

WASHINGTON, DC - Yesterday, U.S Rep. Mike Quigley (IL) proudly joined Representatives Barney Frank (MA), Tammy Baldwin (WI), and Jared Polis (CO) to announce the introduction of the 2009 Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

The landmark legislation would extend federal employment laws, which currently prevent job discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, national origin, age, and disability, to cover sexual orientation and gender identity. The bill covers both the public and private sectors.

“I echo the sentiments of President Lincoln when I say that in the end, we simply must do what’s right, what’s just, and what’s fair,” said Cong. Quigley. “The Employment Non-Discrimination Act is a watershed piece of legislation, not only for the GLBT community, but for the country as a whole. When we discriminate against one, we discriminate against all of us, and our United States suffer unless we are all equal. I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass this legislation and end discrimination in all of its forms.”



*Pictured above: Cong. Mike Quigley speaks at a press conference to introduce the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), along with Representatives Tammy Baldwin (WI) and Jared Polis (CO).*

The legislation, with 118 original co-sponsors, including both Democrats and Republicans, will

be discussed in hearings before the Education and Labor Committee's Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions in July.

Although some states have passed laws to prevent such discrimination, it is legal in thirty states to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, and legal in thirty-eight states to discriminate on the basis of gender identity. Only twelve states, including Illinois, prohibit both types of discrimination by law. In 2007, the House passed a version of the current legislation which protects individuals against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but did not include a provision on gender identity.

An unswerving champion of issues important to the LGBT community, Congressman Quigley recently sent a personal letter to President Obama urging him to include same-sex marriages in the 2010 Census. Immediately after being sworn in this past April, Quigley's first act in Congress was to co-sponsor the Hate Crimes bill, which would authorize the Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute certain bias-motivated crimes based on the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. Earlier this month, Quigley called for the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which mandates the military discharge of openly gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual service members.

Congressman Quigley is a member of the Congressional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equality Caucus and has co-sponsored over twelve LGBT-significant bills during his first two months in office. Back at home, he is forming a district LGBT Advisory Council of community leaders to function as a resource on important issues as well.

As Cook County Commissioner (1998-2009), Quigley worked tirelessly to ensure that Cook County did not do business with groups that discriminate based on sexual orientation. Additionally, Quigley passed two groundbreaking ordinances that extended health benefits to gay and lesbian partners of County employees and created the Cook Country Domestic Partnership Registry, which allows domestic partners to more easily secure benefits for one another.