

Subcommittee on Rules and Organization of the House
Congressman Mike Honda (CA-17) | Testimony | Sept. 17th, 2014

Chairman Nugent and Ranking Member McGovern, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee about a critical issue that impacts the entire U.S. House of Representatives, and the over 10,000 officers and employees who work here every day.

I testify in support of the rights of the many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender employees of the House and to ensure employment discrimination has no place in this Congress, or any thereafter.

Under our current House Rule 23, Section 9 individuals are protected from employment decisions on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including marital or parental status), disability, age, or national origin. The missing element under this rule is the protection for our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender employees.

I believe it is the House's responsibility to ensure that LGBT people are protected from employment decisions, including compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. That is why I strongly recommend inserting "actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity" to Section 9.

This recommendation should be—and is—a bipartisan effort; that is why I am pleased to have the support of Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen for this historic change; I deeply appreciate her leadership.

We can always hope that there is no discrimination in the House. However, the Office of Compliance reported in its Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report that nearly half of all information requests, and two-thirds of all requests for counseling, were related to discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, national origin and religion. In the preceding five years, nearly 800 claims were made during counseling that alleged discrimination and harassment on these same traits.

This Committee's jurisdiction over the House Rules is an important part of this institution, which could also ensure that no individual faces an adverse employment decision on the basis of one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

When I served as County Supervisor for Santa Clara in Silicon Valley, I fought to extend employment benefits to same-sex partners of county employees. I did so, because I knew that the happiness and comfort of our employees is inextricably linked to the work culture and their productivity and effectiveness.

For the many LGBT employees of the House – today and tomorrow – we must ensure that employment discrimination has no place in this Congress, or any thereafter. After all, securing the comfort and protections for our employees ultimately serves our nation.

I know each of us share in the honor and privilege of serving our constituents, and our nation. As we fight for the civil rights and human rights of all people across America, let us begin in this House – the “people’s house.”

Thank you for your consideration of my recommendation.