

"While we have come a long way since the Stonewall riots in 1969, we still have a lot of work to do. Too often, the issue of LGBT rights is exploited by those seeking to divide us. But at its core, this issue is about who we are as Americans. It's about whether this nation is going to live up to its founding promise of equality by treating all its citizens with dignity and respect."

-- Barack Obama, June 1, 2007

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

Fight Workplace Discrimination: President Obama supports the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and believes that our anti-discrimination employment laws should be expanded to include sexual orientation and gender identity. 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. The President also sponsored legislation in the Illinois State Senate that would ban employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Support Full Civil Unions and Federal Rights for LGBT Couples: President Obama supports full civil unions that give same-sex couples legal rights and privileges equal to those of married couples. Obama also believes we need to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and enact legislation that would ensure that the 1,100+ federal legal rights and benefits currently provided on the basis of marital status are extended to same-sex couples in civil unions and other legally-recognized unions. These rights and benefits include the right to assist a loved one in times of emergency, the right to equal health insurance and other employment benefits, and property rights.

Oppose a Constitutional Ban on Same-Sex Marriage: President 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.

Repeal Don't Ask-Don't Tell: President 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. 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. The President will work with military leaders to repeal the current policy and ensure it helps accomplish our national defense goals.

Expand Adoption Rights: President Obama believes that we must ensure adoption rights for all couples and individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation. He thinks that a child will benefit from a healthy and loving home, whether the parents are gay or not

Promote AIDS Prevention: In the first year of his presidency, President Obama will develop and begin to implement a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy that includes all federal agencies. The strategy will be designed to reduce HIV infections, increase access to care and reduce HIV-related health disparities. The President will support common sense approaches including age-appropriate sex education that includes information about contraception, combating infection within our prison population through education and contraception, and distributing contraceptives through our public health system. The President also supports lifting the federal ban on needle exchange, which could dramatically reduce rates of infection among drug users. President Obama has also been willing to confront the stigma -- too often tied to homophobia -- that continues to surround HIV/AIDS.

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. President 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.

Source: http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/civil_rights/