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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

transgender, gay, bill, congress, community, human rights campaign, lobo, lobbying, part, people, lesbian community, fact, gay community, heterosexual, genitals, introduce, lesbian, hear, organization, good

## SPEAKERS

Sarah DePalma, Nancy Drew Meyer, Tom Richards, Jimmy Carper

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**S** Sarah DePalma 00:00

I asked that question he asked around the person who brought gay student services on the campus of Texas a&m and took bricks through my window for it.

**T** Tom Richards 00:08

And yeah, if you recall, though, a few weeks back, sir, I did ask you in the lobby of this radio station? Do you have homophobic acts in the organization?

**S** Sarah DePalma 00:20

That the answer is no, not my organization? Yeah.

**T** Tom Richards 00:23

But I believe that that time, though, sir, you did tell me yes. Now, I'm not really trying to be contradictory. I'm just stating, why are why we have these concerns are being brought up. Because there are homophobic within the transgender community. We know that. But then my biggest concern was when I asked that question, and then you suggest that begin to that did not personally that did not sit well with me.

**S** Sarah DePalma 00:59

I have a problem with hearts and trading on the 10% of the community was held that's homophobic and not giving credit to the 90%. That isn't, I have the same problem within my own community, when they point out the transphobes, who exists in the gay and lesbian

community, for exactly the same reason that I have a problem with concentrating on the 10% of gays and lesbians who are transphobic instead of concentrating on the 90% weren't?

**T** Tom Richards 01:25

No. Now here. Here's a question. I think that that I have heard the most. The gay community accepts cross dressers without question, which I have. I, I, I personally have had many friends that are cross dressers-.

**S** Sarah DePalma 01:44

-and I hear I hear 100 planes from cross but-.

**T** Tom Richards 01:49

But the question we have is, is what is the difference between your organization and across dresser?

**S** Sarah DePalma 02:03

I'm not sure I understand. Because we have many cross dressers who belong to it's time America.

**T** Tom Richards 02:07

Yeah. But we do not relate cross dressing as transgender-

**S** Sarah DePalma 02:14

We're not gonna look at any lesbian. But like, if that's not a crossdresser, then I don't understand the norm.

**T** Tom Richards 02:20

It's right. It's, we see a crossdresser as, as being gay, but not necessarily wanting, wanting to try to change their, their their sex, from male to female, or from female to male.

**S** Sarah DePalma 02:40

That's an end. Whereas direct definition that I've spent hours and hours correcting, and it makes me wonder why the gay and lesbian community continues to refuse to hear what I've told them. I have sat here on the show, and I have read the definition of transgenders,

according to the Human Rights Commission, in the city of San Francisco. And I read it over and over, I have put it in writing in numerous newspapers, it has been in writing in magazines. And the day after that comes out, people will read me what it says. And then say to me, but But this is wrong. I didn't make the definition up. Where the idea came from that of transgenders, or only people who are about to change their sex is wrong. It has always been wrong. It is going to be wrong tomorrow, and I am so sick of hearing that and I could scream if people don't want to hear what we have to tell them. That's willful ignorance, but we've corrected that myth. And I'm, I'm sick of it, frankly.

T

Tom Richards 03:40

But now, for instance, tonight I had I had a friend who who left his apartment dressed in drag. Okay. Okay. We can, we can understand that we can associate with that. But, but I'm trying to make myself a little more clear I don't think I did was not necessarily a dried point. Although he, though he likes to refer to himself sometime as but he is male. He doesn't want to be anything but a male. And he doesn't wear drag all the time. Whereas we see the transgender who wants to change their sex from from what they are saddled with.

S

Sarah DePalma 04:29

That's wrong, nonprofit software theory. Transgenders are not necessarily people who want to change the sex. Let me repeat that transgenders are not necessarily people who want to change their sex. I've said that in writing. I've said it on the air. I just said it to call it 10 seconds ago. That's wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

T

Tom Richards 04:47

But these these are the ones who were always that we're always seeing a flashed across the airwaves. No, I am not queer. I just like to wear women's clothes. Are I just like to wear men's clothes?

