

July 8, 2009

Dear Chairman Lynch,

We, the undersigned organizations, write in support of the Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act, H.R. 2517. The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act would provide health care, retirement, and other benefits to all federal civilian employees with qualifying same-sex domestic partners on the same basis as spousal benefits. The Act also provides benefits for domestic partners' children, even if they are not the biological or adopted children of the employee.^[1]

Benefits currently afforded to married federal employees but denied same-sex domestic partners include:

- Access to FEHBP health insurance;
- Pension and retirement benefits;
- Family relocation assistance;
- Language training, evacuation services, health care, and anti-terrorism training for Foreign Service officers' families;
- Family and medical leave; and
- Continued health coverage upon employee's termination (at own expense).

The Act also imposes equal obligations upon domestic partners, including the duty to disclose financial interests.

By offering full benefits to the domestic partners of federal employees, this bill will bring employment practices in the federal government in line with those of America's largest and most successful corporations. Fifty seven percent of Fortune 500 companies provide domestic partner benefits to their employees. Many of America's leading companies, including defense giant Raytheon, IBM, Microsoft, Shell Oil, Walt Disney, Fannie Mae, Citigroup, Xerox, AOL Time Warner, and United and American Airlines offer these benefits. In addition, 23 states, the District of Columbia, and over 150 local governments make benefits available to public employees and their same-sex partners. These include cities in every part of the country, from Los Angeles to New York City, to Madison, Wisconsin and Iowa City.

In addition, by offering domestic partnership benefits, the federal government would not only improve the quality of its workforce, but also demonstrate its commitment to fairness and equality for all Americans. Benefits comprise a significant portion of all employee compensation. By not offering domestic partnership benefits to its employees, the federal government is not providing equal pay for the equal work of these employees. The legislation would also require domestic partners to have the same obligations under federal law.

It is time for the federal government to have the ability to retain the best employees, through giving equal treatment to its gay and lesbian employees in committed relationships. We therefore support the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act.

^[1] In most states, second-parent adoption is not available, and as a result many children of same-sex couples cannot become legal children of both parents. The Act would provide coverage for these children on the same basis as stepchildren of married employees.

Sincerely,

AIDS Action Council
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Family Equality Council
Federal GLOBE
GOProud
Human Rights Campaign
National Air Traffic Controllers Association
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU)
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National
Pride at Work, AFL-CIO
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)