

The Death of United ENDA Part III: The Funeral

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Published June 23, 2008 | Updated March 31, 2026

https://www.transadvocate.com/the-funeral_n_365.htm

Article

In March I wrote a post called “The Many Faces Of Mara Keisling: The Death of United ENDA?” in which I put forth the theory that the coalition of over 300 groups was dead. In April I wrote “Starting From Scratch: The Death of United ENDA Part II” in which I furthered my theory by pointing out the words of Matt Foreman (the departing executive director of NGLTF) that alluded to the death of United ENDA.

Yesterday I received an email from NCTE regarding the upcoming hearings :

“I am really proud of the role that NCTE played in getting us to this historical day. This is not only an opportunity to be truly heard by our fellow Americans, it will help to build the foundation for significant changes in federal laws protecting transgender people from discrimination. Witness have not yet been announced.” - NCTE newsletter

According to my sources, the role that NCTE and NGLTF has played in these hearings has been minimal. This only reinforced Donna Rose’s blog post from March 3rd which I referred to in my post.

“During our conversation today HRC came up several times. Joe (Racalto, Barney Frank’s senior policy adviser) went out of his way to assure me that HRC is taking the lead in these hearings in many ways. As far as our community is concerned I’ll take his word for it and let it all unfold....”

And most recently from HRC email:

“HRC has been a key player in working with Congressman Andrews, and well as Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA) and Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) in ensuring that this critical hearing took place. We have also has been working with a coalition of groups, including the ACLU, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in preparing for the hearing.

HRC is activating resources throughout the organization in support of this hearing. Our own Diego Sanchez, member of the Business Council and the Boston Steering Committee, has been invited to testify at the hearing. Workplace Project staff are garnering letters of support and written testimony from corporate America, and another member of the Business Council, Meghan Stabler, will also be submitting testimony for the record. The Religion and Faith Program has secured written testimony from Religion Council member Reverend Erin Swenson and is soliciting statements of support from other faith leaders and groups. Our Web Team is working to ensure that the hearing,

and all of our resources on transgender issues, are highlighted on our website and the Communications Department is using its connections to secure extensive coverage of this historic event. And, of course, the folks in Political and Legal are working closely with witnesses, congressional staff and coalition partners to ensure the hearing is the most productive discussion of this critical issue possible.

More information about the hearing will be posted on the committee's website here -- <http://edlabor.house.gov/committee/schedule.shtml> -- when it becomes available, and the subcommittee hearing will likely be webcast there as well.

We're very excited that HRC is part of this historic hearing!

Keep in mind that in January of this year Keisling said:

"Our official position right now is we are extremely disappointed and angry at HRC. ... The real bottom line is right now NCTE will not do anything that will rehabilitate HRC as a legitimate spokesman for transgender people ... until they stop actively hurting trans people", said Keisling. She characterized HRC's advocacy of the sexual orientation-only version of ENDA in the House, as well as its expected lobbying to pass the bill this year in the Senate, as hurting trans people.

As for NCTE's future plans for ENDA, Keisling said that after the election she expects advocates to lobby a new Congress and a new president in favor of passing a trans-inclusive ENDA bill.

'It is our expectation that in 2009 Congress is going to hear from a very united LGBT movement,' said Keisling. 'Whether that includes HRC I have no idea.' - Trans-HRC schism widens"

Those words ring solidly hollow, as the United ENDA coalition now swings from the gallows. Especially given the fact that HRC admits that NCTE and NGLTF have worked together to organize the hearings.

"Herwitz said a coalition of LGBT and civil rights organizations, including HRC, NCTE, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the ACLU and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, have been coordinating strategy for the hearing and have been meeting and talking regularly. "

What is obvious in all this is how anemic NCTE and NGLTF have become (especially since the departure of Matt Foreman, and most recently David Noble, from NGLTF). It also shows that the HRC is still the gatekeeper to Congress. With the reality of that situation some very important questions need to be asked:

1. Do we keep asking the HRC to include us?
2. Should we try and shame them into caring about our issues as much as they care about their own?
3. Should we continue to give money to groups that support this pathway to equality?

The answer to these questions are vital. The coming years will be a time to rebuild the movement. We need to talk about what our next move as a community is. Like any death, it is a time to reflect on how the end of this life mattered to us, and what we can do to change our own future.

Suggested citation

Marti Abernathy. "The Death of United ENDA Part III: The Funeral." TransAdvocate, June 23, 2008.
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