S

Sarah DePalma 05:01

Did you hear what we said in the early part of the program? About how I haven't been able to get on? I've been continuously turned down on talk shows because I'm considered to normal. If you get if you gauge our community on talk shows, that's a lot like gauging. It's a lot like gauging the political views of America by reading the National Enquirer. Are you getting it? My gay? My answer to that is no. I am intersexual. The and what that means is I don't love people for their genitals. I love them for who they are.

T

Tom Richards 05:35

No, no, no, that's not a that's not what gay is.

**S** Sarah DePalma 05:43

That reset was no.

**T** Tom Richards 05:45

But that, but we're loving someone simply because their genitals is is is is not gay.

**S** Sarah DePalma 05:54

Oh, sure. It is. No, it's not the most hypocritical statement in the world. It's not if that was true that if it was true that bisexual non homosexual,

**T** Tom Richards 06:01

but first of all, I don't practice hypocrisy, because I'm not a Christian. And and I'm not straight. I'm queer. And I don't have to lie. And I don't have to practice hypocrisy.

**S** Sarah DePalma 06:12

What Why? Why do men love men?

**T** Tom Richards 06:16

Because. Why do men love women?

**S** Sarah DePalma 06:20

For the genitals? No, yes. No, that's what there's there's a basic difference between transgenders in a definition that is put forward by a certain segment of the gay lesbian community. One of the basic differences that one of the biggest problems here is that we are engaged in a discussion over three different things. One is gender. One is gender identity, and one is sexual orientation. Why? It's interesting to me that this topic keeps coming up in Houston, when it's been resolved, in most major cities around the country. Let me offer these definitions again. Gender is gender is how you perceive yourself, whether you perceive yourself as male or female. That's-. Wait, let me finish that's gender. Gender identity is how you present yourself, whether you present yourself to the world as male or female. Sexual orientation is the body structure that you are attracted to that sexual orientation.

**T** Tom Richards 07:25

I am gay because I was born gay. I grant an award in the matter of genitals involved in it was just simply, it was just simply the, this is the way that my makeup is. I agree. And it has. And,

frankly, genitals when I was a child, I was gay, then, although I may not have recognized what it was-.

S

Sarah DePalma 07:53

You were attracted to men. Right? Right, but not to women, that you were attracted to the body structure and genital types of men, right?

T

Tom Richards 08:01

That's what I just said. But it wasn't a matter because because I was attracted to the genitals. It was a matter that I was attracted to them. I didn't understand-.

S

Sarah DePalma 08:12

People who find genitals unimportant are bisexual typically, because they can love men and women equally. Gay men or heterosexual men for that matter, are attracted to who they're attracted to, because of the body structure and in the general and the general construction. That's, you know, I don't know why that's so hard to admit. All you if you think that's wrong, I invite you to go to Lobo and look at the magazines on the stand. Lobo will go almost every week. Okay. And look at the look at the with the poses that are presented, look at the body structure that are presented. They know what's erotic to gay men in body structure. And in anybody who tells me that it's not what genitals has never sat in a gay bar, and listen to the discussion about size and ability. And I mean, it's just not-.

T

Tom Richards 09:02

But, but, but, but when I make love with another man, yes, it is an emotional attachment. But but there was also something else besides the genitals that that that allow me to, to create that that friendship that bond with with other males.

S

Sarah DePalma 09:25

Right, that sexual orientation, which is very different from gender identity. Okay, that's precisely where and I again, you know, it's amazing to me, this is so hard for gays and lesbians to admit. It may be why they don't understand the heterosexual criticism of them, because heterosexual won't admit it about themselves, either. No, and it's where the source of bigotry from both sides comes from,

T

Tom Richards 09:50

But, but really getting off. We're really getting off the discussion of what we started with, I believe But we have a problem. And I'm one of them. And I freely admit it, I'm not afraid to matter of fact, years ago, I had a problem with lesbians. I was very prejudiced about lesbians, I

could not understand it. This was years ago, until I met my real true companion, who taught who took me out and took me to a lesbian bar. And we made a lot of lesbian friends through the years that we were together. Did I forget this prejudiced, but there is a hang up within our community, and I am one of them that have the hang up, that that cannot see the transgender being part of the gay community, as is because we hear so much transgender people that are more transgender people that are homophobic than a mere 10%. I have yet to see. No, I take that back. Let him say this, I have yet to see a majority of them that were not homophobic.

