

Senator Markey Introduces Bill to Create a Special Envoy for LGBT Rights in U.S. State Department

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Despite all of the progress made on LGBT equality in the United States, on a daily basis, LGBT people around the world face violence, discrimination and even death. The United States can do more. And to help make that happen, today, Senator Edward Markey (D-MA) introduced a bill that would create a special envoy for LGBT rights in the U.S. State Department. In addition, the International Human Rights Defense Act would, among other responsibilities, coordinate LGBT policies for all bureaus and offices of the U.S. State Department and in the international programs of other federal agencies; represent the United States in diplomatic matters relevant to the human rights of LGBT people; and work to ensure that the needs of LGBT people seeking resettlement and protection are incorporated into federal government policy.



Senator Markey said at the bill's introduction: "By fostering a coordinated effort across the federal government and relevant agencies, we can meet the enormous challenge before us and work to ensure equality for all people around the globe."

In a world where it is still a crime to be gay in more than 80 countries – and where homosexuality is punished by death in seven – it is now more important than ever that the United States develop a comprehensive strategy addressing LGBT discrimination abroad and make LGBT human rights a foreign policy priority. HRC President Chad Griffin applauded the bill's introduction: "For the United States to hold true to our commitment to defend the human rights of all people around the world, we must stand with the LGBT community in their struggle for recognition and equality everywhere."

The protection of LGBT rights globally is not only a moral imperative, but a necessity in our interconnected world. LGBT Americans who work for American business that have strong LGBT protections are hesitant to take new jobs in countries that criminalize them just for being who they are.

That's why HRC worked with Senator Markey's office in drafting the bill and why HRC supports it. We look forward to working with Senator Markey's office and our coalition partners to pass this important step in securing LGBT rights around the world.

The International Human Rights Defense Act, which has twenty-four original co-sponsors in the U.S. Senate, is supported by Amnesty International USA, Council for Global Equality, RFK Center for Human Rights, Freedom House, Human Rights First, American Jewish World Service, National Center for Transgender Equality, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Advocates for Youth, and MassEquality.

HRC's fact sheet on the bill is [available here](#).

