

LETTERS

ENDA without the 'T' is toothless for all

To the Editor:

Chris Crain has it backwards. ("T' time at the Human Rights Campaign," editorial, March 29). Transgendered people will not be protected by an Employment Nondiscrimination Act without language protecting gender variance—nor will any gay man or lesbian whose dress, speech, or mannerisms vary from the ideal heterosexual norm.

We all know discrimination is based more on the way we look and act than on whom we sleep with—we're being attacked on the streets and discriminated against at our jobs, after all, and not in our bedrooms.

At best, ENDA, in its present form, would protect only those gay men and lesbians who are straight-looking and straight-acting—and how many of us are? With the toothless ENDA that Crain envisions, employers would do an end-around by claiming dismissals were based upon variation from gender norms rather than sexual orientation—and it would stick.

Crain is dreaming if he thinks transgenders have other legal protections. We are specifically excluded from the Americans with Disabilities Act, and state courts have ruled that while sex is a protected category until Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, change of sex is not.

In an ideal world, transition-related medical expenses of transsexuals would be covered by insurance. Unfortunately, this is the exception rather than the rule. We must dig deep into our own pockets to pay for expensive electrolysis, hormones, and surgery, procedures too many of us can never afford because of discrimination which prevents us from getting and keeping jobs.

Is it any wonder some of us cling to the faint promise of an official DSM diagnosis

for Gender Identity Disorder as a psychological disorder?

Most transgenders, myself included, consider ourselves sane and healthy. Like gay and lesbian Americans, we want to work.

And we're smart enough to know Crain's "we'll come back and get you" promise is bullshit. Nor do we buy Crain's claim that trans inclusion will cost votes in Congress.

ENDA must include the extra sentence that will truly protect not only us, but gay men and lesbians, and we're not gonna shut up until it happens.

Dallas Denny
Atlanta

Editor's note: The letter writer is the former executive director of the American Educational Gender Information Service, a transgender rights and education group.

Printing Alvear column was hurtful, insensitive

To the Editor:

Since the publication of Michael Alvear's column on lesbians' embrace of the ugly ("The curious lesbian embrace of all things unattractive," op-ed, March 15), there have been cries of outrage from women in New Orleans. Some have gone so far as to call for an advertisers' boycott of *Southern Voice*.

Our local editor for *Southern Voice*, Mike Fleming, responded that, "We clearly state that opinions expressed are not those of the staff."

That reminds me more than a little of the signs that were still around New Orleans until I was in my teens: "We reserve the right to refuse to serve anyone."

Both are cop-outs. One let racist business owners defy integration laws, the other, in the present case, lets a newspaper disavow responsibility for disseminating the misogynist tirade of a freelancer.