

The Blind Push For ENDA And Your Advocacy Dollars

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Abstract

Tomorrow you'll likely to see a big push from inside the beltway "equality" organizations pushing for passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). From a recent e-mail plea: Dear United ENDA Coalition Organizational Leaders: We think you'll agree that our community is more than ready to see ENDA passed now. So we are writing to [...]

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Tomorrow you'll likely to see a big push from inside the beltway "equality" organizations pushing for passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). From a recent e-mail plea:

Dear United ENDA Coalition Organizational Leaders:

We think you'll agree that our community is more than ready to see ENDA passed now. So we are writing to ask your organization to sign on to a very simple statement asking Congress to PASS ENDA NOW. The statement is attached but you'll see that it is really that simple. In reality, we have been waiting for decades to pass ENDA. More specifically, we have been waiting months for actual action by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. We believe that it is time to make a very clear ask right now: Pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act NOW.

We are therefore hoping to issue this public statement signed by hundreds of LGBT and allied organizations early next week. We regret the short notice, but for this to matter we need to release this statement this coming Tuesday, April 20. Thus we are asking for you to respond by Noon EST on Monday April 19. To sign on, please email to sign-on@endanow.com no later than Noon EST Monday April 19. Please include the correct name of the organization as well as the name and title of the chief executive of your group. Please include only one name per organization and one title per person. So you can see the format we are thinking, we have included our own orgs in alphabetical order on the attached statement.

We are welcoming LGBT and allied organizations. Large organizations and small are welcome, as are chapters and national groups. We are hoping for as many organizations as possible by Monday. ENDA is so close to passing. We simply need Congress to act NOW.

Importantly, this statement is embargoed and should not be released anywhere or posted on blogs until the whole letter is finalized and released on Tuesday, April 20. Thank you for everything you do.

Rea Carey and Mara Keisling

United ENDA Steering Committee [sic] Co-Chair

Their plea tomorrow will be simple:

LGBT AND ALLIED GROUPS CALL ON CONGRESS TO PASS ENDA NOW

of Organizations Demand Immediate Action

(Washington, D.C.--April 20, 2010) Today, the nation's leading lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organizations, along with their allies in faith and civil rights communities, issued the following statement to members of the United States Congress:

"Pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act NOW."

Equality Federation, Toni Broaddus, Executive Director

Family Equality Council, Jennifer Chrisler, Executive Director

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), Lee Swislow, Executive Director

Human Rights Campaign, Joe Solmonese, President

National Black Justice Coalition, Sharon J. Lettman, Executive Director/CEO

National Center for Lesbian Rights, Kate Kendell, Esq., Executive Director

National Center for Transgender Equality, Mara Keisling, Executive Director

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund, Rea Carey, Executive Director

National Stonewall Democrats, Michael Mitchell, Executive Director

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National, Jody M. Huckaby, Executive Director

Pride at Work, AFL-CIO, Peggy Shorey, Executive Director

Out and Equal Workplace Advocates, Selisse Berry,

Founding Executive Director Transgender Law Center, Masen Davis, Executive Director

Simple, eh? What is missing is any reference to the "bathroom language tweaks" of which Barney Frank said:

If you insist on the right for unrestricted access to bathrooms - we lose. And we're making some accommodations here. And we worked it out with the transgender community. We had people very upset when we raised it - it because clear we couldn't pass the bill without it."

According to the Advocate:

"Congressman Barney Frank of Massachusetts said Thursday that the language of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act had been finalized, serious vote counting had begun, and LGBT activists should contact their representatives and senators. 'We have an agreed-upon bill,' Frank said.

'We're going to get the bill voted on this spring -- what people really ought to focus on is helping us get the vote. I think we're pretty close, but it's not a done deal.'

If the language has been finalized, why all the secrecy? Why not share the language changes with those people who are being pushed to call their congressional representatives? Have these non-profits who are asking us to push or legislators seen the language "tweaks" or are they asking us to blindly support this bill? If so, why? As Keisling has said previously of the language changes,

"it might be harmless or it might be horrible."

Our rights shouldn't be left to chance. We did that already, remember Southern Comfort?

Or in June of 2007 when Keisling said of our removal from ENDA:

“While it is technically true that this rumor emerged a ‘few days after NCTE lobby day,’ the inaccurate rumor did not come out of NCTE lobby day. I have been doing several visits per day on the Hill and near constant phone calling, and I agree with PFLAG and HRC on this-there is no substantiation to that rumor. We are all very optimistic.”

and

“There is no mystery about the language in the Senate version of ENDA in the sense that you may mean. That is, no one is trying to keep anything a secret. It is simply this: Congress-especially the Senate-is focused on other things. Today in the Senate is the Energy bill and then they are moving back to immigration where NCTE will be focusing on Amendments #1441 and 1236 which would add privacy protections and eliminate a Real ID Act nexus. ENDA introduction in the Senate will happen in due course when the Senator(s) who ‘owns’ it believes it to be the right time. We are very optimistic that we will like the bill language.

Finally, in my opinion, we should all stop worrying about allies backsliding or screwing us and keep the focus on the positive education and ally-building that has gotten on this far. We’re really winning all this and need to keep our eyes on the prize. Our allies are really pulling their weight on this-we need to as well. The enemy is ignorance and bias not people and organizations who are our allies.”

I’m not saying we shouldn’t support ENDA. But before we say say “Pass ENDA NOW!”, we should be saying “SHOW US THE LANGUAGE!”.

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