

After The Personal Wars: What's Next In The Fight For Transequality?

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Abstract

Given the current political climate it looks as if the Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA) is dead for at least the next couple of years. What should we do? We need to look at the example of Haverford. From Philadelphia Gay News: "Haverford is on its way to becoming the 19th jurisdiction in the state to [...]"

Article

Given the current political climate it looks as if the Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA) is dead for at least the next couple of years. What should we do? We need to look at the example of Haverford. From Philadelphia Gay News:

"Haverford is on its way to becoming the 19th jurisdiction in the state to ban LGBT discrimination, as the township commission voted 5-3, with one abstention, at its Jan. 10 meeting to adopt a measure that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing and public accommodations. The commission must approve the bill on a second reading, which is expected to take place at next month's commissioners' meeting, before it can become law."

and Hartford, Connecticut:

"Last night the Hartford Court of Common voted unanimously in favor of two ordinances which protect gender identity or expression from discrimination. The Council's action makes Hartford the first municipality in Connecticut to have anti-discrimination provisions on the basis of gender identity and expression. This ordinance adds gender identity or expression to race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, ancestry, disability as classes protected from discrimination in City employment, employment with City contractors and housing. It also mandates that gender identity be incorporated into the City's Affirmative Action Plan and also allows aggrieved individuals to seek redress with the City's Office of Human Relations."

and Springfield Township is thinking of doing the same thing:

These local ordinances/policies/laws make a difference. I know this personally. I was told after a week at a house I was renting that I had to leave because my roommate/house manager's girlfriend wasn't comfortable living with someone that is "LGBT" and that:

"YOU withheld information that should have been mentioned, as 85% of people in this world are NOT gay or trans and THEY have a right to know beofre living with you. Whether you like it or not. They have rights, too, just like you."

and

"Had you mentioned your situation, I would have found another roommate."

I was living in a place that had become hostile and I didn't want to spend another minute there. Luckily I found a place close and had enough money to move a week after moving in. Otherwise I'd have either been homeless or felt like I was under siege in my own home. Had this happened in a city that didn't have an Equal Opportunities Ordinance (Madison General Ordinance 39.03) that includes gender identity, I would have had no recourse against this discrimination. I filed a complaint and the Department of Civil Rights and the landlord agreed to repay me the rent plus the cost of moving. I recouped my losses and my ex-roommate sent me the following email:

"I will mail your check today to you. Thank you, Marti. I have learned that sometimes I could be a nicer person- to all people. I hope you understand that my sleep deprivation can cause me to be a bit rude sometimes. I apologize for that. I do find you a very brave and courageous person. I hope you continue to help shine the light where light is needed. All the best-"

I was made whole monetarily and someone learned to be a little more tolerant of others.

We need our representatives in the media to stop "Jumping the Shark" with personal attacks on community members and work on legislation that protects people from discrimination on the basis of "gender identity or expression". This is the important work that has to be done. ENDA doesn't just support transsexuals or transgender people. With the right language it supports ANYONE that is discriminated against because of their gender identity or expression. That language is much larger than the LGBT community, it is a frontal attack on misogyny. It's a matter of justice.

We may not get ENDA soon, but getting employment, housing, and public accommodation protections are a vital component in the fight for transequality. It's something we can do locally. It's something we can do today. It's something we can do now. And when we do have the votes in Congress to pass ENDA, we'll have a stronger platform to demand FULL inclusion.

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