

# In a Presidential First, Obama Marks Gay Pride at the White House

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## Culture Wars

*By Michael D. Shear*

President Obama on Monday became the first Oval Office occupant to officially celebrate [gay](#) pride in the White House even as the gay community remains bitterly divided about the pace of Obama's efforts to turn words into action for their agenda.

In recognizing the march of progress since the protests outside New York's Stonewall Inn 40 years ago, Obama achieved a milestone for many gay and lesbian Americans who mark the day as the beginning of their modern rights movement.

But the excitement among the several hundred guests invited by the first couple to the East Wing Monday was tempered by frustration among many who believe that the president has moved too slowly to make good on his campaign promises.

Obama's refusal to take unilateral action to end the "don't-ask, don't tell" policy regarding gays in the military and his administration's support for a legal challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act even sparked a small protest outside a speech to gay activists by Vice President Biden last week.

"There's been an awful lot of noise and criticism," said Steve Elmendorf, a top Democratic lobbyist who is openly gay. "For him to send a message to the entire country that this is an event worth celebrating is a big deal. But people expect beyond that to see some substance on a whole host of issues."

Obama confronted those expectations directly Monday, renewing his campaign promises to change the military's policy, repeal the marriage act and pass a federal hate crimes bill named for Matthew Shepard, the student murdered in Wyoming in 1998.

"I want you to know that I expect and hope to be judged not by word, but by the promises my administration keeps," Obama said to sustained applause from the crowd. "By the time this administration is over, I think you guys will have pretty good feelings about the Obama administration."

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