



RAHM'S COMMITMENT TO LGBT EQUALITY

Rahm has been a supporter of equality for the LGBT community in his personal and professional life. He has fought for legal protection, funding and opportunity across the diverse spectrum of the community. Rahm is proud of the 100% rating he earned from the Human Rights Campaign while serving in Congress.

Looking forward, Rahm believes there are many things he can accomplish in Chicago by advocating for LGBT equality, working to improve coalitions and communications among the city's diverse communities and bringing services to all LGBT persons located throughout the city. Chicago thrives on its diversity, and we gain strength because we are different. The LGBT community has made numerous significant contributions to Chicago's rich history, and Rahm looks forward to continuing a strong partnership between the mayor's office and the LGBT communities and persons living everywhere in Chicago.

Marriage equality

Rahm celebrates with the community the passage of comprehensive civil union legislation this month in Springfield. He vigorously advocated passage to members of the state legislature. He continues to believe that full marriage equality, in name and in rights, should always be the goal. While in Congress, he voted repeatedly against discriminatory efforts to make marriage equality more difficult to attain for gay and lesbian couples. Rahm voted against the Marriage Protection Amendment, which attempted to define marriage as only between one man and one woman.

Mayor's LGBT advisory council

The Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues has been a major asset for the city as a conduit between the Mayor and the LGBT community. Rahm would like to see the Council report directly to the Mayor, rather than to a Commissioner, so that community input is heard in City Hall.

Diversity in staffing

Rahm is sensitive to the need for a wide range of input from a diverse group of advisors, executives and administrators. Rahm recognizes the need to identify and recruit qualified LGBT candidates for prospective mayoral appointments and city jobs. He is committed to continuing the initiatives of hiring from the LGBT community across the departments that fall within the purview of the mayor's office and making sure that the entire city is represented in his administration. As a Congressman, he co-sponsored inclusive employee non-discrimination legislation, and he is proud to have been a part of President Obama's administration which has made more than 150 openly LGBT appointments in its first two years – a record number. As mayor, Rahm will seek to close any of the existing gaps in the City's pension fund benefit plan to ensure 100% equality for LGBT employees and their partners.

Safe schools and anti-bullying project

The need to establish an absolute zone of security in and around our places of learning is paramount. Children must feel safe in order to learn. The tragic deaths of so many middle and high school Chicago students cry out for urgent steps to be taken to halt the senseless violence and gang warfare. Establishing a task force with CPS and Chicago law enforcement personnel will be a priority to help solve this problem faced by Chicago school children.

The recent string of LGBT youth suicides across the country has underscored that bullying is a critical issue plaguing schools. For many in the LGBT community, this problem is all too familiar – more than 85 percent of gay and lesbian youth report being harassed in school and a third report having skipped school out of fear. Our city cannot be whole until every child feels secure and welcome in our schools. While we have made progress toward equality and acceptance in Chicago, we need to end bullying by changing the culture in our schools to prevent it from happening in the first place. Anytime bullying is accepted or ignored, a student pays the price.

Rahm will make 100% enforcement of anti-bullying policies an absolute mandate and task the incoming CPS leader to test new strategies to end bullying. Teachers and administrators, hall monitors and lunch room aides all must set the tone and engage directly whenever bullying takes place. Encouraging parental involvement in our students' education increases the likelihood that students will succeed in school – and it can also have an impact on a student's conduct in the classroom.

Rather than avoiding the issue, schools should embrace LGBT youth and make clear that it's okay to be a gay or lesbian student in Chicago and Chicago Public Schools. Gay-straight alliances and other programs that provide support for LGBT youth can help to ensure that our schools are welcoming all students. Rahm will work with CPS school administrators and officials and allied organizations to make sure that all schools have such alliances or similar programs.

