

SPEAKER 1: The employment's concern, they're not going to get any callbacks. And in fact, that's one of the issues that one of the girls, Naomi, had mentioned. She had put in 28 applications at various convenience stores, fast food restaurants, just about any place that she could find all around her neighborhood and had no calls back, whatsoever. And obviously, a lot of it, I'm sure, was the fact that they could notice she had-- even though she was probably going dressed as male-- she had visible breasts development and looked obviously female and on top of this, had identification that identified her as male, but yet, she does not present as male. I don't even think she could if she tried.

It's a different situation than, for instance, someone coming over who conforms to gender. Now you've actually added a circumstance there where it makes it almost impossible to secure any kind of employment, whatsoever, without getting the name and gender change. And to do that, you obviously need money. You need to go through the court system. And usually, to do that, you usually have to apply for the immigration status beforehand or at least get the paperwork begun and started in that direction.

Is there any way of, I guess, approaching-- and I don't even know who we would approach, the Immigration Naturalization Service or would this be better done to the legislature? How would we, I guess, impress upon them the special circumstances in a situation like this?

SPEAKER 2: I think INS is-- to give them some credit, they have actually-- they consider these factors and have to a great extent in terms of their abilities to deal with Hernandez Montiel and realizing its precedential nature. One nice thing about an asylum claim is that, if one is granted asylum, they are then given a green card. They're then allowed to work. They are given all sorts of wonderful options for purposes of being able to change their name to what's needed.

INS, basically, is going to do a lot for the individual whose asylum claim has been OK'd, because as a green card holder, they have so many more options available to them also. They have one of the-- most important options is they don't have to fear any-- well, I mean, you always do, but there's not the same fear factor as would have been the case before, where they can actually go into courts. Now, Texas is a tough state still. Other states have been much-- we all know how many more states have been done so much more.

Rhode Island for example, is a great state at this point for purposes of dealing with the law, the issues of name change and everything else. But being able to get INS to consider factors involving, INS is very cold-hearted a lot of times. Asylum is one of those branches where you really do sometimes find a very cold face staring at you across the table doing the interview. And other times, you find people who really truly are willing to listen.

Like I said, I think that on an asylum case involving a transgendered individual, they have tremendous opportunities at this point. I go into those very, very confident. But if they have-- if they've done anything like a theft, prostitution, cases that would fall into that category, cases involving-- crimes involving moral turpitude, their options may be the convention against torture. And that may be it. And that doesn't allow them that work benefit, minus, will look and say that there are a lot of people who have had-- they come for the reasons they do who've had a lot of difficulties.

But I do think that it's a topic that comes into that education factor in getting INS officials here and all across the country better understanding the issues involving-- cases involving transgendered individuals.

SPEAKER 1: Now, do we find it maybe a little bit more difficult to seek asylum in, say, for instance, some of the border states bordering Mexico or I guess even Canada than, say, like in Kansas or someplace in the middle of the country?

SPEAKER 2: That's interesting. The Houston office, for example, Houston's office controls states all the way out to Wyoming, all the way out to Tennessee.

SPEAKER 1: So it's still the same officials that, I guess, deal even with it if it pops up in Wyoming then?

SPEAKER 2: Yeah. Well, they actually do interviews in other cities, too. In Texas, as far as I know, the only other cities where they do interviews are Harlingen and El Paso. And it is one of-- I don't know if there are statistics available. It'd be a real interesting statistic to try to come up with. But to see how they've all dealt with issues, I've done some interviews across the state and it's hard. I really haven't seen too much in terms of-- you kind of always have that concern that you're going to get somebody who's just has a deep seated transphobia or homophobia. But at the same time--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Always know you have options. Yeah, exactly. You have those options of appeal which is real important. And something that I've probably said several times already, but I'll say it again. You've got that case that's precedent, that is so helpful to us. And when we take that case and another case called Matter of Acosta which defines very strictly what it means to be part of a quote unquote, "social group," which you have to do to get an asylum case done, you've got a very powerful twosome there.

And so even when you go in, you have somebody who kind of looks at you like, I really don't want to OK this. Quite often, they do just because they're going to get in trouble if they don't. they've Got to take that decision back and justify why it went and tied up a judge's docket also if they end up making the wrong decision which they would be doing if they were to deny one.

