

BY RYAN J. PRADO

Merkley, Kirk, Harkin and Collins Reintroduce ENDA to Senate

On Thursday, April 14, Senators Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced to the Senate the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) to prohibit job discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The announcement follows the reintroduction of ENDA in the House by openly gay Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) on April 6, albeit it with 92 fewer co-sponsors than the measure gathered before the close of the 111th Congress last year.

ENDA would prohibit employers, employment agencies, labor organizations and joint labor-management committees from firing, refusing to hire or discriminating against those employed or seeking employment on the basis of their perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity. Such protections are already in place prohibiting discrimination based on race, religion, gender, national origin, age and disability.

"The right to work hard and earn a living is a fundamental right," said Sen. Merkley via press release. "It is essential to the success of a family. It is essential to the pursuit of happiness. It is part of equality under the law. The test of whether you can get and hold a job should be whether you can do the job, not



Jeff Merkley is mad as hell, and he's not going to take it anymore!

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your sexual orientation or gender identity."

Currently, it remains legal in 29 states to fire or refuse to hire someone for being lesbian, gay or bisexual, while transgender workers can be denied or refused jobs in 37 states.

Just Out will follow the progress of ENDA in the House and Senate as information becomes available.

Southern Oregon Pride Finds Positivity in Pear Blossom Parade After Initial Denial of Entry

Following Southern Oregon Pride's initial denial of entry into Medford's Pear Blossom Festival Parade—held Saturday, April 10—the

Ashland-based nonprofit organization reported to KOB Channel 5 News in Medford a generally positive experience marching in the parade.

On April 5, KOB News reported that the Pear Blossom board had denied SOPride entry to march in the annual parade. The organization was encouraged to instead obtain a booth for the festival—though there were no more booths to be had. Soon after, SOPride president Gina DuQuenne's protests prompted the Medford City Attorney's office to investigate the matter, and locals to voice their outrage.

During a news report about the parade, and the Pear Blossom board's denial of SOPride's application, festival director Darcy Mann-Self

was quoted as saying, "I don't wanna talk about it on TV. I'm not going to go into any kind of a confrontational thing on TV, because the parade isn't confrontational."

She also explained that the board felt that SOPride's entry didn't "quite fit" the family affair, adding, "There's a parade for them in Ashland."

Just Out made several attempts to contact the Pear Blossom board, as well as Mann-Self, but was unable to obtain any response to questions pertaining to the reasoning behind their initial refusal to allow SOPride to participate in the parade. DuQuenne was not given a reason either. SOPride was eventually granted entry to the parade after Mann-Self met with the executive board of Pear Blossom.

"I think they probably looked at the part where it's probably not legal to deny people into a community event," says DuQuenne. "They probably went and thought about some of the ramifications and changed their mind."

DuQuenne reports that Mann-Self has apologized to SOPride and DuQuenne for the initial denial of the organization's wishes to march in the parade, and that they've accepted the apology and are "moving forward." DuQuenne says she has still received no written or verbal apology from the board itself as of press time.

"I think it would be very smart on behalf of Pear Blossom to give a written apology," says

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