



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Putting Pressure on Russia to Repeal Anti-LGBT Laws

BRAD HOYLMAN August 16, 2013

In response to the Russian Federation's recent enactment of a number of discriminatory laws against LGBT people and their supporters, I joined City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and my other LGBT colleagues in City and State government in sending a letter to President Obama calling on him to refuse any diplomatic mission to Russia until President Putin repeals its anti-LGBT statutes. According to Human Rights Watch, the statutes include:

- Ban on “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relationships” among children - applies to the press, television, radio, and the Internet and imposes administrative sanctions, such as heavy fines, arrest for up to 15 days and deportation of foreigners, and severely restricts the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly of LGBT persons and activists. It bans distribution of positive information and communication about LGBT issues, making LGBT persons appear alien or unnatural to Russian society.
- “Foreign agent law” - requires non-governmental organizations receiving foreign funding and conducting “political activity” to register as “foreign agent,” a term that is widely understood in Russia to mean spy or traitor. LGBT rights organizations are among those targeted under this law.
- Ban on foreign adoption by LGBT couples – the law also applies to any couple or individual, gay or straight, in countries where same-sex marriage is legal.

These laws threaten not only Russian citizens but also visitors to the country. This is particularly relevant since the 2014 Winter Olympic Games begin on February 7 in Sochi, Russia, potentially exposing thousands of New Yorkers and other foreign visitors to the new laws. As such, I joined the same group of colleagues in writing to the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) calling on the IOC to publicly condemn this civil rights crackdown on LGBT citizens and visitors to Russia and obtain explicit, written assurances from President Putin stating that LGBT visitors and their allies will not be subjected to these discriminatory laws while in Russia for the Olympic Games. Please see both letters below.