Health care

Rahm is a strong supporter of incoming Cook County Board Chairman Toni Preckwinkle's idea of an independent Cook County Hospital Board and medical clinics throughout the city that provide affordable, immediate care to underserved populations. He will work with her to develop appropriate facilities and strategies to make sure quality care is provided to everyone in Chicago. Health clinics work side-by-side with non-profit providers to increase LGBT services and programs throughout the city. He is committed to keeping public health and safety a priority in future budgets, including HIV/AIDS prevention, education and services.

HIV/AIDS programs

HIV/AIDS disproportionately impacts the gay community and in particular African-American and Latino men and LGBT youth. Rahm will seek to address this problem by targeting prevention programs to communities and populations most impacted, specifically promoting strong community-based programs throughout Chicago and in particular the West and South sides. He will direct the Chicago Department of Public Health to redouble its efforts in prevention and continue working with the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Test Positive Aware Network, CALOR, Howard Brown, Center on Halsted and other community groups to achieve reductions in rates of infection.

Rahm will also work with the Chicago Public Schools to provide age appropriate education about HIV/SADs and prevention as well as developing a strategic partnership with other levels of government, non-profits and the private sector to implement the National HIV/AIDS strategy goals recently released by President Obama.

Public safety

Rahm is committed to providing increased public safety. Recognizing the needs of everyone to feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods, Rahm intends to stress this goal to the Superintendent of Police. Rahm believes in diversity training for the entire Chicago fire and police forces. As co-sponsor of Matthew Sheppard Act, Rahm recognizes the need to address hate crimes with appropriate responses. He will ensure that the Superintendent of Police enforces the recently passed federal hate crimes law that includes crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. He will also work with other units of government and labor unions to add, as part of annual performance reviews, an evaluation of how well individuals and departments are follow protocols when dealing with LGBT community. Rahm recognizes that members of the transgender community have experienced abuse and disrespectful treatment by law enforcement officials; he will enforce a zero tolerance policy for police abuse.

Homelessness and poverty

Homelessness and poverty are a very serious issue in Chicago and disproportionately affect the LGBT community. LGBT youth, women and communities of color are particularly impacted. Rahm will see that city agencies work closely with service providers to ensure that our neediest citizens are cared for and put on a path to stable housing. He will work to increase the stock of shelters and affordable housing units and make sure that housing is welcoming and available to LGBT citizens. He will advocate for sensitivity training so that LGBT homeless are treated with dignity and fairness.

LGBT Hall of Fame and salute to LGBT Veterans

Rahm applauds Mayor Daley's establishment of the LGBT Hall of Fame and the annual salute to LGBT Veterans. Rahm will continue and strengthen these programs. The Hall of Fame highlights the incredible contributions that LGBT citizens and allies make to the City of Chicago, and Rahm will be proud to preside at that event every year and confer the honors.

LGBT seniors

Rahm recognizes that LGBT seniors are a vulnerable population with unique and specific needs. He will designate LGBT seniors as a target population under the criteria of the Area Plan of the Chicago Department on Senior Services. Rahm will undertake an assessment of the city's capacity to provide culturally competent and welcoming programming for LGBT seniors, and will carry out Mayor Daley's pledge to help create affordable housing for LGBT seniors.

Immigration

Rahm supports the Dream Act and full inclusion of rights of LGBT couples and families in Immigration reform. He will advocate for the rights of immigrants and detainees, including LGBT immigrants. Rahm will confer with the LGBT Coalition for Immigrant Rights in matters of advocacy and legislative reform that benefits everyone, including LGBT individuals.

A record of standing with the LGBT community

Rahm has spent his career fighting for LGBT equality. As President Obama's chief of staff, Rahm worked to get an executive order signed securing hospital visitation rights for gay and lesbian couples. The order, which resulted from a meeting between Rahm and members of the Chicago LGBT community, prohibits hospitals from continuing this form of discrimination.

In Congress, Rahm co-sponsored the Matthew Shepherd law and then watched President Obama sign it into law, expanding the federal hate crimes law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. He supported and helped pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against an individual on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, and co-sponsored the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act to provide benefits to domestic partners of federal employees, including health benefits, retirement and disability plans, and family, medical and emergency leave.