

The Council for Global Equality



Advancing an American Foreign Policy
Inclusive of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

2020 Elections: Our Challenge to Presidential Candidates and the Media

The 2020 presidential elections are a crucible for our country, from many perspectives. These include the place of respect and insistence our country accords to the guarantee of human rights for all people — a long-cherished expression of American values that the Trump Administration has debased.

The Council for Global Equality challenges all presidential candidates, on each side of the political divide, to express their support for elevating our country's human rights policy, and for ensuring that it addresses the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities worldwide. Specifically, we call on all candidates and their campaign staff to ensure that their policy positions:

- **Make specific their support for human rights as a basic tenet of U.S. foreign policy**, contrasting that support with the Trump Administration's embrace of dictators (e.g. Russian President Putin, Egyptian President Sisi, and Philippines President Duterte), withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council, and general lack of attention to human rights needs on our border with Mexico and in the world at large.
- **Underscore that the fair and equal treatment of minorities, including LGBTI populations, must be part of any genuine human rights policy**, noting that neither President Trump nor Vice President Pence has spoken to global LGBTI rights issues.
- **Stress that the U.S. should use all available diplomatic tools to advance LGBTI-inclusive human rights abroad**, including police and rule-of-law training, exchange and speaker programs, targeted development assistance, and consistent bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagement, as a reflection of our country's values of fairness and equality.
- **Insist that U.S. diplomats not strike references to sexual orientation, gender identity or sexual and reproductive health and rights** in UN and other

international texts, as this undermines years of human rights advocacy in support of women and LGBTI communities globally.

- **Explain the impact of the global gag rule on women and LGBTI communities abroad**, including the diversion of lifesaving funding away from health care providers that traditionally have offered health services, including HIV prevention, care and treatment and psycho-social support, to LGBTI communities in many countries.
- **Show humanitarian understanding of the special plight of LGBTI refugees**, who flee abuse at home only to find equal abuse in refugee camps and shelters – a problem the Trump Administration has refused to address.
- **Make clear that LGBTI and gender equality issues are grounded in long-held American principles and precepts and will be restored to a place of respect**, drawing a sharp contrast with the current Administration's lack of respect for both.
- **And affirm that sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex traits are not a bar to service to our country**, whether at home or abroad, and that our country should set an example to others in demonstrating its commitment to inclusivity, including proud and open military service by transgender and intersex Americans.

We urge media organizations to explore candidates' understanding of these issues and, at minimum, **to ask each candidate for his or her views on these fundamental points:**

- What would your Administration do to elevate the importance of **human rights in American foreign policy**?
- Will your Administration include the **fair and equal treatment of racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities as a cornerstone of U.S. human rights and democracy policies** — and if so, how would that be expressed?
- What would your Administration do better to inform the American public of why respect, fairness and equality for all people, including LGBTI, should be a priority in both our foreign and domestic policies? **What diplomatic or economic arguments would you offer** to justify the use of U.S. taxpayer funding in support of LGBTI-affirming human rights and development policies?
- Secretary of State Pompeo recently launched a new "**Commission on Unalienable Rights**," a body that many civil rights groups see as an effort to elevate a conservative religious viewpoint in order to justify discrimination against LGBTI people and women. Would you disband the Commission? And how would you balance the rights of some religious communities against those who use the cover of religious liberty to limit the rights of others, including LGBTI people.

The time to reaffirm our country's leadership in advocating for the dignity, respect and human rights for all people is now. We have called repeatedly on the Trump Administration to do so, and we make that call again here. But **in the absence of needed changes in Administration foreign policy, we cannot afford another four years of human rights neglect.**