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SPEAKERS

Michelle Meyers, Vanessa Edwards Foster, Sarah DePalma



00:02

The article I read is, as research for my article didn't say specifically that she got fired because she was transgendered. But I would be willing to bet a substantial amount of money that that was the case.



Sarah DePalma 00:14

According to Attorney Barry Neto, she that was flat out. The reason is that she went, and of course, I worked for a bank, who actually is fairly transgender, if not friendly, at least understanding. So this story really hit home for me. I'm sorry, go ahead. Well, I



00:31

mean, that was pretty much it as far as what we were what I was talking to you about just as far as what Trent, what do we need politically? employment protection? Amen. I agree on that. And, as you were talking about with getting anything through, not just the Texas Legislature, but any legislature, as long as such things as a Christian coalition exist, it isn't going to happen. It has to be done to the courts.



Sarah DePalma 01:00

Well, that's a good, that's a good beginning point of Vanessa, you and I are on, we want to talk about that you want me talking about the thing that we're gonna be working on with hate crimes?



Vanessa Edwards Foster 01:10

Yes, um, we're well, I guess I'll go ahead and let you take the lead on this. And

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Sarah DePalma 01:16

there is an organization a national organization called Gender PAC. And gender PAC is the political action committee for the various national transgender groups, which include its tomuu, Arca and renaissance in all just a whole host of others. It's kind of the catch all organization, and lobbyist for gender PAC. Her name is Dana precinct, a very, very fine individual. And there is new legislation that is going to be that is working its way through Congress right now. Or, in theory, it's working its way through the Congress right now, about hate crimes, and surprise, surprise transgenders aren't included in it. Aren't we all shot? Yeah. And guess what organization is spearheading this? Can we say the HRC boys and girls? Yeah. Anyway. So Dana pressing has said, Well, there's no reason that we could not go we meaning transgender activists could not go to federal attorneys, and present our case, and get the federal attorneys to work on this legislation on our behalf. Which makes perfect sense to me.

V

Vanessa Edwards Foster 02:29

Exactly. And that's what we want to do is to try and at least initialize some kind of contact with the US Attorney's office here in Houston. And if we can try and inspire some of the individuals in some of the other larger cities in San Antonio, Dallas, for instance, to do likewise, and to familiarize the US Attorney's in these specific offices, about the law, and exactly what it covers, and the fact that we do at least have some kind of a structure there in place to where they can prosecute certain crimes. For instance, the crimes that you were just talking about in Florida and New Jersey, they're really the way they interpret the law, a lot of opportunities to take advantage of this, even where a lot of the local courts will not pursue some of these cases, some of these can be pursued in federal court, just by virtue of the fact that they take place on federal property. They happen to individuals who happen to be on government assistance, or recipients of government loans, or who work for government entities either directly or indirectly. There's a lot of different ways to pursue hate crimes through the US Attorney's Office, not just specifically on transgendered, per se, but also everyone throughout the GLBT communities. So this is something we need to take the initiative and I guess, do a little education, if you will, of the US Attorney's on this, you're willing to let them know that we are planning on monitoring, all these situations ourselves. That of course is going to require a little bit of vigilance on our part. And basically to just make sure that they do pursue the law as it is set up.

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Sarah DePalma 04:35

You know, what I would like to do is put together a committee of perhaps between three and five people who would be willing to go and help us do this. Because I, my my biggest concern when we go to speak, whether it's the legislators or to judges or whatever, is that if one person goes in or only two days say, aha, this is what the transgender community is. And I would much prefer that we that when we go and speak, and I guarantee you, I am going to go and talk to the US attorney, that we bring a more wide ranging representation of who we are. I am very, very conscious of the fact I'm sorry that some of the guys are not here tonight. Because I'm very, very conscious of the fact that the community is not all male to female. And it's not all

white. It's not short and tall or anything, it is diverse. And I realize we can't have 100 People go talk to US attorney, but I would at least like to have them speak to see that we are not a monolith either.

