
From: H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 29, 2012 8:05 PM
To: 'Russorv@state.gov'
Subject: Fw: Fwd: [I/O] Among Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's greatest achievements...

Pls print.

From: Cheryl Mills [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, April 29, 2012 07:31 PM
To: H
Subject: Fwd: [I/O] Among Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's greatest achievements...

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Globally Obama administration earns praise for commitment to gay rights

By Claire Veyriras - California News Service
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WASHINGTON - As President Obama struggles with the politics of gay issues at home, his administration is drawing cheers from human rights groups for its commitment to gay rights around the globe.

In the past several months, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivered a speech, which dramatically shifted the international human right focus on LGBT rights in front of the United Nations, dedicated \$3 million to help promote LGBT rights worldwide and distributed kits to U.S. embassies.

The U.S. involvement was also essential in the passage of a U.N. resolution expressing "grave concern" about abuses and violations of gay and lesbian rights, as well as the first ever debate on LGBT issues before the U.N. Human Rights Council.

"LGBT rights are a high priority for the State Department and I think that our commitment to this issue is clear throughout our numerous actions," said Daniel Baer, deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor.

While U.S. gay groups express frustration at Obama's refusal to sign an executive order banning LGBT discrimination at the workplace and his "evolving" view on same-sex marriage, international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch praise the steps the Obama administration has taken worldwide.

"A lot has changed thanks to the U.S. ongoing policy," said Suzanne Nossel, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA. "Important steps have been taken."

Some Republicans, including the party's presidential candidates, reacted negatively to Clinton's U.N. speech in December. Texas Gov. Rick Perry released a statement saying that "promoting special rights for gays in foreign countries is not in America's interests and not worth a dime of taxpayers' money."

Mitt Romney said national security, not gay rights, should be the primary test for foreign aid.

Killings, oppression, and discriminatory laws which punish gay sexual activity by the death penalty have put LGBT people at risk in many parts of the world. LGBT are not only shunned for social and religious reasons, some are targeted by their own government.

Uganda's 2009 "anti-homosexuality bill," for instance, calls for the execution of individual found guilty of gay or lesbian sexual activity; Saudi Arabia recently banned gay students from their schools and universities, according to Arabic news reports.

The United Nations has taken several steps over the past year for LGBT rights.

Twenty-three countries supported a LGBT human rights resolution last June, which put the issue on the U.N. agenda for the first time.

"It really is a key part in setting a new norm that gay rights are human rights and that that has to be accepted globally," Nossel said.

It was followed last December by Clinton's address in front of the U.N. General Assembly. The 30-minute speech was the first on LGBT issues ever delivered at the U.N. signaling the U.S. commitment to the issue abroad.

Just last month, the U.N. conducted an unprecedented debate on the topic in which the Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon declared that: "the time has come" to protect LGBT rights.

State Department officials say that Clinton has been committed to the issue since she became secretary.

"It was not a kick off speech but one continuing the State Department's concern on LGBT rights since 2008," Baer said.

Baer pointed to the U.S. embassy's support to a special task force in Honduras which is investigating the killing of LGBT people, a trend that has accelerated since the 2009 coup.

Human rights leaders said that South Africa, of all places, has served as an international model by placing LGBT protection in its constitution. Other countries have not been as supportive. When Clinton delivered her speech to the U.N., representatives from several Arab and African nations walked out in protest and some refused to participate in last month's debate.

Beyond signaling the U.S. commitment to the issue, many see Clinton's speech as helping legitimize the work of local groups around the globe.

"Several human rights defenders in countries which criminalize homosexual conduct regard her words as very inspirational, so in that respect the speech really worked well," said Boris Dittrich, Advocacy Director of the LGBT Rights Program for Human Rights Watch.

Others say it is an inappropriate reaction prompted by politics at home.

"I certainly don't believe homosexuals or anyone else should be flogged or put to death for their sexual sins. However, I don't believe homosexuals should receive special treatment over and above anyone else either," Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, told the Christian Post. "Secretary Clinton's remarks were more than likely a painless way for the Obama administration to placate the homosexual community in the U.S."

The State Department has a \$3 million budget dedicated to LGBT rights with three main goals: advance justice, support advocates and increase public dialogue. It provides grants, meeting space, and workshops to assist nonprofits and other LGBT groups, many of which are working in hostile environments. Grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000 were allocated to LGBT organizations abroad last week.

American embassies are being provided "kits" aimed at keeping U.S. diplomats alert and responsive to LGBT issues. And in Washington, the State Department has convened a task force which meets monthly to discuss LGBT issues.

A report by the U.S. Consulate General in Hamburg said that the State Department assisted over 40 LGBT advocates facing emergency situations in 11 countries throughout the world over the past two years.

Things have changed since President Clinton's 1977 appointment of James Hormel -- an openly gay San Francisco philanthropist -- as ambassador to Luxembourg created a stir. Last year, the U.S. ambassador to Slovakia marched in a "Pride" parade in Bratislava, Slovakia's capital, in response to violence at the 2010 parade.

At the 2011 "EuroPride Rome" festival, U.S. embassy officials helped convince pop star Lady Gaga to perform, according to the consulate's report.

International organizations are praising the U.S.'s diplomatic skills when dealing with this controversial issue, noting that Clinton's speech was not a moralizing lecture blaming other countries' shortcomings.

The speech recognized the U.S.'s own struggle with LGBT rights and the issue's cultural sensitivity.

Despite the U.S. commitment, human rights advocates warn that LGBT rights are a long term struggle. Many issues, such as Uganda's death penalty, Saudi Arabia's school prohibition and Liberia's new anti-LGBT laws, still need to be addressed.

"The test of the U.S. foreign policy will be over time," Nossel said.

The California News Service is a journalism project of the University of California Washington Center and the UC Berkeley School of Journalism. Email the California News Service at cns@ucdc.edu

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Richard Socarides** [redacted]
 Date: Sat, Apr 28, 2012 at 6:41 AM
 Subject: Fwd: [I/O] Among Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's greatest achievements...
 To: Cheryl Mills [redacted]

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http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_20500561/globally-obama-administration-earns-praise-commitment-gay-rights

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