



National Gay and Lesbian Task Force expresses disappointment in Montgomery County Circuit Court decision allowing efforts to repeal transgender rights law to move forward

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The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force expresses deep disappointment in today's Montgomery County Circuit Court decision concluding that opponents of transgender rights collected enough valid signatures to place a measure on the November ballot to repeal a county law extending nondiscrimination protections on the basis of gender identity. The Montgomery County Council in Maryland unanimously passed that law last fall, but opponents quickly launched a signature-gathering effort to place a repeal measure on the ballot.

In March, the county Board of Elections certified those petitions, but a group of Montgomery County voters brought a lawsuit against the Board of Elections challenging its conclusion that enough valid signatures had indeed been collected.

The challenge was mounted by these voters through the combined effort of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Equality Maryland and volunteers. For more than two months (days, nights and weekends), volunteers converged on the Task Force headquarters in Washington, D.C., to pore over the 25,000-plus submitted signatures and find flaws that would possibly invalidate the signatures. The legal team - local counsel Jonathan Shurberg hired by Equality Maryland, supported by Lambda Legal and Arnold & Porter on a pro bono basis - relied upon Task Force Transgender Civil Rights Project Director Lisa Mottet to supervise the review of faulty signatures. In addition, the Task Force Action Fund contributed \$20,000 to Basic Rights Montgomery, the group set up to fight the measure on the ballot. Equality Maryland intends to appeal the ruling.

Statement by Rea Carey, Executive Director National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

"Never before has this country seen an effort to repeal a transgender nondiscrimination law. Why? Because rolling back rights is not only mean-spirited, it is morally wrong. Any effort to fraudulently put such a measure on the ballot must be fought, and we are proud to have stood side by side with Equality Maryland, Basic Rights Montgomery, our legal partners and many volunteers to ensure there was a thorough review of every signature submitted to the Board of Elections. We believe there were not enough valid signatures and we hope this will be shown on appeal. We remain committed to efforts to protect this important and necessary nondiscrimination law. If the measure reaches the ballot this November, we believe the fair-minded voters of Montgomery County will reject this attack on fundamental rights."