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TSONGAS BILL PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A bill to prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was introduced today by Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts. Co-sponsors are Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York and Lowell P. Weicker of Connecticut. The legislation, which amends Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include the term "sexual orientation", will provide legal recourse for those persons who are dismissed from or denied jobs because they are homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual.

"The Civil Rights Act already bans job discrimination based on gender, race, religion, creed or national origin," Tsongas stated. "As a matter of consistency and simple justice, we should not allow discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation."

Tsongas continued "My bill simply provides a legal recourse for persons fired or denied jobs because of this aspect of their private lives. It is consistent with strong public disapproval of government intrusion in the private lives of Americans."

Tsongas submitted for the Record a number of letters from major corporations to the National Gay Task Force declaring their non-discriminatory policies in the area of sexual orientation. Corning, Bank of America, AT&T, CBS, IBM, Dupont, Exxon, Levi Strauss, General Foods, General Election, Mobil and several others were cited. Tsongas also named other organizations such as the American Psychiatric Association, The National Council of Churches and the National Federation of Preists' Councils, who have taken positions in support of the inclusion of the term "sexual orientation" in existing civil rights laws.

"The issue is simple" Tsongas stated. "Every American must have an equal right to a job based on his or her ability. Sexual orientation is essentially a private matter that should have nothing to do with job performance. Despite, the issue's sensitivity, it is fundamentally a matter of equal rights under the law."

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