



# TAKE ACTION FOR ENDA

Summer 2009

## TAKE ACTION

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This toolkit will help you reach out to your elected officials and educate them on the vital importance of passing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). Members of Congress have repeatedly stressed how critical it is that they and their staffs receive current information about the need to pass this legislation. If we are going to succeed in securing employment protections for transgender people, we must get active in this work.

Speaking with members of Congress to educate them or impact their views on policy decisions that affect the lives of the people they represent is a fundamental right and responsibility of people in a democracy. Most people fail to realize the importance of speaking out on issues; we all have the power to affect change in our government.

This guide focuses specifically on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. For more general information, visit the Resource section of our website.

### **SIMPLE STEPS WITH A BIG IMPACT**

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Here's what YOU can do for ENDA:

1. Educate your member of Congress at home in your district (see page 2)
  - Assemble a team and prepare for your meeting
  - Make an appointment for August 2009
  - Visit your member of Congress
  - Let us know how it went
  - Attend gatherings in your district
2. Write to your member of Congress (see page 10)
3. Call your member of Congress (see page 12)
4. Follow up (see page 13)

### **WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE ACTION ON ENDA**

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Employment is one of the greatest challenges we face as transgender people. We face staggering levels of under- and unemployment because of prejudice. Yet a strong majority (65%) of Americans in a 2004 poll felt that people should only be judged on their ability to do the job, not their gender identity. Anti-discrimination laws send a clear message to employers and co-workers that discrimination is wrong and not to be tolerated.

### **National Center for Transgender Equality**

1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 903-0112 • [ncte@nctequality.org](mailto:ncte@nctequality.org) • [www.nctequality.org](http://www.nctequality.org)

# VISITING YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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We are asking you to visit with your member of Congress when they are home in August for their in-district work period. It is absolutely critical that you meet with them then, before they return to Washington to consider this bill.

## Who are my representatives in Congress?

Every person<sup>1</sup> in the United States has two U.S. Senators and one member of the House of Representatives. Every member of the United States House of Representatives has approximately 600,000 constituents. Every U.S. Senator represents an entire state. Each of the 435 members of the House and 100 Senators has many transgender constituents, but chances are they don't know it because they have not met very many of us or any at all.

You'll need to know your Zip Code + Four in order to find your representative on the House of Representatives website. You can get your Zip + Four from the Post Office website at <http://www.usps.com>. You can also contact NCTE by phone, at 202.903.0112, or look on NCTE's website, you can enter your zip code to find your members of Congress at <http://www.nctequality.org> > Take Action.

## Taking Action

Once you know your member of Congress, follow these steps:

### 1. ASSEMBLE A SMALL TEAM OF PEOPLE TO GO ON THE VISIT

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Try to bring a small group of two to four people with you on your visit. When assembling a "team" of constituents, try for diverse representation from the transgender people and allies in your area. Diverse groups bring added perspectives, skills and presence that a homogeneous group cannot and help to break stereotypes. Diversity is an important goal in all transgender organizing and especially important when educating legislators about transgender lives and issues. We want legislators to have an accurate picture of who we are.

While it is important that transgender voices speak for transgender people, allies are often passionate and convincing educators on our behalf. Having allies at the meeting also shows broader political support for your position. Allies may have existing relationships with the member of Congress and therefore are better able to influence a legislator's opinions.

Some possible team members to include in your visit:

- **Transgender people who have personally experienced discrimination or violence.** This helps communicate to the legislator that discrimination is a problem in her or his district.
- **Transgender people from local support groups,** including transmen's groups and groups representing people of color. This helps show the diversity of transgender people and adds a broader perspective.
- **Parents, siblings, spouses or children of transgender people.** They may be able to connect with the legislator and explain issues from a non-transgender perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> This does not include residents of Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the US Territories, who do not have Senators and who have a non-voting Delegate to the House of Representatives.

