

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Ambassador - Designate Pamela Bridgewater Awkard by  
Senator Russell Feingold (#1)  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
July 27, 2010**

**Question:**

According to the State Department's most recent human rights report, the LGBT community continues to face significant challenges in Jamaica, whether from the law prohibiting "acts of gross indecency" or human rights abuses reported such as arbitrary detention, stabbings, mob attacks or harassment by prison and hospital staff. If confirmed, how would you work with the Jamaican government to ensure that the most basic rights of the LGBT community are protected? What potential do you see in partnering with civil society to reach out to this community? Are there efforts that need to be taken by the U.S. embassy in Kingston to ensure the safety of LGBT Americans, be they embassy staff or visitors to Jamaica?

**Answer:**

We closely monitor acts of discrimination and hostility against the LGBT community and work to promote greater tolerance in Jamaican society. If confirmed, I will advocate for the rights of the LGBT community in Jamaica in my meetings with Jamaican government officials. I will work collaboratively with civil society groups to promote greater tolerance and respect for the human rights of all individuals and advocate for greater inclusion of all marginalized groups into Jamaican society.

Human rights NGOs and even some government entities agree that brutality against gays and lesbians is widespread in Jamaican society. The

only local gay rights organization, the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All Sexuals, and Gays (J-FLAG), continues to report human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention, mob attacks, stabbings, and harassment of gay and lesbian patients by hospital staff, and targeted shootings of homosexuals. Lesbian women have been subject to sexual assault as well as other physical attacks. Police often do not investigate such incidents.

Despite the levels of hostility in the community, I see opportunities to partner with civil society to promote greater tolerance. Last year, our Embassy in Kingston hosted a Thanksgiving luncheon for gay and lesbian leaders to discuss stigmatization in Jamaican society. The Embassy also hosted a panel discussion and funded a human rights workshop that addressed issues of intolerance towards the LGBT community. If confirmed, I pledge to further these efforts and strongly advocate for the rights of the LGBT community in my meetings with government officials and in appropriate public statements.

The safety of all Americans, including members of the LGBT community, is of paramount importance to me. The Embassy monitors the security situation and provides clear information about potential risks to the Americans in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, which is included in our Consular district. We have expressed our concerns about violence directed

at the LGBT community, and if confirmed, I will continue to do so. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that in cases where Americans are victims of crime or violence, the Embassy advocates for the full investigation by local authorities.

