



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Russian persecution of gays is reprehensible and alarming**

**Joint Statement from Aids. Tony Zielinski, Nik Kovac and José G. Pérez**

Like many supporters of LGBT rights, a number of Milwaukee's elected officials have watched with growing alarm in recent months as the Russian government has tightened its crackdown on the rights and freedoms of gay people and their supporters. The actions of Russia's leaders mark a shameful step backward toward Soviet laws that banned homosexuality outright.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed legislation that allows police to arrest tourists and foreigners suspected of being gay or pro-gay rights and detain them for up to 14 days. Other legislation classifies gay rights "propaganda" as pornography, making anyone who argues for tolerance or attempts to educate children on the matter subject to arrest. And last month, Putin signed a law banning the adoption of Russian-born children to gay couples and to any couple or single parent living in any country where marriage equality exists.

All of this stepped up persecution takes place amid a backdrop of growing violence toward and intolerance for Russia's gay population.

President Putin, Russia's government and the Russian people need to moderate their stances on these important issues and step back from the brink of bigotry. This kind of hate-fueled intolerance has no place in the modern world, let alone a world power that should serve as a model for other freedom-loving people worldwide.

We join other leaders worldwide in calling on President Putin and other Russian leaders to enact policies that treat all people with the respect, dignity and equality that are their human rights, and to repeal this reprehensible anti-gay legislation.

Signed,

Handwritten signature of Tony Zielinski in black ink.

Ald. Tony Zielinski

Handwritten signature of Nik Kovac in black ink.

Ald. Nik Kovac

Handwritten signature of José G. Pérez in black ink.

Ald. José G. Pérez