

Time to Ask Congress for Civil Rights

When Cracker Barrel Restaurants fired nine lesbian and gay employees last month, they established publicly what other businesses have done privately for ages--they discriminated against individuals solely on the basis of their sexual orientation. Because lesbians and gay men are an "invisible minority," many of us choose to hide in the closet when discrimination occurs in the belief that this behavior will prevent further victimization. Complicating the fight against homophobic discrimination is the fact that there are few laws which protect us against this kind of injustice. However, there is a bill pending in Congress which would directly address an array of situations where discrimination against lesbians and gays occurs.

The federal Civil Rights Amendments Act, commonly referred to as the Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Bill, would add "affectional and sexual orientation" to the list of classes protected from discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

If the bill were to become law, it would be illegal to treat lesbians and gay

men differently from non-gay people in employment, housing, public accommodations, programs receiving federal money or facilities owned, operated or managed by any state or subdivision of a state. It would also outlaw discrimination in restaurants, stores, hotels, and other places services or goods are sold.

The bill would prohibit the use of statistical evidence to demonstrate discrimination and the use of quotas to remedy discrimination. It defines affectional or sexual orientation to include male or female homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality by orientation or practice.

The Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Bill was recently reintroduced for this Congress in both the House and Senate. Human Rights Campaign Fund lobbyists are working hard to add House and Senate co-sponsors to the list of supporters. In order to maximize our success, we need the assistance of constituents in targeted areas. You can play an important role in the legislative process by writing the following member of the North Carolina delegation:

Senator Terry Sanford
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20515

During the 101st Congress (the most recent), Sanford was one of 13 Senators who received a perfect score on his votes on issues of interest to gay men and lesbians and people with AIDS. Ten of those 13 Senators are already co-sponsors. Sanford is one of the three who have not yet signed on. He, especially, needs to hear from us that it's important to his constituents that he make the commitment to become a co-sponsor.

POINTS TO MAKE IN YOUR LETTER:

* Urge your Senator or Congressperson to become a co-sponsor of the Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Bill.

* Include personal anecdotes about homophobic discrimination which might have occurred to you or a loved one. Or make reference to the recent Cracker Barrel incidents.

* A 1989 Gallup poll showed that 71% of Americans support legislation that would establish "equal rights in terms of job opportunities" for lesbians and gay men, up from 59% in 1982.

* Ask the legislator to respond to your letter with a statement of their position on the bill.

So that Human Rights Campaign Fund staff members can monitor constituent pressure on Members of Congress, please send a copy of your letter(s) to:

Cathy Woolard
Southeastern Regional Field Manager
Human Rights Campaign Fund
P. O. Box 375
Decatur, Georgia 30031-0375

For more information about HRCF and its grassroots political activities, call Cathy at 404-373-6330--*Parts of this report excerpted from a HRCF press release.*

Are you HIV+ (HIV antibody positive)?

A Research Study is being conducted at UNC-Chapel Hill to examine the role of stress on the immune system for people at risk for getting AIDS.

Who Qualifies?

- Gay or Bisexual Men
- HIV+ or HIV-
- No symptoms related to HIV*
- Not on any antivirals (e.g., AZT)*
- 18 - 50 years old

Benefits:

- \$175.00 for 2 day/night visit
- Free medical exams
- Free blood tests (including T-4 cell)
- Access to all medical and lab results
- Referrals to resources

*upon entry into the study

All information kept strictly **confidential**. If you meet all of the criteria listed, you may be eligible for this research study. Call (919) 966-6001 or (919) 966-5478 collect for more information.

You can help make a difference in the fight against AIDS.