- **Co-workers or supervisors of transgender people.** They can explain what it is like working with a transgender person and how workplace issues have been handled in a positive manner.
- **Human resource or business leaders.** Similar to co-workers, these folks can convincingly make the argument that non-discrimination makes good business sense and that having transgender employees is not a problem.
- **Social workers.** They can communicate effectively the devastating impact of discrimination on communities and individuals within that community. Consider a social worker from an organization that works with LGBT youth, the homeless or a community mental health center.
- **Leaders from your local/state LGBT advocacy organization** (if they are transgender supportive). Their presence will convey the message that the local LGBT voting bloc cares about this issue.
- **Leaders from the local LGBT partisan organization or local party leadership** (if they are transgender-supportive). Consider bringing Republicans to meet with Republicans and Democrats to meet with Democrats etc.
- **Leaders from local congregations.** They can help ease the legislator's concern that people of faith do not support transgender equality.
- **Leaders of other civil rights organizations.** Leaders of the NAACP, NOW, or the ACLU, etc., may be influential with a legislator who cares about the concerns of these groups. They can help educate the member of Congress that justice issues are interconnected.
- **Other community leaders.** Their presence should help the legislator understand that transgender equality has wider support than the legislator realizes.
- **People who have worked in local politics with the legislator.** Bringing in people who the legislator specifically knows and values can help them realize that their community and their supporters believe in transgender equality.
- **Donors or volunteers from the legislator's campaign.** The legislator may be very interested and influenced by those she knows are her core supporters.
- **Union representatives.** Depending on the legislator, union leaders may carry a lot of influence.



*NCTE member Marissa Richmond with Senator Lamar Alexander and Senator Bill Frist (ret.)*

## 2. SETTING UP A MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Send a fax requesting a meeting with preferably one month's notice. A sample letter is:

Date

Attn: (Name of Scheduler, if known)  
The Honorable (Name)  
Washington, DC 20515 [May use local address]  
FAX

Ms./Mr. (Name of scheduler):

I am writing to request an appointment for several constituents and I to speak with Congressman/Congresswoman/Senator \_\_\_\_\_ in at our district office to discuss the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the need to ban employment discrimination against transgender people.

We are requesting a meeting in August; my preference would be for [day of the week], [month, day and year], but we can certainly be flexible for the Congressman's/Congresswoman's/Senator's schedule.

Those in attendance at the meeting, depending on when it is scheduled for, will be:

- Name, title and address for each attendee
- Name, title and address for each attendee

Please let me know when the Congressman/Congresswoman might be available. I will follow up with you in a few days if I have not heard back.

Thank you,  
(Your name)  
(Your address)  
(Your Telephone Number)  
(e-mail address)

If you do not hear from them, follow up by phone. You may need to be persistent in following-up until an actual meeting is confirmed. They are usually not trying to avoid you—they are simply overwhelmed with requests for meetings in an already packed schedule, so keep trying. If you speak to a scheduler, be sure to get her or his name in case you need to call back. Be persistent—it will pay off.

## 3. PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

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Gather your team in advance, if at all possible, so that you can share information and agree upon strategies for your meeting. Agree on the focus of your meeting with your Congressional representative, how you will introduce yourselves and the basic talking points you intend to cover. Holding a practice session is an excellent idea and will help you feel more confident and prepared for the actual meeting. Because appointments with members of Congress are often brief (usually fifteen to twenty minutes), taking the time to prepare carefully will help you use that time wisely to focus on your most important issues.

You may also want to divide up roles for the meeting. It is helpful to have one person designated as the leader, who can guide the introductions, move things along, and be sure that the right questions get asked at the end of the meeting. It is also very useful to have someone take notes of your meeting so you'll remember what has been said.

Congress is a formal institution, so plan to dress professionally for your meeting. Members of Congress and their staffs usually will be wearing suits and ties for men, and suits, dress slacks or skirts, with a blouse or dress sweater for women. You are likely to be taken more seriously if you dress in a similar fashion. You should feel free to dress according to your chosen gender presentation.

Do some research to help prepare for the meeting:

### **What Positions Have They Taken?**

Most of the representatives' web sites include information about them and their positions on various issues. You can visit their websites at

<http://www.senate.gov>

<http://www.house.gov>

Research the person you are meeting with. Make an effort to know your Senator or Representative's position on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues and other major issues. Congressional voting records are also a good resource, and can be found by visiting the Thomas Legislative Information website, <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. Knowing basic facts about your members of Congress and their positions can help you establish a connection with them and increase your understanding of what might motivate them to support our cause.

### **Important points to consider for your meeting**

Most members of Congress need to be convinced of two things for them to support trans-inclusive legislation. First, they must understand what problems exist, such as employment discrimination, and that these problems are harmful to us. Second, they must be convinced that co-sponsoring and voting for a trans-inclusive bill will not be a political problem for them in their re-election.

