



Happy inauguration, Mr. President

Gay rights leaders in their own words

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The Blade asked prominent figures in the gay rights movement to compose welcome messages to President-elect Barack Obama as he takes office. Some of the responses are shown below.

"I have seen no president better prepared to take office than you will be on Jan. 20th. There are great challenges and great opportunities. The challenges will come at you regardless. It is the opportunities you must not lose sight of, and that is where we will make our greatest gains together."

— Hilary Rosen, Huffington Post

"We hold you in our hearts and minds on this most auspicious day as you assume the office of the president of the United States of America. Our nation faces many and great challenges, President Obama. We know that you will remember our community as you make real your vision of a united country, where all of us share equally in the promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We are your family, your neighbors, your people. Together we will."

— Rea Carey, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

"Gay people helped bring you to the presidency and rejoice at the historic change and national fulfillment your taking office marks. Amid the many pressing challenges confronting the country and you is the need to undo the second-class citizenship that gay Americans have long endured and continue to be subjected to by their own federal and state governments. Ending gay couples' exclusion from marriage is not a simple matter of policy options; it is a burning question of civil rights and holding America to its promise. While there is much you need to tackle with urgency, the cause of equal rights for all must always hold a preeminent claim on any president."

— Evan Wolfson, Freedom to Marry

"Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans salute you. We admire your Herculean achievements and vision for our nation. We are heartened to have a president-elect who publicly states that he is 'a fierce advocate for equality of gay and lesbian Americans.' I had the great honor to introduce you at a LGBT event during the general election. You stated that you expected prompt passage of hate crimes and ENDA, repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' during your administration and reaffirmed your support for equal benefits for same-sex couples. It is our dream that you will help fulfill our long awaited aspirations for the American promise of liberty, pursuit of happiness and equality."

— Malcolm Lazin, Equality Forum

"President-elect Obama and his administration must use their change momentum to transform the national dialogue on LGBT lives and issues. Coming out of an eight-year period where the power of the bully pulpit allowed anti-gay activists to advocate exclusion of us from the American family, we now must claim our opportunity to create a new dialogue of inclusion and respect. Our

community needs to be more visible than ever and share stories about our lives with friends and families. These conversations will advance our community because they will change hearts and minds.”

— Neil Giuliano, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation

“Servicemembers Legal Defense Network is working with the new president and his team as we build momentum in the next Congress to repeal ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’ which bans open military service on the basis of sexual orientation. President Obama has repeatedly expressed a strong commitment to signing legislation to overturn this discriminatory law and replace it with one that ensures open service for all members of the military regardless of sexual orientation. We encourage the new administration to continue demonstrating strong leadership and forging new partnerships to push forward the repeal process so that all service members will have the freedom to serve.”

— Aubrey Sarvis, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network

“As you take office after the most successful campaign in history, I hope you do not forget the extraordinary everyday people you met when you first began your work as a community organizer. Your job, like then, is to bring fairness and equality for all and to make America a better place. Please do not disappoint those most in need of your leadership. Keep making change. Keep making history.”

— Mike Rogers, Page One News Media

"Equality Virginia welcomes an administration that seeks to open the doors of government for all to participate in a nationwide discussion. While we join our fellow GLBT organizations in expressing concern regarding Reverend Warren's participation in the Inauguration ceremony, we prefer an administration that is all-inclusive, as opposed to the past administration that operated under a narrowly defined, exclusive ideology.

The President-elect has asked the GLBT community to ‘look at [his] policies.’ We look forward to seeing positive progress on GLBT issues as this administration fulfills its promise of change.”

— Jon Blair, Equality Virginia