

# Legislative Priorities for the 116th Congress

NATIONAL LGBTQ TASK FORCE  
**ACTION FUND**

*The Task Force is the oldest national LGBTQ advocacy organization and has hundreds of thousands of members across the country. In 2019, our focus will be to continue “Queering the Progressive Movement” with an emphasis on three issue areas: Faith, Equity and Democracy.*

## FAITH

### ISSUE: Religious Exemptions/Religious Refusals

Our country is currently embroiled in a debate over the right of private business owners to refuse service to LGBTQ customers based on the owners' religious beliefs. We believe that freedom of religion and LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections can and should co-exist.

**Legislation:** We contest legislation with religious exemptions that would degrade existing or future civil rights or that would restrict access to reproductive health services. To prevent these types of measures we encourage lawmakers to support the Do No Harm Act.

## EQUITY

### ISSUE: Nondiscrimination Protections

All people in the United States should have equal opportunities and equitable treatment under the law, including fair, non-discriminatory access to housing, public accommodations, and to work without fear of discrimination for their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender presentation.

**Legislation:** We support the Equality Act which seeks to secure strong and explicit nationwide protections for all LGBTQ people in employment, housing, education, public accommodations, public funding, credit, and jury service. The Equality Act would also provide sex based federal non discrimination protections in public accommodations for the first time.

oppose any efforts to overturn the Affordable Care Act and we contest religious exemptions that prohibit access to reproductive health services.

### ISSUE: Economic Justice

LGBTQ individuals and families are more likely to live in or near poverty than the general population, especially those living at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities including LGBTQ people of color, LGBTQ immigrants, LGBTQ seniors and transgender and gender nonconforming people. In addition to the need for explicit federal nondiscrimination protections, LGBTQ people need strong paid leave and minimum wage policies to achieve equality and economic equity.

### ISSUE: Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice

LGBTQ people need access to reproductive healthcare and services such as abortion, HIV care, and family planning, which includes the right to decide whether or when to become a parent. All parents regardless of marital status or LGBTQ identity, deserve to parent their children with dignity and in communities that are free from violence and discrimination.

**Legislation:** We oppose pervasive and government-sanctioned discrimination designed to block recognition of our relationships and hinder our ability to form and protect our families. We support legislation such as the EACH Woman Act which would reverse the Hyde Amendment and ensures abortion care is available for poor people and included in public health insurance programs. We also

**Legislation:** We support legislation such as the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act, the Healthy Families Act and the Raise the Wage Act to grant LGBTQ workers the ability to better care for themselves and their loved ones using paid sick, family and medical leave. We also support the long overdue increase to the federal minimum wage.

### ISSUE: Immigration

There are nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, including at least 267,000 who are also LGBTQ. The current broken system harms, scapegoats and vilifies all immigrants, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and their friends and families. In many areas, such as detention, asylum, and employment, the system disproportionately harms LGBTQ people.

**Legislation:** We support DACA and the Reuniting Families Act. We also support legislation that provides a real pathway to citizenship; ends family separation at the border; ends the unjust Muslim ban; ends unjust detentions and deportations; upholds labor and employment standards; promotes a dignified quality of life for border communities; and doesn't relegate immigrant members of our community to second-class status.

## ISSUE: LGBTQ Inclusive Sex Education

Most sex education curricula ignore the needs of LGBTQ youth by only discussing sexuality within the confines of heterosexual marriage. At least 30 states are required by law to stress abstinence during instruction in sex education and only 16 states are required to cover contraceptives. At least seven states have laws that are explicitly anti-LGBTQ.

**Legislation:** We support the Real Education for Healthy Youth Act (REHYA) and the Youth Access to Sexual Health Services Act (YASHS Act) and urge lawmakers to eliminate

funding and/or support for harmful and ineffective abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

## ISSUE: Criminal Justice

LGBTQ individuals are incarcerated at higher rates and often serve longer sentences as compared to non-LGBTQ individuals. For example, while only 3 percent of the general national population identify as queer women, over 42 percent of the overall women's national prison population are lesbian or bisexual.

**Legislation:** We support legislation that goes further than the recently enacted First Step Act to address systemic problems such as ending any use of private prisons and other legislation leading to mass incarceration. We support the End Racial and Religious Profiling Act to address racial and religious profiling within federal law enforcement. We also support legislation such as the Democracy Restoration Act to restore the federal voting rights of persons when released from incarceration.

## DEMOCRACY

### ISSUE: Democracy Reform

The LGBTQ community is one of the most diverse populations in the country. Our community is comprised of people from all races, ethnicities, ages, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, religious or secular communities, and regions of the country. As such, we represent a wide range of people that are being targeted by discriminatory voting rights practices.

**Legislation:** We support the For the People Act (HR 1), the democracy reform package designed to address voter suppression, end partisan gerrymandering, restore federal voting rights to formerly incarcerated individuals, enact ethics and campaign finance reforms and other protections.

### ISSUE: Federal Surveys and Data Collection

The LGBTQ community must be counted in the Census and other federal surveys. When compared to non-LGBTQ people, LGBTQ people are more likely to be people of

color, more likely to live in poverty, more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system, more likely to experience homelessness or housing insecurity, less likely to have health insurance, and less likely to have steady employment.

**Legislation:** Because the Census is used to direct federal funding and to determine our representation in Congress, we support the Census Equality Act, which would:

- 1) require the Census Bureau to continue its testing on sexual orientation and gender identity questions
- 2) begin asking sexual orientation and gender identity questions on the American Community Survey by 2020 and on the 2030 Census and
- 3) require the Census Bureau report out on the sexual orientation and gender identity information it collects, as it does for other characteristics.

**The National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund** builds political power, takes action and creates change to achieve freedom and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people and their families. We accomplish this through direct and grassroots lobbying and organizing on legislation and ballot initiatives. As a progressive social justice organization, the Task Force Action Fund works toward a society that values and respects the diversity of human expression and identity and achieves equity for all.

[www.taskforceactionfund.org](http://www.taskforceactionfund.org)

**be you.**