

Congress Set to Pass Anti-discrimination Bill

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By Political Affairs

Congress is expected to vote on the Employment Non-discrimination Act or ENDA this week. This bill would outlaw discrimination in the workplace against gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender individuals.

While the bill is expected to pass, the religious right, which has openly stated that discrimination against gay people is justified, has launched a campaign to pressure members of Congress, especially moderates, to vote against the bill.

Labor, religious, and civil rights organizations have urged their constituents to speak up in support of the bill and insist on its passage.

In a statement released this past week, Reverend Rebecca Voelkel of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's National Religious Leadership Roundtable said: "The National Religious Leadership Roundtable joins the Bishops and Elders Council in calling upon the U.S. Congress to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and on President Bush to sign it into law."

She urged Christian leaders to speak on behalf of the law.

Reverend Bishop Yvette Flunder in an interview with Political Affairs concurred. "If we in any way," she said, "take from anyone their inalienable rights to have access to the freedoms that are accorded to every human being in this nation, then we have attacked their civil rights."

Flunder rejected the right-wing's claim that protections from discrimination are "special rights." She said, "Special mention is probably the best word for it. Special mention has to exist where there are special wrongs. When a group of people are in the minority and do not have the sheer numbers to make sure that special wrongs are not perpetrated, then we have to have legislation that identifies them so those special wrongs will not continue to take place."

Pride at Work, a constituency group of the AFL-CIO and the LGBT voice in the labor movement, turned in thousands of signature cards to members of Congress in support of ENDA and organized a call-in campaign last Thursday. Thousands of callers urged their representatives to support ENDA.

Other organizations including the AFL-CIO, National Organization for Women, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and many others have endorsed ENDA.