

Frank Leaps Transgender Lobbyists in Single Bound

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Abstract

Am I the only one who is a bit puzzled/miffed/baffled by Barney Frank's insinuation in this exchange: There is another difference from 2007. Frank now has a policy adviser who is a female-to-male transsexual. Diego Sanchez is the first transgender person hired for a senior congressional staff position on Capitol Hill. Sanchez has done extensive [...]

Article

Am I the only one who is a bit puzzled/miffed/baffled by Barney Frank's insinuation in this exchange:

There is another difference from 2007. Frank now has a policy adviser who is a female-to-male transsexual. Diego Sanchez is the first transgender person hired for a senior congressional staff position on Capitol Hill.

Sanchez has done extensive face-to-face lobbying for ENDA, and Frank says that's enabled some members of Congress to get to know a transsexual for the first time.

"He interacts with a lot of people," Frank said. "Prejudice is literally ignorance."

Frank says he now doubts votes will be cast against ENDA solely because it extends to transgender people.

Should we forget the fact that groups like NTAC, NCTE, and numerous individual activists have been lobbying Congress, both on the Hill and in their home states for 15 years? If this was simply a matter of Barney Frank hiring a transgender person, why didn't he do it in 2006?

If anyone wonders if Frank's words are a slap in the face, keep in mind he once said this:

"I do think that the hearing that we had -- and by the way, we had a hearing in the House over the objections of many of the transgender leadership. But I really doubt their political wisdom...Because they said it was part of our deal to separate it from ENDA and they wanted to not have anything separate. We did a good job in that hearing and we helped persuade some people. So we're making progress. We'd make even more progress if the transgender community was willing to do the hard political work. And not, frankly, think they can just talk a few leaders into handing this to them."

I think the real genius in the hiring of Diego Sanchez comes from Sanchez himself. He said:

"He's called on the entire community since then to lobby, work -- and the community has said, 'OK, we've got one game plan, and it's Barney,' Sanchez said. 'There's broader support this time.'"

Sanchez almost soothes over Frank's slap in the face. If transgender activists hadn't been lobbying Congress since 1995, it might have been enough.

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