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IGLTA Chair Award 2015: President Barack Obama

White House LGBT Liaison Aditi Hardikar to accept honor on the president's behalf at travel association's Los Angeles convention

Los Angeles (2 April, 2015)— President Barack Obama will receive the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association's prestigious Chair Award this year. The award recipient is chosen by the leader of the IGLTA board of directors and presented to an individual or business that has made significant improvements to the landscape of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender travel.

"This administration has gone to great lengths to make the U.S. more welcoming to the global LGBT community and has allowed individuals with HIV/AIDS to travel freely," says IGLTA Board Chair Dan Melesurgo. "We all know travel opens minds and changes perceptions. The actions of President Obama and his administration certainly have created a more positive experience for all of us."

In 2009, Obama lifted a 22-year-old travel ban that prevented visitors and immigrants with HIV from entering the United States, saying that it "was rooted in fear rather than fact." A year later the Department of State revised standards for gender designation on passports, making it easier for transgender people to travel. U.S. Customs and Border Protection eased entry into the United States by expanding the definition of family to include domestic partners in 2012 and to recognize children of same-sex parents regardless of adoption status in 2014.

The award will be presented as part of the opening keynote session 9 April at IGLTA's 32nd Annual Global Convention in Los Angeles. Accepting the award on the president's behalf is Aditi Hardikar, who serves as an Associate Director of Public Engagement in the Office of Public Engagement. In her role, she is the White House's primary liaison to the LGBT community as well as the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

"It's an honor to accept this award on behalf President Obama for his leadership in helping eliminate barriers for the LGBT community around the world," said Aditi Hardikar, White House Associate Director of Public Engagement. "The United States places great importance on the protection and promotion of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people, including LGBT persons globally."

For interview requests with Aditi Hardikar, please email LoAnn.Halden@iglta.org. For more information about the 8-11 April IGLTA Annual Global Convention, please visit igltaconvention.org.

The IGLTA Annual Global Convention would not be possible without the generous support of our convention sponsors. Host City Sponsor – Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board; Presenting Level – Delta Air Lines; South Africa Tourism; Visit West Hollywood; Official Level – Athens Development and Destination Management Agency; Embratur; GayCities; IBM; Tourist Office of Spain, Andalucía, Gran Canaria Tourist Board, and Madrid Region Tourism Board; Tourism Toronto and Ontario Tourism; Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater; VisitBritain; Conference Level – City of West Hollywood; Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau; Frontiers Media; Kinky Boots, The Musical; Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority; Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce; Out & Equal Workplace Advocates; Pink Banana Media; Preferred Hotel Group and Montage Beverly Hills; Silversea.

About IGLTA

The International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association is the leading member-based global organization dedicated to LGBT tourism and a proud Affiliate Member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization. In 2013, the association signed on to ECPAT's Tourism Child Protection Code of Conduct to prevent child exploitation. The association's membership includes LGBT and LGBT-friendly accommodations, destinations, service providers, travel agents, tour operators, events and travel media in 80 countries. For more information: iglta.org and follow us at facebook.com/IGLTA, twitter.com/iglta and instagram.com/iglta.