



The Equality Act of 2019: Talking Points

Topline Talking Points

- We all share the bedrock value that every person living in the United States and its territories deserves to be treated equally under the law.
- Discrimination is wrong. But in 30 states, LGBTQ+ people are at risk of being fired, refused housing, or denied critical services under state law because of who they are and whom they love.
- No one's basic rights should depend on the state or zip code they live in. But today, if [I/an LGBTQ+ person] were to drive from Maine to Los Angeles, my/their rights would literally change dozens of times.
- The harsh reality is that discrimination is a real and persistent problem for LGBTQ+ people and their loved ones. Nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ+ people in the United States and its territories report having experienced discrimination in their everyday lives.
- This is why we need the Equality Act, a federal bill that will add LGBTQ+ people to existing civil rights laws and will strengthen protections for all people.
- The Equality Act would provide clear, consistent protections nationwide in employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service.
- A growing majority of people in the United States and its territories—70 percent—support passing these protections, including a majority of Republicans as well as Democrats. This legislation was introduced with unprecedented support from hundreds of lawmakers, many leading companies, and more than 200 national and statewide organizations.
- At the end of the day, every person should be judged on their merits, and deserves a fair chance to earn a living, provide for their family, and live free from the fear or fact of harassment or discrimination.

Questions and Answers

What is the problem?

- Despite significant steps forward, LGBTQ+ people living in the U.S. and its territories lack basic legal protections under federal law, and the patchwork of current laws leaves millions of people subject to uncertainty and potential discrimination that impacts their families, their livelihoods, their safety, and their day-to-day lives.
- Around 50 percent of LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. and its territories live in places that still lack legal state protections, leaving residents and visitors at risk of discrimination because of who they are or whom they love.
- Nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. and its territories report having experienced discrimination in their everyday lives. While most people in this country are welcoming and affirming of LGBTQ+ people, it only takes one act of discrimination to alter a person's life.
- Our nation's laws protect people on the basis of race, color, national origin, and in most cases, sex, disability, and religion. But federal law does not provide clear, consistent non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The need for these protections is clear—*nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. report having experienced discrimination in their day-to-day lives.*

How is the Equality Act the solution?

- The Equality Act would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people across key areas of life, including employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service.
- The Equality Act would clarify and add sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics to existing laws—including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Jury Selection and Services Act, and several laws regarding employment with the federal government.
- The Equality Act would add sex non-discrimination protections to public spaces and services, as well as federally funded programs.
- The Equality Act would modernize the public spaces and services covered in current law to include retail stores, services such as banks and legal services, and transportation services. These important updates would strengthen existing protections for everyone and establish them where they don't currently exist.
- Almost 20 states and more than 100 cities, counties and towns have adopted these common-sense, inclusive and comprehensive protections for LGBTQ+ people. And the Equality Act also protects loved ones of LGBTQ+ people, which is critical for PFLAG families. These laws are not new—they are just not federal law...yet.
- Decades of U.S. history show that civil rights laws are effective in decreasing discrimination because they provide strong federal remedies targeted to address real discrimination. By explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity in these

fundamental laws, LGBTQ+ people will finally be afforded the exact same protections as other covered characteristics under federal law.

Who supports the Equality Act?

- The Equality Act was unanimously endorsed by the PFLAG National Board of Directors, as documented in a stand-alone Resolution of Endorsement from March 9, 2019 before the bill's introduction into the U.S. House and Senate on March 13, 2019.
- The Equality Act has unprecedented support from the far majority of people living in the U.S. and its territories, the business community, and major statewide and national organizations.
- The nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) found that nationally, support for a bill like the Equality Act topped 70 percent, which includes a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.
- The unprecedented support for the Equality Act also includes strong bipartisan support with reintroduction by Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle—more than ever before—in addition to more than 200 local, statewide and national organizations.

Does the Equality Act undermine religious freedom?

- Religious freedom is a fundamental value in the United States, however it is not a license to discriminate against people and deprive them of their rights.
- Protecting religious minorities from persecution is entirely compatible with protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination.
- The Equality Act furthers the principle of religious freedom by expanding and enhancing non-discrimination protections for people of all faiths.
- The current religious exemptions available under federal civil rights law will be unchanged.