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Michelle Meyers 05:46

Can I mention something about gender pack? Yeah, please. This is Michelle Meyers. Gender pack is doing a first time survey on hate crimes and discrimination that is based on sexual orientation or gender in the workplace. Now, what I'd like to stress is right now, you out there in the audience, who feel that they've been discriminated against based on gender in the workplace can do something, you can fill out the form. Now how do you get the form? Well, you can call a number, I'll give you that number. It's Area code 713-524-6349. You can even name an address on the voicemail, or if there is isn't, if there is someone home at the time, they will answer it and get your name and address. And we'll send in the mail to you our form from gender path explaining about the survey. And that's one of the things that they're going to use, and the upcoming going up to the Hill event on April 20/20. And 21st. Right. That's right. National lobby

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Sarah DePalma 06:56

days is coming up.

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Michelle Meyers 06:57

So let me give you that number. Again, it's Area code 713-524-6349. And we'll mail out the form to you right away. Thank you.




07:07


If I could interject just a moment here. Yeah. For for me, what are the issues you've been talking about, especially the one just now with respect to job security is really where the rubber meets where the rubber hits the road to, to real stability within the transgender community. And in part because of what we've also been talking about with respect to people losing their jobs and having to take up rather unsavory lines of work. And it reminds me of two things, both of them related to Phyllis Frye, who you were talking about earlier, because she lost her job as a city engineer. And the city lost an excellent employee, and Phyllis, which is resource waste. And recently, because of the work that needs Parker has done, Lee Brown has included some transgender friendly language into the city's employment practices. And Phyllis wrote a letter to him, which expressed that sentiment and said, basically, you've lost a good employee in me, and I'm glad to see that you shouldn't let this kind of pressure waste this kind of individuals in


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Sarah DePalma 08:10


person sitting at the table, who had a lot to do with making sure it nice got that done. Vanessa, you had a lot to do with that you deserve the credit for it.

 Vanessa Edwards Foster 08:19
I didn't want to waste an opportunity.

 Sarah DePalma 08:22
That's one of the that's one of the things that it's a good starting point. And so this is where I'd like to start out. And let me sort of lay out what I would like to see as the philosophy for its time, Texas and get some feedback on this. The last time that we tried to organize as a group, one of the problems that I think we had was that it was very difficult to show that any progress was ever being made. And it was because we started out on a state level. And I think maybe that one of the best things that we could do in Houston, is we could show other transgendered youth groups across the state, how to work at the local level. And let me give you some examples of that. And then tell me what you think here. I regularly hear from people, transgendered people who ended up at one of the county owned hospitals, and are then sort of held up as objects of ridicule. And it seems to me one of the things that we could do would be to work in some sort of seminars or in service programs, or some kind of educational progress with the hospital systems in this city and in this county. I that's an area where I think we have the expertise to do it in would probably be a matter of getting to take in contact with the right people to get it done.

 09:48
Similarly, I think a lot can be done with sort of, in the same kind of executive fiat sort of way that Lee Brown is introduced this language, we can approach it Leaders are significant people within large corporations like Compaq, shell or Amoco. and work towards that kind of tolerance within the workplace.

 Sarah DePalma 10:09
A lot of that is faces. In fact, I will probably be flying to Mesquite, Texas, to speak to Lucent Technologies. I've been invited to going up and I'm I said, Absolutely, I'll go yes. But the problem that you're we're going to have with the county is that the county is very, very conservative. You're talking about Joe jackals. So if we're going to get anything done in the hospital district, we need to get it done through the ambulance corps and literally come in the back door. I think. And I've already started on that a little bit as time allows. But let me get some feedback on that. First of all, as as a potential goal. What do you think of the philosophy of working locally and may and making one of the objectives It's Time Texas, to be to show local groups how they can fend for themselves? Yeah, I

 11:02
think it's a good one. Because, as one politician said, All politics is local. That's right, for the most part. And that's very true. Our friends in the social conservative camp have proven that over the last 10 years, to our detriment, that a lot of the damage that they've been able to do

has been basically started at the precinct level, or at the school board level. Yeah. And by the end, a lot of times when I say as soon as rail free one said, you try to fly below the radar. The radar screen, you can do a lot of damage, flying below radar screens.

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Sarah DePalma 11:45

This is KPFT in Houston, and ke O 's College Station,

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Michelle Meyers 11:52

part of the Pacifica network, yes,

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Sarah DePalma 11:54

and queer radio with attitude. I am Sarah dipalma. And with me is a group of invited guests. And we're talking tonight about the political needs of the transgender community. And there may be a lot of people out there who say, Well, hey, I'm gay and lesbian, what the hell do I care? Ah, we're going to get around to you don't go away. We have a lot that we want to talk to you about. Okay, so let me go back to so then is there some Is there a consensus that that the idea of its time, Texas being a facilitator of showing local groups how to get things done? Is that a good concept?