SPEAKER 1: How was--

SPEAKER 3: Hold on we have one thing we have to do here. It is the top of the hour. So we have to say, this *After Hours*, queer radio with attitude. You're listening to us on KPFT here in Houston, KEOS and College Station. And if you were getting us on the web, you're at kpft.org This is the transgendered segment. And we've got in the studio here, Vanessa.

SPEAKER 4: Hello.

SPEAKER 3: And we continue on with our discussion.

SPEAKER 4: And in fact, actually, we've even gotten the studio with us now, Jimmie Vaughan. Apparently, I guess, he did not set his clock back an hour.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, the time change was last week?

SPEAKER 4: Yes, it was. Hey.

SPEAKER 2: Well, that explains everything. 1:00 AM, sweetie. Oh, well so much for being on time.

SPEAKER 1: Now, can we play the opener music for the top of the show?

SPEAKER 4: There you go. Top of the morning to you.

SPEAKER 1: Actually, my question earlier was more, I guess, in reference to the treatment that they get from the INS officials, having to deal with them on such a constant basis, I was wondering whether or not they become jaded, or well, maybe bitter is not a correct term but just, I guess, worn down from having to deal with so many issues, and then especially when you toss someone who's transgendered at them And now all of a sudden, you're confronting another issue that they normally wouldn't have to deal with and kind of compounds the problems.

SPEAKER 2: There was a wonderful documentary done called Well-founded Fear. And it involved-- they actually went to the Lyndhurst office in New Jersey and had access to-- just unbelievable access to behind the scenes on asylum matters. For me, it was very eye-opening because I'd never-- I've just been in the little room where you do an interview. What happens back in those little offices in the back where you wonder whether they just throw a case aside, how they make their decisions. It was fascinating.

But they did show the wide variety of officers that you deal with. And you deal with officers who are very, very just as you said. They know or they believe they know every single story that someone's going to throw at them. They know the story that they believe someone could just buy like-- buy a paper off the internet to turn into a class. They know the types of stories that people just kind of claim they've heard work. And when they hear something like that, they just get in the mode of just denial, denial, denial.

This kind of perfunctory listening and not really paying much attention and not considering the individual case--

Exactly.

As a human-being.

But you do find some that do. And as you were saying earlier about Houston officers, there's some wonderful officers. And there are wonderful officers at INS too and who really do understand the importance of their job, because it is really truly a crapshoot. It's just like every time that an individual comes to this country from another country, they're at the women vanity of that individual who looks at their passport when they go through the-- when they come through customs. If that person is in a bad mood, they can pretty much put that person right back onto a plane.

A visa does not get you in the US. It only allows you to come up and show your credentials, basically, for purposes of the decision to see how much time you're going to be allowed to stay here. And so it's the same thing. Whenever I have clients who were in circumstances, perhaps, legal but with issues, issues that could cause them problems, I always tell them that just never know when you come back into the country, who you're going to get.

And the same thing happens in the immigration asylum office. There wouldn't say any who are good or bad or anything else. But for the most part, and I think we're very fortunate to have a very dedicated and committed group of officers here who I do think take the time to really understand the matters and who understand when they're facing a case such as the Hernandez-Montiel case, that is clearly telling them what they have to do if they have a well-prepared packet that shows that the individual truly has a well-founded fear if they were to be returned to the country they're from.

And so, yeah, they do a lot of cases. I think the rate of approvals is something like 26%. It's a very low amount. So we can feel fairly fortunate that when you've got cases in your favor, you just kind of hope maybe they'll start rubberstamping them.

SPEAKER 3: Wow.

SPEAKER 1: Just out of curiosity, since you kind of touched on that a little bit, with the post 9/11 Era, and the obvious worries about terrorism, and folks coming into the country, obviously, immigration has become a lot more difficult. How difficult is it to seek asylum since then as opposed to pre 9/11?

SPEAKER 2: That's really something because we've seen a lot of news just in the last couple of days about how they're looking at student visas far differently than before. People coming in on tourist visas getting 30 days now instead of the six months that was regularly given before. On asylum matters, I can't say I've seen that much of a change. But I think that an Arab-American would face a lot more difficult now-- more difficulties now than they would have before. INS is really, really looking at those cases carefully. Unquestionably, that's the case.

And I can tell, you I've never seen such strange phone calls as I received after the 9/11 incident, cases of people who were disappearing, truly, as Chris was alluding to earlier. They just vanished. Their families couldn't find them. Calls and numbers that have always worked for me before and these numbers that are just precious to attorneys, where you finally get a lead on somebody who's usually can give you info you can't get otherwise, or you don't get the voicemail line, or something, they were all of a sudden hang ups.

