it means to be fully human. It is because the human experience is universal that human rights are universal and cut across all religions and cultures.

The fourth issue is what history teaches us about how we make progress towards rights for all. Progress starts with honest discussion. Now, there are some who say and believe that all gay people are pedophiles, that homosexuality is a disease that can be caught or cured, or that gays recruit others to become gay. Well, these notions are simply not true. They are also unlikely to disappear if those who promote or accept them are dismissed out of hand rather than invited to share their fears and concerns. No one has ever abandoned a belief because he was forced to do so.

Universal human rights include freedom of expression and freedom of belief, even if our words or beliefs denigrate the humanity of others. Yet, while we are each free to believe whatever we choose, we cannot do whatever we choose, not in a world where we protect the human rights of all.

Reaching understanding of these issues takes more than speech. It does take a conversation. In fact, it takes a constellation of conversations in places big and small. And it takes a willingness to see stark differences in belief as a reason to begin the conversation, not to avoid it.

But progress comes from changes in laws. In many places, including my own country, legal protections have preceded, not followed, broader recog-



dition of rights. Laws have a teaching effect. Laws that discriminate validate other kinds of discrimination. Laws that require equal protections reinforce the moral imperative of equality. And practically speaking, it is often the case that laws must change before fears about change dissipate.

Many in my country thought that President Truman was making a grave error when he ordered the racial desegregation of our military. They argued that it would undermine unit cohesion. And it wasn't until he went ahead and did it that we saw how it strengthened our social fabric in ways even the supporters of the policy could not foresee. Likewise, some worried in my country that the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" would have a negative effect



Secretary Clinton Speaking at the United Nations Office at Geneva



on our armed forces. Now, the Marine Corps Commandant, who was one of the strongest voices against the repeal, says that his concerns were unfounded and that the Marines have embraced the change.

Finally, progress comes from being willing to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. We need to ask ourselves, "How would it feel if it were a crime to love the person I love? How would it feel to be discriminated against for something about myself that I cannot change?" This challenge applies to all of us as we reflect upon deeply held beliefs, as we work to embrace tolerance and respect for the dignity of all persons, and as we engage humbly with those with whom we disagree in the hope of creating greater understanding.

A fifth and final question is how we do our part to bring the world to embrace human rights for all people including LGBT people. Yes, LGBT people must help lead this effort, as so many of you are. Their knowledge and experiences are invaluable and their courage inspirational. We know the names of brave LGBT activists who have literally given their lives for this cause, and there are many more whose names we will never know. But often those who are denied rights are least empowered to bring about the changes they seek. Acting alone, minorities can never achieve the majorities necessary for political change.

So when any part of humanity is sidelined, the rest of us cannot sit on the sidelines. Every time a barrier to progress has fallen, it has taken a cooperative effort from those on both sides of the barrier. In the fight for women's rights, the support of men remains crucial. The fight for racial equality has relied on contributions from people of all races. Combating Islamophobia or anti-Semitism is a task for people of all faiths. And the same is true with this struggle for equality.

Conversely, when we see denials and abuses of human rights and fail to act, that sends the message to those deniers and abusers that they won't suffer any consequences for their actions, and so they carry on. But when we do act, we send a powerful moral message. Right here in Geneva, the international community acted this year to strengthen a global consensus around the human rights of LGBT people. At the Human Rights Council in March, 85 countries from all regions supported a statement calling for an end to criminalization and violence against people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.



At the following session of the Council in June, South Africa took the lead on a resolution about violence against LGBT people. The delegation from South Africa spoke eloquently about their own experience and struggle for human equality and its indivisibility. When the measure passed, it became the first-ever UN resolution recognizing the human rights of gay people worldwide. In the Organization of American States this year, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights created a unit on the rights of LGBT people, a step toward what we hope will be the creation of a special rapporteur.

Now, we must go further and work here and in every region of the world to galvanize more support for the human rights of the LGBT community. To the leaders of those countries where people are jailed, beaten, or executed for being gay, I ask you to consider this: Leadership, by definition, means being out in front of your people when it is called for. It means standing up for the dignity of all your citizens and persuading your people to do the same. It also means ensuring that all citizens are treated as equals under your laws, because let me be clear – I am not saying that gay people can't or don't commit crimes. They can and they do, just like straight people. And when they do, they should be held accountable, but it should never be a crime to be gay.

And to people of all nations, I say supporting human rights is your responsibility too. The lives of gay people are shaped not only by laws, but by the treatment they receive every day from their families, from their neighbors. Eleanor Roosevelt, who did so much to advance human rights worldwide, said that these rights begin in the small places close to home – the streets where people live, the schools they attend, the factories, farms, and offices where they work. These places are your domain. The actions you take, the ideals that you advocate, can determine whether human rights flourish where you are.

And finally, to LGBT men and women worldwide, let me say this: Wherever you live and whatever the circumstances of your life, whether you are connected to a network of support or feel isolated and vulnerable, please know that you are not alone. People around the globe are working hard to support you and to bring an end to the injustices and dangers you face. That is certainly true for my country. And you have an ally in the United States of America and you have millions of friends among the American people.

The Obama Administration defends the human rights of LGBT people as part of our comprehensive human rights policy and as a priority of our foreign policy. In our embassies, our diplomats are raising concerns about specific



cases and laws, and working with a range of partners to strengthen human rights protections for all. In Washington, we have created a task force at the State Department to support and coordinate this work. And in the coming months, we will provide every embassy with a toolkit to help improve their efforts. And we have created a program that offers emergency support to defenders of human rights for LGBT people.

This morning, back in Washington, President Obama put into place the first U.S. Government strategy dedicated to combating human rights abuses against LGBT persons abroad. Building on efforts already underway at the State Department and across the government, the President has directed all U.S. Government agencies engaged overseas to combat the criminalization of LGBT status and conduct, to enhance efforts to protect vulnerable LGBT refugees and asylum seekers, to ensure that our foreign assistance promotes the protection of LGBT rights, to enlist international organizations in the fight against discrimination, and to respond swiftly to abuses against LGBT persons.

I am also pleased to announce that we are launching a new Global Equality Fund that will support the work of civil society organizations working on these issues around the world. This fund will help them record facts so they can target their advocacy, learn how to use the law as a tool, manage their budgets, train their staffs, and forge partnerships with women's organizations and other human rights groups. We have committed more than \$3 million to start this fund, and we have hope that others will join us in supporting it.

The women and men who advocate for human rights for the LGBT community in hostile places, some of whom are here today with us, are brave and dedicated, and deserve all the help we can give them. We know the road ahead will not be easy. A great deal of work lies before us. But many of us have seen firsthand how quickly change can come. In our lifetimes, attitudes toward gay people in many places have been transformed. Many people, including myself, have experienced a deepening of our own convictions on this topic over the years, as we have devoted more thought to it, engaged in dialogues and debates, and established personal and professional relationships with people who are gay.

This evolution is evident in many places. To highlight one example, the Delhi High Court decriminalized homosexuality in India two years ago, writing, and I quote, "If there is one tenet that can be said to be an underlying theme of the Indian constitution, it is inclusiveness." There is little doubt in



my mind that support for LGBT human rights will continue to climb. Because for many young people, this is simple: All people deserve to be treated with dignity and have their human rights respected, no matter who they are or whom they love.

There is a phrase that people in the United States invoke when urging others to support human rights: “Be on the right side of history.” The story of the United States is the story of a nation that has repeatedly grappled with intolerance and inequality. We fought a brutal civil war over slavery. People from coast to coast joined in campaigns to recognize the rights of women, indigenous peoples, racial minorities, children, people with disabilities, immigrants, workers, and on and on. And the march toward equality and justice has continued. Those who advocate for expanding the circle of human rights were and are on the right side of history, and history honors them. Those who tried to constrict human rights were wrong, and history reflects that as well.

I know that the thoughts I’ve shared today involve questions on which opinions are still evolving. As it has happened so many times before, opinion will converge once again with the truth, the immutable truth, that all persons are created free and equal in dignity and rights. We are called once more to make real the words of the Universal Declaration. Let us answer that call. Let us be on the right side of history, for our people, our nations, and future generations, whose lives will be shaped by the work we do today. I come before you with great hope and confidence that no matter how long the road ahead, we will travel it successfully together.

Thank you very much. (*Applause.*)

Source: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/12/178368.htm> (03/13/2012)



## Live at State with DAS Daniel Baer: LGBT Issues and U.S. Policy

Daniel Baer, Deputy Assistant Secretary,  
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
Holly Jensen  
Washington, D.C.  
January 31, 2012

*Ms. Jensen:* Hi. Welcome to LiveAtState, the State Department's interactive webchat platform for engaging with international media. I'm your host, and today I am joined in the studio by Deputy Assistant Secretary Dan Baer, where he'll be talking about foreign policy issues and LGBT.

Before I turn it over to Dan, I would just like to make a few housekeeping notes. If at any time during the program you experience any problems and you can't submit your questions in the lower left-hand portion of your screen, I ask that you email us directly at [LiveAtState.gov](mailto:LiveAtState.gov). And if you're having problems listening, you can also call us on our listen-only phone bridge, and the number is listed in the lower left-hand portion of your screen. Right now, you can start to ask your questions for Dan Baer in the window at the bottom titled, "Questions for DAS Baer." And with that, I will turn it over to you. Thanks for joining us today.

**Mr. Baer:** Great. Thanks so much. Thanks, everybody who's out there watching. Thanks very much to the watch parties that I know are going on in various embassies around the world – Paramaribo, I heard, and Kyiv and Warsaw. Thanks to the people watching in Geneva and other places around the world, all over Latin America, I've heard. So it's great to be with you this morning.

