



KENTUCKY. IT'S A STATE OF FAIRNESS

A Case for Fairness

The term Fairness can be defined as free from favoritism, self-interest, or preference in judgment; an equitable situation that allows for a level playing field.

As Americans, we believe in a society where everyone has to same chance to earn a living, be safe in their communities, serve their country, and take care of the ones they love. In general, we believe that people want to do the right thing; that they want to create a fair environment for themselves, their families, and their neighbors.

Yet historically we've had to create explicit policies when that kind of good judgment has broken down and people don't have the same chances as those around them.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is perhaps the best known of these policies. It was created to prohibit discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin by federal and state governments in the workplace and in some public places. Two years later Kentucky went on to enact a law Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called "the strongest and most comprehensive civil rights bill passed by a southern state" - the first state in the south to adopt a Civil Rights Act with enforceable repercussions for acts of discrimination.

Since that time there has been a growing recognition regarding the need to protect other groups, such as the disabled and the elderly, and to broaden those protections to include housing protections.

At its core, the purpose of the Civil Rights Act is to guarantee equality for everyone. It ensures all Kentuckians have the same opportunities to earn a living, be safe in their communities, serve their country and care for the ones they love. When there has been a history of a particular group's lack of access to these fundamentals of the American dream, the just and appropriate response has been to add that group to existing antidiscrimination laws or to create stronger protections on a more localized level.

Fairness for **ALL** Kentuckians would mean adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes under the state Civil Rights Act. Some communities have chosen to enact their vision for full fairness and opportunity by passing local Fairness ordinances. These local laws ensure that all residents - including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals - can provide for their



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families, put a roof over their heads, and participate in public activities with dignity and without fear of harassment.

Today, any person suspected of being gay or transgender outside Lexington, Louisville, Covington, Vicco, Frankfort, or Morehead may be legally fired from their job, denied housing, or withheld access to any public accommodation – such as a bus ride or service in a restaurant.

Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia currently enforce such fairness protections, and of the 29 states that do not, more than 70 of their cities and counties extend protections to their gay and transgender residents. Approximately 25 percent of our state's population resides in the three communities with existing fairness laws, and census data indicates that large numbers of individuals also commute into these communities during the workweek. Consequently, approximately 30 percent of Kentuckians are protected from this type of discrimination, yet this simple equality proposal has never come to a committee vote in the Kentucky General Assembly.

It is time for Kentucky to join the other 21 states that have already enacted laws protecting gay and transgender people and maintain our place in history as the nation's southern leader of equality. Prior to passage of the statewide law, we can increase the percentage of people who are treated fairly by passing additional ordinances on the local level.

If you agree that it's time for everyone in our state to support these rights, you wouldn't be alone:

83% of Kentuckians believe that gay and transgender people should be protected from discrimination in the workplace, in housing, and in public accommodations. *

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** 2011 Telephone survey conducted by the Schapiro Group*