Or they'd put me on hold or something and then it would just hang up. Or people who would say, we can't divulge that information, or we don't know that information. Unbelievably, weird stuff that was occurring in those months afterwards. And then still to an extent--

SPEAKER 1: It really did change the climate as far as the immigration was concerned as well, even for non-Arab Americans.

SPEAKER 2: And right now, of course, President Bush has said he's, well, right now Congress is pretty much saying they're going to rip INS apart and put it in the-- form two different organizations, one that'll deal predominantly with enforcement and the other will deal predominantly with Visa approvals, and application, and petition approvals. It won't be the same INS we've known before that some of those people would say could only be good news. But we'll see.

SPEAKER 1: Well, I don't know. Usually, when I hear things like this--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER 2: Well, does John Ashcroft in charge, so.

SPEAKER 1: Oh, well, that inspires confidence. Just out of curiosity with the political situation as it is, do you foresee maybe a clampdown on immigration or on these types of decisions of political asylum being granted?

SPEAKER 2: I think that we will see a continued greater scrutiny given to cases, yeah. In terms of the types of cases that we've been talking about, I really-- I think I have seen circumstances where an individual has declared that he was gay, for example. And INS has believed that they are only doing it because there is another case called The Matter of Toboso-Alfonso which Janet Reno, thankfully, declared in 1994 as precedent that allowed homosexuals to also be considered a social group for purposes of asylum.

So some-- it's gotten around apparently, at least, some INS officials believe that many have believed that, that may be their route to getting asylum. So they think that suddenly everybody in jail is turning gay basically because they want to some way to be able to declare asylum, because otherwise, they're not going anywhere or being deported. So they are giving scrutiny without question to these matters.

SPEAKER 1: But that's almost like saying, well, jail is a panacea. Hey, it's wonderful here. We want to stay in America.

SPEAKER 2: Really.

SPEAKER 1: Well, incarceration is not a nice place.

SPEAKER 2: No.

SPEAKER 1: Just wondering about the PPIA, the Permanent Partners Immigration Act, I know that's one of the big issues that are going to be pushed in this Congress and probably the next legislative session as well. Obviously, this kind of dovetails in with a lot of what we're talking about as well. Have we had a number of instances where someone has tried to bring in transgenders from other countries and at least have them given-- not permanent but temporary status-- as a spouse? And what has happened in those cases, especially with the same sex issues?

SPEAKER 2: They have, and INS has been very understanding the circumstances such as that. They have if it's well documented. Now, INS will-- in those circumstances, in order to actually grant someone and I can't think of any exception to this, it has to be someone who is post-op. And they have to have the letters from the doctor and the letters from-- basically, it has to be very, very well documented. But INS has actually dealt with that issue in a surprisingly effective way. It's been something that they have granted. They've considered it also, as I was saying before, in issues involving fiance visas bringing someone from another country to marry here.

And so that is, at least, something where INS has been far sighted.

SPEAKER 1: I was totally unaware of that. That's very promising, at least, for the male to females. Obviously, for female to males, the technology really hasn't advanced surgically, at least, not to the point where it has with the male to females. And a lot of female to males just opt out of having the surgery.

SPEAKER 2: Sure.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

And that's why that's so--

SPEAKER 1: So there's kind of a built in double standard.

SPEAKER 2: So when you were talking about the education factor and explaining the special circumstances, that's where it's so needed--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER 1: Exactly.

SPEAKER 2: They need to understand at some point that this is something intrinsic. It's something who the person is. It's in the head. It's not something that can be changed. And it's something that INS-- if they've come this far at least on some issues, we can hope that they'll start understanding them even better as well-educated and well versed individuals such as yourself can come down and help us on that.

SPEAKER 1: Definitely how does one go about actually lobbying the INS? It's not, I'm presuming, similar to going to Washington and just [? convince them ?]

SPEAKER 2: It's kind of like Dorothy going in and dealing with Oz that first time, because we really-- it is kind of a difficult nature. I know some of the individuals at the Houston office, for example, but they're very well locked up there in the actual office there.

SPEAKER 1: I guess they're not used to having lobbyists come in and saying, yes, we want to speak with you on our issues today.