S

Sarah DePalma 11:12

I submit to you that's a case of hearing what you want to hear.

T

Tom Richards 11:16

No, no, if you-

S

Sarah DePalma 11:20

-wanted on the internet,

T

Tom Richards 11:20

-it is simply a matter of observation.

S

Sarah DePalma 11:24

He's saying, if you think I'm wrong, I invite you to get on to the internet, and to subscribe to the different transgender lists that are on the internet. On talking about the list, for example, for transsexual minutes, there's a list there are three or four lists that are involved for political groups around the country, and invite you to sit around for a few minutes and see what happens when somebody makes a homophobic comment. That person is virtually beaten into the ground. It's a it's a case of hearing what you want to hear, because it's sad because mines are made up. And I learned early along to I learned a long time ago, not to argue with people whose minds are made up, it wastes my time, and it makes them angry. I will talk to anybody who wants to hear what we got to tell them.

T

Tom Richards 12:07

Well. Well, first of all our time was is pretty well up on this. But let me say this, that neither I nor the people I talked with are want to practice prejudice against the transgender segment at all. We just do not it is difficult for us to make the connection between those who want to have a sex change, and those that that are gay.

S

Sarah DePalma 12:38

And and one more one more time. transgendered people are not simply people who want to have a sex change. That's the third of it. So what you know, see if something here's something I guess the gay and lesbian community is gonna have to figure out what Wait, wait, Nola? Yes, let me let me bring this up. Something that gay and lesbian community has has is learned on the national level, but doesn't seem to have sunk in in Texas. Is that you need heterosexual support to win politically. Get used to it. And you're laughing but I'm telling you is a fact I've worked in-.

T

Tom Richards 13:16

Hungary ever really received heterosexual hell? Oh, my God, please don't send it my way. I would rather stay with my gay friends.

S

Sarah DePalma 13:25

I say, Well, okay, except that I lobbying the state legislature of lobbying Congress. And you know, if you want, you know, there are three openly gay lesbian and gay and lesbian congress people. That leaves 530 something straight people you got to convince if you want legislation. Now, whether you like that or not, that's the truth. bashing heterosexual bashing people who consider themselves that are sexual

T

Tom Richards 13:54

- heterosexual in my life-

S

Sarah DePalma 13:56

-that were up there are many people who have that's not going to be the answer. Having a prejudice towards straight people is not the answer. The reverse is true. There are a lot it is having gay straight people who have prejudiced toward gays and lesbians is not the answer either. They need to get it through their heads that a segment of the population is gay has always been gay will always be gay and they're going to have to learn to coexist with that.

T

Tom Richards 14:22

But but it is difficult for us to see how the transgender wished to tag themselves on to the gay movement that's not our now we we we are for we are for the transgender have an equal opportunity like everybody else. We want everybody to have equal rights, but we we cannot we it is difficult for us in our own minds, to connect transgender and with which we relate to sex change, as to the eye As to the gay movement, it it there. It's very difficult. Yeah, it we will take anybody's help you understand. And we are willing for you to, to accept our help. But but as far as saying that the transgender is part of the gay movement, we believe is a fallacy.

S

Sarah DePalma 15:27

Well, okay, so that puts you firmly in the 10% of the people who who are not going to help us. That's fine.

T

Tom Richards 15:33

No, no, no, no, no, that's not what I said. I said, we are willing to help you Sarah, but I will. But it's what I'm saying is is connect let me put it this drag queens, your confusion, the drag queens woman friend that went out tonight dressed in drag is part of the gay community but but to transgender, who was always cross dressing is not part of the gay community since they are not gay, how can they be part of the gay movement yet we will gladly accept to help, but that doesn't mean that they're part of, of the gay community. And, and, and, and you do have to pardon me because I do stutter. I have stuttered all my life. That doesn't mean that um, that I am confused or stupid. It is simply means that I stutter. I know that, okay. So so you do have to pardon me for that. I would not make a good radio commentator. But that's but that's my problem. But it is difficult for us to to connect to transgender as being gay, it is not. It is in no way gay. It is it. It is entirely something different. We are willing for you to have the same rights as anybody else that we want, as-.

