



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®

January 23, 2018

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Human Rights Campaign, the United States of America's largest organization advocating on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, and our more than 3 million members and supporters nationwide, I write in opposition to the nomination of the Sam Brownback to serve as Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom at the U.S. Department of State. Over his long career in the U.S. Senate and as governor of Kansas, Gov. Brownback has consistently opposed basic civil and human rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people and queer (LGBTQ) people. These positions stand in contrast to longstanding policies of the U.S. State Department and could do severe damage to LGBTQ people living abroad.

While governor of Kansas, Gov. Brownback made a policy change that would make it nearly impossible for transgender Kansans to change their birth certificates to reflect their gender identity. He also stripped away nondiscrimination protections for Kansas state employees on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. And he has consistently conflated "religious freedom" with a license to discriminate, signing an executive order that that gave a blank check to religious organizations to refuse services to same-sex couples.

During his time in Congress, then-Sen. Brownback made no secret of his fervent opposition to legal protections for LGBTQ people. He strongly supported an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would have banned same-sex couples from marriage in every state by defining marriage as exclusively a union between a man and a woman. He opposed hate crimes protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, falsely arguing that it would prevent people from being able to "speak their beliefs about homosexuality" rather than recognizing that hate crimes laws are enforced when individuals commit violent crimes based on the characteristics of their victim such as race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. Criticizing the governor of New Hampshire for signing legislation that permitted same-sex couples to marry in his state, Brownback claimed that "[marriage equality] is a massive social experiment whose early results have been quite harmful to families and children," despite peer reviewed evidence to the contrary.

Given his record and his positions on religious freedom in particular, it is deeply worrying that could use this position to promote the harmful idea that individuals holding certain religious views should somehow be permitted be discriminate against LGBTQ people or other minorities. This is particularly concerning because LGBTQ people often face persecution in the same countries where religious minorities face persecution. Gov. Brownback must not be allowed to

use this position to reverse the State Department's longstanding policies, reiterated by Secretary of State Tillerson earlier this year, to support "the fundamental freedoms of LGBTI persons to live with dignity and freedom."

This concern was only amplified at his hearing before the Senate Relations Committee on October 4, when Gov. Brownback pointedly refused to answer Sen. Kaine's repeated questions on the topic of LGBTQ human rights. Sen. Kaine asked Gov. Brownback if there were "any circumstance under which religious freedom can justify criminalizing, imprisoning, or executing people based on their LGBT status." While Gov. Brownback responded saying that he supported specific actions the State Department had previously taken on the topic of LGBTQ human rights, he did not condemn the practice of executing LGBTQ people. Sen. Kaine then asked, again, if there were "any circumstance under which religious freedom can justify criminalizing, imprisoning, or executing somebody based on their LGBT status could be deemed acceptable because somebody asserts they are religiously motivated in doing so." Once again, Gov. Brownback refused to answer clearly with a simple yes or no answer.

Given his past record and his deeply concerning answers at his committee, I urge you to oppose his nomination for this position and to vote "no" when it comes before you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Stacy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Stacy
Government Affairs Director
Human Rights Campaign