This is really an opportunity for me to get to follow up and to do some Q&A with you all in the wake of the Secretary's speech last month in Geneva on December 6th, which was her Human Rights Day speech where she talked about human rights applying to everyone, including LGBT people. That speech was really not a kickoff event but a continuation event, continuing the leadership that the Secretary and President Obama have demonstrated on this issue since the beginning of the Obama Administration and following up on a lot of work that we've got underway here at the State Department and at our embassies around the world. So today, I look forward to the interaction.



I look forward to hearing what's on your mind and doing my best to answer your questions. So let's just turn to questions.

*Ms. Jensen: All right. Our first question comes from Pablo Simonetti: Will the United States encourage other states, as Chile for example, to develop laws that set rules, public policies, and affirmative actions to fight LGBT discrimination?*

**Mr. Baer:** I think what the Secretary laid out was that we will support and work with partners, those who are interested in having technical conversations about how you develop laws so that they are inclusive and nondiscriminatory. Yes, absolutely, we'd be happy to engage with partners like Chile and others around the world on developing various kinds of law.

I mean, what we've found in the United States is that it has been an ongoing process in making our laws more inclusive on many fronts, but oftentimes it gets down to the nitty-gritty of various regulations about who gets access to certain public housing or how you handle various questions around health-care or things like that. And so there's actually an in-depth practical process that has to be undertaken.

Once a legislature or a government decides that they are going to make the law inclusive, there's an implementation process that has to be undertaken. And we would be happy to work with partners around the world on discussing how we've done that and how our Department of Justice enforces nondiscrimination provisions in our law, et cetera, to help make sure that, as much as possible, every person is treated equally under the law.

*Ms. Jensen: Great. Just a quick reminder that you can follow us on Twitter using our official handle @statedept, and if you would like to continue this conversation today, you can do so by using the hashtag #Dignity4All. That's Dignity-the number 4-All.*

*Our next question comes from Visar Hoti from TV TEMA in Kosovo: Kosovo society is pretty conservative, and although there are no laws forbidding homosexuality, public display of affection between same-sex couples are not accepted as normal, hence the expression or promotion of rights of the LGBT persons are not seen as proper in Kosovo, according to many international human rights watchdogs. What is your experience with conservative societies in promoting the rights of LGBT persons, and what was your approach to help them overcome these cultural barriers or taboo problems in terms of legislation upgrade, institutional capacity building, and awareness raising?*



**Mr. Baer:** Thanks very much for that multi-part question. I think that what we've found and what many others have found around the world who have been working within their own societies to advocate for tolerance, to advocate for treating everyone equally, is that in many, many places, it requires an ongoing and a long-term conversation. And I think one of the things that I most appreciated about Secretary Clinton's speech last month was that it really was overall an invitation to a conversation. It was not a lecture; it was an invitation to work through a set of questions that people have.

And the invitation was put out there understanding that, for many people, this is a difficult issue to think through and work through. But it was put out there at the same time with the very clear conviction that all people are people and that being gay doesn't make you less human and doesn't make you less entitled to human rights. And so working through these questions is an ongoing process.

I think in terms of what can be done, there's work to be done from the bottom up in the conversations that we each have with our friends and our associates at work or at our church or synagogue or mosque or wherever we may find ourselves. We can help build cultures of tolerance in everything that we do every day. And there is indeed work that can be done from the top down. Having public figures, whether they be political leaders or celebrities or anybody else who has access to a public platform, having them speak out and articulate a message of equality that is not about anybody being special or having special privileges but is about the fundamental commitment to treat everyone equally and that everybody is equally entitled to dignity, I think that can have a huge impact in every society on both helping others embrace that notion and also reinforcing that notion where it's already reflected in law and culture.

*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from Katherine Zappone: Sending great appreciation to the President and Secretary of State for their groundbreaking initiative of the USA support of rights of LGBT people throughout the world. Does this represent or reflect any changes in U.S. domestic policy re rights of LGBT people, and will we be able to exchange models of good practice between countries and with the USA as part of this initiative?*

**Mr. Baer:** I think that it has developed alongside on a parallel track with a series of changes that have happened domestically, most notably perhaps with the



repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell legislation, which happened a little over a year ago, which was the legislation that didn't permit LGBT soldiers from serving openly in our military. So there have been a series of changes. There have been other changes. Secretary Clinton made changes domestically to the State Department in terms of how LGBT employees are treated and how their partners are treated under our employment benefits and things like that. So there have been other changes that have happened for Americans, if you will, that have accompanied the parallel track of our engagement abroad.

And I think that in general, one of the things that we've tried to do in our human rights policy and recognizing that human rights is a fundamental plank of U.S. foreign policy is to embrace and acknowledge the fact that we want to lead by example and that what happens here at home reflects on our leadership in the world. And so I think there is a concerted effort across the board to be consistent in our practice and in what we advocate and the principles that we think will undergird a more stable, peaceful, and democratic world.

*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from Shengjyl Osmani from BIRN Kosovo: What are the practices of the USA applicable to other societies towards establishing full rights and a culture of respect and acceptance for the LGBT community?*

**Mr. Baer:** I think the practices aren't unique to – first of all, it's great that Kosovo is so well represented today. I think the practices that are most applicable to the question of securing equality for LGBT people are not themselves unique to the question of securing equality for LGBT people. I think what we see both in the American context and in many places around the world is that – and one of the things that Secretary Clinton has made a hallmark of her administration – is that having a free and vibrant civil society, a civil society that is allowed to organize citizens around issues, that is allowed to appeal to the government to do better, that is allowed to engage with government and make recommendations about how government can better serve citizens – that that's really crucial.

And I think if you look back at the progress that we've made as a country toward a more perfect union, toward a country that is more respectful of the equality of each and every citizen, I think that progress is largely attributable not – it certainly wouldn't have been possible without the leadership of those in civil society. Obviously, Dr. King is somebody who comes to mind,



and he was not a government figure, and yet he is somebody who many of us credit with having shifted the national conversation in ways that we are all still benefitting from today. And so I think if there's one principle that we would articulate around the world – and Secretary Clinton talked about this in Krakow in July of 2010 – it's the need to support civil society and to make sure that laws that attempt to clamp down on civil society or sham trials that try to lock up the leaders of NGOs, that those are rejected, and that people are allowed to express their views and debate them and contribute to a national conversation.

*Ms. Jensen: Please note that at this time during the program, you will see our 10 in-language Twitter feeds scrolling across the bottom of your screen. If you'd like to join us, you can do so in-language or you can do it at our @StateDept, our official State Department Twitter feed.*

*Our next question comes from Gay Center Rome: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that gay rights are human rights. This was a brave statement which challenged the countries in the world where homosexuality is considered as a crime, as well as those, like Italy, where attempts to legislate on these matters is met by strong resistance. What is the U.S. planning to do to promote gay rights around the world?*

**Mr. Baer:** We're – well, first of all, I would say that going back to what the Secretary said, if – your question, "What are we planning to do to promote gay rights around the world," the first answer is that when we take that on, we define that as promoting human rights for LGBT people, the same human rights that we promote and that Democratic and Republican administrations in the United States have seen as a hallmark of our foreign policy for many, many years. And so this is not a – this is not something new in that sense. This is making sure that our approach is inclusive and that we are really focusing, because fundamental to human rights is the idea that each and every person is entitled to them by virtue of being human, that we are indeed widening our focus and making sure that we are including each and every person in that focus, including LGBT people.

In more practical terms, what we're doing – we're doing a range of things. We engage diplomatically with partners around the world, in both places where this is a more difficult conversation and places where we're working with other governments who want to collaborate with us and help to secure



Daniel Baer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor



rights for everybody around the world. So we have a range of conversations ongoing with other governments at the government-to-government level. We have been very supportive of South Africa's leadership, particularly in the Human Rights Council, where a resolution was passed last June that the South Africans led on, and was co-sponsored by many others from all regions of the world that condemned violence against LGBT people. So we've been working in the UN fora to support that.

And then we've been working a lot on the ground, and I think one of the kind of theories of change that we ascribe to is the idea that progress on human rights generally is made from within, and the best thing that we can do often, as a government, is to really focus on supporting those who are making the case for change within their own societies. And sometimes that means shining a spotlight on their work because they can benefit from that, both in terms of getting their message out and also in keeping safe. Sometimes that means just having conversations with them or convening groups at our embassies or going out to meet with them and hear about the challenges that they're facing so that we can link them up to others who may be able to help. And in many places, we also provide grants that provide technical assistance, that help train people on advocacy, et cetera.

One of the things that I've found – and I try to meet with LGBT NGOs around the world when I travel – one of the things that I've found is many times, if there are LGBT NGOs that are working on these issues, they are isolated from other human rights NGOs, even in their country. And so one of the things that we've been focusing on is: How can we help these well-intentioned human rights defenders who are working on human rights for LGBT people?



What kind of training do they need? Do they need help learning how to run an organization? Do they need help learning how to put together a media campaign? Do they need help learning how to document abuses so that they can base their advocacy on factual records?

And so we're working very hard, and all of our embassies have been instructed to and are doing a great job of following up in local contexts to make sure that we're in touch with those who are working on advancing human rights for everyone within their own communities.

*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from a watch party in Suriname: Why are LGBT rights a priority for the U.S. Government?*

**Mr. Baer:** I think the answer to that is simply that human rights are a priority for the U.S. Government. When President Obama gave the Nobel lecture after he won the Nobel Prize, he talked about the fact that the only lasting peace would be a peace that was based on the inherent dignity of every person. And I think that one of the things that this Administration has recognized is that in many places around the world, as in our own past and present, LGBT people are often left out, pushed aside. They don't have access to social services. Sometimes they are thrown in jail, sometimes they are even killed for who they are. And that if we believe that human rights apply to everyone and that human – that a world that respects human rights is more likely to be safe, prosperous, and good for all of us, then it stands to reason that we should be committed to human rights for everyone.

