



Q Notes

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Trans protections ripped from ENDA

National organizations, trans activists respond; rift in HRC forms

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — At the end of September, U.S. House leaders including openly gay U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) and Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) would no longer contain protections for transgender Americans.

Their announcement provoked a firestorm of controversy, in-fighting and division among the LGBT community. At the same time, however, the response to the announcement provided a chance for hundreds of national and state LGBT organizations to unite for a transgender-inclusive ENDA.

Citing an unrecorded "Whip count," or poll, of House members, Frank stated, "it became very clear that while we would retain a significant majority of Democrats, we would lose enough so that a bill that included transgender protection would lose if not amended."

Frank has proposed a new strategy splitting protections into two different bills — ENDA will proceed with protections for sexual orientation with protections against anti-transgender discrimination placed in a second bill.

"One will be ENDA as it has historically existed, banning discrimination on sexual orientation. A second will add transgender protections to that basic scheme. We will move forward with the ban on sexual orientation for

"It is not a strategy to leave out some of our loved ones," said Jody Huckaby, executive director of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), "This is an unacceptable tactic. PFLAG is strongly opposed to any legislation that leaves out any part of our family and divides our community."

"We are acutely aware of the compromises and steps that were necessary for civil rights for African-Americans," said H. Alexander Robinson of the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), "Advocates for the rights of women and people of color have had to accept incremental steps for equality. It is unconscionable for us to think that we could support cutting transgender protections from this bill. Now is not the time to retreat, compromise or capitulate."

During the press conference, Matt Foreman of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) was quick to defend Frank, Pelosi and other leaders in response to questions from the media insinuating that Frank and Pelosi no longer supported the entire LGBT community.

"Speaker Pelosi and Barney Frank have

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Members and allies of the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition protest outside the National HRC Dinner in Washington, D.C.

Photo Credit: Isis, isisimagery.com

which we finally — after 30-plus years — have the votes," Frank said.

Leaders and members of national organizations have called for protections for all or protections for none.

In an Oct. 1 press conference, leaders from five advocacy organizations, representing hundreds of other national and state organizations, urged the House to keep the transgender protections.

N.C. man kills himself after sex sting arrest publicized

Community members cite media, police handling as cause

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes Staff

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. — Over a two-week period in late September, 40 men — including one preacher and employees of school systems — were arrested in undercover sex stings in Johnson City, Tenn. public parks, possibly leading to the suicide of one man less than 24 hours after charges against him were announced.

According to *The Johnson City Press*, the police targeted two parks they felt had become known for sexual activity. The report of the sting was featured prominently as the lead headline on the paper's front page and included names, addresses and photographs of each man arrested.

One of the area's television news stations, WJHL Channel 11, also carried news of the undercover operation and posted on its website the Johnson City Police Department press release, which also included names, addresses and photographs.



Jerry McCloud committed suicide after the sex sting.

The men arrested ranged in age from 26 to 85 and lived in areas scattered across Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia.

Arrestee Jerry McCloud, 55, of Newland, N.C., was found dead in his home around 10 a.m. on Oct. 2. No details on funeral arrangements were published by *The Johnson City Press* and could not

be ascertained by Q-Notes.

Like most of the other men, McCloud was charged with indecent exposure. Some were also charged with sexual battery after they groped undercover police officers.

LGBT organizations in Tennessee and nationally monitored the situation. Many took issue with its handling.

"Without condoning public sex, I think it is clear that this newspaper is perpetrating a punitive culture around issues of sexuality and now we are seeing the tragic results," said Chris Sanders, president of the Tennessee Equality Project. "There is no lobby for public sex and no one is advocating for it, but at the same time we know that this is really not where media coverage needs to be."

Attempts to reach John Molley, managing editor of *The Johnson City Press*, were unsuccessful.

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Q-Notes welcomes new editor

Matt Comer brings fresh perspective to coverage

by David Stout . Q-Notes staff

CHARLOTTE — Q-Notes publisher Jim Yarbrough has hired Matt Comer as the new editor of the biweekly LGBT newspaper of the Carolinas. His time at the helm of the 21-year-old publication begins with the current issue.

"We are excited to have Matt on our team and look forward to the energy and fresh outlook he brings," Yarbrough said. "His activism and journalism, particularly in new media, will benefit our current readers as well as the new readers he will attract."

Comer replaces David Moore, who stepped down at the end of September to pursue other opportunities. As he revealed in his final Editor's Note, Moore



Matt Comer has been active in the LGBT community since high school.

is also caring for his mother who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer shortly before his departure.

"I am grateful to Mr. Yarbrough, his staff and all those who have given me this wonderful opportunity to work daily for the community I hold near and dear to my heart," said Comer, a native of Winston-Salem.

He began his activism there as a freshman at R.J. Reynolds High School, founding a gay-straight alliance. He also worked with the Winston-Salem chapter of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he matriculated, Comer continued his work for LGBT equality both on campus and off. The groups he was involved with include UNCG PRIDE!, Alternative Resources of the Triad, Guilford Green Foundation, N.C. Human Rights Campaign Steering Committee, Triad Business & Professional Guild, Equality NC and PFLAG Winston-Salem.

He also entered the blogosphere during

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