"YOU'RE FIRED!"

Those two words can have a devastating impact on a person's life. And when you lose your job because of some irrelevant factor in your private life, it's unfair. It's Discrimination!
For millions of American citizens, this discrimination, or fear of it, is a cruel part of life

ROB BALFE WAS FIRED

Rob worked for an insurance company, first as a claims adjuster in North Dakota, and then as a claims examiner at the company's suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota, office.

Like many gay men and lesbians, Rob kept his personal life to himself. Nobody suspected that he was gay. He was well-liked at the office. He worked hard. And he was the kind of guy who got the job done, no matter what it took.

Then, through a rumor, his supervisor discovered that Rob was gay. He tried to "freeze" Rob out by refusing to talk to him.

Rob was puzzled. His job performance was excellent. He got along with his associates and clients. And he certainly hadn't been involved in any improper behavior.

One Monday morning, a co-worker told Rob that his supervisor wanted to see him. "I don't want any homosexuals working here. You're fired," his supervisor told him. "We'll arrange for a time after working hours for you to come in and pack your desk."

Although Minneapolis has a civil rights ordinance which prohibits such discrimination, Rob's job was in the suburbs. Without civil rights protection, Rob had no legal recourse to such arbitrary and unfair discrimination.

Hoping that his experience and good work record would help him, Rob applied with a number of other insurance companies. Although these firms expressed initial interest, it soon vanished after they checked with his former employer. Rob now realizes that he may never be able to find a job in his vocation again.

THE ISSUE

Although such discrimination cases don't often get a lot of attention, what happened to one gay man happens to other gay people all the time. And most other gay people live in constant fear that they might be "discovered" and therefore lose their jobs, apartments, etc. as a result.

In some ways, it's not surprising considering the uncomfortable feelings, antagonism and even hatred which our society often shows to lesbians and gay men. The direct result is discrimination in virtually every area—employment, housing, etc.

In fact, studies show that 16% of all gay people have employment difficulties and 9% lose their jobs—just because they are gay.

Unlike discrimination against racial minorities and women, gay people can and often do hide their sexual orientation so employment discrimination against gays usually occurs after they've been hired. It can take the form of firings, demotions, or a refusal to promote.

The similarities are greater than any differences between the forms of discrimination. They are based on stereotypes and a refusal to judge people as individuals. The net result of anti-gay discrimination, like racial discrimination or discrimination based on sex, is to deny the person their job (or housing, etc.) based on an irrelevant personal criterion. The employers lose as well—deprived of the abilities of fine employees.

Mental health experts agree that such discrimination (and the fear that it might occur at any point) are destructive to both the individual and to society. "Discrimination in employment can lead
to economic disenfranchisement, thus engendering anxiety and frustrating legitimate achievement motivation.”

THE SOLUTION
Protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation

To remedy this arbitrary and unjust discrimination, the Gay Rights National Lobby is urging support for legislation to amend existing federal civil rights laws. This legislation, which has been introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, would prohibit discrimination based on “sexual orientation.” This legislation to protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination would not endorse or approve homosexuality. It would not in any way require quotas or affirmative action, only basic non-discrimination.

Six Reasons To Support Basic Civil Rights For Lesbians and Gay Men

1. **THERE IS A NEED!**
   Many people lose their jobs simply because they are gay. At present they have no legal recourse to such arbitrary and unfair discrimination.

2. **PEOPLE SHOULD BE JUDGED AS INDIVIDUALS**
   To judge people by so called “group characteristics” (stereotypes) is unjust. This legislation is consistent with the concept of all civil rights legislation.

3. **NON-DISCRIMINATION IS GOOD BUSINESS PRACTICE.**
   Non-discrimination will ensure that employment concerns are limited to merit and ability on the job.

4. **THERE IS GROWING SUPPORT AMONG RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS.**
   They understand that it is discrimination that is immoral and contrary to religious convictions.

5. **THE GOAL OF THIS LEGISLATION IS BASIC CIVIL RIGHTS.**
   Just as the inclusion of “religion” in human rights legislation does not indicate support for any particular religion, neither would this legislation indicate support for “homosexuality” per se.

6. **DISCRIMINATION BASED ON A FACTOR IN ONE’S PRIVATE LIFE IS A THREAT TO ALL OF US.**
   If one personal factor, which is irrelevant to how the person does the job or pays the rent, can be used to discriminate, who knows what other personal matters might be used?
A Long and Growing List of Organizations and Religious Denominations Support Civil Rights for Gay People

**American Federation of Teachers**

"Whereas, professional people insist that they be judged on the basis of professional and not personal criteria and

Whereas, it is the responsibility of trade unions to provide job protection from all forms of discrimination that is not based on performance

Resolved, that the American Federation of Teachers protests any personnel actions taken against any teacher merely because he or she practices homosexual behavior in private life."

**National Council of Churches**

"The Governing Board reiterates the Christian conviction that all persons are entitled to full civil rights and equal protection... and urges its member churches and their constituencies to work to ensure the enactment of legislation at the national, state and local levels that would guarantee the civil rights of all persons without regard to their affectional or sexual preference."

**American Psychiatric Association**

"Whereas homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities, therefore, be it resolved that the American Psychiatric Association deplores all public and private discrimination against homosexuals in such areas as employment, housing, etc.

Further, the American Psychiatric Association supports and urges the enactment of civil rights legislation at the local, state and federal levels that would offer homosexual citizens the same protections now guaranteed to others on the basis of race, creed, color, etc."

**National Women’s Political Caucus**

"The NWPC considers all issues pertaining to the right of women to control their own bodies as women’s issues. Sexual preference is one such issue. Sexual preference should in no way affect a woman’s right to equal treatment in employment, housing, education, credit or state or federally funded programs.

The NWPC supports federal and state legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual or affectional preference in employment, housing, etc."

**American Civil Liberties Union**

"The ACLU opposed discrimination in public and private housing and accommodations, government benefits, occupational licensing and government and private employment simply because the person is a homosexual."

**1980 Democratic National Convention**

"All groups must be protected from discrimination based on race... sex or sexual orientation. This includes specifically the right of foreign citizens to enter this country. Appropriate legislative and administrative actions to achieve these goals should be undertaken."

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