

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Education and Labor**

**Testimony of Vandy Beth Glenn
at Hearing on H.R. 3017, Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2009**

September 23, 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here and testify today.

In the fall of 2005, I landed my dream job. After serving in the US Navy for four years, achieving the rank of lieutenant, I held several jobs that didn't appeal to me very much. Then a friend of mine told me that the Georgia General Assembly had an opening for an editor in the Office of Legislative Counsel, editing bills and resolutions during the annual legislative session.

The job was a perfect fit for me: I have a journalism degree from the University of Georgia and a background in writing and editing, and the new position allowed me to do what I love -- working with words. Also, I've lived in Georgia for most of my life, and I jumped at the chance to work under the "Gold Dome," playing a part in the legislative mechanism of my home state. I loved the intensity of working 12 or 14-hour days with the other editors during the session, preparing bills for passage.

When the General Assembly hired me, I was still living as a man. Since I was a kid growing up in Atlanta, I had known two things for sure: one was that I had an overwhelming awareness that I was a girl, and the other was that I had to keep that a secret. And so I kept my true gender identity to myself, confiding only in a handful of people over the course of decades, and doing my best to build a life as a man.

But I couldn't ignore the truth forever, and my awareness that I am a woman never wavered. As I got older, I finally began to imagine a life where I could at last be myself. I was lucky: when I told my friends and family that I'm transgender, every single one of them accepted me, and I found a supportive community in Atlanta. I even told my direct supervisor at the General Assembly that I was beginning the process of gender transition, and she too was supportive and sympathetic.

In the fall of 2007, after I had worked in the Office of Legislative Counsel for two years, my name change was nearly finalized and I was ready to come to work as Vandy Beth Glenn. I told my supervisor that the time had arrived. She, in turn, told her boss -- Sewell Brumby, legislative counsel and the head of my office. On the morning of October 16, 2007, Mr. Brumby summoned me to his office. He asked me if what he had heard was true -- did I really intend to come to work as a woman? I told him yes, it was true. Then Mr. Brumby told me that people would think I was immoral. He told me I'd make other people uncomfortable, just by being myself. He told me that my transition was unacceptable. And, over and over, he told me it was inappropriate. Then he fired me. I was escorted back to my desk, told to clean it out, and marched out of the building.

My editorial skills had not changed. My work ethic had not changed -- I was still ready and willing to burn the midnight oil with my colleagues, making sure that every bill was letter-perfect. My commitment to the General Assembly, to its leaders, and to Mr. Brumby had not faltered. The only thing that changed was my gender -- and because of that, the legislature I'd worked so hard for no longer had any use for my skills. I was devastated.

After I was fired, I enlisted the assistance of Lambda Legal and, in July 2008, they filed suit in Federal Court on my behalf. I'm not seeking any money in my lawsuit. I'm asking for just one thing: to be given my job back. I love that job. I can do it well. And I never want another transgender person to experience the discrimination I've endured.

In its legal papers, Georgia's attorneys claim that other people's potential prejudices against me were a good enough reason to fire me. But several of my coworkers already knew that I'm transgender, and they accepted me. And when the state's attorneys asked the judge to dismiss my case, he refused, writing that "the anticipated reactions of others are not a sufficient basis for discrimination."

I'm hopeful that the case will ultimately resolve in my favor. But because some judges wrongly exclude transgender employees from existing nondiscrimination laws, people like me have to fight each case from scratch in most parts of the country, working to persuade each court to rule in our favor. No one should ever get fired for the reason I was fired, and no one should have to wonder if the law protects them. Transgender workers like me need a federal law that clearly and unmistakably bans gender identity discrimination.

I was proud to serve my home state of Georgia with a red pen in my hand. I hope that soon I'll be back at my old desk, making sure the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed on every bill. But no piece of legislation I ever worked on means as much to me as the one before you today. We need the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.