

ber of people in the LGBTIQ community disapproving of this update.

Thirteen states currently have policies against both sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. Additionally, seven other states protect against sexual orientation discrimination and 15 other states prohibit discrimination of transgender individuals.

Nevertheless, there has yet to be a national law passed addressing this issue, and in many states people continue to be fired based solely on these differences. In 31 states, it is permissible to fire a man or woman solely because he/she is gay, and in 39 states it is still legal to fire someone solely because the employee is transgender.

Advocates for the bill argue that it is long overdue, considering the Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process to all. Since proponents of the bill argue that being gay or transgender is not a choice, but a part of one's identity, the gay community should be guaranteed equal rights.

In 2001, a study was published at UCLA indicating that discrimination in the United States against the LGBTIQ community is approximately equal to discrimination against race and gender. Therefore, advocates argue, this is a serious

issue that cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless, opponents claim that sexual orientation is already protected under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and that it is a choice, so it should not be as protected as identifying characteristics such as gender and race.

Furthermore, the religious right argues that since homosexuality is immoral, protecting gay rights is the same thing as condoning these behaviors. One of the most popular legal arguments used by adversaries of this bill is that it will conflict with forms of free speech and will censor people from stating their opinions on the matter.

In the coming weeks, the bill may be put to a vote in the House. Still, even now, there is a lot people can do to help this bill be passed. The Human Rights Campaign has called on people to call their congressperson and tell them to vote for H.R. 2015 (the official name of the bill).

Students can go to passendanow.org and to learn more about how to help. Supporters of the bill are hopeful that if it passes, the LGBTIQ community will come one step closer to equality under American law.

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Summer Lobby Efforts Prove Effective

Multiple reforms passed in N.C. legislature long session

By Daniel Becton

The North Carolina General Assembly held its biannual "long" session this summer, and the LGBTIQ community enjoyed an encouraging amount of success.

North Carolinians can still be proud to live in the only state in the Southeast that has defeated the so-called Marriage Protection Amendment that bans same-sex marriage. A bill that effectively writes discrimination into the Constitution, the amendment has been defeated four straight years in the state for which our University is the flagship institution.

Two more important victories this summer came on HIV/AIDS issues. After more than a decade of flat-funding HIV prevention programs, the N.C. budget allocated \$2 million in new, recurring money to support more programs that work across the state. Additionally, new barriers blocking low-income people getting HIV medications through Medicaid were defeated.

A record number of sponsors joined a State Employee Non-Discrimination bill, which continues to gain momentum as pressure from lobbyists and grassroots activists appears to be paying off. See Scott Kaplan's article above for the news on the national version.

Finally, the School Violence Prevention Act brought both a major victory and a setback. On the one hand, the bill was passed through the House, marking the first time a bill including sexual orientation and gender identity passed either chamber of the state

legislature. Lobbyists thought they had secured the votes needed in both chambers to get a final bill through – in addition to restoring important omissions after the Senate created an unsatisfactory version of the bill – but the deal fell through in the final hours of the last day's session.

The bill is still alive and eligible for consideration in the 2008 legislative session, however.

Equality North Carolina, which has grown significantly in recent years by building alliances with LGBTIQ people across the state and with numerous members of the N.C. General Assembly, played a major role in uniting the effort to get these bills passed. See David Hodges' article on Page 16 for more on ENC's first-ever statewide Equality Conference & Gala coming up Nov. 3.

Ian Palmquist contributed to this report.

on the web...

Visit <http://www.equalitync.org/leg> for more information on each of bills the under consideration in the current legislative session.