



BARACK OBAMA'S SUPPORT FOR THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY

"Most of us do believe that gay couples should be able to visit each other in the hospital and share health care benefits; most of us do believe that they should be treated with dignity and have their privacy respected by the federal government."

[Speech in Washington, D.C., 6/5/06]

BARACK OBAMA ON GAY AND LESBIAN ISSUES

Expand Hate Crimes Statutes: In 2004, crimes against homosexuals constituted the third-highest category of hate crime reported and made up more than 15 percent of such crimes. Barack Obama cosponsored legislation that would expand federal jurisdiction to reach violent hate crimes perpetrated because of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical disability. As a state senator, Obama passed tough legislation that made hate crimes and conspiracy to commit them against the law.

Fight Workplace Discrimination: Barack Obama believes the Employment Non-Discrimination Act should be expanded to include sexual orientation. While an increasing number of employers have extended benefits to their employees' domestic partners, discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace occurs with no federal legal remedy. Obama also sponsored and passed legislation in the Illinois State Senate that would ban employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Promote Gay and Lesbian Rights: Barack Obama supported legislation in the Illinois State Senate to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing and public accommodations.

Support Full Civil Unions: Barack Obama supports civil unions that give gay couples full rights, including the right to assist their loved ones in times of emergency, the right to equal health insurance and other employment benefits currently extended to traditional married couples, and the same property rights as anyone else.

Oppose a Constitutional Ban on Gay Marriage: Barack Obama voted against the Federal Marriage Amendment in 2006 which would have defined marriage as between a man and a woman and prevented judicial extension of marriage-like rights to same-sex or other unmarried couples. *"We are better than this. And we certainly owe the American people more than this. I know that this amendment will fail, and when it does, I hope we can start discussing issues and offering proposals that will actually improve the lives of most Americans."* (Barack Obama on the Senate floor regarding the Federal Marriage Amendment, June 5, 2006)

Repeal Don't Ask-Don't Tell: Barack Obama agrees with former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili and other military experts that we need to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in consultation with military commanders. The key test for military service should be patriotism, a sense of duty, and a willingness to serve. Discrimination should be prohibited. The U.S. government has spent millions of dollars replacing troops kicked out of the military because of their sexual orientation. Additionally, more than 300

language experts have been fired under this policy, including more than 50 who are fluent in Arabic. Obama will work with military leaders to repeal the current policy and ensure it helps accomplish our national defense goals.

Expand Adoption Rights. Barack Obama believes that homosexuals should have the same adoption rights as heterosexuals.

Fight AIDS Worldwide: There are 40 million people across the planet infected with HIV/AIDS. Every day, AIDS kills 8,000 and HIV infects 6,000 more people. The disease is set to become the third-leading cause of death worldwide in the coming years. Barack Obama has been a global leader in the fight against AIDS. He traveled to Kenya and took a public HIV test to encourage testing and reduce the stigma of the disease.

Promote AIDS Prevention: Barack Obama believes that we cannot ignore that abstinence and fidelity may too often be the ideal and not the reality. Obama went to a large evangelical conference in 2006 to promote greater investment in the global AIDS battle. At this conservative Christian event, Obama pushed for a balanced approach to fighting the disease that includes condom distribution. In late 2006, Barack Obama worked to reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act, which is one of the largest sources of federal funds for primary health care and support services for patients with HIV/AIDS. The bill was named after Ryan White, an Indiana teenager whose courageous struggle with HIV/AIDS helped educate the nation.

Empower Women to Prevent HIV/AIDS: In the United States, the percentage of women diagnosed with AIDS has quadrupled over the last 20 years. Today, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses. Barack Obama introduced the Microbicide Development Act, which will accelerate the development of products that empower women in the battle against AIDS. Microbicides are a class of products currently under development that women apply topically to prevent transmission of HIV and other infections.