SPEAKER 2: Exactly. But it is-- right now, of course, we're dealing with an INS that's very much in flux. James Ziglar, actually, has been here in the Houston area is up dealing with it up in Washington now. And it's-- we have a lot of-- they could go in so many different ways in terms of how this newly created INS will be. Just in the last year, we've seen-- INS, basically, closed down after September 11. They stopped doing cases basically while they started bar-coding files. And we thought when things still sharing information with all the different other US organizations and everything, it was kind of scary what might be taking place there.

And right now, it's moving again. They're doing a lot of things that are helping to speed up what's been a very, very slow process on visa.

SPEAKER 1: But it's still the same old process right?

SPEAKER 2: Exactly. Exactly. And so trying to find who really to deal with, well, Congress, at this point. We have Sheila Jackson Lee in Houston who has-- the only Texas congressperson who has actually signed on to the Permanent Partners Immigration Act and who sits on the immigration-- the subcommittee on immigration issues. And she'd be a tremendous person to talk to about issues involving changes or possible changes in INS.

SPEAKER 1: In fact, actually, she's even on the Congressional Human Rights caucus which also deals with a lot of the same Amnesty International type situations or type initiatives with other countries where in fact, it's kind of odd. It seems like we see more movement from our own Congress on issues in other countries and how transgenders, or GLBT are being treated in other countries as opposed to this country. And I find it curious that the only place that we've actually had notice for the insertion of the word transgender is in regards to, in fact, I believe it was representative Lantos who has a proposal regarding human rights in other countries.

I don't know exactly whether or not this is indicative of any change here in this country. And obviously, we've got a long way to go. But the one, I guess, prime issue is getting people inserted into the workplace. Even if you are an American citizen and transgendered, it's difficult enough. We have enough of our girls that still are not able to find work.

In fact, I, actually, was discussing with Kristen Williams today, an individual that was working at one point for the city of Houston. This was many years ago. She transitioned just recently and applied for the same job. This is, of course, city of Houston, which has a non-discrimination ordinance. There are civil service statutes that are set up there that should, in essence, give her the end on having that job.

In all four times she's applied for the job, the job has been closed afterwards, and they did not hire anyone. They're trying to Stonewall in essence. And so even for American citizens, it's difficult enough just trying to find employment. How difficult is it trying to find employment for anyone for that matter with a temporary immigration status?

SPEAKER 2: If they have an employment authorization document even the one year one, that's a document that any employer in Texas or the country can look at and use for purposes of hiring that individual. No different than-- they can apply for social security card. They can get their driver's license. Well, now, all of a sudden, there's been a lot of talk lately. In fact, I think Gordon Kwan was in Austin recently to argue this very issue. He is one of the most well known immigration attorneys in the city in addition to his counsel working about the issue of how difficult they're looking to make it for foreigners to obtain a driver's license here in the state.

And so the employment authorization document is an extremely important document just because it does allow them to work. But it's good for one year. It can be one who's still waiting approval on a petition or application, can reapply and probably get it if they're waiting for application adjustment, a status, or something. But a lot of employers might see that validity date and say, well, I don't know if I want someone who's just going to be here for a year, maybe.

SPEAKER 1: Well, that's the one thing that I'm kind of concerned about is, that they take a look at the temporary status of this and decide, well, this is something that throws a red flag up to them, that this is someone that's not going to be here for a while, or maybe this is a situation we really don't want to get involved in.

SPEAKER 2: I've done letters for clients and been real clear to the employer that this is a circumstance where, unfortunately, they don't give you a card for-- valid for any longer than this but this is a person who will be here and is on track to obtain their green card. And so that's worked a lot of times.

SPEAKER 1: And especially with-- I was getting ready to say representative Cohen, I'm sorry, with council member Kwan, I guess, I'm kind of pushing him up the ladder there a couple of steps.

SPEAKER 2: Maybe a plus form.

SPEAKER 1: Yeah, exactly. Actually with the council members' have been doing is a very excellent work. And that's one of the more critical issues, and people really don't understand how crucial it is to have the proper identification, especially in the post 9/11 America. We have to have something to prove exactly who it is we are. And if not, then we're automatically suspect, and especially if you're from another country, or I guess have a background that, say for instance, someone might decide, well, let's do a little checking here. I think something's not quite adding up. And if they do a little bit of digging around then-- especially if they find out there's an immigration status, I worry that individuals are going to be, unfortunately targeted and probably cut loose from a lot of jobs. I don't know if there's any indication of that so far.

