



The Council for  
**Global Equality**

Advancing an American Foreign Policy  
Inclusive of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

## **LGBT Caucus Briefing**

### **September 22, 2008**

### **Remarks by Mark Bromley**

I'd like to begin by thanking Congresswoman Baldwin and Congressman Frank for organizing this briefing, and for the important contribution they have made to these issues by launching the LGBT Equality Caucus earlier this year. I'd also like to thank Chairman Berman and ranking Republican Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs for co-sponsoring this briefing and recognizing the global impact of this human rights discussion. And finally, many thanks go to Amber Shipley, who put so much effort into making this briefing possible in the final days of this Congress.

Today, on the eve of the tenth anniversary of Matthew Shepard's tragic death in October 1998, we are here to talk about the rising tide of hate violence directed at individuals because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Unfortunately Matthew's death was hardly an isolated incident, and this very city has been hit by a recent wave of LGBT attacks. Many of us were saddened to read that a 27-year-old Maryland youth died just last Wednesday from a brutal assault earlier this month in front of a local gay bar. We will hear today that this is a global crisis, and that LGBT hate crimes represent a growing human rights concern in many parts of the world.

In the State Department's annual Human Rights Report, which was released in March of this year, our own U.S. embassies list human rights concerns relating to sexual orientation and gender identity in approximately 118 countries. The reported violations this year range from extreme violence, arrests of individuals based only on their sexual orientation or gender identity, state-sponsored harassment, extortion, and torture in detention, and the denial of health care, housing, education and other social services. An analysis by my organization, the Council for Global Equality, shows in particular that reports of violence directed at transvestite and transgender activists in Latin America appear to be increasing, just as some studies show that they are also increasing here in the United States. And the State Department report once again points to the failure of the police to protect gay pride marchers in several Eastern European countries.

So we are here today because an emerging body of human rights documentation shows that violence against LGBT communities is severe. Sadly it is also under-reported. That is just as true for the United States as it is for the rest of the world. The evidence is also beginning to show that LGBT-related attacks tend to be more violent than other categories of crime, and that they are often “sexualized,” in what may be a perverse attempt to “punish” the victim for transgressing sexual or gender norms. We’ll hear more about these crimes from our panelists today.

To emphasize the global nature of this crisis, we’ll start today by hearing about a new report from Human Rights First that tracks rising LGBT violence in OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) countries, which include Western and Eastern Europe, as well as the United States and Canada. Unfortunately, in the face of this escalating violence, we will also hear that the United States continues to stand on the diplomatic sidelines. The State Department is reluctant to name these human rights violations within the OSCE’s human rights forum, and the State Department also seems unwilling to push the boundaries of the organization’s important “tolerance mandate.” That diplomatic position must change. Given the levels of LGBT violence in Eastern Europe, it is time for the U.S. government to push the OSCE to address LGBT hate crimes more proactively. At a time when the United States seems to have lost its voice on so many human rights matters, it is sad that we have again abdicated leadership on this issue in yet another international forum.

We will also hear today from the FBI on how they track LGBT hate crimes data in the United States, and from the Anti-Defamation League about efforts to strengthen the FBI’s data collection work. And while the FBI is still grappling to improve its data collection efforts, the ADL will also highlight recent initiatives by European countries, and by the OSCE itself, to adopt some of the FBI’s data collection methodologies to track rising patterns of violence in Europe.

Turning finally to LGBT hate crimes in the United States, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force will discuss the patchwork of state and local laws that have grown up to respond to these crimes. And the Human Rights Campaign will discuss ongoing efforts to pass federal legislation to ensure that the U.S. government finally has the authority to do more than simply track such alarming violence. Ten years after Matthew Shepard’s death, it is clear that we need to give federal prosecutors the legal authority and the financial resources to investigate and prosecute these crimes when local authorities are unable or unwilling to do so.

As we start this discussion, I would also like to extend a special thanks to all of you for turning out during such a busy week on the Hill to hear about this global crisis in LGBT violence.