**S**ince the 1970s, the [Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA)](http://afanet.org/), the largest Flight Attendant union in the world representing over 60,000 members at 19 airlines, has taken a lead on important issues for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. As early as 1976, at a time when the gay rights movement was still in its infancy; AFA changed its by-laws to include as our objective to unite all flight cabin crew members in the airline industry who are eligible for membership, *regardless of sexual orientation.* Even when LGBT issues were not exactly popular, AFA took a stand to protect these workers in the workplace.

**HIV/AIDS**

When the AIDS epidemic was emerging, AFA took swift action to ensure that flight attendants were protected from discrimination in the workplace and fought to ensure that flight attendants with HIV/AIDS retained their health care benefits.

**EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT (ENDA)**

Since the 1990s, AFA has been writing to and meeting with members of Congress, advocating for passage of the ENDA. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act would ban employers from firing, refusing to hire or discriminating against workers or job applicants based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. ENDA is simple justice. [Read more....](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Employment_Non-Discrimination_Act)

**DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP AND TAXATION**

AFA has been in the forefront of negotiating domestic partner benefits (DPBs) for our members, as a matter of fairness. AFA launched a campaign to require partner benefits in 1997 after the city of San Francisco passed a law requiring companies that do business with the city to provide domestic benefits for their employees.

There are no laws prohibiting private sector employers from offering DPBs benefits, but federal and state laws do affect certain other benefits and the taxation of health and retirement benefits. These tax consequences are simply too high and amount to marital status discrimination. Therefore, AFA has been working with members of Congress throughout the 1990s, and most recently supported efforts put forward by Tammy Baldwin during the health care debate, to end this discrepancy and to ensure that partner benefits are taxed the same as spousal benefits.

**HATE CRIMES**

AFA was actively engaged in efforts to end hate crimes. Shocked by the graphic killing of James Byrd, Matthew Sheppard and CWA member Canny Overstreet and un-willing to wait in silence, AFA worked with CWA to ensure that the Hate Crimes Prevention Act would become a reality. In 2001, the first time this legislation was introduced, the bill died when it failed to advance in the committee. Finally, on July 23, 2009, the bill passed. The bill was signed into law on the afternoon of October 28, 2009, by President Barack Obama. This law expands the 1969 United States federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim’s actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. [Read more ...](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Employment_Non-Discrimination_Act)

**STUDENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT (SNDA)**

Recently, AFA joined other organizations to protect students by ensuring that *ALL*students have access to an education free of discrimination. The Student Non-Discrimination Act is proposed US federal legislation that aims to protect LGBT students against bullying and discrimination in school. The legislation was first introduced in the 111th Congress on March 10, 2011 but was not enacted. [Read more ...](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_Non-Discrimination_Act)

**PRIDE AT WORK**

AFA is a long-time supporter of [Pride at Work](http://prideatwork.org/)(Pride @Work). Pride at Work is a nonprofit organization and an officialy recognized constituency group of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations). The mission of Pride @Work is to seek full equality for LGBT people in the workplace and in the union. It’s goal is to create a labor movement that cherishes diversity, encourages openness, and ensures safety and dignity. Additionally Pride @Work seeks to educate the LGBT community about the benefits of a union contract for LGBT working people and build support and solidarity for the union movement in the LGBT community.

In the spirit of the union movement's historic motto, "An Injury to One is An Injury to All," we oppose all forms of discrimination on the job and in our unions based on sex, gender identity and expression sexual orientation, race,  national or ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or political views. The correlation is clear: in the absence of marriage rights, a union is the way to ensure LGBT members receive partner benefits. In addition to providing financial support, AFA members hold positions on the Pride @ Work executive board.

* + Shane Larson, Co-President
	+ Stephen Schembs, AFA-CWA Representative.

Through that relationship, AFA educates the labor movement on the need for anti-workplace discrimination for *all* workers.

**EQUALITY FOR EVERYONE**

AFA has a long history of fighting to defeat discrimination, whenever and wherever it exists. In 1995, when the Boy Scouts implemented a policy prohibiting former LGBT scouts from serving as troop leaders and mentors. AFA, along with the other members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, was prepared to pass a resolution condemning the Boy Scouts of America ([Boy Scouts of America Membership Controversies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boy_Scouts_of_America_membership_controversies)). Unfortunately, after vigorous debate, the resolution failed because of the strong opposition of one international union.

Discrimination of any kind undermines the strength of our nation.  We must work together to protect the rights that should belong to every American.  AFA urges all organizations that have been on the sidelines, to join us in taking a stand for fairness and equal opportunity for all American workers, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

AFA is proud to have worked with other organizations and Congress to end discriminatory practices and to promote an all-encompassing policy of nondiscrimination for all.