

# Home Depot adds sexual orientation to its employment non-discrimination policy

ExxonMobil will face similar proposal for third year

by Anabel Evora  
Special to Q-Notes

ATLANTA — Home Depot management successfully sidestepped a divisive shareholder resolution by adding sexual orientation to its non-discrimination policy.

"Home Depot made a good business decision by adding the words 'sexual orientation' to its non-discrimination policy," said Kim I. Mills, education director for the Human Rights Campaign, a gay activist group. "The company responded quickly and favorably to its customers and shareholders and now joins 86 percent of the Fortune

50 in prohibiting this type of discrimination." Home Depot agreed May 11 to add sexual orientation as a protected category in its written equal employment opportunity policy following an outcry from customers and stockholders. The Unitarian Universalist Association had successfully sponsored a shareholder proposal asking the company to amend its non-discrimination policy. Home Depot publicly opposed such a change in its proxy statement, which was sent to shareholders three weeks ago. The Unitarian Universalist Association agreed May 11 to withdraw the proposal, which would have come to a vote at the shareholder meeting May 30 in Atlanta.

The majority of Fortune 500 Companies have written policies that expressly ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, according to the GLBT groups that track such trends.

A similar shareholder proposal is on the ballot

for the third year in a row at ExxonMobil, whose annual shareholder meeting is slated for May 30 in Dallas. Before Exxon merged with Mobil in late 1999, Mobil prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. During merger talks, company executives decided to eliminate Mobil's non-discrimination policy rather than apply it to the newly formed corporation. Executives also decided to end Mobil's same-sex domestic partner benefits program. Institutional sponsors of that resolution include the New York City Employees' Retirement System, the New York State Common Retirement Fund and several individual shareholders affiliated with the New York-based Equality Project. In the past, the Equality Project has led shareholder proposals that resulted in sexual orientation non-discrimination policies at companies such as DaimlerChrysler, Johnson & Johnson, McDonald's and General Electric. ▼

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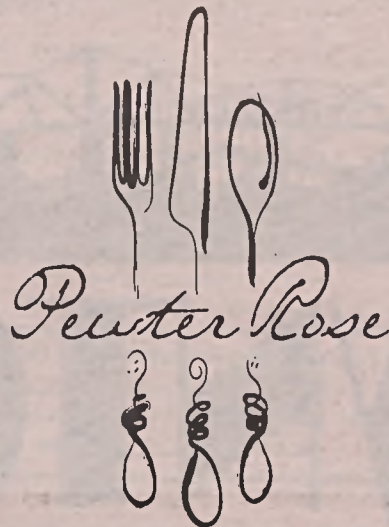
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