

TRANSADVOCATE

Diego Sanchez Named Senior Legislative Adviser To Barney Frank

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Abstract

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Article

Sources on the Hill confirmed to The Transadvocate that Barney Frank's office will announce the hiring of Diego Sanchez today. Sanchez will replace outgoing senior policy adviser, Joe Racalto. Sanchez is currently the Director of Public Relations & External Affairs for AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts. He made history this past August as the first transgender person appointed by the DNC to the Platform Committee and is also a member of the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) Boston Steering Committee and the HRC Business Council.

The appointment doesn't come without some built in controversy. Sanchez crossed union picket lines (on July 28th, 2008) to speak at the HRC's San Francisco Gala Dinner.

This was something that Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and most of the San Francisco politicians refused to do.

Breaking with most transgender activists, Sanchez has also continued to work with the HRC (even though they are one of the few organizations that do not oppose a gay only ENDA). Some worry that the HRC and Barney Frank will use Sanchez as cover for their continuing support of the two bill strategy. Houston DNCC Obama delegate and veteran transgender activist, Vanessa Edwards Foster said:

"It's great to have a transgender employee in staff in Congress, and extremely rare. But I worry that this will be Barney Frank strategizing that he can bring a trans person in and use them as a shield to deflect future trans criticism for what legislation he's likely to push forth."

Sanchez may be a buffer for Frank to the GLBT community, but his background will also help in some important policy arenas. A look at his LinkedIn profile shows extensive experience in health issues and public relations. Sanchez is certainly qualified for the position. But a glaring question is whether or not Sanchez can bridge the gap between Frank/HRC's position of not opposing a gay only ENDA, and much of the GLBT community supporting a fully inclusive bill. That tightrope will be an interesting one to watch.

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