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HRC marks '100 Days'

by John Fenoglio
2009-05-06



Members of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) —the largest national LGBT civil-rights organization—held events across the nation called "First 100 Days" on April 30. In Chicago, HRC members and guests gathered at Pops for Champagne, 601 N. State. The event was part of a nationwide effort to provide HRC supporters with information on the next 100 days of the organization's plans for intended work, and to assess President Barack Obama's plans for promoting pro-LGBT initiatives.

The mood was positive. Bill Weeks, political co-chair for HRC's national board of governors, gave Obama high marks for his work in addressing LGBT issues during his first 100 days in office: "After eight years of an anti-LGBT stranglehold on the White House, the election of President Obama has signaled hope and the possibility of real change our community has not known for nearly a decade. The change in leadership alone has had immediate and profound implications for LGBT equality. Simply put: the most important benefit of a fair-minded White House is what doesn't happen. Instead of support for anti-LGBT policies, we have a White House that has taken action to repeal harmful Bush Administration policies."

During the event HRC announced its "Blueprint for Positive Change," a list of initiatives that they want Mr. Obama to fully support within the next 100 days. It's an ambitious agenda. Some of their initiatives include but are not limited to the following: (1) passing fully inclusive hate crimes legislation; (2) assuring a national, comprehensive approach to HIV/AIDS & LGBT health disparities; (3) expanding healthcare benefits to cover gender identity; (4) assuring tax and Social Security equity; (5) protecting and expanding marriage equality and relationship recognition at all levels of government; (6) protecting and expanding adoption and foster care; (7) passing a trans-inclusive Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA) ; and (8) repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

While Obama cannot personally take credit for the states of Vermont and Iowa legalizing same-sex marriage during his first 100 days in office, he can take credit for the number of openly gay presidential appointees in his administration. While there are not any openly gay appointees at the Cabinet-level, there are over 30 openly gay appointees in the Obama White House, according to the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Institute's website. The highest ranking openly gay official is John Barry, director of the Office of Personal Management. He is responsible for ensuring that federal employment policies are applied fairly. Other LGBT leaders in the executive branch include David Median, Michelle Obama's deputy chief of staff, and Peter Burleigh, interim ambassador to India.

Outside the restaurant, as the event was ending, one of the HRC student volunteers said, "That Matthew Shepard hate-crimes bill passed in the House of Representatives yesterday. If Obama signed it into law, we'd know he's legit, like he'd be our 'real deal.'"

Visit www.HRC.org, www.FightHateNow.org and www.EndTheLies.org for more info.



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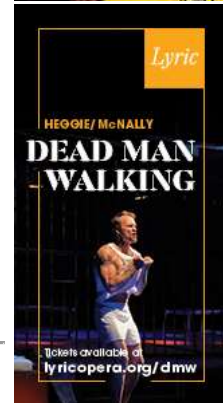
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