The following talking points can aid you in beginning your discussion with your member of Congress.

#### **Transgender people face pervasive discrimination in the workplace.**

Legislators need to hear stories of transgender people who have faced real discrimination on the job. Legislators need to understand what happens to us when we are discriminated against and how anti-discrimination laws and policies can help. Our stories are painful and they need to know about this pain in order to take action to ban discrimination.

#### **Transgender people are not protected from discrimination on the federal level.**

One of the major barriers to getting members of Congress to support anti-discrimination legislation is that they may think that we are already protected by laws currently in place. In reality, none of the existing federal laws prohibit discrimination against transgender people.

**A growing number of states and localities prohibit this type of discrimination, yet coverage remains spotty and is often not enforced.** We need legislators to understand that other politicians are regularly voting for transgender rights and that we are, as a community, establishing that these laws can be in place without negative consequences. However, we do not want to paint so rosy a picture that they think we do not need federal protections. We do—state and local protections are not sufficient.

## 4. MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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When you arrive, each team member should **introduce themselves**. Say your name and that you are a constituent, a veteran, a parent or anything else that might be important to the legislator. Note if you have a connection with your representative.

**Always be brief and stay on point**—your meeting time will be very limited, usually fifteen to twenty minutes. This is when your team’s preparation pays off. Having your general talking points written up will help you present your information clearly and directly.

When speaking with your Congressperson, **the most important thing is talk about personal experiences** of discrimination against yourself or people you know. Personal accounts are the most likely to affect your Congressperson. Painting the realities that the transgender community faces is essential for gaining the support of our representatives. However, it is critical that you keep your remarks brief and to the point.

**Stay focused** so that you will be understood and make your point well since a short, articulate statement will be far more effective than an elaborate story. Congresspeople have limited time and many issues to focus on—help them by being as clear as you can be.

**Avoid theoretical discussions**—they are not a productive way to communicate with your busy Congressperson. For example, engaging in a complicated analysis of gender theory will not be helpful unless he or she specifically asks for this. Instead, focus on telling your personal account and asking your member of Congress to support specific changes in policy.

**Listen carefully** to what your Congressperson has to say and clearly and succinctly answer any questions she or he asks.

**Share only appropriate information** in the meeting. Be sensitive to the fact that some people are uncomfortable hearing about the body and may not want to know specifics. Stay focused on issues of employment discrimination.

Also, remember that many people continue to confuse issues of sexuality with issues of gender. Therefore, it is helpful to stay on topic and focus on gender, and avoid conversations about sexuality or genitals. Some people are uncomfortable with these topics, especially in public and work settings, so it is best to be discreet.

**Speak slowly and clearly**, without using jargon, slang, acronyms, abbreviations or terms that other people may find offensive. Use “transgender” rather than “TG” and “cross dresser” instead of “CD” or “transvestite.” Do not assume that people will understand terms like MTF, FTM or “transition.” Many people speak too quickly if they are nervous, so pay attention to how you are talking so that you will be sure you are being understood.

### SAMPLE INTRODUCTIONS:

Good afternoon, Senator O’Brien. My name is Patsy Anderson, and I am a lifelong resident of our state, as you are. I am a cross dresser and was the founder of Feminine Spirits, our local advocacy and support group. I very much appreciate this opportunity to talk with you about some important issues for our community.

Hello, Congresswoman Martinez. My name is Joe Gardner, I’m a new resident of our state, and a member of my local Union. I lost my last job when my employer found out that I am a female to male transsexual. I want to thank you for your consistent support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that would ban this kind of discrimination.

**Speak positively** about transgender people and do not disparage other people or their positions, even if you don't agree with them. Make your own position clear and let it speak for itself.

**If you do not know something, do not make it up.** Explain that you do not know the answer and offer to follow-up with the information. If you do offer this, make sure you really do follow-up.

**An underlying message** to your visit should be that there are a lot more transgender people than members of Congress think, and that we live in their districts or states.

In addition to educating the legislator on transgender issues, **it is important that you leave knowing whether the legislator would be supportive of trans-inclusive legislation.** When you are about 75% through the allotted time and have given your basic presentation, it is time to get a better idea of your Congressperson's thoughts if she or he has not made them clear to you already. Consider asking the following questions, in your own words, to determine where your legislator stands:

- Is there anything else that you need to know to help you to better understand the issues faced by transgender people?
- Will you co-sponsor the Employment Non-Discrimination Act?
- If you will not co-sponsor trans-inclusive legislation, would you be willing to vote for or support such legislation?

