



Since the 1970s, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA), the largest Flight Attendant union in the world representing over 50,000 members at 21 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 weren't 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, which would ensure that gay and lesbian Americans could go to work and not have to worry about being hired or fired simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Passage of ENDA would be an important step in recognizing that employment decisions should be made on the basis of an individual's ability to perform a job. People who work hard and perform well should not be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. ENDA is simple justice.

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.

DOMESTIC PARTNER IMMIGRATION



AFA is proud to work closely with groups like [Immigration Equality](#) in their efforts to advocate for passage of the Uniting American Families Act (UAFAs). Currently nineteen nations recognize same-sex couples and allow their citizens to sponsor their same-sex partners for immigration rights. In the United States, the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as between a man and a woman, prevents same-sex couples who have been legally married in U.S. states or foreign countries from sponsoring their partner for immigration.

DON'T ASK DON'T TELL

In support of AFA members who either serve or who are in committed relationships with U.S. Military personnel AFA worked with the [Service Members Legal Defense Network](#) to repeal the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. AFA supports a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the U. S. Armed Forces. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" denies qualified Americans with critical skills the freedom to serve. By allowing openly gay women and men to serve in the armed forces we will reinforce our military strength and readiness. Our government has invested billions of dollars and countless hours of training on our troops, often in highly classified and technical specialties, and it is imperative that we retain their service.

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 didn't make it out of committee. It was eight years and four Congresses later that the Hate Crimes Prevention Act finally became law. This law expanded protections of the 1969 hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

STUDENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT (SNDA)

Recently AFA joined with other organizations to protect students by ensuring that *ALL* students have access to an education free of discrimination, harassment and bullying, by supporting the Student Non-Discrimination Act. This important legislation would establish a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination, including harassment, in K-12 public schools based on a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, providing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students with long-overdue and much needed federal protections.

PRIDE AT WORK



AFA is a long-time supporter of [Pride at Work](#) (Pride @Work), the AFL-CIO diversity organization. The mission of Pride @Work is to seek full equality for LGBT people in the workplace and in the union. Pride @Work'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 to 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; Stan Kiino - Co-President, Shane Larson AFA-CWA Representative and Stephen Schembs - Baltimore/Washington Chapter Committee Chair. Through that relationship, AFA can educate 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, including organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America. 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. 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 when we treat any segment of our population unfairly. We must work together to protect the rights that should belong to every American. AFA urges all organizations that have been on the sidelines in the past, 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.