

UNITY COMMUNITY . ANGELA BRIGHTFEATHER

NC Crimes Against Nature Laws provide a very unique opportunity for TG legislation

Equality North Carolina's legislative allies in the NC Senate recently introduced three very important GLBT bills.

Here is how I see it really happening and why I feel the North Carolina GLBT community is working for legislation with the cart before the horse.

In 2001, the Hate Crimes Bill was very narrowly defeated in the NC legislature, even after its gender inclusive language was removed in legislative committee.

And again, on April 30, 2003, the NC Hate Crimes Bill was introduced with gender language, but the bill did not even get out of committee *despite* the fact gender expression references had been removed.

New and renewed ENC leadership

Over its last two years, the new Equality NC leadership is to be commended for its focus on inclusive gender participation in the legislative process. Accepting transgender people on their board of directors, revising gender language to conform to the latest terminology found in recent laws passed by other states and municipalities, has proven their mettle.

But, ENC fully admits they cannot withdraw legislation if legislators cut gender language in committee. Their position: if a non-

inclusive bill has a chance of reaching a floor vote, that is better than no bill, hence no vote, at all. And if a non-inclusive bill does pass, ENC says it will fight for an amended inclusive version later.

Crimes Against Nature: only for GLB, not T

In North Carolina, the Crimes Against Nature Law (CAN) is the "kiss of death" used to defeat most GLB legislation.

Right wing NC legislation opposition always points to CAN, calling GLBT people felons for breaking the law — thus denying them/us further protective legislation. So, bills fail.

Simply stated, it is not a crime for women to wear front-zippered pants and short-cropped hair or men to wear earrings, shoulder bags and polish their nails.

The CAN law applies only to sexual act, not gender expression. Therefore transgender or gender diverse people are not felons under NC law.

It only makes good legal sense, then, to fight on behalf of us "non-felons," since the CAN law argument always used to oppose GLB protections is rendered moot when it gets to T.

So lets assess this now. GLB are felons in NC. Legislators insist they are not going to pass any laws to protect felons. Transgenders, though not legally felons, are deemed guilty by the association: GLB...T.

Let the irony continue.

Those who write "special" inclusive legislation are themselves seeking inclusion and

rail against theirs being termed "special" — it is about rightful place, just recognition, and above all, legal, life-saving protection.

Two gay men were killed in Chapel Hill last year and one transgender woman was murdered in Charlotte. Hate crimes protection comes to late for some ... too many.

In priority order

The simple fact is, it is more imperative and legally expedient to propose legislation protecting TG people first — for whom CAN laws do not legally apply. A GLB amendment would be far easier to attach and subsequently pass.

It is a shame there is a need for any protections beyond those granted to "regular" citizens. But frankly, I'm tired of being considered one of "those" transgender people who want to be included.

We must take our political fights out into the open, trust in the collective wisdom of community and their ability and right to weigh in on legislative process. Secret rooms and closet coalitions are the weapons politicians used to *un-include* us all in the first place.

ENC & HRC Surveys on TG protection

In a recent Human Rights Campaign survey, 72 out of every 100 people in America have a good general idea of what transgender means.

In the ENC survey taken only in NC, the general public objected less to transgender workplace protections than to GLB protection.

The nationwide HRC survey noted most respondents thought transgender people are already /automatically protected under GLB sexual orientation hate crimes inclusion — and were surprised to find out otherwise.

Unique mindset

NC transgender activists and others are just beginning to wrap their minds around this new concept of TG Human Rights being championed before GLB Human Rights.

It is a startling idea and yet-to-be-attempted approach to GLBT legislation that will take a bit of time to sink in.

It might also re-motivate GLB people to join TGs and become more involved in doing away with the CAN laws — a major obstacle to GLB protections.

The stark reality has had a devastatingly poor and unemployed TG community, taking the legislative back seat, begging for inclusion.

In other states, the more-employable and better-employed GLB community has successfully influenced legislation outcome.

A poor community can be enriched and empowered by bringing its GLB allies along on its TG coattails of unique protective, life-saving legislation — bound to bring with it unparalleled unity.

info:

Angela Brightfeather: TGQuestions@aol.com



Join Us



Will & GRACE

Every Thursday Night at

LIAISONS
Video bar

316 Rensselaer Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28203

704.376.1617
pinkhouseenc.com