

Obama to Gay Rights Activists: Keep Pressure on Congress to Pass Anti-Discrimination Law

President Barack Obama said on Tuesday he will sign an executive order barring federal contractors from discriminating against employees based on their sexual orientation, but told **gay rights** activists they need to keep up the pressure on Congress to pass a broader law.

Drawing a lengthy standing ovation from a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) gala raising money for the Democratic National Committee, Obama said the order was the right thing to do for human rights and the economy.

"We don't benefit as a country or an economy—businesses don't benefit—if they're leaving talent off the field," Obama said.

The White House confirmed on Monday that Obama would sign the order, which would make it illegal for companies with U.S. government contracts to fire or avoid hiring employees based on sexual orientation and gender identity, just as it now is with race.

The order would apply to about 20 percent of the U.S. workforce, according to gay rights group Human Rights Campaign.

Obama said he had hoped Congress would pass broader legislation banning employment discrimination against **LGBT** people, but noted the Republican-controlled House of Representatives has not taken up a bill passed in November by the Senate.

About 550 people attended the gala, with tickets ranging from \$1,200 to \$32,400.

It was one of three Democratic fundraising events in New York City for Obama on Tuesday. Obama later attended a dinner at the home of Anna Wintour, editor in chief of Vogue magazine, with about 30 guests contributing up to \$32,400, a DNC official said.

Earlier, he participated in an event at the Intercontinental Hotel in Times Square for Senate Majority PAC. A spokesman for the group did not respond to a request for information about the event.

Editing by Eric Walsh

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