Resist the urge to leave a large packet of information—legislators and staff simply will not have time to read it. A **simple leave behind** that covers the important facts is perfectly adequate. There is one you can use on the last two pages of this guide.

**Remember that most appointments are brief**—about fifteen to twenty minutes. Leave gracefully when your time is up and be careful not to overstay your welcome. If you are invited to stay longer, by all means do so if you have the time.

## MEETING STAFF INSTEAD OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

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If your member of Congress is not available to meet with you, you may be asked to meet with a staff person instead. This is not a negative thing. Legislators rely a great deal on their staffs and receive detailed reports on every visit they do with constituents. So, while meeting with the actual member of Congress is ideal, meeting

### TELLING YOUR STORY: AN EXAMPLE

My name is Latisha and I am a male-to-female transgender woman. I was working as a sales clerk at a local store and everything was going fine. One day, though, one of my co-workers found out that I was transgender because I went to high school with his cousin. He told everyone and my manager fired me, saying that my presence was disruptive and that customers would be uncomfortable with me, even though that had never been an issue before and I had worked hard at my job. I went and spoke with someone in the Human Resources department at the corporate offices. She said they had an anti-discrimination policy and got me transferred to another store, where I've had no problems at all. But it really worried me, getting fired, because I just want to keep a steady job and I really like what I've been doing.

with staff people is also extremely helpful. If you found the staff to be helpful, write to your Congressperson to let him or her know that you appreciated the staff's courtesy. Also, keep in mind that occasionally something unforeseen comes up and, even if you were expecting to meet with the actual legislator, you may see a staffer instead.

Often meeting with a staff member first, or even several times, can help you get in to see the actual member of Congress in the future. Remember that staff members can be very important in shaping legislation and policy, so do meet with them.

## **AFTER THE MEETING**

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Each visitor should send a thank you note immediately—this is a quick and easy way to further your relationship with your Congressperson. If you also met with someone on the Congressperson's staff, write them a separate thank you note as well. Be sure to follow up as soon as possible with any promised additional information. Whether or not they support ENDA, send them a note thanking them for their time.

### **Sample Thank You Letter**

Date

The Honorable [First and Last name]  
United State Senate or House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510  
VIA FAX

Dear Senator/Representative (Last name):

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us on [date] to discuss the rights of transgender people living in our [insert name of district/state here]. We appreciate your time and attention to this issue that is of vital concern to your transgender constituents.

As we discussed in the meeting,

- Transgender people face pervasive employment discrimination.
- Transgender people are not protected from discrimination on the federal level.

[If applicable] Thank you for your support [or sponsorship] of this critical piece of legislation that will help ensure that transgender workers do not lose our jobs because of prejudice. If you have any further questions, please feel free to be in touch with me.

Thank you,  
(Your name)  
(Your address)  
(Your Telephone Number)  
(e-mail address)

### **Report the Results of Your Visit**

The information you gather in your meeting is critical to our efforts to pass this bill. Please fill out an online visit report form at or print out and fax or mail the form at the end of this document.

## **ATTEND TOWN HALL MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

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Members of Congress often make themselves available to constituents by holding town hall meetings, constituent coffee hours, or other events in their district or state. All people are welcome to attend these and there is no admission charge. They are a good way to build relationships with members of Congress. Also, consider volunteering at a town hall to raise transgender visibility at the event.

Check with the district office to see when events like this are being held in your district this summer and then plan to be a part of them (some events require RSVPs and others do not; again, check with the district office).

This is a relatively simple thing to do, but a great way to show your member of Congress that you are an informed and active constituent.



*Approximately 80 of the participants in NCTE's 2009 Lobby Day who spent time educating their members of Congress. Now it's time to build on those relationships and visit members of Congress at home in their district offices.*

# WRITING TO YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Writing letters, faxes and/or emails can be a very effective way to deliver a message to your elected officials. While usually not quite as potent as an actual in-person visit, writing is still very useful.

When Congresspeople gets an actual letter, typed or handwritten, they know the constituent writing the letter really feels strongly about the issue. However, letters mailed to Congress are required to go through an extensive and time consuming screening process due to concerns about terrorism, so they will take more time to arrive. Faxes and emails are much quicker ways of getting a message to Congress and should be utilized when time matters in expressing your opinion on an issue.

