

BRAD SHERMAN.

Democrat U.S. Congress

Fighting for LGBT Rights

As part of my efforts in Congress, I have fought for the equal treatment of all people, particularly the rights of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. **In its most recent scorecard, I earned a 100% rating from the Human Rights Campaign for my record on issues important to the LGBT community.**

I am also a member of the LGBT Equality Caucus, which is co-chaired by Congress members Barney Frank, Tammy Baldwin, and Jared Polis. The mission of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus is to promote lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender equality. This Caucus works for equal rights, the repeal of discriminatory laws, the elimination of hate-motivated violence, and the improved health and well-being for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Marriage Equality

I believe that government should allow all consenting adults, regardless of sexual orientation, to enjoy the benefits of legally-recognized marriage. I have consistently opposed Constitutional amendments seeking to ban gay marriage. As a member of Congress, I will continue the fight for marriage equality and am optimistic that one day all adults will be able to marry the person of his or her choosing.

Ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell

On December 22, 2010, President Obama signed the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act*, which I strongly supported. The repeal will be fully effective 60 days after the Secretary of Defense has received a review from the Department of Defense on the implementation of the repeal, and the President, Secretary, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certify to the congressional defense committees that the implementation of the DADT repeal is consistent with standards of military readiness and effectiveness.

Repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell is not only a matter of fairness; it is also an urgent national security issue. At this critical time in our

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nation's history, we need to attract and retain the very best in our military. Any qualified American who wishes to serve should be able to do so without fear. I am confident that the requisite certifications will be made shortly, and this discriminatory policy will finally be repealed.

Protecting Students from Bullying

Our children and students deserve particular vigilance from the government in protecting them from all types of pernicious discrimination. Many LGBT students face daily harassment from their peers and even teachers. This harassment has devastating effects. Recently, a number of gay students or students perceived as being gay have committed suicide following school-based bullying incidents.

As a step to help prevent such tragedies in the future, **I have again joined with my colleague Rep. Jared Polis to introduce the *Student Nondiscrimination Act (H.R. 998)***. This bill would prohibit public schools from excluding students from participating in, or subjecting students to discrimination under, any federally-assisted educational program on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Any student who has been discriminated against on these grounds can seek recourse in court. The bill is now being considered by the House Education and Labor Committee, and I will continue working with my colleagues to make sure that it becomes law.

Preventing Discrimination Against Workers

No person should be denied employment simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Unfortunately today, many Americans are terminated, or simply not hired, not because of their qualifications or performance but rather because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

To prevent such workplace discrimination, **I have again joined with Congressman Barney Frank and others in introducing the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act, known as ENDA, (H.R. 1397)***. Under the bill, employers cannot base employment decisions, such as hiring and/or firing, on sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill is currently being considered by the House Education and

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Labor Committee.

I will work with my colleagues to make sure that this important legislation passes, so everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, has the right to fairly participate in the American workforce.

Keeping Our Families Together

Under our immigration laws, non-citizen spouses of citizens are allowed to reside in the United States. This same privilege should not be denied to same-sex partners. I have again cosponsored the *Uniting American Families Act* (H.R. 1537). The bill would include same-sex ("permanent") partners within the scope of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The bill is currently being considered by the Judiciary Committee.

Caring for Loved Ones

Under the *Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993*, certain private and all public employees may take up to twelve weeks of unpaid medical leave to care for a parent, spouse, or child with a serious health condition. Unfortunately, same-sex spouses or domestic partners do not currently enjoy the same right. Therefore, to care for a critically-ill partner, a same-sex spouse who needs to take time off from work must risk termination.

Because every employee should have the right to take a reasonable amount of time from work to care for a seriously ill family member, last Congress I cosponsored the *Family Medical Leave Inclusion Act* (H.R. 2132). This bill would provide medical leave to care for a same-sex spouse or domestic partner. I look forward to joining with my colleagues in reintroducing this important piece of legislation soon.

In 2009, we passed the *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act*, which imposes additional federal penalties for crimes motivated by hatred on the basis of race, religion, or actual or perceived sexual orientation. I hope that we are equally successful in pass the legislation documented above.

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Ensuring Tax Equality for Same-Sex Couples

In September, several of my colleagues and I wrote a letter to the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) urging the IRS to treat LGBT couples in states with domestic partnership and same-sex marriage laws equitably and fairly. Currently same-sex partnerships have undue complications in filing simple tax returns because their marriages are not recognized by the federal government. The letter, which was led by Congressman Jim McDermott, was signed by a bipartisan coalition of 74 Members of Congress.

"Currently, fifteen states recognize same-sex marriage or domestic partnerships with no equivalent recognition under federal law. The absence of federal recognition for these couples has created ambiguity and complexity in the tax law that can, in part, be mitigated through IRS action," reads the letter.

While I believe that legislative action should be taken to fully address the inequities experienced by same-sex couples, I will continue to work with my colleagues in urging the IRS to take immediate action to reduce the unnecessary burdens faced by LGBT couples in complying with our federal tax laws. Our tax laws should be applied fairly.

I will continue fighting for the civil rights for the entire LGBT community.

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