12:31

Any? Any progress is good? And if that's the way we want to approach it? Yeah. Certainly. I mean, you know, when I said earlier that going to any, any legislative body probably wouldn't work. I mean, that that could be taken to include your local city councils. Obviously, the way the City Council in Houston is right now, there's a chance for progress. But, you know, any step forward on any level that can be shown and waved waved is a flag. So here's progress. That's that's a good thing. While there

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Sarah DePalma 13:10

are gay people in the city council in Dallas, there's a good there's an open gay person and the city council in Galveston. So some things are changing. But the here's the reason that I'm glad you brought that up. The reason that I think at least for our first couple years that we ought to spend our time working, I mean, really, on the nuts and bolts, is because the last time I went to Austin, it ended up being Phyllis fry, Terry Fredrickson and myself, who ended up making trip after trip after trip to go in, that's okay. But it sort of left a taste in their mouths, that we were in, that we were the transgender community. And one of the mistakes that we made was that we tried to do too much too fast. I think before we can start asking people to go to the state level and testify in Austin, it might be better to let them get their feet wet, or their toes wet, and slowly work their way in. And that's kind of what I'm thinking is, is is where we're at, we're really at ground zero. So that maybe what we need to do right now is to start building the base. Before we start to do much more than

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Michelle Meyers 14:18

let me make a suggestion. And a little bit of my political feelings that come out. I believe that politics is not run by politicians, but politics is run by the workplace, by money. And if we work for the community, in the workplace, for getting acceptance, that's going to be the fastest way and the best way to overcome the political hurdles. Because all the politicians do is listen to what big money tells them. And so in the Houston area for those who are transsexual and who want to transition on the job, working with them as a group, I mean tax dodging, we do sensitivity training for the employer, so that they can learn how to deal with the transsexual, what the issues are, how to make this work, for Win, win, win win for the transsexual win for the company and win for the other employees.

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Sarah DePalma 15:20

Well, I agree with him. I

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Michelle Meyers 15:21

agree with some doing that in the workplace and working in the workplace and being open in the workplace is a way to make it to get over the real hard problem of politics.

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Sarah DePalma 15:36

Well, I agree with some of that. But I think it's, I think we cannot afford to be invisible. And for those of us who, who, you know, who are willing to, one of the things that I think we could be doing, that we're not doing now, is to start attending some of the political functions. For example, the League of Women Voters often has breakfasts or dinners with politicians. And some of us need to start going to that and go walking in like, like I saw Wendy and Alan do one day, walk up into a person say, Hi, my name is Wendy. I'm a transsexual, and I'm here to talk to you about this, that and the other. It's amazing how she could get their attention. Because we'll never get anywhere in the legislature if they don't know we exist. And they don't know that we're not freaks and sideshows. They've been taught to believe, Oh, I

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Michelle Meyers 16:20

believe in working in the political system. I'm a member of HDL PC. And so yes, I believe in working in the political system. I'm also on the membership committee.

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Sarah DePalma 16:31

Good man, I need to ask you later.

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Michelle Meyers 16:36

But, you know, if you want to make something for the individual, so the individual can achieve something at the same time work for the whole community, there has to be something in there for both, you know, immediate for both organizations. I agree.



16:51

Well, on the state level, and, you know, certainly do not ignore the Texas Legislature, because you never know what we could somehow slip through. But I really believe that, you know, most of the people in the legislature are up every two years, those who aren't up every two years opera before yours. They have to go before the voters. And anything with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered on it is going to be waved in front of the voters come election time by our good friends at the Christian coalition. Likewise, as long as all the judges, all the state judges go before the voters every couple of years, I don't think it's gonna happen in the state courts, either it's going to be in the federal courts. As far as anything that is done by legislative process, it probably will be local, because we can influence or not influence. Don't want to. That sounds too much like bribery.