And because in many places, LGBT people, like other minority groups, other vulnerable groups, are left out and pushed aside, it makes sense to focus concerted effort on making sure that our human rights policy and that human rights protections around the world include everyone.

*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from Stefano Bolognini: Today, Mrs. Elsa Fornero, Italian minister of welfare and equal opportunities, declared her full commitment to the fight against any discrimination of homosexual and transgender people. In your opinion, and also considering the action of your government on this issue, which steps should be taken by a democratic nation against this kind of discrimination? And as regards to the American Administration, what are the initiatives that you will undertake within the United Nations in order to achieve a full decriminalization of homosexuality throughout the world?*



**Mr. Baer:** I haven't yet seen the minister's comments, but I think one answer to your question about what can be done is obviously to have ministers make those kinds of public commitments. I think it has a great impact on all of those. Obviously, certainly, when Secretary Clinton says something, I'm listening, and I take that as a signal toward what I should do. So I believe that in other governments as well, when the minister talks the people below the minister listen and it changes the way they do their business. And so I think having the minister speak out is a great step. I think there are a range of tools, and oftentimes there are domestic institutions that allow for review, whether that's through the courts or through nation human rights commissions or through consultations with judicial experts, et cetera.

I think there are a range of ways to review the current domestic law and regulations and to identify areas that may need to be revised. And so I think once there is commitment and political will behind a particular change in policy, then the question becomes largely a practical one of how do you go about implementing it. And the u.s. experience has been one way, and there are many others to draw from.

So in respect to your question about the UN, as I said, we've really been very supportive of South Africa's leadership on this issue at the Human Rights Council and we intend to continue to support South Africa and their leadership. There will be a panel discussion at the Human Rights Council on March 7th during the March session, where human rights of LGBT people will be discussed. So that's the next upcoming event, and we're looking forward to that. We think that that will be another chance to have a conversation.

There was a report that was issued recently in December by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which talked about various international legal instruments, parts of international human rights law, and how they apply to LGBT people. So that's another place where it hasn't been because we've been directly involved but it's another part of the UN that has been engaged on these issues. And as I said, we continue to be interested in working with our partners around the world. We're certainly not the only ones who are interested in this, and we continue to look to work with them not only bilaterally but also in the context of the UN as well.



*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from Sergey Ilupin from Russia, a blogger and LGBT activist: Russian law does not recognize LGBT as a social group and does not contain the term homophobia. It is impossible to prove the homophobic reasons of dismissal, beating, or murder of LGBT people. Moreover, the law prohibiting propaganda of homosexuality has recently been passed in a few regions of Russia. In fact, this law aims to paralyze the activity of LGBT rights organizations. What steps are you planning to take to help us overcome this situation?*

**Mr. Baer:** The situation in Russia is obviously very difficult, and we are well aware of that. To – I think the first step is there are many places where LGBT is not called out as a particular vulnerable group that needs protection, and in those cases – and indeed, in the U.S. hate crimes law has been a recent innovation and in the last few years. And so I think where there isn't specific protection in the law, you have to rely on the general protections that apply to everyone. Now, I understand that in various contexts even those protections are not firm enough supports and that they are unevenly applied and often discriminatorily applied. And that is a real challenge. I think as much as possible, appealing to general protections of freedom of expression or freedom of association is obviously the legal route that is available.

Now, you also raise the worrying trend, which we've seen not only in Russia but in other places around the world, of trying to limit speech as a way of trying to curtail various forms of citizen participation in government or citizen activism. And I think one of the things that really needs to be highlighted about these kinds of laws, the laws that say you can't talk about homosexuality, is that they're not just a limitation of speech for LGBT people, they're a limitation of speech for all Russians or all people, all citizens of whatever states in which they might be – or municipalities in which they might be considered. And so they are a violation of international standards of freedom of expression, and we should argue against them not because we're seeking to protect one particular community but because we're seeking to protect that standard of freedom of expression for everyone.

In terms of the specific instances that you raise, I think we've been very clear in our disagreement with that kind of legislation, and we will continue to urge that such legislation is not a way forward that is consistent with international human rights obligations and that it's unlikely to solve any problems that it may be identified as solving.



*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from Julian Neaves : Will there be any penalties for countries that refuse to adopt anti-discriminatory policies?*

**Mr. Baer:** The Secretary's speech really laid out what we see as an affirmative policy. Really, it was a commitment to engage in a conversation with partners and with those who have much more progress to make around the world on making sure that rights are secured for everyone. So it was not intended to be a message about penalties or demerits or detractions. It was intended to be an affirmative message about the value that we can all derive out of seeing that everyone is protected. So that's really the aim of our policy right now, and that's the aim of our assistance to the extent that we're investing in grants for NGOs, et cetera.

What we're trying to do is help make sure that when we invest in civil society abroad that we're making sure that we're investing in civil society across the board, including civil society that advocates on behalf of vulnerable groups like LGBT people. So this isn't – this wasn't meant to be a threatening message. It was an invitation to a conversation and to an opportunity to make progress in all societies, including our own.

*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from Embassy Warsaw: We know that the U.S. Secretary of State monitors human rights situations across the globe. What is the mechanism of reacting for cases of violation of LGBT rights by other countries? In other words, how is the U.S. Government going to react in the case of violation of LGBT right across the world?*

**Mr. Baer:** That's a good question about the – kind of how we operationalize the policy, and it's one of the things that we've been working on internally. But I would say that the Secretary, over a year ago, sent out a message to all of our ambassadors around the world asking them to engage on human rights for LGBT people as part of our comprehensive human rights policy. And obviously we rely on – in all aspects of our foreign policy, we rely on our embassies around the world to really give us a heads up when things are happening and to let us know what their assessment is of facts on the ground and how we might be – how, if at all, we might be most effective in reaching out to the government or making any kind of public comment or reaching out to help an activist who may in trouble, those kinds of things.

And I've been really thrilled in the last few years to see how embassies are, around the world, are taking seriously this work. We've always had a great



relationship with embassies in terms of their feeding back into Washington cases of concern about activists who get in trouble for speaking out or for advocating for women's rights or for taking on a corrupt judiciary or things like that. And so that has continued, and we've seen that embassies have, in many cases, raised cases of LGBT people who get in trouble or raise cases of laws that are being contemplated that we ought to be aware of and that we ought to be considering how we can make the case that those laws are not necessary and would be counterproductive. So we really rely on our embassies a lot for the hard work that they do every day. There's a human rights officer in every embassy around the world who makes it their primary responsibility to follow these issues, and we have a great partnership with them back here in Washington.

*Ms. Jensen: Our next question comes from Embassy Kyiv in the Ukraine: LGBT individuals in Ukraine have no protection against being fired if their sexual orientation or gender identity is discovered. Has the U.S. considered working with American chambers of commerce, the Foreign Commercial Service, or economic sections in embassies to encourage U.S. firms working abroad or international firms in any country to adopt LGBT-friendly human relations policies?*

**Mr. Baer:** You've hit on something that we are in conversations right now about how best to engage the private sector. It's something that a lot of people have raised that the private sector really has an opportunity to play a role here, and how should we talk to them about that. One of the reasons that people bring this up, of course, is that in the American context, it's a little-known fact, but in the u.s. there is no federal legislation protecting – right now protecting LGBT people against discriminatory firing and employment. However, the American private sector has really led the way. And so I believe – I don't know what the exact proportion is, but it's the vast, vast majority of Fortune 500 companies have as a matter of corporate policy nondiscrimination policies that include LGBT people.

And the private sector has led the way on this, because it makes sense for business that you don't want to lose out on any talent for a silly reason. And so they've made their own choices, and I think that there certainly is an opportunity. It's probably the case that that principle applies in other places around the world as well, and so there's certainly an opportunity for the private sector to lead in other places around the world as well. And that's a conversation that



I've started to have with a few friends in the private sector who have raised it with me, but we'll be continuing to talk to friends, including in the chambers of commerce, et cetera, about what the opportunities are.

*Ms. Jensen: We have another question from Suriname: What would you say to the people who claim that LGBT rights is a Western product with its promotion of a form of imperialism?*

**Mr. Baer:** I think I would refer back to what the Secretary said in her speech. There has long been a myth that being LGBT is a Western phenomenon and that therefore the commitment to protect LGBT people is a peculiarly Western thing. I think that demeans non-Western societies. Non-Western societies have commitments to human rights just like Western ones and have concepts of universalism just like Western ones, and I don't see their commitments as any less valuable or real when compared to Western societies.

And so the commitment to human rights is a commitment to human rights for everyone. And I think that as a matter of history it's interesting, because one of the things that I hear when I talk to folks often – I travel often in Africa, and one of the things I hear there is to say that protecting LGBT rights is – the human rights for LGBT people is a Western thing is actually a complete inversion, because, in most cases, the provisions and law that are discriminatory or that criminalize LGBT conduct or status are legacies of imperialism. They were left by Western governments and are still in place.

And so I don't think the right way to approach this is that it applies to one region of the world. It applies to all regions of the world. Neither – it's important to note – neither are the problems that LGBT people face solely non-Western phenomenon. There are problems that LGBT people face in my country and all over the countries in Europe. There are still hate crimes in the United States. There is still discrimination in the United States. This is something that we all can work on and that there're improvements to be made in every country around the world. So it's not a Western thing; it's a universal thing. And being gay isn't a Western thing; it's a human thing.