S

Sarah DePalma 17:10

As long as you're as willing to let us have equal rights. As long as we don't come to you and say we have been part of your movement. We know the movement. Wait, wait, wait now because I'm going to tell you what I've been hearing. Okay, fine. You're willing to give us help. As long as we don't come to you and say we want part of your hate crimes bill. You're willing to give us help as long as we don't come to you and say we want to be included in your employment non discrimination act. You're willing to help us as long as we don't come to you and say we want but we have always been part.

T

Tom Richards 17:39

No, no, no. No, no.

S

Sarah DePalma 17:42

They'll tell me where I'm wrong.

T

Tom Richards 17:43

It no hate crime should be practiced against any human being.

S


Sarah DePalma 17:49

 Sarah DePalma 17:15

Are we are we is it okay for us to be included in the hate crimes bill? Yes. Okay, that makes you that you just peed stated a disagreement with the Lesbian Gay rights lobby?

 Tom Richards 17:57


No. If we believe that, that no hate crime, murder fact the stab wounds in my stomach is because somebody was looking for queer.

 Sarah DePalma 18:08

Is it alright for for transgenders to be included in the employment non discrimination act?

 Tom Richards 18:13

I'm sorry, run that pass?

 Sarah DePalma 18:14

Is it okay, the transgenders be included in the employment non discrimination act?

 Tom Richards 18:19

Yes, of course,

 Sarah DePalma 18:20

then you just stated a disagreement with a lot Kevin Republicans and Dale Carpenter, I don't want out of their way not to let it happen.

 Tom Richards 18:26

I do not care who I disagree with or who disagrees with me, it is the mere fact that there are many of us who do not see how you can can say you are part of the gay movement, you are not a part of the gay movement. This does not mean and I am not stating that you do not deserve the same rights that everybody else has. And you do not and and that you should be included in the hate crime bill, you should there should be a clause to state that you should not be discriminated against in employment, housing or anything else.

 Sarah DePalma 19:08

So that puts you two cuts above the people I just described. Excellent.

T

Tom Richards 19:13

From a job majority of the majority of the gay people I know now, I don't know about the goody two shoes out there. You understand I have never been a part of the goody two shoes. You understand. I am a part of the normal gay community. And, and that's who I am. That that's where I'm coming from now. As as far as a caucus or Republicans are concerned, I am not a Democrat or Republican. I don't care what political office they hold or anything else. But as far as transgender and gay people are concerned they are two separate movements. They are not the same movement.

S

Sarah DePalma 19:59

Okay. It's time for us to go. But I'm gonna leave this with a very simple response. We are very well aware there is a certain segment of the community that does not accept this as part of the gay community never has never will not a part of a community. And my response is, you know, my response is we know, and we don't care. Know the way okay, simple that the simple enough, we already know. We don't care. That is it sounds like we need to agree to disagree. That's great. That's why, That's why. That's why it's kind of America exists.

T

Tom Richards 20:33

We're not willing to bigotry. Sarah against you. I, I would be the first to stand up and sit and say that to anybody at anytime. But I am not willing to say yes, the transgender who are heterosexual or therefore part of the gay movement.

S

Sarah DePalma 20:52

This has been nice to have made up your mind. We pick the right. This is KPFT Houston, and KEOS College Station. That's right. Just College Station, not College Station, Brian anymore. Okay. Well, I'm glad that you brought this up because people have brought this up to me. And all I can say is, I'll put it in writing. I've said it on the air. People either accept us or they don't we're going to keep going forward to what we're doing.

T

Tom Richards 21:18

Know, it's not a matter of accepting or rejecting. It's simply a matter of recognizing two different distinct groups.

S

Sarah DePalma 21:25

You're entitled to your opinion. You're entitled to your opinion. Let's go to some music. I believe we have the flirtations here as a matter of fact, and I think we'll go to those now and then we'll come back and talk about needs to be remark.

J Jimmy Carper 21:46  
The Flirtations are always good as a nice calming effect.

S Sarah DePalma 21:50  
I think out of all of the songs I've heard the flirtations, do that easily my favorite.

J Jimmy Carper 21:55  
And it's one it's Tom's favorite, too.

S Sarah DePalma 21:57  
Yeah, I want to I want to tell listeners to first of all, I'm glad Tom, he had the courage to come in and say what he did, because I do think he speaks for a lot of folks.