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Sarah DePalma 17:46

But that's a bad word right at the moment, city. Show



17:52

show people who we are that will happen on local levels. But the problem is, I hate having to go that route. Because me on the net. I see little victories here. And there was some city in Illinois recently, that added transgender protection. Yeah, that's great. Yeah. Evanston. That's great. But it doesn't do me one bit of good and Houston. No, thank you. I was wanting to use the word even though it is after midnight, I still wouldn't work and don't want to use it. Yeah. But I think it is just insane that people in one little city have that protection. And And right now, I am effectively a non person when it comes to employment law. Here. The Supreme Court decision recently involving the same sex harassment, obviously, didn't specifically have anything to do with transgendered employment rights. But it's, you know, one of the first times that the Supreme Court is basically telling people to ease up on the interpretation of the word sex, honestly. Yeah. And



19:02

to me, considering the



19:04

makeup of that. Yeah. And the thing is anything with the name Scalia on it is suspect. I, I just know I don't want to go any further than that. I'm gonna have to work as a lawyer someday.



19:15

And Thomas.



19:18

But yeah, it was very surprising that that was a unanimous verdict. And, but that may be a signal somewhere somewhere down the line. Some some federal court may say, you know, sex, maybe that includes change of sex. But that'll, that'll be be always right now. It really doesn't matter what sort of local protection you have, or even worse, in my eyes, the company protection. Yeah, your company may say, sure, will protect you. But all it takes is a new owner, new board of directors. So this who decides that it wants to run its company by the Book of Leviticus, they can throw you out and you don't have Have a damn bit of recourse. Okay.



Sarah DePalma 20:04

Well then, then let me ask a question about that because I think that's an interesting point. Okay. Now it's time America is the national level is working on end. But I have to be very honest and telling you there is not a snowball's chance in hell, transgenders will be included in ended. And it's not going to happen because we don't have the money nationally to make it happen. For us to be involved in end it at the federal level, would require a massive lobbying effort of which we are not capable. Now we do a national lobbying day, once a year. And that's the one and only time they ever see transgendered people. Meanwhile, groups like the National Gay Lesbian Task Force, speak on our behalf, but no less than Carrie LaBelle. If you remember this law conference. Carrie Labelle told us flatly, we were not going to be included, because it couldn't be done. That brings me back to the first question that brings me back to the point in the first place, which was there are national organizations to which we contribute, who can do some things. But for example, I am advocating that we take a name change builds Austen, not because I necessarily think it can be passed, but because it gives us an excuse for being there. It gives us a reason to be there and go talk to legislators and let them see our face. We might even get shocked and have it passed. Because we've actually got the wording on it from several years ago. But the real reason that we need to go is a they need to know we exist. And B we need to know what's going on if they're going to pass a law that's going to take what child custody, we damn well better be there. But at the local level, what can we do, for example, on the things that one of the things that I discovered is that there is not a single, not one single shelter for the homeless, that will take an openly transgender person now one, misogyny, that's something that we did. You know, and it would be a success if we can get it done. I'm not aware of a single rape facility that will take an openly transgender woman, that's a problem. The treatment that transgenders get at hospitals in the city, that's a problem. The medical care that they get is a problem. Those and guess what I'm wondering, is it one of the things that we do know how to do in Houston, is we know how to get our backs up and go get something done? Is I guess what I'm wondering is, are those the kinds of things that we're interested in doing locally? And are we interested in showing people across the state how to do it?



Vanessa Edwards Foster 22:49

Ah, as far as showing people across the state, and this is something that's probably best learned by example. So before we can really show them, we need to get it accomplished first. Otherwise, it kind of comes across as so much rhetoric. I guess for a lot of them, they want to see exactly how we did it, not just basically hearing someone else tell them you need to do it this way.

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Sarah DePalma 23:15

Well, I think there's some truth in there. One of them one, when we went to Austin with Wendy Yellin, Denise Kopp and several other people, I remember Wendy Allen coming back saying, I didn't know we could actually talk to legislators. And I think there's a lot of people who feel that and I kept saying, but we are their employer, we pay for their salaries, you know, but but that that that really hadn't clicked. So I think there's some truth in what you say. The other thing about it is that I think there are a couple of different levels and what Katrina was talking about. And one sense, I think, across the state, we have a handful of people who were capable and willing to go to Austin today and do what would need to be done, who have backed out of the background. But my impression is in here listening to the community, is that they're not going to go until they find out nothing bad's gonna happen to him. Does that sound about right? Yeah. And so that so that maybe something that we that those of us who have been there can do is to keep going and take people with us every time we go, so they can also see what we did, and nothing terrible is going to happen to them. I mean, we have to make a start somewhere, we have to increase our visibility. And if for no other reason, then it gives us an excuse to go and shake hands and say, Oh, but you never met another transgender before have you then then that's why we need to have legislation to go.

