

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Three Arkansas LGBT rights groups urge Senators Lincoln and Pryor to support the Employee Non-Discrimination Act

LITTLE ROCK and FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (November 9, 2009) – The Center for Artistic Revolution, the NWA Center for Equality, and Stonewall Democratic Caucus of Arkansas representing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Arkansans today announced the formation of Arkansas Allies for ENDA, a joint campaign calling for Senators Lincoln and Pryor to publicly support the Employee Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). In a form letter to constituents from Lincoln's office dated September 29, the Senator cautioned that passage of ENDA would constitute 'special' and not 'equal' rights. After the letter became public, Lincoln's office stated that she has "no current public position" on ENDA. They have also stated that the "special rights" portion has been removed from the form letter and that it was there through some "confusion" that has yet to be explained.

Senator Pryor's office has also indicated that the senator has no current public position on ENDA.

If passed, ENDA would provide basic protections against workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Once law the bill would not apply to religious organizations or businesses with fewer than 15 employees. ENDA was introduced in the 111th Congress by Representatives Barney Frank (D-MA) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) in the House. The bill was introduced in the Senate by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Susan Collins (R-ME). Today's announcement by the state's three largest advocacy groups for the LGBT community follows the opening of ENDA hearings on Capitol Hill last week.

As it is legal in the state of Arkansas to be fired based on gender identity or sexual orientation, the support of Senators Lincoln and Pryor for the Employee Non-Discrimination Act is essential in protecting the rights of LGBT Arkansans. The joint statewide campaign will also urge Arkansans of all gender identities, sexual orientations and their allies, to contact their legislators asking them to support ENDA.

For more information about the Arkansas Allies for ENDA campaign visit <http://arkansasallies.com/>

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