



Congress holds first hearing on trans issues

June 27, 2008

The first congressional hearing on transgender issues, addressing discrimination against trans people in the workplace, was held Thursday by the House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions, chaired by Rep. Robert Andrews, D-N.J.

The historic hearing was a long time coming, said Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund.

"For far too long, transgender people have lived with the fear of losing their job simply because of who they are," she said. "Today's hearing marks a critical step in addressing this travesty once and for all."

"Regardless of our gender identity, we all deserve a fair shot at job opportunities and advancement," said Christopher Anders, American Civil Liberties Union's senior legislative counsel. "In America, it should be hard work, education, skills, and experience which determine our success in the job market."

According to Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, the very presence of such a hearing before Congress is cause for celebration.

"The idea of Congress holding a hearing (on transgender issues) was a huge long shot," Keisling said. "It shows that Congress understands that this is a significant problem. It's progress -- it's not enough progress and it's not fast enough, but it's progress."

Based on the testimony of several witnesses, advocacy groups hope Congress will be compelled to pass legislation protecting transgender individuals from discrimination on the job.

Among those who testified were Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, one of the attorneys who helped win marriage equality in California; Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., and retired Army Col. Diane Schroer, whose job offer to be a terrorism research analyst at the Library of Congress was rescinded when her supervisor-to-be learned that she was formerly a man.