V

Vanessa Edwards Foster 24:41

It's true. In fact, actually, I think I don't want to say anything that I did, unnecessarily rubbed off on anyone else in the community. But I noticed this year that there's a number of individuals that are planning on doing the national lobby day this time He just kind of took it on my own to go ahead and do it a couple of times. In fact, last year in folk saw that I went out there, I didn't get attacked, I actually came back alive. And it was actually a pretty much a learning experience for me. I learned quite a bit about the political processes there. Some of it good, some of it not so good. But regardless, I was glad for the information. Even you know, the downside of it.

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Sarah DePalma 25:30

Are you showed the flag?

V

Vanessa Edwards Foster 25:31

I'm sorry, you showed the flag? Well, yeah, so to speak, I guess.

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Sarah DePalma 25:36

Yeah. That's not a put down, there's a lot to be said for that. Because not many people are willing to do it.

V

Vanessa Edwards Foster 25:42

Well, this is true. It's it's a lot easier to say these things and not actually get around to doing them. It's quite another day actually put action behind the word or to just, you know, forget about the words and just do it.

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25:56

When there's something else need to don't don't want to disparage too much is, you know, if you can't, if you don't have the money to fly to Washington, or even drive to Austin, and if you are, you know, too uncomfortable about doing it. You always have a little thing called a word processor or typewriter. Right. I mean, everyone has one congressman, two US senators, although in this state, I don't feel that I really have to say we're not represented. You have you have a state legislator, you have a State Senator, you have city council, people, write to them, call them do something, let them know. Just write a little note saying I am not the people you see on Jerry Springer, period, end of story.

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26:40

Actually, I write letters to Kay Bailey Hutchinson and Phil Gramm all the time. And I tell them, I'm a Republican, and I signed my name, doctor. And while I am a doctor, so I can do that. But they, they still know where the wallet is. And they still know who votes and they listen to letters, even if they don't like it. I'll get the letter and they'll read it. I've told the story once

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Sarah DePalma 27:03

before about Phil Gramm. And I got, I'm gonna tell the story again. This this one when I was in college station, I actually debated Phil Gramm. And when he was running for Congress, and it got into a running argument with him, which there were two papers reported. And he made the comment the teachers, shouldn't they that there should not be any openly gay teachers. And I said, Well, why? And he's got to come back was well, because I said so. And my response was, Well, do you think we're all lemmings? Didn't we all going to jump off a river bridge? Because you do, and made the papers. Last time first time went to Washington, DC, as luck would have it. his press secretary, his name was Larry Neil. I graduated from me and then with Larry Neil. But I graduated as a male. He doesn't know me. And the whole time we're sitting there, he keeps saying to Palma de Palma, where do I know that name? And I wouldn't tell him. And at the end is we were walking up the door and I said, Do you remember debate between a little guy and Phil Gramm when he ran for his first term in Congress? And he said, Yeah, and I pointed at me and said, I'm that person. And his eyes get wide, and his jaw drops. And thank you for seeing us today. And it just felt so good. I knew because Bill Green was never going to vote for any of our stuff anyway. But it sure what sure felt nice. I walked out the door, and I felt

that it was about 20 feet tall. You know, let me ask you this. If there's any one thing that you would want a state political organization, working on behalf of transgenders, what's the one thing you want us to be doing?



28:36

Job is secure job secure



28:38

apps, job security, we work? We like that? Yes.



28:42

And even even the social conservatives can probably appreciate somebody paying taxes.



28:51

Well, thing is that what you just said, involves logic. And it's been my experience that most of the people who are really fervently in favor of laws that deny rights to people are not into Logic, they are into shoving their dogma down people's throats, regardless of the the, the actual consequences of it, they do not care that in this this room, right? Here are five, five lives. And none of us, are you even though we all have jobs and pay taxes and are, you know, law abiding citizens. One, one, snap decision by some employer, we're out on the street, welfare, unemployment, whatever, you know, or you're worse comes to worse. Like like the people we were talking about of those articles, and that is not a useful end to human main.