Consider having a letter writing party at a group meeting or inviting friends over to write letters about an issue that is important to you. You can provide paper, pens, addresses and a sample letter to help people get started.

## TIPS FOR WRITING

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- Be polite, brief and to the point
- Be concise; aim for one to two page letters or faxes.
- Address only one issue in each letter, fax or e-mail
- In the letter:
  - State your purpose for writing in the first paragraph (and in the subject line, if you are writing an e-mail) State your position clearly for or against a particular piece of legislation, using the bill number if you know it, and succinctly describe why you hold that position;
  - Include, briefly, personal information that supports your point of view
  - Conclude by asking for a specific action from the legislator, such as asking them to vote for or against a bill, sponsor legislation or meet with transgender constituents.
  - Thank them for their past support of related issues, if applicable
- Always include your contact information, including your address (this will let them know that you live in their district and state), so they can follow up with you.

## ADDRESSING EMAIL

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Use the same suggestions as above. In the subject line, write something like, “Support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act”. Even though you are sending by e-mail, you still need to include your mailing address to confirm that you are, in fact, a constituent from that district. You can use the text from the sample letter. Your email message should have the following format:

Dear (Title) (Last Name),

[Body of your e-mail]

Sincerely,

Your name

Address, City, State, Zip Code

Phone

E-mail

## SAMPLE FAX OR LETTER

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Date

The Honorable (First and Last name)  
United State Senate or House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)

Dear Senator/Representative (Last name):

I am writing to you out of deep concern for the for the employment discrimination faced by transgender people. Because we are not protected by federal legislation and because of widespread discrimination against our community, we face widespread levels of under- and unemployment due to prejudice in hiring and retaining transgender workers. I believe that all Americans should be evaluated for the work that they do, not for who they are.

I urge you to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), a vital piece of legislation to address the discrimination that we face.

If you have any questions about this subject, please feel free to contact me at any time. I would be glad to talk with you about it.

Sincerely,

Your Name  
Organization (if applicable)  
Address  
City, State and Zip

# CALLING YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Calling your Congressperson can be an effective way of letting her or him know that constituents are concerned about a particular issue. You may speak with a person or get voice mail. When you call:

- State who you are, including your name, that you are a constituent of that person's district or state, and any other appropriate information (for example, if you are a physician calling about a medical issue or the leader of a transgender organization)
- Name the issue you are calling about (including the bill number or name of the legislation, if applicable), your position on it (are you for or against the proposed legislation), and a sentence or two only about why you have taken that position.
- State clearly what you wish your representative to do (for example, vote for or against a piece of legislation)
- Close by repeating your name and, if they ask for it, giving your address and phone number in case the office wishes to follow up with you
- Remember to be polite, clear and brief. It may help to write out what you plan to say ahead of time

Phone numbers can be found at <http://www.house.gov> and <http://www.senate.gov>.

## SAMPLE PHONE MESSAGE:

Good afternoon, my name is Pat Nyugen and I'm a member of the City Transgender Alliance. I am calling to urge Senator Davis to be a co-sponsor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and ensure that there are job protections for transgender people. In our country, everyone should have the right to work without being fired for who they are. Even if she is not a sponsor of the bill, I hope that she will vote for it. Again, this is Pat Nyugen. My address is 123 Main Street, Springfield, MO, 45678 and my telephone number is 987-654-3210. Thank you for your time.

# FOLLOWING UP

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## **After a Meeting with Your Congressperson**

Follow up as soon as possible with a thank you note and with any promised additional information after you've met with your member of Congress.

It is vital that you complete a visit report form so that we have the information you've gathered about your members of Congress' position on this issue.

## **After Action Has Been Taken on a Bill**

If your Congressperson co-sponsors or votes for ENDA, send them a letter or make a phone call thanking them. This demonstrates constituent support for their positions and shows that you are paying attention. This is especially important if it represents a change in their position from previous years.

## **Attend In District Gatherings**

Go to events hosted by your member of Congress, such as Town Hall Meetings or social events. Check with the district office for more information.

## **Invite Your Congressperson to a Community Gathering**

If your community is holding a public event, such as a transgender pride event or candlelight vigil, consider inviting your elected officials. A number of members of Congress have attended Day of Remembrance events. If you are conducting a meeting to discuss a particular piece of legislation, ask your legislator or one of their staff members to come and talk about their position on it.