*Ms. Jensen: The next question comes from Matthew Jenkin: When the U.S. is still very much divided on gay rights issues such as marriage; does that lessen the impact of America's pressure on other countries to establish LGBT equal rights?*

**Mr. Baer:** As I said earlier, I think that we have a general commitment in our



approach to foreign policy to lead by example. And so obviously, domestic policy has implications in how we are understood internationally. And it's well understood that we have an ongoing conversation domestically about the question of marriage; however, I think that even for those who don't recognize a difference in kind in the question of marriage or the question of decriminalization, I think that you can recognize a difference in degree between the question of marriage and whether or not somebody should be killed or thrown in prison for who they are.

And so I think that we've found that the conversation about the fact that nobody should be killed or beaten or abused for who they are or who they love, that's conversation that we can have with many, many partners around the world, and including in places where some people are surprised that the reception is collaborative and productive. So I think that's something that everyone can agree on and that we'll continue to expect that other conversations will continue not only in the United States but also in other places around the world.

*Ms. Jensen: Rob Salerno wants to know: It's been well known that the U.S.-based evangelical organizations have been supporting efforts at criminalizing homosexuality in many countries, notably Uganda. Does the U.S. bear any responsibility for these actions? And if so, how can the U.S. prevent American organizations from undermining LGBT rights abroad?*

**Mr. Baer:** We wouldn't – we don't seek to limit the activities of civil society or religious groups domestically or internationally, and there are many, many American groups that do enormously good work around the world. I know that there are reports of a number of organizations that have been advocating for laws that have, as their ultimate effect, a limitation on the human rights not only of LGBT people but of other people. Because many times these laws cast a very wide net, and obviously it's very important to understand the context in which you're working in order to be able to know what kinds of effects your actions will take.

One of the things that – as I've talked with the religious community here, one of the things that I've been asked to do and that I've tried to do domestically is to engage in a conversation about how religious organizations that are doing work abroad can best understand the context in which they're working and what the implications or the effects of their work might be. I spoke at



conference at the Union Theological Seminary in New York in October and talked about the challenge of reconciling religious beliefs that hold that homosexuality is a sin with the commitment that each person is entitled to dignity and should be free from violence or being thrown in prison for who they are.

And I think that's a – it's a serious conversation, and we shouldn't shy away from it. And there are religious people who are willing to have that conversation, and we should engage in that conversation and really identify the way forward that allows us to do justice to both. And one of the things that Secretary Clinton said in her speech, which I deeply believe, is that for many of us religious beliefs are a great source of meaning, they help us understand the world around us, and they help us – they give meaning to our daily life. And at the same time, for many of us, the person who we choose to make a life with and who we love is also a great source of meaning and gives us a way to understand the world around us. So the ultimate effect of both of those things can be something that is enlarging, and we want to make sure that we are protecting the space for each individual to pursue not only his or her religious beliefs but also to be able to live a life of dignity.

*Ms. Jensen: We have time for one more question, and it comes from Claudia Calleja from the Times of Malta: Two lesbian teenage girls were recently beaten up in Malta because of their sexual orientation. Various organizations called for better legal protection for LGBT people. What measures should governments take to protect LGBT people from such attacks?*

**Mr. Baer:** Well, I think the focus on better legal protection is a good one. I think one of the things that we see around world is that when crimes or abuses go unpunished or uninvestigated they are more likely to be repeated. And so one of the things that any society can do to help combat violence or abuse against any vulnerable group is to get serious about investigating and redouble efforts to investigate and prosecute those who are responsible. And that's something that we've struggled with domestically throughout the decades but that we've gotten increasingly better at. And we have an entire division at our Department of Justice that prosecutes cases of discrimination. We now have a federal hate crimes law, and so we can prosecute federal hate crimes. And I think really focusing on that legal aspect is important.

But of course, there's also the broader commitment which those laws evidence, and so again, here, this is a time where it's an opportunity for



leaders to speak out and to condemn violence against anyone and to say that it shouldn't be part of a democratic and rights respecting society and that it won't be tolerated. And I think the opportunities for leadership – whenever somebody who is vulnerable is being pushed out, pushed down, cast aside, violated in some way, there's an opportunity for leadership to step up and to reject that and to say that that's not the kind of society in which we want to live. And so I think both the legal aspect and the political aspect are opportunities here.

*Ms. Jensen: Well, that's all the time we have for today. I'd like – I know that there are a lot of questions still pending in the queue, and I'd like to apologize, but we got to as many of your questions as we could in the 30 minutes we had. I'd like to thank you all for the amazing questions and I'd like to thank you for joining us today. There will be a full audio and video clip of today's program available shortly after the conclusion of today's webchat. If you'd like to get the latest information from the State Department, you can do so by following us on any of our ten in-language Twitter feeds, or you can continue this conversation now on Twitter using the Twitter handle @StateDept and the hashtag #dignity4all. That's dignity, the number 4, all. We look forward to doing this again with you in the near future. Have a great day.*

Source: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ime/182834.htm> (03/13/2012)

## Obama Administration Record for the LGBT Community

*“Every single American – gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transgender – every single American deserves to be treated equally in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of our society. It's a pretty simple proposition.”*

– President Barack Obama, October 1, 2011

President Obama values every American, and his Administration has made historic strides to expand opportunity, advance equality, honor differences and level the playing field for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people and communities. The President's efforts have included major legislative achievements such as the repeal of “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” as well as



significant administrative actions in support of equality. The Obama Administration's record in support of the LGBT community includes:

- **Repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell:** The President signed the bill to repeal Don't Ask Don't Tell on December 22, 2010, putting in motion the end of a discriminatory policy that ran counter to our values as Americans. As of September 20, 2011, when the repeal took effect, gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans can serve openly in our Armed Forces and without fear of losing their jobs for who they are and who they love.
- **Ending the Legal Defense of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA):** In February 2011, the President and Attorney General announced that the Department of Justice would no longer defend Section 3 of DOMA against equal protection constitutional challenges brought by same-sex couples married under state law. In July 2011, the White House announced the President's support of the Respect for Marriage Act, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressman Jerrold Nadler, which would repeal DOMA and uphold the principle that gay and lesbian couples should receive the same Federal rights and legal protections as straight couples. The President has long supported a legislative repeal of DOMA.
- **Signing Historic Hate Crimes Legislation:** President Obama overcame years of partisan gridlock to pass and sign the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law, which extends the coverage of Federal hate crimes law to include attacks based on the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Ensuring Hospital Visitation Rights for LGBT Patients and Their Loved Ones:** Following a directive from the President, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) now requires all hospitals receiving Medicare or Medicaid funds – just about every hospital in America – to allow visitation rights for LGBT patients. The President also directed HHS to ensure that medical decision-making rights of LGBT patients are respected.
- **Developing and Implementing a National HIV/AIDS Strategy:** President Obama fulfilled a pledge to those with HIV by developing and releasing the Nation's first comprehensive plan for responding to the domestic HIV epidemic. In 2009, President Obama signed legislation reauthorizing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program for four years to provide critical health services to uninsured and underinsured people living with HIV. The Administration has also prioritized funding increases for HIV prevention, care, and



research in each successive President's budget. In FY 2011, the Administration fought for and secured a \$50 million increase in appropriations for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) and a \$31 million increase for HIV prevention. President Obama continued this commitment in FY 2012, when he announced on World AIDS Day an additional \$35 million for ADAP and a \$15 million increase for Ryan White Part C medical clinics. Finally, the health reform legislation that the President signed into law, the Affordable Care Act, ensures that Americans have secure, stable, and affordable insurance, which will make it easier for people living with HIV and AIDS to obtain Medicaid and private health insurance and overcome barriers to care from qualified providers.

- **Expanding Access to Health Coverage:** The Affordable Care Act ensures that Americans have secure, stable, and affordable insurance. In 2014, insurance companies will no longer be able to discriminate against anyone due to a pre-existing condition, and because of the law, insurers can no longer turn someone away just because he or she is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. In addition, the federal website, HealthCare.gov, designed to help all consumers find the health insurance best suited to their needs, makes it easy to locate health insurers that cover domestic partners.
- **Addressing Health Care Disparities:** The Affordable Care Act is funding preventive efforts for communities, including millions of dollars to use evidence-based interventions to address tobacco control, obesity prevention, HIV-related health disparities, better nutrition and physical activity. In addition, the new health care law is making other investments that will help address health disparities. Funding is going toward building a more diverse and culturally competent health care workforce, as well as investing in community health centers to serve up to 20 million more patients. And through increased research and data collection on health disparities, policymakers will have the knowledge and tools they need to continue to address the health needs and concerns of the LGBT community.
- **Ensuring Equality for LGBT Federal Government Employees:** President Obama has taken numerous administrative actions to advance equality for LGBT Federal employees, setting an example for all employers. In response to the President's directive, the Office of Personnel Management is expanding Federal benefits for same-sex partners of Federal employees to the extent possible under current law, including by allowing same-sex domestic part-



ners to apply for long-term care insurance. The Administration's directive on same-sex domestic partner benefits also opened the door for the State Department to extend legally available benefits and allowances to same-sex domestic partners of members of the Foreign Service serving abroad.

