

TRANSADVOCATE

Exactly Ten Years Ago

By Kat

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Abstract

History that some who claim to be our allies expect us to forget: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Tuesday, March 27, 2001 HRC CONGRATULATES MARYLAND SENATE FOR VOTING TO END LEGAL DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION Maryland is on the Verge of becoming Twelfth State to Ban Discrimination, Says HRC WASHINGTON - The Human Rights Campaign today [...]

Article

History that some who claim to be our allies expect us to forget:

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Tuesday, March 27, 2001

HRC CONGRATULATES MARYLAND SENATE FOR VOTING TO END LEGAL DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Maryland is on the Verge of becoming Twelfth State to Ban Discrimination, Says HRC WASHINGTON - The Human Rights Campaign today congratulated the Maryland state Senate for voting to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, public accommodations and employment. The House is also expected to pass the bill, which would make Maryland the twelfth state to become a discrimination-free zone, according to HRC.

“This is an enormous victory that sends the message that discrimination is not acceptable in Maryland or in society,” said HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. “We reserve our highest praise for the bill’s sponsors and especially Gov. Parris Glendening who expended political capital and used his moral authority to end this vestige of discrimination.

Thanks to their efforts, along with the tireless work of Maryland’s Free State Justice, literally thousands of workers are one step closer to being able to work without fear in their hearts.”

After an emotional and often contentious debate, the Senate today passed, 32 to 14, the Anti-Discrimination Act of 2001. Last week, the largest hurdle for passage was cleared when the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee - which stymied the measure in 1999 - passed the bill by a vote of 6-5. The bill is soon expected to pass the House of Delegates, which passed the bill in 1999. If all goes as expected the bill will land in mid-April on the desk of Glendening, the bill’s most ardent supporter, and he will surely sign it into law.

“The Senate vote makes this an historic day for civil rights,” said Blake Humphrey, managing director of Free State Justice, the state’s gay rights lobby. “Maryland senators listened to their constituents and voted to end discrimination. In voting by such a wide margin, senators also sent a message that bias and hate will not be tolerated in the Free State.”

The Anti-Discrimination Act of 2001 prohibits employers from considering sexual orientation when

making employment decisions such as hiring, promoting or terminating an employee. Churches and other religious institutions are exempted from coverage by the bill. The legislation also makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation when renting an apartment or selling a house through a real estate agent. It bans discrimination in places of public accommodation as well, such as restaurants and doctor's offices.

Today's vote was a personal victory for the governor whose passion to pass the measure was ignited by the memory of his brother, Bruce, who was gay and had to conceal his sexual orientation during his Air Force career. He later died of an AIDS-related illness.

To help pass the bill, HRC activated the organization's action network and co-sponsored a lobby day and rally with Free State Justice. HRC staff also worked with the state group to organize in the district of Sen. Leo Green, whose vote was needed to pass the statewide antidiscrimination bill out of the Senate committee. In 2000, HRC also gave Free State Justice a \$5,000 Equality Fund grant to support their lobbying efforts on this bill.

"We highly commend the work of Maryland Free State Justice in their successful efforts to shepherd this bill towards passage," said Liz Seaton, HRC deputy field director and former head of Maryland Free State Justice.

If Maryland passes this bill, as expected, it would join Hawaii, California, Vermont, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Nevada as states that already outlaw this type of discrimination.

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian and gay political organization, with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

Will any of you out there feel safe to be open and honest about who you are at, um..., what were the examples again?

I *places of public accommodation as well, such as restaurants and doctor's offices*
Ah yes...

Will any of you out there feel safe to be open and honest about who you are at places of public accommodation as well, such as restaurants and doctor's offices once HB 235 becomes law?

Oh, but I'm sure some people will - those for whom Maryland actually did become a discrimination-free zone in 2001 and who have felt safe to be open and honest about who you are at places of public accommodation such as restaurants and doctor's offices in Maryland since 2001.

[Cross-posted at ENDABlog]

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