

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2015

Randy W. Berry  
Special Envoy for the Rights of LGBT Persons  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Berry,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as the first-ever U.S. Special Envoy for the Rights of LGBT Persons. As longtime advocates for LGBT rights, we applaud the decision to create this position and look forward to working with you. Your appointment embodies the importance of this issue in the United States' approach to foreign affairs, which is why we sponsored the International Human Rights Defense Act of 2015 (S.302) calling for the creation of this position. We will continue to champion your work and seek to provide you with the necessary resources.

As you settle into your position and begin coordinating the State Department's efforts so that the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons are defended and promoted worldwide, we would like to highlight a few of the issues around the world that are of key concern. It is our strong desire that we work collaboratively in these areas.

## *Egypt*

As a result of an anti-homosexuality law that is susceptible to broad interpretation and a recent court ruling upholding the 2008 arrest and deportation of a Libyan man accused of homosexuality, foreign nationals who identify as LGBT are at risk of arrest and deportation from Egypt and may be denied entry to Egypt simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Egyptian media reports indicate that the Egyptian National Council on Human Rights has endorsed a recent court decision authorizing the Ministry of Interior to deport or ban "alien homosexuals" as a means to "prevent the spreading of social ills."

## *Uganda*

LGBT persons have been fleeing Uganda to escape oppression and violence. While its law making gay sex a crime and imposing long prison terms was overturned by its Constitutional Court on a technicality, leaders have pledged to pursue similar legislation. The upcoming elections are motivating some to amplify anti-homosexual sentiment, and activists have warned that draft bills would allow housing discrimination, prevent LGBT individuals from adopting a child, and include an anti-propaganda ban.

## *Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan*

Russia's anti-homosexuality propaganda legislation is being used as a model and spreading to nearby countries. Kazakhstan's Senate passed legislation that would ban "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations," and the bill now awaits President Nursultan Nazarbayev's signature. The Kyrgyz Parliament continues to consider a similar bill that was introduced in October 2014. These anti-

propaganda laws pose a real danger to LGBT persons and could compel a culture of silence and obstruct the work of journalists, healthcare providers, and HIV prevention workers. Rises in attacks against LGBT organizations have already been reported since the bill was registered in Kyrgyzstan.

***Jamaica***

Jamaica continues to be worrisome with its intolerance to homosexuality. Of particular concern are sexual crimes targeting lesbians, including so-called “corrective rapes.” The anti-LGBT sentiment is so severe that some Jamaican lesbians have sought asylum and victims keep their experiences secret, fearful of blame and stigma that might follow reporting a threat or assault.

***Brazil***

Transgender persons face dire conditions in Brazil, which reportedly has the highest rate of violence against the trans community in the world. Last year, 113 trans persons were murdered in Brazil. These dangers persist even when in police custody, as highlighted by the recent brutal beating of Veronica Bollina, a transgender woman placed in a male jail upon her arrest.

From a broader perspective, we encourage you to consider the full array of tools available to defend and promote the human rights of LGBT persons. It is essential that the United States be consistent in both word and deed, so we encourage you to explore effective mechanisms to counter extremist rhetoric, robust ways in which to respond when countries enact anti-LGBT legislation or allow violence and persecution of LGBT persons, and to strengthen collaborations and partnerships with allied governments and non-governmental organizations.

We will continue to endorse the passage of S.302 so that the office of the Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons is made permanent as is the attention given by the State Department to the promotion of human rights for all persons—regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. We also will work with you on these issues and others as they arise and invite you to meet with us. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is an issue that needs legislative action.

Again, congratulations on your appointment as Special Envoy for the Rights of LGBT Persons.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Mazie Hirono  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

*Barbara A. Mikulski*

Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senator

*Ron Wyden*

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

*Chris Murphy*

Chris Murphy  
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*Sheldon Whitehouse*

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

*Jeanne Shaheen*

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

*Al Franken*

Al Franken  
United States Senator

*Tammy Baldwin*

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

*Sherrod Brown*

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

*Maria Cantwell*

Maria Cantwell  
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*Cory A. Booker*

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator