



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®



EQUALITY ACT

H.R. 2282; S. 1006

The Problem

Despite significant steps forward, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Americans lack basic legal protections in states across the country. The patchwork nature of current laws leaves millions of people subject to uncertainty and potential discrimination that impacts their safety, their family, and their very way of life.

Our nation's civil rights laws protect people on the basis of race, color, national origin, and in most cases, sex, disability, and religion. But federal law does not provide consistent non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The need for these protections is clear—nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ Americans report having experienced discrimination in their personal lives.

Everyone should have a fair chance to earn a living and provide a home for their families without fear of harassment or discrimination.

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people across key areas of life, including **employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service.**

The Equality Act would amend existing civil rights law—including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Jury Selection and Services Act, and several laws regarding employment with the federal government—to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics. The legislation also amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination in public spaces and services and federally funded programs on the basis of sex.

Additionally, the Equality Act would update the public spaces and services covered in current law to include retail stores, services such as banks and legal services, and transportation services. These important updates would strengthen existing protections for everyone.

Decades of civil rights history show that civil rights laws are effective in decreasing discrimination because they provide strong federal remedies targeted to specific vulnerable groups. By explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity in these fundamental laws, LGBTQ people will finally be afforded the exact same protections as other covered characteristics under federal law.

Broad Support

The nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) found that nationally, support for a bill like the Equality Act topped 70 percent, which includes a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. In addition, there is strong business support for non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people. The legislation has been endorsed by the Business Coalition for the Equality Act, a group of more than 80 major companies with operations in all 50 states, employing more than 5.6 million people in the United States, and a combined revenue of more than \$2.6 trillion.

What is the Current Status of the Bill?

The bipartisan Equality Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI) and in the Senate by Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Cory Booker (D-NJ) on May 2, 2017. The bill was introduced with 241 original cosponsors—the most congressional support that any piece of pro-LGBTQ legislation has received upon introduction.