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Va. House subcommittee kills four pro-LGBT bills

A Virginia House of Delegates subcommittee on Thursday killed four pro-LGBT bills.

Members of a House General Laws Committee subcommittee killed state Del. Mark Levine (D-Alexandria)'s House Bill 401, which would have banned discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, public accommodation, housing, banking, insurance, public contracting and apprenticeships.

Lawmakers killed state Del. Marcus Simon (D-Falls Church)'s House Bill 1547 and state Sen. Jennifer Wexton (D-Loudoun County)'s Senate Bill 423, which would have added sexual orientation and gender identity to Virginia's Fair Housing Law. The subcommittee also killed state Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-Alexandria)'s Senate Bill 202, which would have banned discrimination against LGBT public employees.

The Virginia Senate last month [approved SB 202 and SB 423](#).

The committee on Thursday was also expected to vote on state Del. Elizabeth Guzman (D-Prince William County)'s House Bill 971, which would have added gender identity to Virginia's Fair Housing Law. The Prince William County Democrat asked the committee to remove the measure from the docket.

Advocates sharply criticized House Speaker Kirk Cox (R-Colonial Heights) for assigning the bills to the subcommittee on Wednesday "with little public notice."

"I'm gravely disappointed in today's vote," said Equality Virginia Executive Director James Parrish in a press release that his organization released with the Human Rights Campaign and Freedom for All Americans. "Four pro-LGBT bills were killed on a party-line vote, revealing just how disconnected House leadership is from their constituents."

"We hoped this year would be a turning point, but once again, Speaker Cox is playing politics with LGBT people's basic civil rights," he added. "These common-sense bills would have been important steps towards a more equal Virginia, including protecting LGBT people from discrimination in public employment and housing. It is truly disgraceful for sitting members of the Virginia House to vote down such fair-minded legislation at the will of the speaker."

The vote took place three days after Equality Virginia [held its annual Lobby Day](#) in Richmond.

Gov. Ralph Northam, who spoke at the annual event, last month signed an executive order

that bans discrimination against LGBT state employees. Equality Virginia, HRC and Freedom for All Americans on Thursday noted this directive in their press release.

“Today’s action by Speaker Cox and other House Republican leadership is truly disgraceful and leaves thousands of LGBTQ Virginians at risk of discrimination,” said HRC National Field Director Marty Rouse. “The vast majority of fair-minded Virginians support these long overdue protections that were passed with strong bipartisan support in the Republican-controlled Senate.”

“House Republican leaders are completely out of step with what voters made clear at the ballot box in November,” he added. “Virginians want their representatives to send a message that the commonwealth is open and welcome to all. It is far past time House lawmakers stop playing politics with the lives of LGBTQ people and their families.”

A House subcommittee on Tuesday [tabled](#) state Del. Debra Rodman (D-Henrico County)’s House Bill 1466 that would have banned health insurance providers from discriminating against transgender policyholders in Virginia. State Del. Danica Roem (D-Prince William County), who is the first openly trans person seated in a state legislature in the U.S., was the measure’s chief co-sponsor.

<http://www.washingtonblade.com/2018/02/08/va-house-subcommittee-kills-four-pro-lgbt-bills/>