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Out & Equal rallying support for ENDA amid Maine's election results

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates' Founding Executive Director Selisse Berry today expressed her disappointment in Maine's election results, saying "every ally, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender person must take action toward achieving basic civil rights and employment protections for all."

In a closely fought referendum, voters in Maine on Tuesday rejected a law that would have allowed LGBT people to marry, making the state the third in which voters reversed their government's decision to permit marriage equality, after California and Hawaii.

"We can't allow this election's results to stop the movement for full LGBT equality," said Berry, who married her partner in 2008 during the five-month window of marriage equality in California. "Now more than ever we have to continue this important work to achieve the basic civil rights and employment protections that every American deserves."

"Our next opportunity is assuring that members of Congress get behind the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which will go before a Senate committee on Thursday. We are closer than ever to achieving the protections in the workplace that countless people before us have sought, and we - as LGBT Americans - can't let it slip by. The consequences are too great."

At this point, there are still no federal protections to prevent LGBT people from workplace discrimination, and it remains legal in 29 states for someone to be fired, harassed and disrespected at work simply because of who they are. The 2009 Out & Equal Workplace Survey, released in October, shows that workplace discrimination still persists, with 44 percent of respondents indicating they have faced discrimination on the job, and 18 percent indicating they experienced discrimination in the last 18 months.

In the absence of federal legislation, Out & Equal has worked tirelessly for more than a decade to assure that the nation's leading corporations provide domestic partnership benefits, equal employment opportunity policies and other protections for LGBT employees.

With ENDA, the federal government is poised to do what major corporations have been doing for years -- protecting all employees from discrimination. As it stands, about 98 percent of the United States' largest companies have added sexual orientation to their equal employment opportunity policies, with 60 percent of them also including gender identity and expression.

"Not every workplace is an out and equal workplace, and not everyone feels comfortable coming out at work; and there's a reason for that - a lack of legal protections," Berry said. "We must continue contacting our Congressional delegates to gain their support, and ultimately assuring that every LGBT person - whether it's you, your son, daughter, brother, sister, mother or father - can go to work and live their lives without fear. We can't stop now. There's too much at stake."

In other Tuesday election news:

- Voters in Kalamazoo, Michigan overwhelmingly voted to uphold the city's anti-discrimination law that extends protection to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people.
- In Washington state, election officials were still counting the results on an "everything-but-marriage" referendum that would grant LGBT people the right to civil unions and domestic partnerships, with early returns showing a razor-thin margin of 51 percent to 49 percent in support.

Please email or call your lawmakers now and ask them to support [ENDA](#).

Media contact: Associate Director of Marketing & Communications [J. Erik Olvera](#), 415-694-6512 or eolvera@outandequal.org