SPEAKER 2: That's a huge concern for many, many people, because if you get stopped by Harris County Constable, for example, he'll have access to certain screens that might pull up some information. And if you get stopped by HPD, they've got different screens, they pull up. And someone may pull up a traffic ticket from years ago that you paid and was taken care of. But for some reason, it never got changed on that screen and it says that there's a warrant out for you.

And it may be taken care of after a long, arduous process a couple of days in dealing with the courts. But those kind of things do lose people their jobs. And if you're somebody here on with an employment authorization card and you have a foreign background, then you're probably-- there's a double problem for you there. And you're more likely than not to lose your job in those circumstances. So yeah, they don't have everything tied together real well. I don't have a whole lot of faith in them being able to do that, either.

SPEAKER 3: Well, then when you consider-- just heard a story a couple of months ago about a woman who was arrested for a late fee on a blockbuster video.

SPEAKER 2: Oh, yeah. I saw that.

SPEAKER 1: You're kidding.

SPEAKER 3: No. Basically-- she didn't even check out the video. It was in a different town from her. And it came up on the-- it came up in the system.

SPEAKER 1: It's mistaken identity.

SPEAKER 3: Mistaken identity, or something-- somewhere got crossed. And they-- she was late on it or she never returned the video blockbuster, turned it in as a minor theft. And so she got pulled over for a traffic citation, and they pulled out this warrant for her arrest. And she was taken into custody based solely on the fact that she had a late fee on a blockbuster video.

SPEAKER 2: My god.

SPEAKER 1: See, something like that, especially, once they do bring you in and decide they want to do a little bit further of a background check and then decide, oh, well, this person's got immigration status, is everything up to date? Say, for instance they don't have all the access to the information within their computers, what happens then if they decide, well, this person's here illegally, let's go ahead and put an INS hold on them and start the proceedings for that?

SPEAKER 2: And like I said, that's a concern because INS has people down there at this very moment.

SPEAKER 1: They really don't belong there by chance? Have there been instances where someone really shouldn't have had an INS hold on them?

SPEAKER 2: Oh, yes. Oh, without question.

SPEAKER 1: Oh, brother.

SPEAKER 2: And they're quick to slap them on. And then sometimes, I've had people who really should have had them on who just didn't have one [? cut off ?] for whatever reason.

SPEAKER 1: Well, John, we kind of need to wrap this up. I do want to thank you for coming on the show with us. And I also want to thank you extremely from the bottom of my heart for all of the work that you've been doing. This is an absolutely fantastic initiative that you all have undertaken. We can't say enough good things about this. And I'm so glad that I had a chance to have you here on the radio, advertising this.

We need to scream this to the very for corners of the country and all the way back to the middle. You are doing absolutely fabulous work. And I want to commend each and every one of you for undertaking this, especially on behalf of a group that's pretty much without any power to repay in any, I guess, remuneration sense.

SPEAKER 2: Well, we're thrilled to be doing it. And it is so meaningful, because in the fourth largest city in the country, we need to have this. And we're going to continue to do it. And we're to continue to fight for the rights of individuals with regard to immigration and everything else, of course. But since we're speaking on immigration, that is something that-- we're just thrilled to be there, just make sure to contact us our website is the www.stonewall-lawyers.org. lawyers.org Or you can contact me, my email address is [nechlaw, n-e-c-h-l-a-w @bigfoot.com](mailto:nechlaw,n-e-c-h-l-a-w@bigfoot.com). And we'll take care of you.

SPEAKER 1: Excellent. Well, you've picked a very, very good location for this because your work is never going to end here in Houston. Good location for you and actually wonderful work. Once again, thank you very much for coming on the show with us. We're actually moving to the news segment.

SPEAKER 3: We're going we're going to take a music break real quick. I do want to plug one thing here. This month's edition of Outsmart took the transgendered community to its cover page here and a large group of articles even Vanessa got her picture in the middle.

SPEAKER 1: Oh, great.

SPEAKER 3: Standing-- standing behind the mayor.

SPEAKER 1: Every-- no.

SPEAKER 3: No bunny ear.

SPEAKER 1: OK, well, that one was OK. It seems like every time I get my picture in any of the papers, they always pick the worst possible ones.

SPEAKER 2: Those are wonderful pictures.

