

Written by Jack D'Annibale
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Jack d'Annibale, Communications Director - Congressman Mike Honda

WASHINGTON DC – Congressman Michael Honda (CA-15) and Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY-8), Vice-Chairs of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus, are hosting a briefing about how binational same-sex couples are being torn apart due to U.S. immigration policy. Three couples will share their stories and discuss how H.R. 1796, the Reuniting Families Act, and H.R. 1537, the Uniting American Families Act, would eliminate discrimination facing same-sex partners.

“As a person who was separated from family members in internment camps during my childhood, I never want anyone to be torn apart from their loved ones just on the basis of who they are,” said Congressman Honda. “I proudly sponsored the Reuniting Families Act because it not only reunites same-sex couples, but also protects the civil rights of LGBTQ individuals and ensures that they are treated equitably through comprehensive immigration reform.”

“Today in the U.S., there are thousands of committed same-sex couples that are suffering because of unequal treatment under our immigration laws,” said Congressman Nadler. “The Reuniting Families Act and the Uniting American Families Act are critical components of comprehensive immigration reform and must be passed if we are to ensure that our government is helping to stabilize families and not weakening them.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are over 36,000 same-sex binational couples that are unable to sponsor their spouses to come to the U.S., a right currently only enjoyed by heterosexual couples. Therefore, many same-sex couples are torn between remaining apart or reuniting with their partners by moving abroad. The Reuniting Families Act and Uniting American Families Act would afford same-sex couples equal immigration benefits as heterosexual couples, allowing American citizens or permanent residents to sponsor their same-sex partners.

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The briefing will feature testimony by three same-sex couples: Judy Rickard and Karen Bogliolo, John Beddingfield and Erwin de Leon, and Carmen Gilotte and Astor Fonseca. Judy, a native of San Jose, California and Karen, who resides in England, have been together for six years but were forced to live apart about half of that time. John, a rector in Washington, DC, and Erwin, a doctoral student, have been together since 1998, but Erwin's student visa will expire at the end of this year. Carmen, a U.S. citizen, and Astor, a civilian employee working for the Brazilian military, have been together since 1996, but Astor faces the possibility of having to move to Brazil.