



GLOBAL EQUALITY TODAY — SEPTEMBER 2023

Happy Autumn! (Almost)

True, neither the calendar nor the temperatures in D.C. quite reflect that fall is upon us. But we're already diving into what will certainly be a very busy season here in Washington. CGE and its 35 member organizations are hard at work engaging our partners in the Administration and on Capitol Hill to ensure that **U.S. foreign policy consistently and comprehensively promotes LGBTQI+ human rights around the world.**

There are plenty of challenges in front of us, from the possibility of a government shutdown, the PEPFAR reauthorization stalemate, and the distractions of the 2024 election cycle to a flood of viciously anti-LGBTQI+ legislative efforts, not only here in the United States but in dozens of other countries as well.

But we are not approaching our mission from a defensive posture, no matter how well-organized the movement to roll back the human rights of LGBTQI+ people — and democracy and civil society at large — might be. Instead, with sixteen months to go in this first Biden Administration, **we are focused on institutionalizing our victories and expanding our pro-human rights agenda:**

- Alongside HRC, we are working with our Hill allies calling for the President's Budget request to include **\$40 million for the State Department's Global Equality Fund (GEF)** and **\$30 million for USAID's Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons** in the FY2025 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bills. We are also partnering with numerous allies in the HIV and SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and

rights) movements to pass a **clean PEPFAR reauthorization**, even in the face of unprecedented attacks from the anti-abortion movement.

- CGE — in collaboration with Rainbow Railroad, ORAM, Immigration Equality, and IRAP, all CGE members — is working with the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to ensure that **the Biden Administration's direct referral and private sponsorship mechanisms for refugees are both fully LGBTQI+-inclusive and fully operational**. This includes promoting [Rainbow Railroad's referrals to the new Welcome Corps program](#) that will allow local groups to sponsor LGBTQI+ refugees to bring them to safety in the United States. (You can read more in our [World Refugee Day blog](#).)
- We are excited by **USAID's release of its revised and expanded [LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy](#)**, and we are looking forward to collaborating with USAID's Senior LGBTQI+ Coordinator, Jay Gilliam, and his team to make sure that LGBTQI+ concerns are truly incorporated throughout the Agency's work. To that end, we've added meetings with USAID's regional and thematic bureaus to our annual meetings with State's regional bureaus. And we are supporting **the development of a new accountability mechanism at USAID** to ensure that any violations of this groundbreaking new policy — or any other USAID policies — are reported and addressed at the local level.
- **We are working hard with Ugandan activists on the ground and with a global solidarity coalition organizing to overturn the horrific Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA)** assented to by President Museveni in May. The law has a genocidal intent and is already being implemented to disastrous effect. We are simultaneously working with regional colleagues to **prevent the passage of similar anti-LGBTQI+ bills in other African countries**, including Ghana and Kenya. Likewise, we are monitoring the **deteriorating situation in the Middle East**, where anti-LGBTQI+ legislation is pending and attacks on the LGBTQI+ communities are escalating, notably in Lebanon and Iraq.
- As part of our work fighting the AHA in Uganda, CGE met with U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai to [call for the suspension of Uganda from AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which provides preferential trade benefits for qualifying countries](#). The AHA — the most draconian anti-LGBTQI+ law in the world — clearly contravenes the human rights requirements of the program, as well as the goals and ideals that animate the AGOA trade framework. CGE also has submitted public comments on

Uganda, Kenya, and Ghana — in the latter two cases, with the goal of building pressure to scrap proposed anti-LGBTQI+ laws there — and will continue to work with our partners in the Administration and on the Hill to use U.S. trade policy as a tool to promote human rights.



CGE Co-Chairs Julie Dorf and Mark Bromley with U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, center.

