



## GLBT Protections Rise Nationwide

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**More than half of Americans now live in areas where non-discrimination laws that protect gay and lesbian workers and residents are either currently in effect, or are expected to come into effect in the near future, according to an analysis of census data and current laws around the country conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.**

**"We still have a very long way to go, but the tide is clearly shifting," Matt Foreman, NGLTF executive director, said.**

**Other statistics reported by the NGLTF: about 40 percent of Americans now live in districts where anti-discrimination protections extend, or soon will extend, to transgender people, marking a sevenfold increase in the last seven years; and about 20 percent of Americans live in states that provide substantial protections for same-sex families or have passed laws for such protections that will come into effect soon, constituting an eightfold increase over the last three years.**

These statistics indicate a sharp upswing in the number of locales where such protections have been made available. In the last five months alone, three states--New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Oregon--have passed legislation that provides broad protections for same-sex families.

**Foreman commented, "This is a historic and long-overdue milestone. At long last, a majority of Americans will now live in jurisdictions that protect people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."**

**The NGLTF attributed this national trend to years, sometimes decades, of grassroots-level work in the legislative trenches. "These bills would have never passed without the dogged work of state and local leaders and organizations over many, many years. Our national community owes them all its respect and gratitude," Foreman said.**

**The NGLTF specifically pointed to the election results from 2006 as being instrumental, citing changes in state legislatures as Republican dominance waned nationally.**

The current year's legislative sessions have been especially fruitful. Since the start of the year, a record-breaking four state legislatures have passed nondiscrimination laws. Of those four states, Iowa, Oregon and Colorado sought to include transgender people in the new protections. Vermont, with strong protections already in place, added non-discrimination laws specifically covering transgender people.

Gay equality proponents have not garnered all of the protections they had sought. Colorado's laws cover only employment-related non-discrimination. But Iowa, Oregon, and Vermont passed broad non-discrimination laws that encompass employment, housing, public accommodation and

other categories. On May 9, Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed the Oregon legislation, and the governors of the other three states have promised to follow suit. **At that time, the NGLTF analysis predicts, fully 37 percent of Americans will live in jurisdictions where protections for transgendered people are in effect.**

**Foreman addressed the surprising gains made by transgender people, saying, "It's clear that legislators recognize that transgender people face widespread discrimination and deserve the same protections as other minorities." Foreman pointed out that "the common wisdom used to be that including protections for transgender people would kill a bill-that's obviously not the case."**

On the federal level, the U.S. House of Representatives approved, by a margin of 237-180, a hate-crimes bill that includes language inclusive of transgender people. Further, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act was amended to include similar language to provide protection for transgender people. Both the Senate and the House are expected to address ENDA this year.