- **Taking Steps to Ensure LGBT Equality in Housing and Crime Prevention:** The Administration announced the first ever national study of discrimination in housing against LGBT persons and, in January 2012, issued a final rule to ensure that the Department of Housing and Urban Development's core housing programs are open to all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Justice Department also issued guidance stating that Federal prosecutors should enforce criminal provisions in the Violence Against Women Act in cases involving same-sex relationships.
- **Preventing Bullying Against LGBT Students:** President Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services convened students, parents, and teachers, in addition to non-profit leaders, advocates, and policymakers, for the first-ever White House Conference on Bullying Prevention in March 2011. Early in the Obama Administration, six Federal agencies joined together to establish the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Steering Committee to explore ways to provide guidance on combating bullying to individuals and organizations. The Department of Education has issued guidance to support educators in combating bullying in schools by clarifying when student bullying may violate Federal education antidiscrimination laws. In June 2011, Secretary Duncan issued a "Dear Colleague" letter, accompanied by legal guidelines, reaffirming the rights of students to form Gay-Straight Alliances and other student groups under the Equal Access Act, noting the important role they can play in promoting safer schools and creating more welcoming learning environments. In addition, President Obama, Vice President Biden, and other Administration officials recorded "It Gets Better" video messages to address the issue of bullying and suicide among LGBT youth.
- **Advancing and Protecting the Rights of LGBT Persons around the World:** The Obama Administration continues to engage systematically with governments around the world to advance the rights of LGBT persons. The Administration's intensive and systematic leadership has included various public statements and resolutions at the UN. President Obama has also issued a



presidential memorandum that directs all Federal agencies engaged abroad to ensure that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons.

Source: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/LGBT\\_record.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/LGBT_record.pdf) (01/31/2013)

## Presidential Proclamation: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, 2012

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
June 01, 2012

### **BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A PROCLAMATION**

From generation to generation, ordinary Americans have led a proud and inexorable march toward freedom, fairness, and full equality under the law not just for some, but for all. Ours is a heritage forged by those who organized, agitated, and advocated for change; who wielded love stronger than hate and hope more powerful than insult or injury; who fought to build for themselves and their families a Nation where no one is a second-class citizen, no one is denied basic rights, and all of us are free to live and love as we see fit.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community has written a proud chapter in this fundamentally American story. From brave men and women who came out and spoke out, to union and faith leaders who rallied for equality, to activists and advocates who challenged unjust laws and marched on Washington, LGBT Americans and allies have achieved what once seemed inconceivable. This month, we reflect on their enduring legacy, celebrate the movement that has made progress possible, and recommit to securing the fullest blessings of freedom for all Americans.

Since I took office, my Administration has worked to broaden opportunity, advance equality, and level the playing field for LGBT people and communities. We have fought to secure justice for all under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act, and we have taken action to end



housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We expanded hospital visitation rights for LGBT patients and their loved ones, and under the Affordable Care Act, we ensured that insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage to someone just because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Because we understand that LGBT rights are human rights, we continue to engage with the international community in promoting and protecting the rights of LGBT persons around the world. Because we repealed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans can serve their country openly, honestly, and without fear of losing their jobs because of whom they love. And because we must treat others the way we want to be treated, I personally believe in marriage equality for same-sex couples.

More remains to be done to ensure every single American is treated equally, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Moving forward, my Administration will continue its work to advance the rights of LGBT Americans. This month, as we reflect on how far we have come and how far we have yet to go, let us recall that the progress we have made is built on the words and deeds of ordinary Americans. Let us pay tribute to those who came before us, and those who continue their work today; and let us rededicate ourselves to a task that is unending the pursuit of a Nation where all are equal, and all have the full and unfettered opportunity to pursue happiness and live openly and freely.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2012 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. I call upon the people of the United States to eliminate prejudice everywhere it exists, and to celebrate the great diversity of the American people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of June, in the year of our Lord two thousand twelve, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/01/presidential-proclamation-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-pride-mon> (01/31/2013)



## President Obama Supports Same-Sex Marriage

By Josh Ernest, White House Blog  
October 05, 2012

Yesterday, during an interview with ABC News, President Obama said, “I think same-sex couples should be able to get married.”

It’s no secret the President has gone through some soul-searching on this issue. He’s talked to the First Lady about it, like so many couples do. He’s heard from folks – gay and lesbian friends, staff members in long-term, loving relationships, as well as brave young servicemen and women he got to know through the fight to end Don’t, Ask Don’t Tell.

He’s sat around his kitchen table with Sasha and Malia, who have friends whose parents are same-sex couples. As the President said during the interview, “it wouldn’t dawn on them that somehow their friends’ parents would be treated differently. It doesn’t make sense to them. And frankly, that’s the kind of thing that prompts a change of perspective – not wanting to somehow explain to your child why somebody should be treated differently when it comes to eyes of the law.”

In the end, the President said, he believes it’s important to “treat others the way you would want to be treated.” We need to recognize that people are going to have differing views on marriage and those views, even if we disagree strongly, should be respected.

Newspapers across the country commented on yesterday’s news. Let’s take a look at a few of them:

**New York Times: “It Has Always Taken Strong National Leadership To Expand Equal Rights In This Country, And It Has Long Been Obvious That Marriage Rights Are No Exception. President Obama Offered Some Of That Leadership On Wednesday.”** “It has always taken strong national leadership to expand equal rights in this country, and it has long been obvious that marriage rights are no exception. President Obama offered some of that leadership on Wednesday. ‘I think same-sex couples should be able to get married,’ Mr. Obama said in an interview with ABC News that the White House arranged for the purpose of giving Mr. Obama a forum to say just that ... Mr. Obama consciously presented his change of position (he used to favor so-called



civil unions but not marriage) as a personal journey. He said he thought about ‘members of my own staff who are in incredibly committed monogamous relationships, same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together,’ and about ‘those soldiers or airmen or Marines or sailors who are out there fighting on my behalf and yet feel constrained, even now that ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ is gone, because they are not able to commit themselves in a marriage.’ That process will seem familiar to Americans of his and older generations who have reached the same place, or are still getting there. Polling shows that younger Americans have firmly supported same-sex marriage for some time. Mr. Obama said denial of marriage rights to same-sex couples ‘doesn’t make sense’ to his daughters. ‘Frankly, that’s the kind of thing that prompts a change in perspective,’ he said.” [The New York Times, 5/10/12]

**USA Today: “Symbolically, Obama’s Comment To ABC News That ‘Same-Sex Couples Should Be Able To Get Married’ Is An Important, Even Historic, Marker Of How Far Public Opinion Has Shifted.”** “Symbolically, Obama’s comment to ABC News that ‘same-sex couples should be able to get married’ is an important, even historic, marker of how far public opinion has shifted. No previous president has endorsed gay marriage ... To a large degree, Obama’s shift on the subject exemplifies the nation’s evolving views. Same-sex marriage is an idea that appears to be coming. (Support is at 71% for people ages 18–29 and just 21% for those 80 and older, Gallup found.)” [USA Today, 5/10/12]

**Boston Globe: “President Obama’s Support For Gay Marriage Marks The End Of An Evolution For The President And, To An Extent, For The Country. Obama Based His Change Of Heart On Simple Fairness ... His Commitment To Gay Marriage Puts Him On The Right Side Of History, And Demonstrates His Willingness To Embrace The Future.”** “President Obama’s support for gay marriage marks the end of an evolution for the president and, to an extent, for the country. Obama based his change of heart on simple fairness – ‘when I think of members of my own staff who are in incredibly committed monogamous relationships, same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together, when I think of soldiers or airmen or Marines or sailors...’ – and that is the crux of the matter: Respect for the principle of equal treatment, and an acknowledgment that the human yearning for love can lead to an equally human yearning for family ... His commitment to gay marriage puts him on the right side of



history, and demonstrates his willingness to embrace the future. It's never too late to do the right thing, and Obama's conversion should be a source of pride to himself and for the millions of backers of gay marriage who urged him on." [The Boston Globe, 5/10/12]

**New York Daily News: "In A National Conversation That Has Moved With Unprecedented Speed, Wednesday Was A Landmark: President Obama Pronounced Himself Personally Supportive Of Gay Marriage...Obama's Statement, Personal Though It Is, May Move The Conversation Further."** "In a national conversation that has moved with unprecedented speed, Wednesday was a landmark: President Obama pronounced himself personally supportive of gay marriage ... Now, speaking with ABC News' Robin Roberts, he explained his shift by saying of himself and the First Lady: 'We are both practicing Christians, and obviously this position may be considered to put us at odds with the views of others, but, you know, when we think about our faith, the thing at root that we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing Himself on our behalf, but it's also the golden rule, you know, treat others the way you would want to be treated.' But he stopped short of declaring marriage equality a civil right – rightly leaving the issue for citizens and legislatures of states to sort out ... Obama's statement, personal though it is, may move the conversation further." [New York Daily News, 5/10/12]

**Kansas City Star: "In A National Conversation That Has Moved With Unprecedented Speed, Wednesday Was A Landmark: President Obama Pronounced Himself Personally Supportive Of Gay Marriage....The Time Is Clearly Turning. And For The First Time, The Millions Of Gay And Lesbian Americans Who Want Nothing Less Than The Full Privileges Of Citizenship Can Claim The President Of The United States As An Ally."** "In a national conversation that has moved with unprecedented speed, Wednesday was a landmark: President Obama pronounced himself personally supportive of gay marriage. In an interview with Robin Roberts of ABC News, Obama offered a well-crafted and nuanced explanation of how he transitioned from supporting legal rights and short of marriage for same-sex couples to endorsing legal nuptials ... Unfortunately, 30 states, including Kansas and Missouri, have laws banning gay marriage. North Carolina joined the list on Tuesday with a public vote. But the time is clearly turning. And for the first time, the millions of gay and lesbian Ameri-



cans who want nothing less than the full privileges of citizenship can claim the president of the United States as an ally.” [Kansas City Star, 5/10/12]

**Baltimore Sun: “President Barack Obama’s Announcement That He Supports Gay Marriage Is A Heartening Development In The Campaign For Equality, And It Is Commendable That He Made His View Public Before The November Election Rather Than Afterward.”** “President Barack Obama’s announcement that he supports gay marriage is a heartening development in the campaign for equality, and it is commendable that he made his view public before the November election rather than afterward ... So far, every state that has held a vote on gay marriage has rejected it. But Maryland could be the place where that streak ends, and President Obama can help. Talking about the issue might not do much to advance his electoral prospects (though it probably wouldn’t hurt them much either). But it could do a great deal to advance the cause of justice.” [Baltimore Sun, 5/10/12]

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/05/10/obama-supports-same-sex-marriage>  
(01/31/2013)

## Remarks for “Pride Month” by Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State

Washington, D.C.  
June 8, 2012

I am honored to join you to celebrate the fundamental freedoms that all human beings deserve – no matter who they are or whom they love. This month, and every month, we proudly reaffirm our commitment to making sure that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

In the United States and around the world, progress is being made. The tireless advocacy of generations is bending the arc of history. Barriers are being torn down, discriminatory laws repealed, and millions are now able to live more freely and participate in the future of their communities and countries.