- We will continue to work with U.S., European, and Central Asian partners to push Uzbekistan for **full decriminalization of homosexuality and the immediate end to the pervasive human rights violations committed against Uzbekistan’s LGBTQI+ community** by state and non-state actors. This spring and summer, CGE and its partners have been meeting regularly with Congressional partners to promote this priority and to oppose rewarding Tashkent with normal trade relations without improving its human rights record. As Senators Murphy and Young [introduce legislation](#) to repeal Jackson-Vanik trade restrictions on Uzbekistan and its neighbors, we call on Congress and the Administration **to ensure that human rights standards — including the decriminalization of homosexuality — are part of the trade normalization process.**

Looking over the last few months, our work has included...

- [CGE released an updated and expanded edition of *Accessing U.S. Embassies: A Guide for LGBTQI+ Human Rights Defenders*](#), our resource for helping international partners understand and access U.S. embassies and missions and build and maintain productive working relationships with U.S. diplomatic and development staff in around the world. This [guide](#), released in English in June, will soon be available in Spanish, French, and Arabic as well.
- [In May, CGE Co-Chair Mark Bromley attended the inaugural meeting of the P7](#) (for “Pride7”) that brought together LGBTQI+ advocates from the world’s leading industrial democracies to [lobby the G7 alliance to promote LGBTQI+ human rights](#). The P7 meeting, ahead of the full G7 summit in Hiroshima, helped win support for passage of [Japan’s first-ever LGBTQI+ rights legislation](#) (as incomplete as the law may be) as well as lay the groundwork for the P7 becoming an officially recognized civil society engagement group attached to the G7.



CGE Co-Chair Mark Bromley joins other advocates at the inaugural meeting of the P7 in Tokyo

- At a June reception, [CGE honored former Rep. David Cicilline \(D-RI\) with our Global Equality Award](#) shortly after he left Congress to lead the Rhode Island Foundation. We had the opportunity to talk with Rep. Cicilline

about his leadership with the Congressional Equality Caucus and the Foreign Affairs Committee, the progress we've made during his dozen years in Congress, and the opportunities we see and the challenges we're facing. Additionally, **Ambassador Ursu Viorel of Moldova spoke powerfully about being the first openly LGBTQI+ Ambassador from a former Soviet republic and his country's fundamental commitment to democracy and human rights** — even as Russia wages war next door in Ukraine.



*Top: former Rep. David Cicilline accepts the Global Equality Award
Bottom: Amb. Ursu Viorel of Moldova speaks to the reception*

- In May, we spoke with [Alexander Voronov, Executive Director of Coming Out](#), an NGO that provides legal, psychological, and other direct services to Russia's LGBTQI+ community. Alex spoke about Coming Out's continuing work, even in the face of the worsening crackdown on dissent in Putin's Russia following the invasion of Ukraine — a crackdown that forced him to leave the country and function from exile.
- For IDAHOBIT, the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia, and Transphobia, we welcomed the **U.S. government's rollout of its [Interagency Action Plan dedicated to ending so-called "conversion therapy" \(CTP\) practices around the world](#)**. With this plan, the U.S. government has committed itself to the numerous partnerships necessary to stop these abusive practices. This includes working with LGBTQI+ community groups around the world; with like-minded allies and other partner governments; and with faith leaders, educators, professional associations, and other civil society networks. The U.S. government also plans to work to end CTPs at various multilateral fora, including the development banks and international institutions to which the United States is a party, to ensure that no financial or programmatic support, direct or otherwise, goes towards CTPs.
- For Pride in June — knowing how easy it is to focus on the backlash and the battles we're fighting — we published a list of [23 recent victories in the movement for LGBTQI+ justice and human rights](#). We also reiterated how [Pride marches](#) are both expressions of fundamental rights to democratic participation and tools for promoting inclusivity, visibility, and acceptance. CGE staff also attended the annual State Department and USAID Pride receptions, meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Administrator Samantha Power, respectively.



*Co-Chair Julie Dorf and CGE member leaders
meet with Secretary of State Blinken, left*

- Additionally, at the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, CGE promotes **accountability and investments that support LGBTQI+-inclusive development**. CGE staff helped organize several World Bank meetings over the summer that ultimately led to **the freezing of new investments in Uganda** following the adoption of the AHA.