SPEAKER 1: There's dozens of good ones.

SPEAKER 3: Let's put it this way, out of the three people in the picture, you're the best one in there, because [INAUDIBLE] you can't see-- you can see her--

SPEAKER 4: She got her eyes closed.

SPEAKER 3: You can see her lip. She's just so blown out in the picture. And the mayor his-- whoever took that picture, Dalton.

SPEAKER 1: Dalton. That was Dalton.

SPEAKER 3: Dalton, Dalton. But I think if you're the most current the April edition of Outsmart magazine for transgender technicolor--

SPEAKER 2: Wow. Hey, Chris. I wanted to tell you that Phyllis really wants everybody to call her the mother of the community next week the entity banquet. She's insisted that, that be the--

SPEAKER 1: OK, Sylvia Rivera.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 4: It's good that you got tickets because they're gone now

SPEAKER 1: Well, I don't have them. So I'm going to be one of those folks. I wasn't sure if we were going to be going up to lobby. So I was waiting until the last minute.

SPEAKER 3: Do we have any information on the unity banquet?

SPEAKER 4: As far as I know the tickets have been sold out for several weeks now. And there is a waiting list. But at this point, it's pretty unlikely. The people who know this information would be Lilly Roddy. And the usual way of getting in touch with her through the tats lines and all that kind of thing I'm sure people have access to.

SPEAKER 3: Well, considering the topic, I, fortunately, when Jim brought in the music here, I was going to go for Homophobes in Robes, but we don't have that CD. But I found one that's even closer up from the soundtrack of Hedwig and the Angry Inch about a transgendered immigrant from another country-- from Germany. We are going to be playing a Tear Me Down. And this is *After Hours* on KPFT and KEOS.

SPEAKER 1: Excellent segue.

SPEAKER 5: Ladies and gentlemen whether you like it or not, Hedwig. Don't you know me.

SPEAKER 3: OK, that was-- we started off with from Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Tear Me Down. And that was Jill Sobule with I Kissed a Girl. And we are now going into-- I'm going-- I don't know if we have a name for anything on it yet or not, I'm just going to say the Alyssa Report.

SPEAKER 6: Well, thanks, Chris, I appreciate that. You can call it the Alyssa Report if you want. Of course, I'm not trying to horn in on anything anyone else is doing here. But I thought I would have a contribution to make and talk to Vanessa several weeks ago and Jimmy. I have several minutes here of GLBT news, affecting gays, lesbians, transgendered people. And I also quickly, tonight, wrote a short personal commentary on something that, I, myself was involved with.

I was actually at the Democratic Party District Convention last week at Westbury High school, as was Vanessa Foster. Just what that was about really quickly, it was kind of an offshoot of the precinct conventions that took place after the primary last month. And I went to my precinct convention. I got them to pass two precinct-- two resolutions that I proposed. They came up with a third involving the transgendered people.

And I actually showed up at the convention on Saturday and walked in and seemed to pass just fine. Of course, I have my own personal gender issues and one guy served me and then apologized and more to my liking when I raised my hand in the Resolutions Committee to ask a question, a gentleman answered me with a sharp yes, ma'am. That felt good.

As to the resolutions, three of the four resolutions in the table at our convention passed to them I had admittedly come up with and written, and although one had been edited by others. I'm happy to say these passed-- these dealt respectively with a legal mechanism for name and gender marker changes and with a nondiscrimination law covering employment, housing, and education. Now, the third that passed covered hate crimes. The fourth it was defeated, just from memory, was a general statement affirming in effect as I recall that people have a right to pick their own gender. And this came out of my precinct, and I kind of went along with it, obviously.

The Resolutions Committee, in my opinion, seemed to be concerned about language limiting this resolution to Harris County and was in a hurry to get on with the other resolutions. Now, I understand the District of Phyllis Frye passed four additional transgender resolutions. And I wonder what other districts around the state passed transgender resolutions on their own.

One other gratifying thing for me is that I was one of two transgendered people in my district nominated or elected to go to El Paso as a delegate in June. And of course, I may need to find a way to pay for the airplane ticket out there. I may have to cut that short because I'm actually signed up to be a hypnotist of all things today, sci-fi fantasy and gaming convention that weekend called Consortium. But I'm told that it's good to go out there anyway and schmooze.

