

U.S. Names First-Ever LGBT Human Rights Envoy

The United States Department of State on Monday named its first-ever special envoy to advocate globally for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Randy Berry, an openly gay senior diplomat, has served as U.S. Consul General in Amsterdam since 2012. His earlier foreign service postings included Nepal, Bangladesh, Egypt, Uganda, South Africa and New Zealand.

“Defending and promoting the human rights of LGBT persons is at the core of our commitment to advancing human rights globally—the heart and conscience of our diplomacy,” said U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in announcing the groundbreaking appointment.

In his new role, Berry is charged with advancing government initiatives to reduce violence and discrimination against LGBT people around the world, including in the more than 75 countries where consensual same-sex relationships are criminalized.

He also will be able to utilize the State Department’s Global Equality Fund, created in 2011 to provide critical emergency, short-term, and long-term assistance to protect and advance the human rights of LGBT communities in over 50 countries.

“At a time when many LGBT people around the world are facing persecution and daily violence, this unprecedented appointment shows a historic commitment to the principle that LGBT rights are human rights,” said Human Rights Campaign president Chad Griffin in a statement.

The appointment is part of an Obama administration push to

promote LGBT rights internationally and make them a foreign policy priority.

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