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US

Joe Biden taps tireless queer campaigner to champion global LGBT+ rights in key White House role

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Jessica Stern. (Slaven Vlasic/Getty Images)

Joe Biden has named Jessica Stern, a tireless LGBT+ rights campaigner and accomplished academic, as the nation's second-ever LGBT+ envoy.

Stern will act as a torch-bearer for global queer rights in her new State Department post.

Currently executive director of leading LGBT+ advocacy group OutRight Action International, she is also a member of the LGBTI Reference Group of [UN Women](#), the United Nations agency dedicated to squashing gender inequality.

She follows in the footsteps of diplomat [Randy Berry](#) in the role of US special envoy to advance the human rights of LGBTIQI+ persons, a role first created in 2015 to scrutinise the government's efforts to support queer rights.

Berry served in the role up until 2017. It then remained vacant throughout the Trump administration. Biden’s secretary of state Antony Blinken pledged earlier this year to tap a replacement.

In a statement on the White House website, the ambassador role was described as one vital to Biden’s commitment to advancing the human rights of LGBT+ people across the world.

“At a time when the human rights of LGBT+ persons are increasingly threatened in all regions of the world, the special envoy will bring together like-minded governments, civil society organisations, corporations and international organisations to uphold dignity and equality for all.”

Joe Biden expected to double down on need to pass the Equality Act

Officials told CNN that Stern will join Biden at the White House later on Friday (24 June) for remarks celebrating Pride Month.

It is understood Biden will issue a sweeping broadside against the wave of anti-LGBT+ legislation filling the dockets of statehouses across the US.

The dozens of bills that seek to attack the civil liberties of LGBT+ people are “un-American”, the president will say, and are “legislation disguised as bullying”.

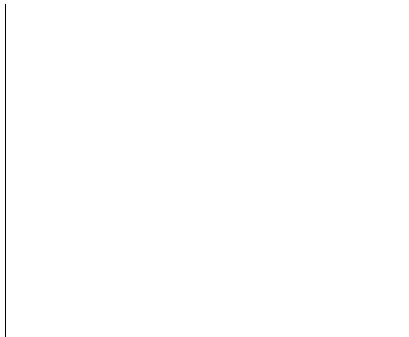
He will also renew his campaign pledge to pass the Equality Act, which would crucial civil rights protections to queer Americans.

The bill narrowly passed in a divided House of Representatives in February, but faces an uphill battle in the Senate where the threat of the filibuster has thrown its future into jeopardy. Republican lawmakers, meanwhile, have seemingly locked arms in their efforts to kill the bill.

But Biden will seek to bolster support for the bill by stressing its urgency during the remarks, an official told CNN.

“He will commend the LGBT+ community for their courage and bravery pushing progress forward,” the official said, “and recommit to the work ahead to confront the hate, discrimination, and violence facing LGBT+ people, especially transgender women of colour, at home and around the world.”

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