

Gay leaders, Dems & some in GOP unimpressed by State of Union

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Faced by a Democratically controlled Congress a weakened President Bush Tuesday night pitched his plan to send more U.S. troops to Iraq "Give it a chance to work," he pleaded in his State of the Union address.

He also promoted proposals to expand health insurance coverage and to slash gasoline consumption by 20 percent in a decade.

But Bush did not mention attempting for a third time to breathe life into a proposed constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

"[P]erhaps the election results served to check the president's use of dangerous wedge politics," said Matt Foreman, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

On Monday Sen. Wayne Allard and Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, both Colorado Republicans, said they have no plans to make a third try to advance the proposal. ([story](#))

Allard and Musgrave were the sponsors of the proposed amendment that failed to get enough votes to advance in either 2004 or 2006 when Republicans dominated both houses of Congress.

"While this is positive news, it hardly erases the last six years of legislative and policy attacks our community has suffered under this administration," said Foreman.

"We look forward to working with the new, more fair-minded Congress to repair the hurt created by President Bush's disastrous domestic and international policies and to restore our nation's reputation as a society in which dignity, equality and justice are available for all," Foreman said in a statement in reply to the State of the Union.

AIDS care groups also were unimpressed with the speech.

Despite signing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act of 2006 into law in December 2006, President George W. Bush failed to address the domestic HIV epidemic in his State of the Union address tonight," said the national AIDS Action Council.

"In particular, the President failed to call upon lawmakers to prioritize the needs of people living with HIV by making life-saving drugs and medical treatment available to all who are HIV infected, nor did he highlight the importance of HIV prevention."

The Servicemembers Legal Defense Network also criticized the State of the Union as an opportunity lost.

"With the war in Iraq raging on, and our military stretched thin, President Bush again missed an opportunity to strengthen our armed forces and renew our commitment to equality by welcoming

the contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans," said SLDN spokesperson Steve Ralls.

"It is unfortunate that the commander-in-chief has neglected, over the past six years, to even mention the service and sacrifice of the LGBT community. While the President rightly salutes our nation's service men and women, he continues to implicitly push gay service personnel into the shadows by supporting a policy of silence and exclusion," said Ralls.

"The State of our Union is strongest when our country lives up to its ideals of inclusion and when every American can bring his or her contributions to the table. Until gay Americans are welcomed in our fighting forces neither our military, nor our nation, is as strong as it could be."

Of Bush's plan to send more troops to Iraq, the Democratic response was quick.

"While the president continues to ignore the will of the country, Congress will not ignore this president's failed policy," Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid gave Bush said in a joint statement after his address.

"His plan will receive an up-or-down vote in both the House and Senate, and we will continue to hold him accountable for changing course in Iraq."