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Montgomery County's Trans Ally

Groups come together to help protect anti-discrimination law

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The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and residents of Montgomery County have joined forces with Equality Maryland, the state's GLBT equal-rights advocacy group, in an effort to protect the county's new anti-discrimination law for "gender identity and expression."

James R. Walker Jr., a Montgomery County resident and business leader, will chair the new coalition, Basic Rights Montgomery, according to an April 24 Equality Maryland statement. Basic Rights Montgomery will focus its efforts on ensuring that Montgomery County voters "have the facts about the law," before November, when it could face a ballot challenge.

Though the Montgomery County Council unanimously passed the law prohibiting discrimination in November 2007, Citizens for Responsible Government, a group opposing the measure, has collected about 25,000 signatures in order to subject the Council's measure to voter scrutiny. Aside from educating residents about the law, BRM also aims to keep it off the ballot by challenging the validity of the petitions. BRM claims opponents used a "smear campaign" and "scare tactics" to secure signatures.

"The LGBT community in Maryland ... sees this as an important opportunity to inform our neighbors about the unique challenges and the intolerable discrimination faced by people who don't conform to certain societal gender expectations," Rea Carey, acting executive director of the Task Force's Action Fund, stated in the release, while also announcing a \$20,000 Task Force grant to aid BRM.