



National collaboration of organizations launches New Beginning Initiative to advocate for pro-LGBT federal policy changes

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National Gay and Lesbian Task Force heads up major policy change project

WASHINGTON, June 25 — The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and a collaboration of expert organizations today announced the New Beginning Initiative [2], designed to push for concrete federal administration policy and regulatory changes directly benefiting the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and eliminating discrimination from federal policies.

The initiative, which is an outcome of the National Policy Roundtable with organizations opting into the initiative, began more than a year ago in preparation of a more LGBT-favorable administration. The more than 80 initial policies identified and recommended for changes span the authority of the White House and more than 30 federal agencies. The recommendations focus on pro-LGBT public policy changes the Obama administration can implement without legislative action. The New Beginning Initiative is the first time such a coalition of LGBT and allied organizations has come together in this way to affect administration policy. Organizations participating in the initiative are listed here [3].

"We have an unprecedented opportunity to push the federal government for policy changes that will directly improve the quality of life for LGBT people and families. It is time for the government to step up and fulfill the promise of full equality," says Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "By leveraging the expertise and resources of so many and advocating for these changes, we can directly challenge long-standing government-supported discrimination and get federal dollars and attention flowing to vital community services and support for LGBT people across the country. Already, progress is being made on a number of policies in the initiative, including last week's Census Bureau decision to reverse its previous policy and now count married same-sex couples in the 2010 census."

The New Beginning Initiative, funded through the generous support of the Open Society Institute, includes concrete policy changes written by the respective participating organizations. Each organization will identify the strategies for accomplishing the respective policy changes it is working on in the coming months and years. The 80-plus policies represent an initial view of the opportunities for federal funding and programmatic attention; additional policy changes will be identified over time.

Examples of the recommended policy changes are:

- Amending the nondiscrimination guidelines for the federal civilian workforce to include gender identity and expression.
- Funding to reduce violence in schools, including preventing bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Including sexual orientation and gender identity categories as a designated and mandated component of federally funded aging research and data collection.
- Ensuring LGBT people are recognized as a population marked by health disparities for appropriate inclusion in federally funded studies.
- Requiring the office of Housing and Urban Development to recognize unaccompanied homeless youth as a special-needs population requiring the development of targeted youth housing models.
- Encouraging U.S. diplomatic engagement on international LGBT issues as legitimate human rights concerns.

Copies of the initial policies identified and recommended for changes were provided to the Obama transition team in November 2008 for inclusion in agency memos for incoming administration personnel. Copies have also been provided to key White House staff in the process of identifying administration and agency staff with authority to change policies and to educate White House staff on the issues facing LGBT people and families.

Participating organizations have already begun meeting with administration officials to pursue some of the policy changes. A meeting of the participating organizations will be held over the summer to map out plans for each recommended policy. As the collaborating organizations succeed in changing policies, press releases will be sent out notifying the LGBT community and broader public about progress made. Additionally, the New Beginning Initiative's Web page features an electronic scorecard to track progress as policy changes are achieved.

For more information about the New Beginning Initiative, [go here](#) [4].

Organizations participating in the initiative launch (listed alphabetically): Council for Global Equality; Family Equality Council; Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders; Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network; Immigration Equality; Lambda Legal; Mautner Project; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Lesbian Rights; National Coalition for LGBT Health; National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; National Youth Advocacy Coalition; Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE); Servicemembers Legal Defense Network; The Trevor Project. *Disclaimer: Each policy proposal should be considered the proposal of the organization(s) responsible for drafting the proposal. There should be no assumption that all organizations adopt, agree with or would prioritize the policies in the same way.*

The National Policy Roundtable, established in 1997 and convened by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, is a forum for more than 35 institutional leaders to discuss and coordinate public policy strategy related to LGBT issues.