## **Develop the Relationship with Your Congressperson**

The best and most enduring way to educate Congress is to interact frequently with the member of Congress, his or her staff, and possibly by getting involved in her or his campaign or political party.

## **Stay in Touch with Your Congressperson**

Make a follow up appointment to visit again and continue to call and write about issues that are important to you. Changes often are not made in a single contact but through developing a positive relationship over time. Maintaining contact is very important to this process.



*NCTE member Babs Caspar Siperstein with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congressman Rush Holt*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **What if I can only get an appointment with a staff person?**

If your member of Congress is not available to meet with you, you may be asked to meet with a staff person instead. This is not a negative thing. Legislators rely a great deal on their staff and receive detailed reports on every visit held with constituents. So, while meeting with the actual member of Congress is ideal, meeting with staff people is also extremely helpful. If you found the staff to be helpful, write to your Congressperson to let her know that you appreciated the staff's courtesy.

## **What if I didn't vote for the legislator I want to visit?**

That isn't a problem. Your Congresspeople work for you whether you voted for them or not. Besides, they won't know who you voted for and they will be hoping that even if you haven't voted for them in the past, you will begin to do so once they have met with you. They are often seeking your support, just as you are looking for theirs.

## **What if I don't vote at all?**

First of all, if possible, start voting. Everyone who is eligible to vote should vote regardless of who you want to vote for. Second, there will no doubt be members of your team who are voters. The Congressional office prefers to spend time with voters, but you will still be graciously welcome. In general, it is wise not to tell the member of Congress or staff person that you don't vote.

For those who would like to vote but have faced problems or fear facing problems, NCTE has created a document on overcoming voting obstacles for transgender people, which can be found on our website at <http://www.nctequality.org/resources/votingrights.pdf>. It is free to download or you can call us at 202-639-6332 and we will mail you a copy.

## **If my legislator has a negative voting record on transgender issues, is it worth going?**

It is NCTE's position that all transgender people—in fact all people—should visit with and educate their legislators. Keep in mind that part of the reason they may seem to be hostile to transgender rights is that they have not been educated and may not even believe that they represent any of us in Congress.

## **If my legislator has a very good voting record on transgender issues, is it worth going?**

All transgender people should meet with and educate their members of Congress. Someone who has a voting record that supports us may become even more of an advocate as you educate them and develop an increasingly deep relationship with them. You can also help ensure that supportive members of Congress continue to vote for legislation that furthers civil rights for transgender people.

## **Will they be respectful of me when I visit?**

Members of Congress and their staff members meet with the public every day and are polite and friendly; this is a large part of their work. We have not yet had a single report of a member of Congress being rude to a transgender constituent (which is not to say this has never happened). If they agree to meet with you, expect that they will act in a gracious and friendly manner. They want your visit to be a positive experience.

## **In which gender should I present?**

You should always feel comfortable presenting according to your preferred gender expression when meeting with a member of Congress. You should dress professionally when visiting Congress, but in whatever gender presentation is comfortable for you. We are often asked by people who have not yet transitioned, whether they must go as their desired gender to make a point to the Congressperson. That is not necessary. Nor is it important whether or not you "pass." Just be comfortable being you.

**What should I wear?**

Congress is a formal institution, so plan to dress accordingly for your meeting. The clothes that would be suitable for a job interview are appropriate for a congressional visit. Your choice of clothing should show respect for the legislator, by being professional and appropriate, and respect for yourself, by expressing your gender in a way that feels right to you.

If your gender presentation is feminine, consider a women's suit, skirt and blouse, dressy sweater or dress slacks. Those with a masculine gender presentation should consider a suit, dress shirt and tie. Borrowing clothes from a friend is fine.

**Can I take a photo with the Congressperson?**

Absolutely; this is a common request. The Congressperson may also ask to have his or her picture taken with you. If they take your picture—and they only will if you approve it—the congressional office can send you a copy of the picture. When considering whether to allow for a photo to be taken, remember that everyone on your team may be not comfortable with being photographed, so please be responsible and ask each person. Please consider sending a copy of the photo to NCTE.

**What if they keep putting me off and just won't give me an appointment?**

This happens sometimes. Usually, though, they are not being dismissive—only busy. You should be persistent, patient and consistently nice. If you still are not getting an appointment, contact NCTE and we may be able to help you with this.

