

January 11, 2017

To the Honorable Members of the United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Request to Senators to Question Secretary of State Nominee Rex Tillerson on LGBT Equality and Human Rights Around the World

Dear Senators,

We are writing today to request that in the formal confirmation hearings for Rex Tillerson, as well as in subsequent one-on-one nomination meetings, that you ask whether he would continue the State Department's existing broad commitment to global LGBT human rights if he is confirmed as U.S. Secretary of State.

As you know, under Secretaries of State Clinton and Kerry, the United States has been a potent force for LGBT human rights around the world. Equality California's hope is that Mr. Tillerson will continue policies that further LGBT equality and human rights, especially in countries where the LGBT community faces criminalization, violence and even death for being LGBT.

Specifically, we urge you to press Mr. Tillerson to commit to preserve State Department policies protecting LGBT people, including:

- the mandate of the State Department's [Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons](#), responsible for defending and promoting global LGBT civil rights
- ensuring that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance programs promote and protect global LGBT human rights
- engagement with human rights organizations and with national governments around the world to protect LGBT people in countries that criminalize and discriminate against them
- funding for and expansion of the [Global Equality Fund](#), an initiative made up of governments, private foundations and corporations supporting organizations that protect and advance LGBT human rights
- support for USAID's [LGBT Global Development Partnership](#) along with current funding levels for a range of LGBT human rights programs
- existing policies allowing transgender Americans to change gender markers on passports
- existing LGBT non-discrimination policies for State Department and foreign service employees
- benefits and allowances for same-sex couples and families of foreign service employees sent to serve abroad, as well as accreditation of diplomats regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We also request that you press Mr. Tillerson specifically on several other issues:

- whether he believes that LGBT human rights are a core U.S. foreign policy priority, and if so, how he would express that commitment
- whether he supports federal non-discrimination policies for State Department and foreign service employees

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202 W 1st Street Ste. 3-0130
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- whether he will continue to monitor global conditions for LGBT people and to make them a part of the State Department's annual Human Rights Report to Congress
- how he would direct the Department to work with countries supporting LGBT advocates
- how the State Department would deal with the nearly 80 countries around the world where LGBT people face open discrimination, arbitrary arrest, violence and abuse
- how he would deal with LGBT refugees and asylum seekers
- whether he supports the office of [USAID's Senior LGBT Coordinator](#), to ensure that LGBT human rights are fully integrated into USAID's vital overseas work.

Equality California is making these requests because of the importance of maintaining existing State Department policies that protect LGBT employees from discrimination and that advance LGBT equality and human rights around the globe.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Rick Zbur in blue ink.

Rick Zbur
Executive Director
Equality California

Handwritten signature of Valerie Ploumpis in blue ink.

Valerie Ploumpis
National Policy Director
Equality California