

GETTING THE JOB DONE

Here are a few facts about employment discrimination that cannot be stated enough: To this day, only 18 states have protections against sexual orientation discrimination on the job, while only seven protect people from discrimination based on gender identity. Although there is a federal law (the Americans with Disabilities Act) that protects people with HIV from discrimination, it is often ignored or misinterpreted by employers and courts alike.

At its most basic level, this means that many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV-affected people have little recourse when they are fired or their employment benefits are attacked. It also means that people have come to rely more on businesses to provide these protections and benefits. For this issue of the *Update*, I had the opportunity to exchange views with Ron Glover, Vice President of Global Workforce Diversity at IBM (see pages 10-11). A frontrunner in corporate diversity, IBM was one of the first companies to add sexual orientation, and later gender identity, to its nondiscrimination policy. Today you'd be hard-pressed to find a major U.S. corporation that *doesn't* include at least sexual orientation in its policy.

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These policies are becoming increasingly important to our communities. Last spring, Lambda Legal released the results of our workplace-fairness survey, in which more than half of those who responded indicated that policies promoting workplace equality were a “critical factor” in deciding where to work. This — along with consistent polling that reports more than 80 percent of Americans believe LGBT people should have equal access to job opportunities and be treated fairly in the workplace — highlights just how much progress we have made nationwide on the workplace-fairness front.

But we've still got a long way to go. Lambda Legal's Help Desks every year receive more calls about workplace issues than anything else, confirming the need for education and advocacy in this important area. To that end, we've devoted this fall *Update* to workplace issues. And we're hard at work with various partner organizations on plans to make these issues more visible and to promote action across the country in the year to come. So stay tuned.



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Photo by Lisa Ross