**Can't I just stop by and visit a Congressperson's office without an appointment?**

Sure, but it is very unlikely that you will get to meet with the legislator or even the correct staff person. A Congressional office is just like any business in the sense that they always are nice to their customers (constituents). But it is also like any other business in that time is limited and heavily scheduled and they may simply not be able to fit you in. The only time we encourage drop-bys is when an appointment could not be set up in advance of a trip to DC (where lots of visiting constituents just drop in, though they usually do not get to see the legislator) or in the district when the office has been repeatedly unresponsive to requests for a meeting.

**YOU can make a difference!**

## CONGRESSIONAL VISIT REPORT FORM

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Please complete this visit report form for each congressional visit you complete. Return the forms to NCTE as soon as possible after your visit. This allows us to keep track of which members of Congress have received education and which have not, as well as what members have told you, their constituents. Thank you.

### Basic Information

Name of Representative/Senator: \_\_\_\_\_ State/District \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_ What time did visit start? \_\_\_\_\_ When time did visit end? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the meeting take place? \_\_\_\_\_

### Information on Legislator/Staff:

Did you meet with the member of Congress or staff?  Member  Staff  Both

What staff members were present?

Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### Information on Your Team:

Name/E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Name/E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Name/E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Was the Senator/Representative supportive of including gender identity or expression in federal legislation?

Did the Senator/Representative express any reservations about adding gender identity and expression to supporting a transgender inclusive federal legislation? If so, what were they?

What questions did the Congressperson ask?

### Looking Ahead:

What would you suggest as next steps with this member of Congress?

Any additional comments (please use an additional sheet if necessary):



National Center for  
**TRANSGENDER  
EQUALITY**

## THE EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT (ENDA)

June 2009

*Numerous studies have shown that transgender people face disproportionate amounts of discrimination in all areas of life, especially in employment and health care. As the American economy worsens, the discrimination faced by transgender people is becoming even more acute. Often forced into already unstable jobs and careers, and often facing compounding bias because of race or age, the economic well-being of transgender people is being challenged today like never before. The federal government has a responsibility to protect people from discrimination. Congress and the Administration can improve transgender lives in a significant way by passing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.*

### **WHY IS THIS BILL NECESSARY?**

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Despite advances in protecting transgender people on the state and local level, as well as in the private sector, it remains perfectly legal in 37 states to fire someone solely based on his or her gender identity. Recent national surveys have found that 65% of people believe it should be illegal to discriminate against transgender people in employment. Most of America's smartest business minds understand that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity has nothing to do with their job performance. That is why 200 Fortune 500 companies include gender identity in their nondiscrimination policies.

### **WHAT DOES THIS LEGISLATION DO AND WHAT IS ITS IMPACT?**

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The Employment Non-Discrimination Act would address discrimination in the workplace by making it illegal to fire, refuse to hire, or refuse to promote an employee simply based on his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. It would reinforce the principle that employment decisions should be based upon a person's qualifications and job performance.

### **WHAT DOES THIS BILL RESOLVE?**

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Federal law has been outpaced by the actions of state and local leaders. Thirty-seven percent of the country, including thirteen states, the District of Columbia and more than 90 cities and counties, have passed protections for the transgender community. But these laws vary from place to place. A federal ENDA would ensure consistency and make a strong statement that discrimination is not acceptable in the United States.

### **WHY ENDA MUST CONTAIN EXPLICIT PROTECTIONS FOR GENDER IDENTITY**

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Including explicit protections against discrimination based on gender identity not only helps transgender people; it also strengthens ENDA for everyone else by ensuring that an employer cannot fire or refuse to hire a man for being too effeminate or a woman for being "too butch."

*continued on reverse*

## **WOULD ALL TRANSGENDER PEOPLE BE COVERED IN THIS BILL?**

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Lawyers experienced with writing and enforcing laws that protect transgender people have worked to ensure that the language in this bill includes people of all gender expressions and identities. Discrimination against people across the gender spectrum would be addressed by this bill.

## **IS THE FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS STILL PROTECTED UNDER THIS BILL?**

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Absolutely. There is explicit language in the bill which will allow religious organizations to discriminate if they wish to. We believe that religious organizations must make their own decisions, based on their beliefs and their conscience, and we encourage them to voluntarily adopt similar non-discrimination measures. However, this bill would in no way mandate that they do so.