

MICHAEL GUEST

b. October 26, 1957

DIPLOMAT

“Leaders are judged not only by the challenges they tackle, but by those they fail to address.”

In 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell swore in Guest as ambassador to Romania.

Michael Guest is the first openly gay Senate-confirmed U.S. ambassador. He was nominated by George W. Bush. After serving for 26 years, Guest resigned from the State Department due to its discriminatory policies toward same-sex couples.

Born in South Carolina, Guest received a bachelor's degree in history and political science from Furman University, and a master's degree in foreign affairs from the University of Virginia. In 1982, Guest joined the State Department as a Foreign Service officer. During his early career, he was part of a delegation that facilitated the reunification of Germany.

In 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell swore in Guest as ambassador to Romania. At the ceremony, Powell recognized Guest's life partner, Alex Nevarez. Advocates expressed hope that this would herald a more inclusive State Department attitude towards LGBT employees and their partners.

Guest's work in Romania was characterized by condemning corruption, advocating for the rule of law and aiding preparations for Romania's entry into NATO. When Guest's ambassadorship ended, Romanian President Ion Iliescu presented him with the Order for Faithful Service in the Rank of Grand Cross.

Guest worked to end the State Department's denial of benefits for same-sex partners. In his farewell speech, he expressed disappointment with the continued discrimination.

When Barack Obama was elected, Guest served on the State Department's transition team.

He advised Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on discriminatory State Department policies. Secretary Clinton changed the policy to provide equal benefits for same-sex couples.

Guest received the Leadership Award from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Christian Herter Award for Constructive Dissent from the American Foreign Service Association. He also received the State Department's Charles E. Cobb Award for Initiative and Success in Trade Development, the Meritorious Honor Award, and five Superior Honor Awards.

Guest is the senior advisor and cofounder of the Council for Global Equality. He was married in 2011 by U.S. District Court Judge Joe Gale, who is the first openly gay Senate-confirmed federal judge. Guest and his husband reside in Washington, D.C.

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