

## U.S. House Passes LGBTQ Civil Rights Bill

**By Barry Y. Freeman**

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill last week known as the Equality Act, which would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes.

Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court held Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects LGBTQ individuals against employment discrimination. The Equality Act would not change that or give LGBTQ employees additional rights.

However, the 1964 Civil Rights Act is not limited to employment; that is only “Title VII” of the Act. The Equality Act bill would add LGBTQ protections to other titles of the Act – including equality in housing, education, public accommodations (hotels, restaurants and other retail establishments), access to credit and jury service. In addition, it would also create uniformity across the country, which is currently subject to a patchwork of different LGBTQ laws and standards.

The bill appears to face an uphill battle in the Senate, specifically around carve-outs for religious freedom and whether transgender women would have an unfair advantage in athletic competitions. Unlike budget matters, the bill will require 60 votes in the Senate for approval in the event of a filibuster.

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