But there is still much more to be done. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender men and women continue to be persecuted and attacked. They are arrested, beaten, terrorized, and even executed.

United States Embassies and Missions throughout the world are working to defend the rights of LGBT people of all races, religions, and nationalities as part of our comprehensive human rights policy and as a priority of our foreign policy. From Riga, where two U.S. Ambassadors and a Deputy Assistant Secretary marched in solidarity with Baltic Pride; to Nassau, where the Embassy joined together with civil society to screen a film about LGBT issues in Caribbean societies; to Albania, where our Embassy is coordinating the first-ever regional Pride conference for diplomats and activists to discuss human rights and shared experiences. And through the Global Equality Fund that I launched last December, we have strengthened our support for civil society and programs to protect and promote human rights.

We will not rest until full and equal rights are a reality for everyone. History proves that the march toward equality and justice will overcome barriers of intolerance and discrimination. But it requires a concerted effort from all of us. No matter how long the road ahead, I'm confident that we will travel it successfully together.

Wherever you are celebrating this month, I wish you a happy Pride.

Source: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/06/192136.htm> (01/31/2013)



Senior Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs Paula Uribe during her LiveAt-State interview on LGBT Pride Month



## Live at State with Paula Uribe on LGBT Pride Month

Paula Uribe, Senior Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs  
Washington, D.C.  
June 26, 2012

*Mr. Ostick: Good morning, my name is William Ostick, Spokesperson for Department of State Western Hemisphere Affairs; I welcome you today to Live State. This is a new interactive space, a video platform to communicate with international media. Our topic today relates to the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual community, and the LGBT Pride Month that just took place. If you want to participate, you can send your questions via Twitter, using #AskUSA. Today, with us is Paula Uribe, Senior Advisor at the Department of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. Welcome Paula.*

**Ms. Uribe:** Thank you, Will.

*Mr. Ostick: Our participants are welcome to send their questions; please use the lower part of your screen where you can see the “questions” title. We welcome your questions and we will try to answer as many as possible within the time that we have available. We also invite you to browse our Twitter @USAenEspañol. We have about 20 minutes. Let’s start with some words from Paula Uribe. Paula?*



**Ms. Uribe:** Good morning. Thank you for being with us today. We want to speak with you about the rights of the LGBT community, and we are doing this to celebrate Gay Pride month. Thank you, and I think that we can start with questions.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you Paula. Please use the lower part of your screen to start sending your questions. Paula, could you start explaining why Gay Pride Month is celebrated?*

**Ms. Uribe:** Gay Pride Month is an event that is celebrated in the month of June, commemorating the riots that happened at Stonewall, a bar in New York, where a police raid took place and the gay community decided that it was time to fight for its rights as citizens of this country.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you. We have a question here from Federico Ruiz Mora; I think it comes from Colombia. "What priority does the United States Government place on LGBT organizations in Colombia and Latin America?"*

**Ms. Uribe:** For us, it is very important that organizations advocating for the rights of the LGBT community are empowered and that they have the capacity to fight for its rights within their own countries and around the world.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much. "And what is the Department of State doing to promote the rights of the LGBT community?"*

**Ms. Uribe:** We are doing many things to promote the rights of the LGBT community. Obviously, this is a mandate that comes from above. It comes from our president and Secretary Clinton, in which, we as a government, believe that human rights are fundamental; respect for human rights is fundamental and all citizens must have these rights, and they must be respected by all governments and their citizens. To achieve this protection for the LGBT community, we are carrying out bilateral talks with other governments. We promote agreements in multilateral forums, such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States, OAS. We also communicate with NGOs across the world to monitor how people are being treated, and I think this is just part of what we do, because we do a lot more. Empowering, we help with skills, training people at NGOs, training police, training judges and prosecutors to implement respect for all citizens.



*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much. Let me remind all participants that you can send in your questions via e-mail to [Live@state.gov](mailto:Live@state.gov), spelled with a small v, or you can use the participation screen, under questions. Also, send in your questions via #AskUSA. Paula, recently, some decisions were made in the United States favoring gay marriages. What is the position of the United States towards homosexual marriage around the world?*

**Ms. Uribe:** What we want is protection for basic human rights. We believe that each country has its own laws and each country must decide on the laws they have. Obviously, we have states where gay marriage has been approved and our president has been very clear that equality is something very important and that all citizens should have it. In any case, the United States Government does not yet have a unified position. This will be voted on at some point in time, but at this time, only eight states of the union have gay marriage.

*Mr. Ostick: We have a question here from Mexico; Judith Garcia, from El Sol de Mexico newspaper is asking us: “Countries where human rights for LGBT organizations are violated the most; and another question: “And what has been the position of the government when dealing with crimes related to different sexual preferences? Are the cases investigated, or are they just filed?”*

**Ms. Uribe:** Well, this ... In the Western Hemisphere region, the situation is mixed. Anyway, there are many cases where the human rights of people belonging to the LGBT community are violated more than others. We have countries in this region that still consider it a crime to be an adult and have an adult homosexual relationship. These, in particular are the English-speaking Caribbean countries. There are eleven countries that have these laws. In Latin American countries where these laws which criminalize this behavior do not exist, there still are socio-cultural attitudes that promote violence and discrimination against the LGBT community. Obviously, in many cases, crimes against people in this community may not be filed sometimes or they take a long time to solve, and sometimes, these crimes are not properly accounted for, and there is not much willingness to investigate them.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you Paula. Let me remind participants that can send in your questions via Twitter. You can follow us on Twitter at #AskUSA. We have another question here from Federico Ruiz Mora from Colombia: “Rights violations against LGBT population are very pronounced. How is the State Department mediating*



*with the Colombian government to prevent and reduce these right violations?”*

**Ms. Uribe:** Well, we have several instruments. We publish an annual report on human rights including a section that shows these crimes – human rights violations related to sexual orientation and gender identity. This is one of the items which are published annually, and it forces states to be more aware about what is happening in those countries. With the Colombian Government, we always, as with all governments, have discussions as allies. We have always stated that our country also does not have a perfect situation, but we are trying to do something about it, and we would like other countries to also have responsibility regarding the facts affecting this community, and to carry out campaigns to prevent violence, bullying and discrimination against any citizen. But when we have discussions regarding the LGBT community, obviously, it is done with the LGBT community in mind.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you. And a question [inaudible] little; is from Zayuri Tivaduisa from Colombia again. “What projects are we working on with the Colombian government and what type of follow up will be carried out?”*

**Ms. Uribe:** We... Thank you very much for the question; we have a lot of projects to support the Colombian Government; we have training for judges, for prosecutors, as I said before. We are working a lot with police and obviously, protection for all citizens is very important to us and this includes the LGBT community.

*Mr. Ostick: Very well. A question now from Mexico, from Enrique Torres Molina. A little... a domestic matter, but... “During the Obama administration, the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy was abolished. Equal marriage was established in New York and Obama himself declared his support for this right. What will happen in the following administration? What are the next steps that the Federal Government will take on matters related to LGBT rights?”*

**Ms. Uribe:** At this time, we do not know what may happen. This depends on who wins the elections in November. Obviously, if President Obama is reelected, I believe he will continue our policies to promote the rights of the LGBT community. For him, it is very important that all citizens in this country enjoy equal rights, that everyone enjoy the same rights, and I believe if he’s reelected, this will be a priority for the Obama Administration.



*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much; and here from Federico Ruiz Mora, again. “This annual report, is it public? And, where is it available?”*

**Ms. Uribe:** Yes. The annual report is available to the public. It describes all types of violations against people, including freedom of expression, violations against human rights related to gender issues, torture, etc. And it is a public report; you can find it at [humanrights.gov](http://humanrights.gov), spelled with a small ‘v’.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much. And does the United States condition its aid on respect for LGBT rights?*

**Ms. Uribe:** Actually, this is not the case. We... this was a misunderstanding that occurred after some declarations in December from Secretary Clinton and from President Obama; we sent a memo to all agencies operating overseas, and it is not the case. We do condition our aid, if needed, when there are human right violations in general. If a government violates human rights systematically, we evaluate, our Congress evaluates whether aid is given to a government or not.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much. And what plans do we have to promote rights in the immediate future?*

**Ms. Uribe:** We will continue with the plans that we have at this time; which is to train NGOs, civil society. We believe they have the right to fight for the rights in their countries. We will continue to insist on the protection of human rights for the LGBT community through multilateral organizations such as the OAS, the United Nations, and will continue holding bilateral talks with governments, asking them to do everything in their power so that the LGBT community benefits from equal rights and is protected from violence, discrimination, and all other types of violations of their rights.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much. Let me remind again that you can participate via Twitter, using #AskUSA, #AskUSA. Now we have an incoming question from Luis Garcia from El Sol de Mexico: “Which are the most of violated rights against the LGBT community?”*

**Ms. Uribe:** Well, actually the right to life is one of the rights that is violated the most against the LGBT community. The right to expression, the right to personal safety. In general, these are their rights that are violated the most; the right to a dignified life, to work and education.



