



Gay Groups Unite To Oppose Stripping Trans Protections From ENDA

September 27, 2007

Nine national LGBT organizations announced Thursday they would fight any attempt to strip protections from the transgendered from the Federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act, or ENDA.

The bill was introduced in Congress in April (story). If passed and signed by the president it be illegal to fire, refuse to hire or refuse to promote an employee based on the person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

The nine groups were reacting to reports that a growing number of members of Congress are quietly trying to remove references to the transgendered in the belief the bill would have a better chance of passing.

A spokesperson for Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), one of only two openly gay members of Congress, said Thursday that the votes are "just not there" to pass the bill as it now stands.

Frank will offer up a separate bill specifically on transgender rights.

But the either or approach does not satisfy LGBT rights groups.

"Our collective position remains clear and consistent regarding the status of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act," the groups said in a joint press statement.

The groups include Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Stonewall Democrats, National Coalition for LGBT Health, Pride At Work (AFL-CIO), National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects, Mautner Project and National Center for Transgender Equality

"Our organizations oppose the removal of protections for transgender people from ENDA. We would also oppose any employment nondiscrimination bill that did not protect transgender people," the joint statement said.

While we don't doubt the sincerity of congressional leadership's intent to take action and be helpful to the LGBT community, we cannot disagree more with this strategy. We will continue to work with LGBT-supportive members of Congress to urge their colleagues to immediately drop this strategy."

Opposition to removing the transgendered from the bill also has the support of state groups.

"Being from a state where it is still perfectly legal to fire someone from their job because the boss does not like the way they express their masculinity or femininity, it is absolutely imperative the Employment Non-Discrimination Act be passed with protections based upon gender identity," said Alan Van Capelle, the executive director of Empire State Pride Agenda.

"We will be urging New York's Congressional Delegation not to yield on this critical matter and to ask their colleagues to take the same position."

Garden State Equality also said it opposes any change to the bill.

"We are fortunate that New Jersey state law prohibits all discrimination, employment and otherwise, against transgender people ...[b]ut federally and in too many other states, discrimination against the transgender community continues without impunity," the group said in a statement.

Earlier this month a House committee heard from LGBT victims of job discrimination. (story) It is expected the bill will come to a vote within the next few weeks in the House.

Although most states provide job protections in 31 states, it's still legal to fire someone because they're gay; in 39 states it is legal to fire someone for being transgender.