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"Change has come to America": New White House Web site has roster of LGBT issues

By: Carla Marinucci (Email) | January 20, 2009 at 02:05 PM

We have President Barack Obama giving the 'hang loose' sign to the Hawaiian marching bands in the inaugural parade -- so maybe it is no surprise we're already seeing the new motto on the usually staid White House official website: "Change has come to America," it declares.

And yes, it has: in a shift from the Bush years, the new website includes a whole roster of LGBT civil rights issues — a move already being praised by groups like the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Here's some excerpts of the Obama LGBT civil rights agenda:

Support for the LGBT Community

"While we have come a long way since the Stonewall riots in 1969, we still have a lot of work to do. Too often, the issue of LGBT rights is exploited by those seeking to divide us. But at its core, this issue is about who we are as Americans. It's about whether this nation is going to live up to its founding promise of equality by treating all its citizens with dignity and respect." --- Barack Obama, June 1, 2007

Among the priorities:

***Expand Hate Crimes Statutes:** In 2004, crimes against LGBT Americans constituted the third-highest category of hate crime reported and made up more than 15 percent of such crimes. President Obama cosponsored legislation that would expand federal jurisdiction to include violent hate crimes perpetrated because of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or physical disability.

Fight Workplace Discrimination: President Obama supports the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and believes that our anti-discrimination employment laws should be expanded to include sexual orientation and gender identity. While an increasing number of employers have extended benefits to their employees' domestic partners, discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace occurs with no federal legal remedy.

Support Full Civil Unions and Federal Rights for LGBT Couples: President Obama supports full civil unions that give same-sex couples legal rights and privileges equal to those of married couples. Obama also believes we need to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and enact legislation that would ensure that the 1,100+ federal legal rights and benefits currently provided on the basis of marital status are extended to same-sex couples in civil unions and other legally-recognized unions.

Oppose a Constitutional Ban on Same-Sex Marriage: President Obama voted against the Federal Marriage Amendment in 2006 which would have defined marriage as between a man and a woman and prevented judicial extension of marriage-like rights to same-sex or other unmarried couples.

Repeal Don't Ask-Don't Tell: President Obama agrees with former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili and other military experts that we need to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. The key test for military service should be patriotism, a sense of duty, and a willingness to serve. Discrimination should be prohibited. The U.S. government has spent millions of dollars replacing troops kicked out of the military because of their sexual orientation....The President will work with military leaders to repeal the current policy and ensure it helps accomplish our national defense goals.

Expand Adoption Rights: President Obama believes that we must ensure adoption rights for all couples and individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation. He thinks that a child will benefit from a healthy and loving home, whether the parents are gay or not.

Promote AIDS Prevention: "In the first year of his presidency, President Obama will develop and begin to implement a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy that includes all federal agencies. The President also supports lifting the federal ban on needle exchange, which could dramatically reduce rates of infection among drug users.

Empower Women to Prevent HIV/AIDS: In the United States, the percentage of women diagnosed with AIDS has quadrupled over the last 20 years. Today, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses. President Obama introduced the Microbicide Development Act, which will accelerate the development of products that empower women in the battle against AIDS.

So does this help repair the Rick Warren choice? My guess is yes. But stay tuned.