

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 15, 2010

His Excellency Hamidon Ali
Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations
President of the Economic and Social Council

Your Excellency,

The 2010 session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) presents an opportunity to support the vital role of civil society at the United Nations. As members of the United States House of Representatives, we urge you to support the application for NGO consultative status of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) and to prevent the unfair use of procedural measures to silence civil society.

IGLHRC is a twenty-year old human rights organization with offices in the United States, South Africa, Argentina, and the Philippines. In supporting the work of ECOSOC and the UN Charter, IGLHRC promotes the implementation of human rights treaties. It assists non-governmental organizations to prepare and submit documentation to the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Procedures, and the treaty bodies. IGLHRC is committed to combating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. In definition and practice, IGLHRC is committed to the rights to the freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

It has been more than three years since IGLHRC's application for consultative status was received by the Secretariat.¹ In addition to its initial application, IGLHRC has answered more than forty-four questions or requests for information by the Committee, including having answered oral questions before the Committee on two occasions.²

Last month at the NGO Committee of ECOSOC, a motion of "no action" on the call for a vote to decide on the consultative status application of IGLHRC was successful. The nature of the previous questions for IGLHRC and various other statements made by some Member States indicated that this tactic was motivated by the fact that IGLHRC's focuses on the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

¹ On May 8, 2007, IGLHRC's application for consultative status was received by the Secretariat.

² On May 9, 2008, IGLHRC was transmitted 1 question and 2 requests for additional documentation, which were answered and provided on December 9, 2008. On Feb 24, 2009 IGLHRC was transmitted 6 questions, which were answered on March 5, 2009. On May 8, 2009 IGLHRC was transmitted 17 questions, which were answered on May 13, 2009, including three attached reference materials as requested. On May 19, 2009, IGLHRC was transmitted a request for answers in writing 5 questions that had been communicated and answered orally in that session, which were provided on 1 June 2009. On June 1, 2009, IGLHRC's application was deferred to the next session. On February 1, 2010, IGLHRC was transmitted 7 questions, which were answered on February 3, 2010. In February 2010, IGLHRC answered questions orally. On February 12, 2010, IGLHRC's application was deferred to the next session. On February 8, 2010, IGLHRC was transmitted 5 questions, which were answered on March 15, 2010.

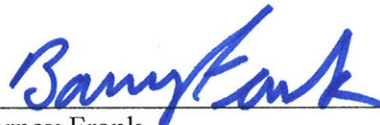
This incident was the first time the no-action procedure has been used to prevent the Committee from making a recommendation on an application's merits after an initial - and in this case extensive - review of the applying organization. This extraordinary use of the no-action motion to prevent the full ECOSOC from making a decision on an NGO's application should not be allowed to stand. If left unchallenged, it could result in the regular use of such a procedure to block progress. This would subvert the purpose of the NGO subcommittee, deny ECOSOC the opportunity to fulfill its function, and limit the access of vital civil society groups to contribute to the work of the UN.

We urge you to support IGLHRC's application for consultative status at ECOSOC. In so doing, you will send a message to the NGO Committee that it must review all applications without discrimination. Diversity of civil society at the United Nations is essential to respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of all people and to achieving sustainable peace and human security. Please do not allow the voices of marginalized people to be silenced by discrimination and procedural roadblocks.

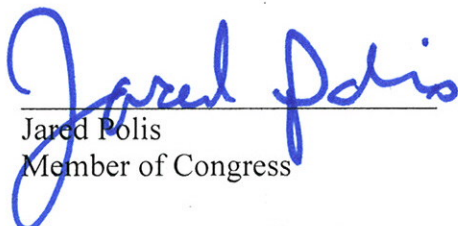
Sincerely,



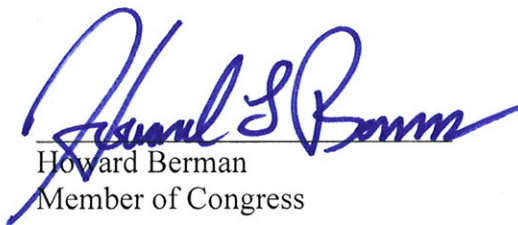
Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



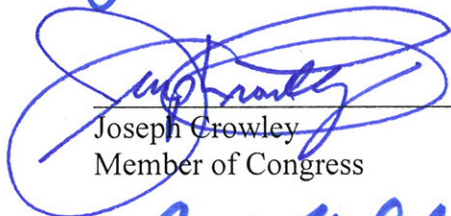
Barney Frank
Member of Congress



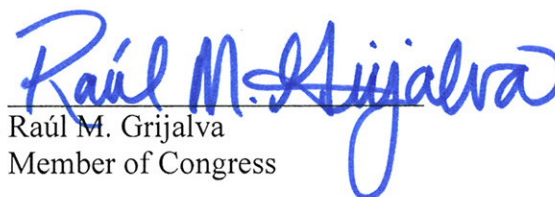
Jared Polis
Member of Congress



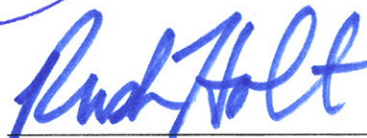
Howard Berman
Member of Congress




Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



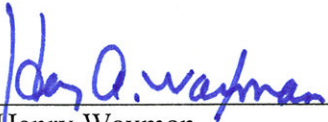
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

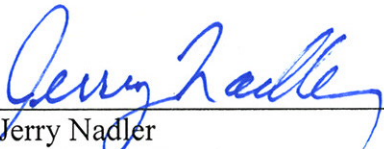


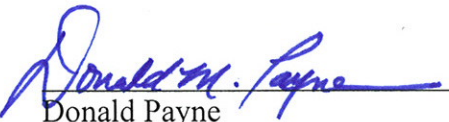
Rush Holt
Member of Congress




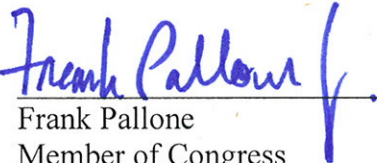
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Henry Waxman
Member of Congress


Jerry Nadler
Member of Congress


Donald Payne
Member of Congress


Steven Rothman
Member of Congress


Frank Pallone
Member of Congress


Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Cc: Member States of the United Nations