*Mr. Ostick: And how is the judicial framework for LGBT across the hemisphere? Which other countries have laws that support the rights of the LGBT communities?*

**Ms. Uribe:** Well, there are many countries and they are growing little by little; countries that have, that are creating laws to protect LGBT communities. There are countries, such as Mexico, Bolivia, Argentina. Chile is now promoting an antidiscrimination law. Colombia has an antidiscrimination law that was signed recently by the president, where sexual orientation and gender identity are issues protected by these antidiscrimination laws. Brazil is also leaning towards this path, but actually, there is a lot left to do in this hemisphere to protect the LGBT community. And compliance with law is also an issue for the authorities.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much. And, what can our participants do to create awareness ... [laughter], this is a hard word for me to say ... Please tell me the word ...*

**Ms. Uribe:** Yes, create awareness ...

*Mr. Ostick: What can they do to try to participate?*

**Ms. Uribe:** Well, I think it is very important that community members be aware of their rights, of what their rights are within international law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights places great importance on rights for all citizens without any exception. And they must know what these are. They need to learn a little about their rights within their domestic law, local laws in their countries, and see how they can ask for these rights to be respected.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you, and Federico Ruiz Mora asks what are the strategies implemented in the United States to prevent bullying.*

**Ms. Uribe:** We have a lot of strategies. This is a serious problem affecting us all. But every day there is more awareness about this problem, on how to prevent it. There are awareness campaigns, where even the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, many celebrities have come out. There are some videos called “It gets better,” and they speak about how serious bullying is and how to avoid it. Besides these campaigns in schools, there is much more attention on this and this is considered a very serious issue. It used to be that bullying was something like ... people would take it as something inherent to human beings. This is not the case nowadays. People now know that bullying is a very serious issue and that it must be prevented because it is causing very serious problems. For example, suicides are up among the



teenage population, which is a very vulnerable population here in the United States. Teenage suicide levels have increased substantially, and in particular, in the LGBT community.

*Mr. Ostick: Thank you very much Paula.*

*Ms. Uribe: Thank you.*

*Mr. Ostick: Unfortunately, our scheduled time is coming to an end. I thank the 14 attendees for their participation, and our Embassy in La Paz. And on behalf of Live State, I thank you all and I bid you greetings from Washington. Good day and until the next time.*

Source: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ime/194607.htm> (01/31/2013)

## Remarks at the 20th Anniversary of GLIFAA by Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State

Benjamin Franklin Room  
Washington, D.C.  
November 28, 2012

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all, very much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. *(Laughter.)* Thank you, all. Thank you.

Yeah, that's good. *(Laughter.)* Wow. Well, welcome to the Ben Franklin Room. *(Laughter.)* And congratulations on your 20th anniversary. I am so pleased to be here and to have this chance to join this celebration. Ken, thank you for your kind words and your efforts here to make this day possible. I am extremely pleased that Cheryl Mills, my friend as well as Chief of Staff and Counselor is here, so that those of you who may not have met her or even seen her, given how shy and retiring she is – *(laughter)* – can express your appreciation to her for her tireless efforts.

I'm delighted that Deputy Secretary Tom Nides is here. Tom, who some of you know, who you've had a chance to work with him, has been just an extraordinary deputy. Also let me recognize USAID Deputy Administrator



Don Steinberg. He's been an unyielding advocate for the LGBT community at USAID. We also have a number of ambassadors and deputy chiefs of mission, both past and present, some of whom have literally traveled from the other side of the world to be here. David, I'm talking about you. And we have Michael Guest with us, our country's first out ambassador to be confirmed by the Senate and someone who's remained an outspoken champion for LGBT rights, despite having to endure countless attacks and threats. Michael, why don't you stand up so that you can be recognized? (*Applause.*)

Also let me thank the GLIFAA board and members. I just had a chance to meet the board and former presidents. I don't think I've ever been in a room with so many former presidents. (*Laughter.*) The last count was maybe five. (*Laughter.*) But it's really due to their leadership over 20 years that GLIFAA has reached this milestone, and it will be up to all of you and those who come after you to keep the work going for the next 20 and the 20 after that.

Now, it wasn't really that long ago since this organization was created, but in many ways it was a completely different world. As we heard, in 1992 you could be fired for being gay. Just think about all of the exceptional public servants, the brilliant strategists, the linguists, the experts fired for no reason other than their sexual orientation. Think of what our country lost because we were unable to take advantage of their hard work, expertise, and experience. And the policy forced people to make terrible choices, to hide who they were from friends and colleagues, to lie or mislead, to give up their dreams of serving their country altogether.

That began to change, in part because of the brave employees here at State, who decided that it was time for the bigotry, the ignorance, the lying, and discrimination to end. The LGBT community deserve the same chance as anyone else to serve. And indeed, as we all know, many had for many years, just without acknowledgment of who they were. So enough was enough, and that's how GLIFAA was formed. And thank goodness it was.

We've come a long way since then, and we have seen milestones along that journey over the last 20 years. I remember that I think on my husband's first day in office back in '93, he announced that gays and lesbians working in the Federal Government would receive equal treatment under the Civil Service Reform Act. Two years later, Secretary Warren Christopher made clear those rules would be enforced within the halls of the State Department when he issued a statement that explicitly prohibited discrimination on the basis of



Secretary Clinton delivers remarks at GLIFAA 20th anniversary event

sexual orientation. — Now over the past four years, we've built on those and other steps to really acknowledge and welcome LGBT people into the State Department family and other agencies. We've extended benefits to same-sex domestic partners of State and USAID employees, Foreign Service officers, personal service contractors, third country nationals at missions overseas. We've institutionalized these changes by creating a classification for same-sex domestic partners in the Foreign Affairs manual. We've also made it clear in our Equal Opportunity Employment statement that the Department doesn't discriminate on the basis of gender identity or expression.

We've helped to make it easier for transgender Americans to change the gender listed on their passports, because our mission is not only to protect the rights and dignity of our colleagues, but also of the American people we serve.

And we've taken this message all over the world, including the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, where we worked to pass the first ever UN resolution affirming the human rights of LGBT people.

Now, together we have worked to make something very simple and right come true. Our people should not have to choose between serving the country they love and sharing a life with the people they love. And I want to say a few words about why this work is so important.



Now, leaders of all kinds will stand in front of audiences like this and tell you that our most important asset is our people. And of course, that's especially true in diplomacy, where we try to be very diplomatic all the time. But what our success truly depends on is our ability to forge strong relationships and relate to people of all backgrounds. And what that means for me, as your Secretary, is that creating an LGBT-welcoming workplace is not just the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do.

In part, that's because the nature of diplomacy has changed, and we should and need to keep up. Today we expect our diplomats to build relationships not just with their counterparts in foreign governments, but with people from every continent and every walk of life. And in order to do that, we need a diplomatic corps that is as diverse as the world we work in.

It's also smart because it makes us better advocates for the values that we hold dear. Because when anyone is persecuted anywhere, and that includes when LGBT people are persecuted or kept from fully participating in their societies, they suffer, but so do we. We're not only robbed of their talents and ideas, we are diminished, because our commitment to the human rights of all people has to be a continuing obligation and mission of everyone who serves in the Government of the United States. So this is a mission that I gladly assume. We have to set the example and we have to live up to our own values.

And finally, we are simply more effective when we create an environment that encourages people to bring their whole selves to work, when they don't have to hide a core part of who they are, when we recognize and reward people for the quality of their work instead of dismissing their contributions because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

So really, I'm here today to say thank you to all of you. Thank you for your courage and resolve, for your willingness to keep going despite the obstacles – and for many of you, there were and are many. Thank you for pushing your government to do what you know was right, not just for yourselves but for all who come after you.

I want to mention one person in particular who was a key part of this fight, Tom Gallagher. I met Tom earlier. Where is Tom? There you are, Tom. Tom joined the Foreign Service in 1965 and in the early 1970s he risked his career when he came out and became the first openly gay Foreign Service officer. He served in the face of criticism and threats, but that did not stop him from



serving. I wanted to take this moment just to recognize him, but also to put into context what this journey has meant for people of Tom's and my vintage, because I don't want any of you who are a lot younger ever to take for granted what it took for people like Tom Gallagher to pave the way for all of you. It's not a moment for us to be nostalgic. It is a moment for us to remember and to know that all of the employees who sacrificed their right to be who they were were really defending your rights and the rights and freedoms of others at home and abroad.

And I want to say a special word about why we are working so hard to protect the rights of LGBT people around the world. And Dan Baer, who works on this along with Mike Posner and Maria Otero, have been great champions of standing up for the rights of LGBT communities and individuals.

We have come such a long way in the United States. Tom Gallagher is living proof of that. And think about what it now means to be a member of a community in this country that is finally being recognized and accepted far beyond what anyone could have imagined just 20 years ago. And remind yourself, as I do every day, what it must be like for a young boy or a young girl in some other part of the world who could literally be killed, and often has been and still will be, who will be shunned, who will be put in danger every day of his or her life.

And so when I gave that speech in Geneva and said that we were going to make this a priority of American foreign policy, I didn't see it as something special, something that was added on to everything else we do, but something that was integral to who we are and what we stand for. And so those who serve today in the State Department have a new challenge to do everything you can at State and AID and the other foreign affairs agencies to help keep widening that circle of opportunity and acceptance for all those millions of men and women who may never know your name or mine, but who because of our work together will live lives of not only greater safety but integrity.

