

PROTECTING LGBT WORKERS: THE NEED TO UPDATE MISSOURI'S NONDISCRIMINATION LAW

March 2014



When Americans go to work each day, they want to be judged on their professionalism, their experience, their performance, and their ability to get the job done. By working hard, meeting their responsibilities and playing by the rules, they strive for a fair chance to achieve a piece of the American Dream.

But today, hardworking Missourians who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) can still be unfairly fired from their jobs simply because of who they are. Many Americans are shocked to learn that there is no federal law that explicitly protects gay and transgender workers from unfair workplace discrimination, and that in more than half the country, including Missouri, such protections are also denied under state law.¹

America is a land of opportunity, where all people should be treated fairly and equally under the law. No hardworking Missourians should have to live in fear that they can be fired for reasons that have nothing to do with their job performance. By updating our laws to protect gay and transgender people from unfair job discrimination, we can help level the playing field for all Missourians—and make our state a fairer and more equal place to live and work.



MISSOURI

152,000 LGBT ADULTS

27% PROTECTED BY LOCAL NONDISCRIMINATION ORDINANCES



73% CAN BE UNFAIRLY FIRED



ONE-FIFTH

OF SAME-SEX COUPLES IN MISSOURI ARE RAISING CHILDREN

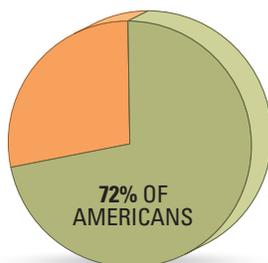


ONE-THIRD

OF LGBT WORKERS NATIONALLY HAVE BEEN HARASSED OR FACED DISCRIMINATION



WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR UPDATING MISSOURI'S NONDISCRIMINATION LAWS



FOUR OF MISSOURI'S TEN FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES



LGBT Missourians and the Legal Landscape

Approximately 152,000 LGBT adults live in Missouri (3.3% of the state's total population).² Seventeen percent of same-sex couples in Missouri are raising children.³

Currently, one-quarter of Missourians live in cities and counties that protect workers from unfair discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.⁴ Currently, Missouri's Human Rights Act protects workers from unfair discrimination at work based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, and age, but it doesn't protect workers from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Workplace protections shouldn't depend on where you live or work. All workers in Missouri ought to be protected by laws that explicitly state that it is against the law to fire someone or discriminate against someone at work because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Discrimination and the Work Environment

LGBT workers can put their job prospects at risk if they disclose that they are LGBT while looking for work. An LGBT employee may be stuck in a workplace that is blatantly hostile, one that condones anti-gay jokes and slurs, and/or one where employers look the other way and allow a discriminatory climate to flourish. In addition to job and workplace discrimination, LGBT employees face wage disparities that make it harder for them to provide for themselves and their families. According to a survey of LGBT workers, 38% of employees who were out at work had been harassed or discriminated against in the last five years.⁵

The lack of legal protections for LGBT workers, combined with the unequal treatment they receive in areas from wages and hiring to family benefits, is not just a problem for LGBT workers; it also harms their coworkers, their employers and Missouri's economy. Organizations that create diverse and inclusive workplaces are better positioned to attract and retain top talent. They benefit from decreased costs associated with absenteeism and turnover. They also have higher levels of employee satisfaction, which can boost productivity and innovation and result in higher profits.

Business Support for Nondiscrimination

Employers who value diversity understand that it gives them a competitive advantage. But employers can't fix the broken bargain on their own. Nondiscrimination laws need to be updated to protect LGBT workers. And, most business owners support nondiscrimination laws ensuring that workers are treated fairly on the job. A 2013 Small Business Majority survey of small business owners found that 69% support state laws protecting LGBT workers from employment discrimination as do 71% of Missouri small business owners.⁵

Many of Missouri's largest employers, including four of the state's ten Fortune 500 companies, have nondiscrimination policies addressing discrimination against LGBT people, including Monstanto, Charter Communications, and Boeing.

The vast majority of Americans (72% according to a recent poll by the Public Religion Research Institute⁶) agree with business owners that LGBT workers should be treated fairly.

Ensuring that all workers are treated fairly on the job is good for LGBT workers, businesses, and the state of Missouri.

ENDNOTES

¹ For an updated listing of states with laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, visit Movement Advancement Project. "LGBT Equality Maps: State Non-Discrimination Laws." http://lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_laws (accessed October 23, 2013).

² Estimates based on the adult population in Ohio and the percent of adults in Ohio who identify as LGBT. Gates, Gary J. and Frank Newport. "LGBT Percentage Highest in D.C., Lowest in North Dakota." Gallup Politics. February 15, 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/160517/lgbt-percentage-highest-lowest-north-dakota.aspx> (accessed October 23, 2013).

³ Gates, Gary J. and Abigail M. Cooke. "Missouri Census Snapshot: 2010." The Williams Institute. http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Census2010Snapshot_Missouri_v2.pdf (accessed October 23, 2013).

⁴ Analysis by the Movement Advancement Project. Updates available at Movement Advancement Project. "Equality Maps: Local Non-Discrimination Ordinances." http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_ordinances (accessed January 3, 2014).

⁵ Small Business Majority. "Opinion Poll: Missouri Small Businesses Support Workplace Nondiscrimination Policies." June 4, 2013. <http://www.smallbusinessmajority.org/small-business-research/downloads/060413-MO-workplace-nondiscrimination-poll-report.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2014).

⁶ Jones, Robert P., Daniel Cox, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. "A Decade of Change in American Attitudes about Same-sex Marriage and LGBT Issues." Public Religion Research Institute. February 2014. http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014.LGBT_REPORT.pdf (accessed March 4, 2014).

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This brief is based on content from *A Broken Bargain: Discrimination, Fewer Benefits and More Taxes for LGBT Workers*, a report which examines how job discrimination without legal protection makes it harder for LGBT workers to find and keep a good job; and how LGBT workers receive fewer benefits and pay more taxes, which puts LGBT workers and their families at risk. For more information, visit www.lgbtmap.org/lgbt-workers.