

= John Berry (administrator) =

Morrell John Berry (born February 10 , 1959) is the United States Ambassador to Australia . He used to be director of the United States Office of Personnel Management .

Berry was born in Montgomery County , Maryland , to parents who worked for the federal government . He completed degrees at the University of Maryland , College Park and Syracuse University and worked in local government and as a legislative aide in state government from 1982 to 1985 . From 1985 to 1994 , he worked as legislative director for U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer . He held posts in the U.S. Treasury Department , the Smithsonian Institution , and the U.S. Department of the Interior until 2000 , and worked as director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Zoological Park until 2009 , when he was nominated by President Barack Obama as director of the United States Office of Personnel Management . Berry took office after being confirmed by the United States Senate in April 2009 .

In June 2013 , President Obama nominated Berry to replace Jeff Bleich as US ambassador to Australia . He was confirmed by unanimous consent of the US Senate in August 2013 .

= = Early life and education = =

Berry was born February 10 , 1959 , in Rockville , Montgomery County , Maryland , United States . His father served in the U.S. Marine Corps , his mother worked for the U.S. Census Bureau , and he has a brother and a sister . Berry graduated from high school in 1977 and finished a Bachelor of Arts in government and politics from the University of Maryland , College Park in 1980 . In 1981 , Berry graduated from Syracuse University with a Master of Public Administration .

= = Career = =

Berry served in management for the Montgomery County government from 1982 to 1984 and as staff director of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee from 1984 to 1985 . From 1985 to 1994 , he was legislative director for U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer , and associate staffer on the House Appropriations Committee . Berry assisted Hoyer on employment issues of the federal government , and played a leading role in negotiations that led to the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 , which established the locality pay system . From 1994 to 1995 , Berry served as Deputy Assistant Secretary and acting Assistant Secretary for Law Enforcement in the U.S. Treasury Department . From 1995 to 1997 , Berry worked as director of government relations and as senior policy advisor at the Smithsonian Institution .

= = Department of the Interior = =

Berry was appointed Assistant Secretary for Policy , Management and Budget at the U.S. Department of the Interior during the Clinton administration , serving from 1997 to 2001 . At the Interior Department , Berry improved credit union and continuing education options , oversaw the expansion of department programs to improve employees ' work @-@ life balance , and held town hall meetings with Interior employees and used their suggestions to upgrade a cafeteria and health center . These changes were partly funded through partnerships with federal employees , unions and other agencies to reduce costs for the department . Berry worked to create a complaint procedure for employees who experience discrimination because of their sexual orientation , to expand relocation benefits and counseling services to domestic partners of employees , to establish a liaison to gay and lesbian workers , and to eliminate discriminatory provisions of the National Park Service 's law enforcement standards . He helped establish an office supply store for Interior employees , which he staffed with disabled workers . Berry oversaw one of the largest budgetary increases in the department 's history .

In 2000 , Berry became director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation , where he worked with Interior Inspector General Earl Devaney to reconcile twenty years of financial records , improve

management , and conserve wildlife habitat through public @-@ private partnerships . Berry was appointed from October 1 , 2005 , to serve as director of the National Zoo , which had been found to have shortcomings in record keeping and maintenance . Berry created a strategic planning and modernization process for the zoo . This included a twenty @-@ year capital plan , securing \$ 35 million in funding to provide for fire protection , and beginning renovations to animal houses . The Berry Bastion , an Antarctic mountain , was named in his honor .

= = Office of Personnel Management = =

In 2008 , Berry was mentioned as a possible nominee for U.S. Secretary of the Interior , a position obtained by Ken Salazar . President Barack Obama announced his intention to nominate Berry as director of the Office of Personnel Management on March 3 , 2009 , and did so on March 4 . The nomination hearing before the Senate Homeland Security Committee on March 26 , 2009 , led to expectation of easy confirmation for Berry , despite opposition from conservative activists based on Berry 's homosexuality . In the hearing Berry stated he supported any effective employee compensation system , but that the federal government had the obligation to give employees with comparable job performances similar pay and treatment . He pledged to preserve veterans preference and supplement it with training programs to prepare veterans for federal jobs , and promised reviews of proposals to improve the security clearance and hiring processes . Berry emphasized the importance for agencies to use all recruitment tools , citing relocation benefits that could keep agencies competitive with the private sector , and stated he would create a strategic plan and set performance goals for the Office of Personnel Management . Berry had stated support for benefits for same @-@ sex partners of federal employees and a repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act .

The Senate confirmed Berry on April 3 , 2009 , and he was sworn in April 13 as the first agency director in the Obama administration with all senior staff in place . The ceremonial swearing in on April 23 was attended by First Lady Michelle Obama . Berry has been , according to the Human Rights Campaign , the highest @-@ ranking openly gay official to serve in the executive branch in any U.S. administration .

= = U.S. Ambassador to Australia = =

In June 2013 , President Obama nominated Berry to be the US ambassador to Australia , the first openly gay U.S. ambassador to a G @-@ 20 nation . On August 1 , 2013 , the United States Senate confirmed Berry by unanimous consent . Australian media coverage of Berry 's appointment has been overwhelmingly positive with a video he posted to the US Embassy website being described as the " friendliest introduction video in diplomatic history " while Berry himself was described as " modest " , with an " impressive record " . Federal News Radio , in the US , reported that , " more than 200 people had posted responses " to the video , " most of which were warm and cordial " .

= = Personal life = =

Before being appointed as ambassador to Australia Berry lived in Washington , D.C. Berry is openly gay . On August 10 , 2013 , he married Curtis Yee , his partner for 17 years , at St Margaret 's Episcopal Church in Washington .