



State Sen. Christine Kehoe, D-San Diego, authored California's equal benefits bill.

employer has taken to heart that discrimination against people with HIV is wrong and has agreed to have new policies and training," Hickman said.

NEW JERSEY

Trans Nondiscrimination Bill Passes

By a 69-5 vote, the New Jersey Assembly voted Dec. 14 to amend the state's nondiscrimination laws to protect transgender people from discrimination. The Senate approved the companion bill by a 31-5 vote. Democratic Gov. Jon Corzine is expected to sign the measure into law.

As a result, New Jersey will become the ninth state to extend statutory nondiscrimination protections based on gender identity and expression. With New Jersey's new law, 34 percent of the nation's population will live in a jurisdiction with a clearly transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination law, up from just 6 percent only five years ago. In addition, several states have favorable court or administrative rulings that protect transgender people from discrimination.

"The overwhelming bipartisan margins of support in both houses of the New Jersey Legislature prove this is not a 'controversial' issue. Legislators clearly understand that discrimination against transgender people is pervasive and that it is wrong," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

OHIO

New Gov. Appoints First Gay Cabinet Member

Democratic Governor-elect Ted Strickland has appointed Columbus City Councilwoman Mary Jo Hudson to direct the Department of Insurance. It is the first time in Ohio history that an openly

queer person has been appointed to a Cabinet-level position.

Hudson, an attorney, chairs the council's Jobs and Economic Development Committee. From 1989 to 1996, she was a deputy liquidator and special services attorney for the Ohio Department of Insurance and Office of the Ohio Insurance Liquidator.

The state has a history of unfriendly legislation toward gays. In 2004, Ohio voters passed a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. In the last legislative session, Republicans attempted to pass a bill preventing gay couples from adopting children.

Strickland's election followed a particularly acrimonious campaign in which his Republican opponent, Ken Blackwell, compared gays to criminals in a newspaper report.

Strickland opposes same-sex marriage but has generally reached out to the sexual minorities community. Hudson's appointment must now be confirmed by the state Senate.

TEXAS

Employment Discrimination Lawsuit Filed

A lawsuit was filed Dec. 18 in federal court in the Southern District of Texas on behalf of Izza Lopez, a transgender woman whose employment offer was rescinded because she is transgender.

"When the HR director found out the company offered a job to a transgender person, the offer was rescinded," said Cole Thaler, transgender rights attorney at Lambda Legal. "Even though Izza was the best applicant for the job, the company decided that it didn't want a transgender employee and claimed that she 'misrepresented' herself."

Lopez, a 26-year-old transgender woman, applied for the position of scheduler with River Oaks Imaging and Diagnostic, a Houston medical imaging company, in September 2005. She sent in her résumé, was invited in for an interview, completed a background check and drug test, and was asked to start work as soon as possible Oct. 4, 2005.

Lopez gave notice to her employer the following day and planned to start working at River Oaks the week of Oct. 24. On Oct. 10, however, she received a phone call from River Oaks' human resources director and one of its employment recruiters saying that River Oaks was rescinding its offer of employment because of her "misrepresentation" of herself as a woman. Lopez was unable to get her previous job back and was without employment for several months.

The lawsuit charges that River Oaks violated Lopez's rights under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in employment.

"As an applicant, I was interviewed by a manager and a director who both felt I was qualified to do the job," said Lopez. "I was shocked when I received the call from human resources taking away the job they'd offered me—it felt as if they'd said to me, 'You're a monster; we don't want you here.'"

Compiled by JAYMEE R. CUTI



Out lesbian Columbus City Councilwoman Mary Jo Hudson was appointed to a Cabinet-level position by Ohio's new governor.

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