Vanessa Edwards Foster 29:51

Usually, there is a point I would like to make, this can be something that can be used as an effective one. argument with legislators. But that's not necessarily true that this is going to force them to change their opinion or change their votes. One thing I did learn from my lobbying is the fact that many legislators, while privately they might support the fact that they would prefer having us work, and be in legitimate professions, the problem is, when they go home to their constituency after voting that way, they still have to answer to them. And for many of them who live in conservative districts, and realize that by voting in this fashion, they could be jeopardizing their jobs. They're not willing to put their lives on the line to do that, even though it might be the right thing to do. In essence, they are they're protecting their own interest.



Sarah DePalma 30:53

Well, unfortunately, Vanessa, you're 100%. Right. And I need to point something out here. Everybody talks about job security. But let's talk about political reality for a minute. The

political reality is the Texas has a right to work state. Exactly. And the reality is, the Texas legislators are no more likely to give job protection to transgendered people, than they are likely to become icebergs tomorrow. Okay. And the fact of the matter is, there is nothing we're going to do to change it. And here's why. Number one, something Michelle said is right. Money is the mother's milk of politics. Where do they get their money from? Corporations, corporations, now then we're going to go into politicians. And we're going to say to them, we realize you don't know us, but we're here to make a case, in our case is x y&z and we think these legislators are going to listen to us. And they're going to take a political risk, as Vanessa pointed out, on job security. And I have to be honest, and telling you that as a political matter, I will be dead before that ever occurs. So as a reality, let me really do.



32:10

I think that there are workarounds for these kinds of things. And that we as a community, we haven't been really creative at sort of sussing them out. With with respect to coming up with new and inventive language, which is less confrontational, but which reaches the same end. And I think that that, again, this the last change that went through with Lee Brown's push for the state city hiring is a case in point for that. He didn't mistake his political career on that he didn't rough rub people the wrong way. He came out smiling and looking very sweet. But it was because of the way he did it. He used a very specific and careful choice of words, as a workaround. And the more of those kinds of options we can construct as options for legislators, I think we have a better chance of seeing these things go forward.



33:01

Only thing isn't it's kind of stay tuned on that too, because Steven hopes he and his boys and girls have filed a lawsuit



Sarah DePalma 33:07

and when Mayor Brown leaves in protection leaves with him.



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So that and that that goes in my point about being dependent on the good on the goodwill of whoever it is you're working for, in this case, you know, if you're a city employee, basically working for whoever's at the top, the mayor. And whenever Lee Brown leaves, the next person who comes in, can write and write an executive order saying, Oh, that last one ignored it, ignore it.



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But you know, though, it's so much harder to revoke a right than it is to grant one. Yeah, I agree. Politically, period.

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Sarah DePalma 33:42

Yeah, unfortunately, in this case,



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that also goes for revoking entrenched discrimination. It isn't going to happen. It rarely happen. I say it isn't going to but it rarely happens by the legislative process as an app,



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wouldn't it every day, for the last 20 years.



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And in many cases, when it happens by legislation, it's almost by accident. What a lot of people forget is your Title Seven protects own the words because of sex. Well, sex was thrown in there, just almost as a joke. That was primarily a racial civil rights bill in

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Sarah DePalma 34:19

the U Lane case, take that away from us anyway.



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Well, my point I was making about the recent Supreme Court cases that that decision, may or may not tell lower courts, look at sex dip, look at the word sex and they're a little bit differently. Keep your fingers crossed. I'm not banking on it yet, but it could happen. My point is, when when that law was passed, it was primarily a racial civil rights bill. A significant number of people didn't want even that to pass. So they decided to get cute and throw the word sex and they said, There's no way in hell anybody will vote to give good rights to women. Well, sure enough, a pass.



34:58

Yeah, here's the interest anything about that, you know, the big battle of affirmative action. It's all orchestrated from our friends on the right wing, they're basically taking the attention on the affirmative action issue to get to Title Seven. The basically, once they finish on the affirmative action issue, ladies and gentlemen, that's the next thing that they have targeted. And they have said point blank, they want it. They want to eliminate it. Okay. I'm curious

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Sarah DePalma 35:25

 Sarah DePalma 35:13

about something if if everyone is unanimous, and employment is the issue, and I agree that to a large extent, it is. I'm of the personal opinion that there is very little, my just my own personal opinion, our personal opinion that there's nothing that we can do currently in the state of Texas, at the legislative level, to bring them around to bringing protective legislation for us.

