



HRC ENDA poll raises more questions than answers

By Jan Stevenson

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The Human Rights Campaign released the results of a poll conducted last month that shows 70 percent of the LGBT Americans prefer passing a federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act without inclusion of transgender protections, rather than not passing the bill at all. HRC released the poll results last week in an apparent effort to justify their support of the non-inclusive version of ENDA, but for many the poll release raised more questions than it has answered.

Reporters from LGBT publications, including this publication and Bay Area Reporter in San Francisco, have asked for details about the poll, but HRC leaders have not provided complete answers. HRC has not adequately answered these basic questions originating from Cynthia Laird, BAR's reporter and freelance reporter Rex Wockner:

What polling company conducted the poll?; What is the source of the 500 people questioned, and were they all HRC members?; What is the breakdown of the group - lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender?; What is the margin of error?

HRC's lack of transparency is further aggravating an already charged situation. HRC was the only major LGBT organization to break away from a coalition of 360 LGBT groups that had rallied to support an inclusive version of the bill. The House of Representatives passed this non-inclusive version of ENDA Nov. 7.

Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, argued that it is unlikely ENDA will pass the Senate, and even if it does, President Bush has vowed to veto it. Foreman believes that an important principle of community solidarity was squandered on a bill that has little chance of becoming law anyway.

"The past six weeks have been among the most difficult and challenging our community has ever faced," said Foreman. "When confronted with the possibility of Congress moving forward on a bill that stripped out protections for transgender people, the activist and grassroots backbone of our movement responded almost instantaneously in unprecedented numbers with conviction, passion and political savvy. United ENDA, a broad coalition of more than 360 national, statewide and local LGBT organizations, community centers and health clinics, fueled the effort. All of this has shaken the long-established order to its core and things will never be the same."

Some local leaders agree.

"Don't be fooled, this is not the victory it appears to be," said Triangle Foundation Director of Policy Sean Kosofsky. "Triangle Foundation does not support any version of ENDA that does not protect all Americans from discrimination based on gender identity or expression."

"Transgender Detroit is deeply disappointed that the ENDA bill that passed is a non-inclusive bill," said Michelle Fox-Phillips, executive director of Transgender Detroit. "We would like to thank the

360 organizations that signed on to unitedenda.org and their tireless efforts to have gender identity/expression included. Unfortunately some organizations have let us down."

"We are relieved this episode is behind us, and starting right now we are going to pick up where we were six weeks ago -- namely, working to pass into law in 2009 the ENDA our entire community wants and deserves," add Foreman.