



The Council for Global Equality

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

Celebrating the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia by Opposing Homophobic, Transphobic Leadership at the State Department

May 17 – Today, as we join colleagues around the world in celebrating the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOTB), it’s worth asking **why President Trump – who calls himself a friend of the LGBT community – has nominated someone with a long history of anti-LGBT statements to serve as Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights.**

Celebrated on May 17, IDAHOTB marks the anniversary of the World Health Organization’s decision to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1990. That illicit stigma continues to be instilled by organizations that espouse so-called “conversion therapy,” a psychologically barbaric effort to change a person’s deeply innate sexual orientation or gender identity. Some of the State Department’s recent human rights reports, such as that for Ecuador, confirm that these efforts exist not only in the U.S., but overseas as well.

Trump’s nominee, Dr. Robert Destro, has written extensively of his opposition to full civil rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans. But his most malicious writings deny the very existence of transgender individuals, essentially suggesting that they are psychologically disturbed and in need of some type of conversion or identity therapy. As such, he defends the harmful psychological perspectives that the World Health Organization and all leading U.S. medical associations have long abandoned. Indeed, his views represent the exact antithesis of the compassionate understanding of LGBTI identities that we celebrate on May 17.

The theme of the May 17 celebration this year is “Justice and Protection for All.” In recent years, the United States has played an increasingly important role in promoting justice and protection for LGBTI communities globally. The State Department’s [annual human rights reports](#) are by far the most comprehensive reports on human rights trends impacting LGBTI individuals around the world. The United States administers the Global Equality Fund to support LGBTI rights and at-risk human rights defenders in hostile countries. And our diplomats continue to support the [Equal Rights Coalition](#) and the “core group” of countries that defend LGBTI rights at the UN, OAS and through diplomatic engagement everywhere.

Robert Destro can’t credibly contribute to such efforts because of the heavy baggage he carries from his expansive public record opposing human rights for LGBTI individuals. His confirmation is an affront to our country’s human rights legacy, and the U.S. Senate should reject his confirmation. That would be a fitting tribute to the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on this May 17.