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I agree. That's why I say the federal courts are going to be the only avenue. Well, that brings me back

 Sarah DePalma 35:54


to the question that I asked in the first place, which is what can we do, I mean, physic actually accomplished. And because I agree that that protect that employment protection is the issue. But I don't believe it's passable in Texas, in mylar in our lifetime.

 Vanessa Edwards Foster 36:13

It is not passable. But the fact is, you still have to bring this up to them and keep pushing up on this issue. You can't just give up on the issue, you still have to drive these points home, each and every time you go out there, even though you're going up there for a different purpose. Still, always bring up the fact that we have problems with employment and bring them case histories and bring them something that they can relate to on a dollars and cents level. In fact, Monica touched on it a little bit earlier, when you can bring it down to their level, as in, I am a taxpayer, if I'm not working, I'm not paying taxes. If I actually live somewhere long enough, I can still vote because of motor voter registration. So in essence, I can get basically representation without taxation. Well, yeah, having to work in illegitimate means I'm not going to be paying tax on semi,

 Sarah DePalma 37:07

we actually used that argument when we brought the name change bill up there. And we took we went in being told we were going to lose nines and nothing and we came out winning 72. And we won largely on the argument that if they would pass this thing, we would become taxpayers instead of people on the unemployment.

 Vanessa Edwards Foster 37:23

So you're exactly right. This is something that everyone can agree on. The only problem is, they don't want to risk any kind of political future based on the fact that they are supporting something that is going to be unpopular with those who will raise the biggest stink come reelection time. And that's what's keeping us from having the education going out to the general public to begin with on it is the main thing that we need to do.

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Sarah DePalma 37:48

And how do you get some Texas go about that? Well, if this is what everybody wants, and how do we do it,

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37:52

if I could make a recommendation, since the thing we're most concerned about is job security, we need to go directly to employers, we need to go to employers of companies.

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Sarah DePalma 38:02

That's my argument it was we need to be talking to employers legislate. And

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38:05

the fact is that you can make the exact same argument to the employer on a case by case basis. You know, Houston is home to a number of very large corporations, many large oil companies, Continental Airlines, Compaq, and every single one of these, you can say, look, there's a lot of transgendered engineers, there's a lot of transgender computer programmers, you don't want to lose

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38:27

these people, transgender flight attendants, gate agents, and that's right.

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38:31

And these are people who are valuable, useful employees who are earning money for you. And the fact is that if you if you work those battles, and you win, then you also have the corporations on your side, which can help you with the legislation.

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38:44

As a matter of fact, a prime example of dad is American Airlines, which is based in Fort Worth. They have protections for transgendered employees written in their corporate bylaws, and religious Well, let's see this, let's say the religious right has been actually threatening to boycott American. If they don't take good look, Americans are the largest carry on the planet, right. So they've been actually making noises about boycotting American if they don't take these protections out.

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39:22



I'm sure the American will care about as much as Disney.



39:24

Right? Yeah. Yeah,



Sarah DePalma 39:26

that's basically it, the stock got hurt.



Vanessa Edwards Foster 39:27

This is the problem. Only those very large heavy hitters can put up with this kind of a threat from the individuals from the far right. If you get down to your medium size and smaller companies and corporations that can be killed by the Religious Right, exactly. And they're very, very wary of anything that's going to upset that balance or potentially cause them bad PR. It's all dollars and cents in



39:54

that case is a deadhead strategy for what you want to do in town, target the 10 largest corporation Listen, walk right into their CEOs, and just say this is a bottom line issue for you.



Sarah DePalma 40:04

It's not quite that easy, as it is a political reality, or as a business reality, it's not, it's not



Vanessa Edwards Foster 40:10

quite, there are ways that you can doable, there are ways that you can do this, I'd like to see someone, say, for instance, from a university, come up with a documentary, say something along the lines of a film that shows transgendered in the workplace, show successful individuals, individuals who are competent at their jobs, who have won accolades from their positions, and at least put this in a format to distribute to these large corporations, say, for instance, like Exxon with their sensitivity training program, what you can do is distribute these to these large corporations, and have these go out to the companies and have them take it from there.



40:53

Or even let's say, let's expand on that, take that video, and maybe send it to, you know, say, friendly, you know, it's a transgender friendly legislator, convincing. I say, Yeah, can't you know, can is my congressman, as a matter of fact, so

know, can is my congressman, as a matter of fact, so

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Vanessa Edwards Foster 41:12

transgendered friendly, but unfortunately, he is not going to put his political life.