So this is not the end of the story. There's always more we can do to live our values and tap the talents of our people. It's going to be an ongoing task for future Secretaries of State and Administrators at AID and for people at every level of our government. So even as we celebrate 20 years with Ben Franklin looking down at us, I want you to leave this celebration thinking about what more each and every one of you can do – those who are currently serving in



our government, those who have served in the past, and those who I hope will decide to serve – to make not only the agencies of our government but our world more just and free for all people.

Thank you very much. (*Applause.*)

Source: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/11/201170.htm> (01/31/2013)



## Remarks at the 20th Anniversary of GLIFAA by Kenneth Kero-Mentz, GLIFAA President

Benjamin Franklin Room  
Washington, D.C.  
November 28, 2012

Thank you, David, for that reminder of where we have been and how far LGBT employees of the foreign affairs agencies have come in these last twenty years. And thank you to all of our speakers – Madame Secretary, Deputy Administrator Steinberg, Congressman Cicilline, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Baer. Your presence here today, and the powerful messages you have shared with us, are a welcome affirmation of how much this Department, and indeed this entire Administration, cares for LGBT people not just in Foggy Bottom, but in the far corners of the country and the globe.

For two decades men and women not so different from me, or from many of you, have dreamed of a day when an openly gay Department employee could stand here, in this fabulous room, on a stage with guests as impressive as these. Well, we've made it. And I am humbled to represent generations of dedicated LGBT men and women who have given so much in service to their country.

Or as humbled as I ever can be ... and excited, and truly honored.

Not to mention lucky. You see, standing at this podium, I am, really, standing on the shoulders of all those who have led GLIFAA in the past and who have made it possible for us to enjoy the benefits and recognition we have in the present. It is all too easy to forget on a day like today that there was a time when an event like this would have been impossible. In fact, there was a time not so long ago that we all would have found ourselves under investigation simply for enjoying a cocktail, or two, together – as we will in a moment.

My personal story tells a small bit of the larger narrative that brought us here, and demonstrates some of GLIFAA's success, at that. A number of years ago – more than I like to admit in a crowd this big – I grappled with the decision of whether or not to leave the Hill, and join the Foreign Service. I worried, even then, that there might not be a place, or at least a comfortable one, for a gay man in the Foreign Affairs family.



Grasping at straws, I reached out to the organization with a funny little name called GLIFAA. Bryan Dalton, who was president at the time, and who did not know me from Adam and Steve, offered to meet me and tell me the good – and bad – of life as an LGBT person at State. He sold me, and he is one of the reasons that I entered on this grand adventure – one which today sees me serving as a senior advisor on LGBT issues. That my current job even exists is a positive statement on the progress we have made in our Department and our society, something for which we owe no small debt of gratitude to the courage of our straight allies, among whom we proudly number the Secretary and others on this stage.

More than that, though, and in the broadest sense, Brian's outreach to me represents the very heart of GLIFAA – that our members are always there to help one another and all of our LGBT brothers and sisters, however we can. Just last week, GLIFAA worked with officials at USAID and OPM to ensure that the adopted children of an FSO would be covered by her health insurance – despite the fact that those children have two moms. You see, the story of GLIFAA is not one of power politics or beltway bravado. No, it is really a fable about the true and inspiring force that ordinary people can muster when they stand together and stand for their rights and their dignity. And twenty years of that kind of story is really worth celebrating.

Now, as if I haven't used the word enough – and really can you? – the fabulous thing is that GLIFAA will continue this tradition for a twenty-first year, and a twenty-second, and a twenty-third, and for as many more as we and those who come after us maintain the spirit and strength that has carried us so far. And there is still more work to do. So long as our spouses and partners are not equal and do not receive the full benefits and privileges they should for enduring the hardships we all share... so long as bigotry and discrimination lurk in any dark corner of our bureaucracy... so long as any LGBT employee reasonably fears that she or he will be judged by anything other than her talent or his skill... there is a place for GLIFAA in this Department and a reason for our members to go on helping one another and helping the entire Foreign Affairs family achieve the full potential that we owe to the people we represent: the people of the United States of America.

Great things come from the most humble beginnings, and what starts as a simple – albeit fabulous – brunch can lead one day to the Ben Franklin Room. In celebrating GLIFAA's 20th anniversary together, we are all celebrating



GLIFAA President Kero-Mentz delivers remarks at the GLIFAA 20th anniversary event

the countless contributions made by those in this room, by the Secretary, by her team, and by the silent multitude of LGBT employees who have served Secretary's since the days of Jefferson – all of which brought GLIFAA and all its members on that very journey. Thank you for joining us on this special occasion. Now let's end today's celebration as GLIFAA began – with a mimosa, or two, among friends!

Source: Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA)





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## **Information on Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA)**



## GLIFAA Mission Statement

Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA) was formed in 1992 in order to challenge a security clearance process that at the time discriminated against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees. We have since grown to include hundreds of members and associates and become the officially recognized voice of LGBT personnel in U.S. foreign affairs agencies. Our Open Letter to Secretary Clinton at the beginning of her tenure included over 2,200 signatures from GLIFAA members and our allies.

We are non-profit and rely entirely on the efforts and contributions of our members and associates in Washington, D.C., and around the world. Our membership is primarily comprised of personnel and their family members from the Department of State, USAID, the Foreign Commercial Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service, and other U.S. offices and agencies with foreign affairs components.

GLIFAA works to secure full parity for LGBT personnel and their families in U.S. foreign affairs agencies serving in the United States and overseas. We seek to break down the continued barriers that LGBT foreign service, civil service, and contract employees – and their partners and children – encounter as a result of prejudice, misunderstanding, and apathy within our institutions. We serve as a support network and resource of information for LGBT employees and their families.

Members of the GLIFAA Board meet regularly with the management of the State Department, USAID, and other agencies to discuss ideas and solutions to address the continued concerns of LGBT personnel and their families. GLIFAA also works closely with AFSA (the American Foreign Service Association) and the Offices of Equal Employment Opportunity to provide information about employee concerns. We also support broader efforts in the U.S. and around the world to bring about greater respect for the rights of sexual minorities.

We sponsor educational and outreach activities, with a variety of events for LGBT Pride in June and numerous other occasions. We organize educational panels and presentations on issues of concern to employees; manage a website; and provide information to employees, prospective employees, and management to help promote a workplace grounded on the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination.



We have a network of post representatives that help to address the needs of our members and allies abroad. This network of representatives plans outreach activities, serves as a resource to fellow employees, and keeps the membership in Washington apprised of what is happening around the world.

GLIFAA is non-partisan and does not discriminate based on sexual orientation, race, gender, disability, ethnic background, religion, gender identity, or HIV-status. We have a diverse membership, including both LGBT and straight members, and welcome the participation of all who seek to end continued inequality based on sexual orientation.

We seek to help employees stay abreast of current developments, keep in touch, and share information with one another. GLIFAA's website, social events (regular monthly meeting and happy hour), and support for members overseas are just a few ways that members and their families stay connected. See our Calendar to find out about upcoming events.

## Successes

We are proud of the many accomplishments of our organization since our founding in 1992. The issuance of a non-discriminatory policy by then Secretary of State Warren Christopher in 1993 was one of our early successes. We also worked with the U.S. Administration, the management of our agencies, and other employee associations to eliminate barriers for obtaining security clearances and create and implement non-discrimination policies with regard to entry and employment.

GLIFAA played an instrumental role working with the administration of the Department of State in developing and implementing rights and privileges for same-sex partners of Department employees overseas. In the summer of 2009, the Department of State granted Eligible Family Member (EFM) status to domestic partners of Department employees and to their children. This change was followed by a number of other agencies which send employees overseas. Details can be found on our Domestic Partner Benefits Page.

Previously, we worked to implement the "Member of Household" (MOH) guidance, which explains the no-cost accommodations available to members of an employee's household, including partners, while serving overseas, and instructs U.S. missions overseas to take steps to assist members of household. These accommodations, still available to household members who are not recognized as domestic partners, were the primary benefits available to

the partners of LGBT employees overseas before the 2009 EFM guidance. In December 2000, State 242724 was transmitted, explaining to Posts these accommodations. In December 2003, MOH provisions were included in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), the Department of State's "Bible" containing the regulations, policies, and procedures for the Department's operations. New guidance providing for EFM status for domestic partners was added to the FAM in the summer of 2009.

Thanks in part to the work of GLIFAA, the ability of LGBT personnel to serve openly and successfully in U.S. foreign affairs agencies is now greater than ever.

### Objectives

Many challenges remain. Our current priorities include:

- Ensuring full and fair adherence in our agencies to current policies concerning LGBT employees and their families, including the Executive Order (E.O. 13087) uniformly prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the Federal Government;
- Promoting a professional atmosphere in our agencies whereby LGBT personnel at all levels can be open about their sexual orientation and gender identity without concern or fear of repercussions;
- Increasing opportunities for same-sex partners accompanying personnel on assignment overseas and ensuring their full inclusion in community life at U.S. missions;
- Securing access for the partners and children of LGBT employees to affordable and adequate health insurance as well as to other basic accommodations and benefits;
- Obtaining the right for LGBT employees to bring foreign-national partners back to the United States during domestic assignments or after employment;
- Raising awareness within our agencies and the public at large of the important contributions LGBT personnel have made and continue to make to our country in the Foreign Service, Civil Service, and as Contractors;
- Ending discrimination based on HIV-status, including with regard to the hiring practices of our agencies;
- Contributing to the broader cause of tolerance, equality, and full civil rights for sexual minorities in the U.S. and elsewhere;



- Strengthening our organization through effective outreach efforts, including to incoming personnel, other employee and foreign affairs associations, the management of our agencies, LGBT groups in other federal agencies, and relevant non-governmental organizations.

*For further information on GLIFAA please see: <http://www.glifaa.org>*

Source: <http://www.GLIFAA.org/content/mission> (01/31/2013)



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