And Vanessa, who was here in the studio tonight, was actually there. We were just talking in the city a few minutes ago and her opinion that went on too long. But it was good to see her out there. All that said, I do have several other minutes of more conventional news including something for our friends at Texas, A&M. First though, first things first, Texas gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender political groups are pleased with the outcome of Tuesday's Democratic election runoff. Former Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk won 60% of the vote and defeated school teacher Victor Morales.

GLBT groups had endorsed Kirk in that election. At least a couple of other lesser candidates who had been endorsed by GLBT two leaders also won. One of them was openly gay Dallas County Constable Mike Dupree, another was Eddie Rodriguez whom openly gay state representative Glen Maxey had endorsed to succeed him in district 51.

One official speaking out is Alan Baker, president of Austin's Lesbian Gay Political Caucus. He says, quote, "We have Sanchez in line to be governor, now, Ron Kirk at the top of her Senate ticket. Combined that with Austin's Kirk Watson is for attorney general and John Sharpe for Lieutenant Governor, all of them are progressive and good for our issues." Baker, of course, is referring to the Democratic candidate for governor, Tony Sanchez.

If you see a white ribbon lurking about the Texas A&M University campus, it may be a left over from a counter-protest of the recent week long, gay awareness campaign on campus. Young conservatives of Texas say, set up a table nearby the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender display with their own answer to the demonstration. Their aim in handing out the white ribbons was to quote, "Take back the rainbow and bring attention to University funding" of what they call quote, "a far left political agenda."

Justin Anderson is the president of the GLBT Aggies. He says his group does not receive automatic yearly funding from the university as it has in the past. But he says that as a recognized student social organization, it has the right to request funds for specific events. He says that while last week's demonstration attracted a few hecklers and dissenters, most people were supportive.

Anderson says that when he was a freshman, he was outed by a roommate who found out about his sexuality by going through his computer files. He says the roommate proceeded to warn the entire hallway. Soon thereafter, he found threatening notes taped to his door, and he was the walking target for jeers and bad looks.

From Juneau, Alaska to Kalamazoo, Michigan to Boston, Massachusetts, this year's Day of Silence has generated positive press and a record number of schools participated. This past Wednesday, thousands of students, nearly 1,800 schools nationwide participated in the Day of Silence throughout the country to promote awareness of anti-gay harassment and discrimination in America's educational institutions. That's an 800% increase in school participation over last year when only 200 schools participated.

Federal authorities are pursuing capital murder indictments against a Columbia, Maryland man accused of murdering two women by slashing them in the Shenandoah National Park in 1996. According to the indictments the feds unsealed Wednesday, Darryl David Rice told prosecutors that 26-year-old Laura "Lollie" Winans and 24-year-old Julianne Marie Williams deserved to die because they were lesbians. And now, the Washington blade newspaper is reporting Rice may have attacked others.

Yvonne Malbasha says that when she was riding her bicycle along Western Virginia's Skyline Drive on July 9, 1997, she felt a can of soda slam into her back. When she skidded off the road to avoid a pickup truck that had pulled up beside her, she turned around and stared into Rice's eyes and saw nothing but rage. She described Rice as cold and mechanical and said she knew she was his target because she is a woman.

There are fresh allegations that the senior New York official in charge when police horses charged the crowd during a Matthew Shepard vigil in 1998 may have been involved in police violence against the transgendered years earlier. A newspaper called Gay and Lesbian-- excuse me, Lesbian and Gay New York is reporting that inspector Thomas Graham was the senior officer in command on West 43rd Street during the 1998 incident in which three marchers were seriously injured. And the newspaper says that in 1982, Graham led a raid against a queer bar whose patrons were largely transgendered people of color. The raid wrecked the bar and injured both patrons and employees.

A 1982 Village Voice article quoted a man as saying, "the devastation was worse than Stonewall." And press reports, at the time, called the raid retaliation for an assault on two plainclothes officers by bar patrons. The head of the New York City gay and lesbian anti-violence project, Richard Hames, says that if the allegations turn out to be true, that it's scary to think someone like that is in a leadership position.

An Akron, Ohio transsexual man accused of criminal falsification is off the hook. On Wednesday, Municipal Court Judge John Poulos dismissed the case against Sean Brookings, saying too much time had elapsed since Brookings last obtained a marriage license in 1994. He had been born a woman, been married twice to men and had children. Then after he underwent sexual reassignment surgery, he listed himself as a man while obtaining three marriage licenses between 1998.