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41:18

The problem for fair and the problem in our district now are in thanks to Mr. Blum. That district had a large piece of Eastern Fort Bend County sliced off of it when Mr. Blum had his little lawsuit go through,

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yes, and I now have Tom DeLay as a representative because of that.

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So instead of having Eastern Fort Bend County is mostly African American and democratic. Alright, when Eastern Fort Bend County was sliced off that district, they add Bellaire, West you and Southside place which are heavily Republican areas. So instead of saying a well, the district went from 5545, Democratic majority, to about maybe 5049, Republican majority, so that changed the dynamics in his district. And all it takes is for akin to make, say, for example, one move and Congress that they don't like they run a candidate against him. Which they're trying now because Beverly Clark, who just switched parties is now social conservative, so she's not she doesn't have a whole lot of credibility in African American community these days.

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Sarah DePalma 42:37

Can I ask a question here? Am I hearing in my understanding correctly, then, that there is no interest or or even or support in the idea of going out to do the what I call the political dirty work the nuts and bolts stuff? And going to the to the hospital to the hospital districts? And in the I mean, the stuff that's that's not glamorous at all, but the going to these political dinners and carrying the flag, my hearing, interested, are very well,

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43:07

no, no, actually. I think it's a good idea, because it's a civil rights movement got started a one more bus boycott? Well, that's what I said, Yeah, one bus boycott, start one old lady who got tired. One is a one bus boycott started, you know, say, the civil rights movement, and eventually ended up with a lot of the progress that we've made up to this point, which to try and roll back. So your idea does have a lot of merit, you know, starting with one or two little victories, because, you know, you know, from African American us experience here, you know, we had the same attitude for a long time. And you know, the, okay, we can't win dada dada da,

but you know, the boss, you never start, you never win. But if you never start, you don't. But once you got you say, one or two victories under your belt, then you say, okay, hey, this, okay, if we can do this, then we move on to a bigger challenge. So

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Sarah DePalma 44:05

then what I'm hearing is that you see that as part of an overall strategy. Yeah. All of which is aimed at employment issues. Yeah.

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44:13

I mean, that said this earlier, you know, every every little little victory helps. Bottom line is, everybody has to do whatever it is that they can actually do. Exactly. Two years ago, you would not have seen me in the studio. Talking on the air I was in my little shell just barely coming out. wouldn't have done anything. A couple of months later. I was willing to do a little, little something more and more. I'm sure there are people listening right now, who might be able to do one little thing. They might have enough courage just to call the congressman or call the legislator call or Councilman or write a letter to him. You know, if that's really all you can do, do it. But don't, don't sit don't say Don't your hands don't, don't sit completely in the closet unless you're really in a situation where you have to. And there are people like that. That's, that's just the way things are. And that's what we're trying to best as the the situation we're trying to get rid of the fewer people who are actually in that situation, it will be a snowball effect. Hopefully one day there won't be anybody who has to be in that situation.

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Sarah DePalma 45:25

Well, this is really it's been an educational experience for me. I've learned a lot lessons all this today. I'm glad we have to wrap this up. Before we go Beth Pritchard have been sitting over here, practically eating the microphone dying, dying to get in, you guys have

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45:42

really gone at it, it's hard to hard to squeeze a word in edgewise here. Basically, I was just gonna say that there's, there's really two two things when it comes back down to the corporate issues. There's really two kinds of large corporations out there, there's the ones that look at the bottom line and say, Where's the money in supporting this, and you know, you're gonna have a pretty much a brick wall against that. Good luck, it's going to take quite a lot of work. The other one, the, the company that I worked for, which is a very large company, took the attitude of well, we protect all our employees, you know, they didn't actually have a policy in place that said there was a non discrimination policy against either lesbian gay people or transgendered. And, but they do have a statement. It's kind of a very blanket statement that says we will not discriminate in the workplace. And when it comes down to the nuts and bolts of that, that might be the way that they'd like to implement it. But if it ever gets challenged, you know, who's the first one to go? But they wouldn't even listen to my case, because their first response was,

Well, all of our employees are protected. I mean, it's right here in the policy. We don't discriminate against any employee, period, period. Any discussion? Yeah, yeah. And the discussion get in my office.