



The Council for Global Equality

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

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Washington, DC, June 11, 2009 – Late yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2010-11. Importantly, the Act (HR 2410) has groundbreaking provisions that will strengthen the State Department’s attention to serious human rights abuses directed against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals worldwide.

The bill was adopted over Republican objections that “social issues such as gay rights and abortion have no place in a State Department funding bill.” But Council Chair Mark Bromley countered these claims by noting that “the bill does not focus on social issues, it merely creates mechanisms to improve the U.S. government’s support for basic human rights, including the rights of women and of LGBT communities abroad.”

The bill instructs the State Department:

- to establish an Office for Global Women’s Issues;
- to create one or more positions within the Human Rights Bureau to monitor international LGBT concerns;
- to work through U.S. embassies to encourage countries to repeal or reform laws that criminalize homosexuality or consensual homosexual conduct or that otherwise restrict fundamental human rights;
- to improve human rights reporting on LGBT issues, with a new requirement to include transgender concerns; and
- to include LGBT issues in human rights training courses for Foreign Service Officers.

Former U.S. Ambassador Michael Guest, a senior adviser to the Council, applauded the bill’s passage as being “consistent with our country’s traditional leadership on human rights, and supportive of [President Obama’s March 2009 call](#) for the global decriminalization of homosexuality.” The bill emphasizes that the Obama Administration’s endorsement of efforts at the United Nations to encourage the decriminalization of homosexuality worldwide must be backed by diplomatic action if that endorsement is to carry meaning. “We see this provision of the bill as fully in keeping with U.S. law, with fundamental American principles of equality and fairness, and with the advocacy role expected of our embassies in advancing U.S. foreign policy goals,” noted Guest.

In a letter to Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Howard Berman (D-CA), Bromley thanked the Chairman for his leadership on these provisions. Bromley noted that the Council’s goal “is to seek a stronger U.S. voice on behalf of fair treatment and equal citizen rights for LGBT individuals at home and abroad,” and that “greater vigilance in how the State Department reports on and responds to the growing evidence of a genuine crisis in human rights abuse directed at LGBT individuals in many countries around the globe” is essential to that goal.

The Council urges similarly principled leadership on these provisions as the bill moves to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

A Copy of the Council letter is available on the Council’s website at www.GlobalEquality.org.