August 6, 2009

The Honorable Susan E. Rice
Permanent U.S. Representative to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations
140 East 45th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Ambassador Rice:

Congratulations on your confirmation as our new Permanent Representative to the United Nations. We welcome your leadership in promoting America’s standing among our fellow nations in the UN and look forward to working in partnership with you. We write to enlist your support to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all U.S. citizens who serve honorably as UN employees.

As you know, on June 17, President Obama signed a Memorandum granting limited domestic partnership benefits to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees of the federal government, including U.S. diplomats serving in our country’s many embassies and missions around the world. The Presidential Memorandum also requested that Director of the Office of Personnel Management John Berry and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton extend to same-sex partners of federal employees the benefits they identified as a result of extensive internal reviews. Finally, the Memorandum requests that the heads of all other executive branch departments and agencies conduct internal reviews to determine whether other benefits they administer might be similarly extended, and to report the results of those reviews to the Director of OPM.

We are both heartened and inspired by President Obama’s strong commitment to LGBT equality and decision to issue this Presidential Memorandum. We also commend both Director Berry and Secretary Clinton’s readiness to clarify the details of the benefits that can be made available to lesbian and gay federal employees and their families. We wholeheartedly agree with Secretary Clinton when she said of the policy changes at the U.S. Department of State: “this change is the right thing to do, and it is the smart thing to do.”

As you are no doubt aware, current internal UN policy defers to the instructions of the relevant Permanent Mission of the country of origin of a staff member when deciding whether to grant benefits to same-sex partners of UN employees. We understand that the UN may have already forwarded to you at least one request for recognition of the domestic partner of a U.S. citizen serving honorably at the UN.
In light of President Obama’s Memorandum, as well as Secretary Clinton’s steadfast commitment to ensuring LGBT federal employees at the Department of State are treated equally, we hope that you will continue this promise and enable American employees at the UN to designate their same-sex partners as domestic partners. These individuals lead dedicated lives of service, and deserve the opportunity to provide for their families.

We would be pleased to work with you in addressing these matters and look forward to your prompt response. If you have any questions, please contact Amber Shipley of Rep. Baldwin’s staff at 202-225-2906.

Sincerely,

Tammy Baldwin
Barney Frank
Jared Polis
Bill Delahunt
Henry Waxman
William Delahunt
Michael Capuano
Steven Rothman
James McGovern
Joseph Crowley
Rush Holt
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Lynn Woolsey
Dennis Kucinich
Chellie Pingree

William Delahunt
Baldwin’s staff at 202-225-2906.
Cc: The Honorable Hillary Clinton