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CONTACT:
Chairman John Traier
201-723-5269

Equality GOP calls into question recent comments by Congressman Chris Smith

The Board of Directors of Equality GOP NJ has released the following statement in follow up to recent remarks by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), chair of the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organization, expressing his view that state-sanctioned violence against lesbian women and gay men in Uganda are not human rights concerns:

"Despite Congressman Smith's views on civil marriage equality, the Board of Directors of Equality GOP New Jersey have long respected his outstanding record on Human Rights and his courage to fight a just fight for the good of humankind and to promote the dignity and welfare of human life.

Mr. Smith's recent remarks, however, are completely outside the recognized global human rights framework, inconsistent with his solid pro life record, contrary to Catholic teachings regarding violence against LGBT people, and not at all reflective of the values of equality and inclusion that have been the bedrock of the U.S. Republican Party and the values of life and liberty that have been the foundation of American democracy.

The U.N. Declaration on Human Rights --- and the numerous covenants and instruments that have emerged from it --- apply to women, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, children, and LGBT people EQUALLY and WITHOUT EXCEPTION.

There is no greater violation of an individual's human rights and no more tangible a threat to human rights universally than state-sanctioned violence against a living human being based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

This is a sad moment for Equality GOP NJ and for Republicans generally. This moment offers a critical lesson in how a few words uttered by an elected official who is highly respected and who holds a position of such authority and influence can have global consequences. Sometimes, however, a moment of shame can become a springboard of opportunity and greater courage.

A number of E-GOP's leaders have stood with Congressman Smith over the years and supported his congressional career actively. Now it's time for Congressman Smith to look inwardly and revisit his recent remarks and his current line of thinking.

The leadership of Equality GOP NJ looks forward to meeting with Congressman Smith to discuss with him in further detail the human rights dimensions of LGBT concerns in Uganda specifically and around the world generally as well as how these concerns impact the constituents in his district who have returned him to Congress time and time again."

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