

RELEASE IN PART B6

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Subject: Fw: State Department steps back on gender-neutral parentage, won't replace terms 'mother,' 'father'

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To: Mills, Cheryl D
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B6

State Department steps back on gender-neutral parentage, won't replace terms 'mother,' 'father'

By MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- In a bid to forestall a backlash from congressional conservatives, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has ordered the State Department to amend a bureaucratic change that would have eliminated the titles "mother" and "father" with the gender-neutral term "parent" in reports of overseas births.

The State Department said Saturday that Clinton had instructed the department to retain "mother" and "father" in a form known as a "Consular Report of Birth Abroad" that U.S. embassies use to document the birth of a child to expatriate Americans. It said the form will now ask for the names of the child's "mother or parent 1" and "father or parent 2."

Gay and lesbian groups had applauded the initial change, which was announced with little fanfare in late December. But conservative groups criticized it as an attack on traditional marriage and family values.

Clinton has been a forceful advocate for gay and lesbian rights and in 2009 moved to give homosexual diplomats, their partners and families the same benefits that heterosexual diplomats and their families receive. That step at the State Department preceded a similar government-wide move announced by the White House.

However, State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said Saturday that Clinton had not been aware that the terms "mother" and "father" would be stricken from the consular birth reports when she signed off on broader changes to the document last year.

"She has directed that the relevant forms retain to the existing references to 'mother' and 'father' in addition to the designation 'parent'," Crowley said. He said her decision would ensure that the documents are as inclusive and informative as possible.

State Department officials said Clinton was concerned that eliminating the "mother" and "father" from the forms would spark an unwanted fight with newly powerful Republican lawmakers who are calling for major cuts in foreign operations spending and have challenged administration policy in numerous areas.

The changes to the form were made public on Dec. 22 but not widely noticed until earlier this week when the Family Equality Council, an advocacy group for gay, lesbian and transgender families, hailed the revisions as a victory for its efforts and thanked Clinton for making them.

In a Jan. 5 statement, it said the change "carries significant tangible and symbolic consequences for same-sex headed families, and increases governmental efficiency by alleviating the needless confusion, delays and denials caused by outdated gender-specific forms."

That drew the attention of conservative groups, like the Family Research Council, which called the move indicated of the "topsy-turvy world of left-wing political correctness" and slammed the State Department for making changes to a "birth-related document" that "provide less information about the circumstances of that birth."

"This is clearly designed to advance the causes of same-sex 'marriage' and homosexual parenting without statutory authority, and violates the spirit if not the letter of the Defense of Marriage Act," the council said in a statement on Friday

Read more: <http://miamiherald.typepad.com/gaysouthflorida/2011/01/state-department-steps-back-on-gender-neutral-parentage-wont-replace-terms-mother-father.html#ixzz1AYqNfAkE>