

Why No ENDA? The Scary Trans Frank'en Penis!

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Abstract

There's a meme going around the GLBT leadership out in the media right now that goes something like this: "Democrats wouldn't pass ENDA even when we had the votes and no one knows why." And what do our transgender leaders say about this troubling question? Dana Beyer blamed it on the "national LGBT leadership": "This was strange, [...]"

Article

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"Democrats wouldn't pass ENDA even when we had the votes and no one knows why."

And what do our transgender leaders say about this troubling question?

Dana Beyer blamed it on the "national LGBT leadership":

"This was strange, since after talking to then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) a number of colleagues said she was perplexed as to why the national LGBT leadership had abandoned ENDA in favor of DADT repeal. Congressional leadership hadn't asked for a change. The whip counts showed more support for ENDA than for DADT repeal. It seems that getting the last few votes for ENDA could have been no harder than getting DADT repeal at the 11th hour."

I'm hearing that GayInc isn't too happy with that answer. Maybe they'll like Barney Frank's legislative aide, Diego Sanchez?

"The thing that breaks my heart the most is that we did have the votes this time. Enda didn't come up because of two things, primarily. One is health care which took so much longer, and number two is the Don't Ask, Don't Tell the thinking that it needed to on the Defense bill and so when it came up it, it went. Both Congressman Barney Frank and Tammy Baldwin do believe and we know because we counted, we believe we had the votes this past Congress and we ran out of time. So the short answer is the calendar, but this time we actually had the votes, with even some Republican surprises to pass a fully inclusive ENDA bill. "

and of the fear of a motion to re-commit:

"Not only did we have the votes to pass a fully inclusive ENDA, but we also had the commitment of the votes, we had enough votes to defeat a motion to recommit that would have tried to strip away or hurt trans people. We had the votes, we just ran out of time. And that's a terrible heart breaker. We will

be reintroducing ENDA. We are working with the community groups now and we'll be able to say more about that as we get closer."

or if you don't like that, Babs Siperstein:

"Try as I might, I could get no information about what was happening with ENDA. I heard that it was all about health care legislation, but there was something more and no one was talking to me."

Siperstein is not just some average Jo. She's on the Democratic National Committee. She's a Democratic insider saying she doesn't know why ENDA wasn't brought to a vote? This points to either Siperstein being totally out of the loop (see also: token), or she's being dishonest about not knowing. Neither answer seems very comforting.

The Advocate's Kerry Eleveld:

"Second, although I have asked a good number of questions about ENDA and its prospects for a vote, I still can't tell you why it never happened. Meanwhile, I can recall with decent clarity nearly every twist and turn of the battle to pass "don't ask, don't tell" (DADT) repeal. This is not due to a bias on my part, but is rather indicative of the fact that no one seemed willing to talk with any specificity about what was or wasn't happening with ENDA."

And where does take that question? Gender identity. As Autumn Sandeen so eloquently put it:

"My reaction was to those paragraphs written by Kerry Eleveld were visceral. I heard 'It's time to open up the discussion again as to whether gender identity should be part of ENDA' when I read the phrase 'we need to have an honest conversation about our inability to discuss ENDA and transgender issues' in her piece. That's my filter; that's my problem."

Sandeen also calls out Barney Frank for his planting the seeds of the "bathroom question".

"Frankly, after so many promises by Rep. Frank and other congressmembers in 2009 and 2010 about how ENDA was going to be marked up "soon," at the end of the month, next February (2010) -- well, you can read about the long history of broken promises on ENDA here. It didn't appear to be an issue that would definitely kill the bill until the postmortem at the end of the 111th Congress., unless you consider this comment from Rep. Frank found in a January 13, 2010 piece in The Advocate:

'There continues to be concerns on the part of many members about the transgender issue, particularly about the question of places where people are without their clothes -- showers, bathrooms, locker rooms, etc.," said Frank. "We still have this issue about what happens when people who present themselves as one sex but have the physical characteristics of the other sex, what rules govern what happens in locker rooms, showers, etc.'

**Sigh.* Always the bathrooms; always the locker room showers."*

Our leaders on Barney:

"Barney Frank has said this before, and he was saying it again, even after he said that advocates had been doing a good job of educating. That was a bit of mixed messaging." - Babs Siperstein

and

“Ironically, the man who did the most to derail an inclusive ENDA in 2007 led the efforts to educate himself and his colleagues about the trans experience, and worked hardest on its behalf this past session. Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) made the effort to become comfortable with trans people, exemplified by his hiring of Diego Sanchez. If only our community leaders did the same. It would be refreshing to see trans people leading national organizations. It would also be bracing to hear gay leaders speak passionately for full civil rights for trans and gender non-conforming individuals. Where there is silence, there is, naturally, the inference that the issue is of little importance.

To move forward, I echo Tom Carpenters’s call for an independent debriefing on our advocacy during this past congressional session. We must learn from the past, and do so quickly.” - Dana Beyer

Apparently that debriefing is in and it’s still trans penises in showers. Endablog and Transadvocate blogger Katrina Rose put the harsh truth out unvarnished:

“Until St. Barney (and the other heads of the gay transphobia political hydra) told America to be afraid of something that doesn’t exist (sexually predatory pre-op trans women in women’s restrooms), America was more afraid of the long-known, long-proven - and, in many circles, still asserted as a right concomitant with being gay - public/toilet sex practices of many gay men.

George Michael exists.

David Shaw exists.

St. Barney exists - to make sure that America doesn’t think about men like George Michael and David Shaw when ENDA and DADT are discussed, but do think about the mythological creatures that St. Barney has devised when federal and state ENDAs are considered.”

The biggest obstacle to a trans-inclusive ENDA will be a penis shaped barricade built exclusively by Congressman Frank. What’s most sad is that no one in “transgender leadership” has the guts enough to say so.

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