

Obama Administration Record for the LGBT Community

“Every single American -- gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transgender -- every single American deserves to be treated equally in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of our society. It’s a pretty simple proposition.”

-President Barack Obama, October 1, 2011

President Obama values every American, and his Administration has made historic strides to expand opportunity, advance equality, honor differences and level the playing field for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people and communities. The President’s efforts have included major legislative achievements such as the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” as well as significant administrative actions in support of equality. The Obama Administration’s record in support of the LGBT community includes:

- **Repealing Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell:** The President signed the bill to repeal Don’t Ask Don’t Tell on December 22, 2010, putting in motion the end of a discriminatory policy that ran counter to our values as Americans. As of September 20, 2011, when the repeal took effect, gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans can serve openly in our Armed Forces and without fear of losing their jobs for who they are and who they love.
- **Ending the Legal Defense of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA):** In February 2011, the President and Attorney General announced that the Department of Justice would no longer defend Section 3 of DOMA against equal protection constitutional challenges brought by same-sex couples married under state law. In July 2011, the White House announced the President’s support of the Respect for Marriage Act, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressman Jerrold Nadler, which would repeal DOMA and uphold the principle that gay and lesbian couples should receive the same Federal rights and legal protections as straight couples. The President has long supported a legislative repeal of DOMA.
- **Signing Historic Hate Crimes Legislation:** President Obama overcame years of partisan gridlock to pass and sign the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law, which extends the coverage of Federal hate crimes law to include attacks based on the victim’s actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Ensuring Hospital Visitation Rights for LGBT Patients and Their Loved Ones:** Following a directive from the President, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) now requires all hospitals receiving Medicare or Medicaid funds – just about every hospital in America – to allow visitation rights for LGBT patients. The President also directed HHS to ensure that medical decision-making rights of LGBT patients are respected.
- **Developing and Implementing a National HIV/AIDS Strategy:** President Obama fulfilled a pledge to those with HIV by developing and releasing the Nation’s first comprehensive plan for responding to the domestic HIV epidemic. In 2009, President

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Obama signed legislation reauthorizing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program for four years to provide critical health services to uninsured and underinsured people living with HIV. The Administration has also prioritized funding increases for HIV prevention, care, and research in each successive President's budget. In FY 2011, the Administration fought for and secured a \$50 million increase in appropriations for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) and a \$31 million increase for HIV prevention. President Obama continued this commitment in FY 2012, when he announced on World AIDS Day an additional \$35 million for ADAP and a \$15 million increase for Ryan White Part C medical clinics. Finally, the health reform legislation that the President signed into law, the Affordable Care Act, ensures that Americans have secure, stable, and affordable insurance, which will make it easier for people living with HIV and AIDS to obtain Medicaid and private health insurance and overcome barriers to care from qualified providers.

- **Expanding Access to Health Coverage:** The Affordable Care Act ensures that Americans have secure, stable, and affordable insurance. In 2014, insurance companies will no longer be able to discriminate against anyone due to a pre-existing condition, and because of the law, insurers can no longer turn someone away just because he or she is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. In addition, the federal website, HealthCare.gov, designed to help all consumers find the health insurance best suited to their needs, makes it easy to locate health insurers that cover domestic partners.
- **Addressing Health Care Disparities:** The Affordable Care Act is funding preventive efforts for communities, including millions of dollars to use evidence-based interventions to address tobacco control, obesity prevention, HIV-related health disparities, better nutrition and physical activity. In addition, the new health care law is making other investments that will help address health disparities. Funding is going toward building a more diverse and culturally competent health care workforce, as well as investing in community health centers to serve up to 20 million more patients. And through increased research and data collection on health disparities, policymakers will have the knowledge and tools they need to continue to address the health needs and concerns of the LGBT community.
- **Ensuring Equality for LGBT Federal Government Employees:** President Obama has taken numerous administrative actions to advance equality for LGBT Federal employees, setting an example for all employers. In response to the President's directive, the Office of Personnel Management is expanding Federal benefits for same-sex partners of Federal employees to the extent possible under current law, including by allowing same-sex domestic partners to apply for long-term care insurance. The Administration's directive on same-sex domestic partner benefits also opened the door for the State Department to extend legally available benefits and allowances to same-sex domestic partners of members of the Foreign Service serving abroad.
- **Taking Steps to Ensure LGBT Equality in Housing and Crime Prevention:** The Administration announced the first ever national study of discrimination in housing against LGBT persons and, in January 2012, issued a final rule to ensure that the Department of Housing and Urban Development's core housing programs are open to all

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persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Justice Department also issued guidance stating that Federal prosecutors should enforce criminal provisions in the Violence Against Women Act in cases involving same-sex relationships.

- **Preventing Bullying Against LGBT Students:** President Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services convened students, parents, and teachers, in addition to non-profit leaders, advocates, and policymakers, for the first-ever White House Conference on Bullying Prevention in March 2011. Early in the Obama Administration, six Federal agencies joined together to establish the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Steering Committee to explore ways to provide guidance on combating bullying to individuals and organizations. The Department of Education has issued guidance to support educators in combating bullying in schools by clarifying when student bullying may violate Federal education anti-discrimination laws. In June 2011, Secretary Duncan issued a “Dear Colleague” letter, accompanied by legal guidelines, reaffirming the rights of students to form Gay-Straight Alliances and other student groups under the Equal Access Act, noting the important role they can play in promoting safer schools and creating more welcoming learning environments. In addition, President Obama, Vice President Biden, and other Administration officials recorded “It Gets Better” video messages to address the issue of bullying and suicide among LGBT youth.
- **Advancing and Protecting the Rights of LGBT Persons around the World:** The Obama Administration continues to engage systematically with governments around the world to advance the rights of LGBT persons. The Administration’s intensive and systematic leadership has included various public statements and resolutions at the UN. President Obama has also issued a presidential memorandum that directs all Federal agencies engaged abroad to ensure that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons.