



David E. Clarenbach

S P E A K E R P R O T E M O F T H E A S S E M B L Y

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MADISON-- The Wisconsin Assembly today defeated an attempt to weaken the state's anti-discrimination protections for lesbians and gay men. On a vote of 55-44, the Assembly killed an exemption for religious groups from provisions of the law that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in contracts with government agencies.

"I am heartened that once again the Wisconsin legislature has gone on record in support of gay rights," said State Representative David Clarenbach (D-Madison). "There is no justification for denying any person the right to make a living, a place to live or the use of a public place or service because of his or her sexual preference."

Clarenbach is Speaker Pro Tem of the Assembly and authored Wisconsin's first-in-the-nation gay rights law that will observe its fourth anniversary on March 2nd.

(MORE)

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SPEAKER PRO TEM OF THE ASSEMBLY

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"This is not the first-- nor will it be the last-- attempt to undermine our gay rights law. As long as prejudice and bigotry exist, we will have to be vigilant in our efforts to guarantee all citizens basic human rights," stated Clarenbach.

The attempt to amend Wisconsin's gay rights law was introduced by Representative Wayne Wood (D-Janesville) at the request of Rawhide Boys Ranch, a private home and treatment center for delinquent boys with a religious affiliation. State and local governments are currently prohibited from contracting with Rawhide Ranch since it refuses to comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of state law.

Rawhide Ranch's proposed exemption was presented as an amendment to a bill under consideration, Assembly Bill 729, relating to social service contracts, and would also have extended to other similar religious organizations.

"Both our federal and state constitutions grant individuals the right to practice religion as they choose, but this is not a license to discriminate against those who don't share their beliefs," concluded Clarenbach.

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