J Jimmy Carper 22:06  
Yes, he does. I've heard the same throughout the community.

S Sarah DePalma 22:09  
Yeah, I have also. All I can say is this. i In the end, when it's going to come down to is the bigots don't care. They don't care whether we're part of the of the gay community, or they don't, or we're not there.

J Jimmy Carper 22:27  
They're an equal opportunity. People hate haters. Yeah, yeah, that they hate transsexuals. As much as they hate gays and lesbians,

S Sarah DePalma 22:36  
the fact of the matter is that even if a transgender person is straight, and then that's sometimes in our community is pretty hard to define, when you're in the middle of changing from one gender to another-.

J Jimmy Carper 22:46

And the self identification changes,

S

Sarah DePalma 22:50

Even if they are straight, they often are perceived as gay, so they're still going to suffer the same prejudice and killed and Oh, yeah. And the point that I would like to make to our audience, is that in the end, it doesn't matter. When Pat Robertson gets on television, and he says that the queers ought to go to concentration camps or whatever he means all of us, he isn't going to distinguish. So for I just wanted to repeat something, I've said it a year many times, but I'll say it again. In the end, we're either going to hang together, or we're going to hang separately. So just for whatever that's worth, I also wanted to point out one other thing. And that is that despite what you may have heard, Tom and I are not enemies, we lobby, we're gonna hug. You bet. You bet. So I don't want the listeners to get the wrong impression. No, no. The fact of the matter is, he does speak for a certain segment of the community I've heard from them have debated with them. And there came a point when some of us in the community sat down and are in the transgender community and said, Okay, what percentage of the gay community really feels this way? And it's our view that it's actually very small. We could concentrate on people who don't feel we belong. Or we can concentrate on the people, the Suzanna Anderson's and the Ray Aills, and, and the Anita Parkers and the hundreds of other people who have helped us over the years and continue to help us. And it's our choice to concentrate in the positive and this we're going to keep going. Yeah. So and I think it's pretty much from what I can tell it's the choice of the of the gay community as well, to do that. I don't think they're looking to make one anybody.

J

Jimmy Carper 24:31

Well, if you don't want to think of transgenders as part of your community, just think of it as coalition building there. Yeah, that's something we need to do.

S

Sarah DePalma 24:40

Also, if you're not part of being a Unitarian, which I am, is saying that other people have the right to different opinions. Still true. And I'm glad documents. So what do you say.

J

Jimmy Carper 24:51

In other news, go for it. Let's say I do want to congratulate the Colt 40 fives on 20 years. years of service to the community. And there was a certain section that that just amazed me that I read in the voice about. I mean that the boy says this wonderful article about the entire history. The boys now headed up by Deb, rebel, rebel. Yes. Let's see moneys for each of the call 45 charitable funds and they have three different funds are obtained through voluntary contributions from private individuals, organizations and our local fundraising activity. The group receives no governmental assistance of any kind. In the past 10 years, through these three charitable arms, the Colt 45 have distributed over \$510,000 in community funds directly back to the community itself, and with no administrative costs. Now, that's something no one else can say.

S

Sarah DePalma 26:03

The Colt 45 is another one of those groups that exist in the gay lesbian community who do great work quietly. Yeah, get very little credit for him. The community would be much poorer without them.

J

Jimmy Carper 26:14

Absolutely. \$510,000 in 10 years. That's piece of chain every cent goes to the charity.

S

Sarah DePalma 26:26

You know, Jerry Lewis telethon can't claim. Absolutely not. I want to congratulate the voice on your new inclusive banner also. Oh, yes.

J

Jimmy Carper 26:34

Yes. The voice of Houston's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. That's right under the title of the Houston voice.

S

Sarah DePalma 26:43

Yeah, I want I want to congratulate them on there's a very nice. There's a very nice editorial in the voice by Deborah Bell about inclusion. Yes. Which I thought was excellent. I do hope that the voice will continue the the editorial excellence that it had under-

J

Jimmy Carper 26:58

Oh, yes. Yes, I think it will under Deborah.

S

Sarah DePalma 27:00

I think so to Sherry. I'm sorry to see the Sherry left. Oh, I understand that she moved to Louisiana. Yes. But in any case, I have known Deborah for a long time we and we work and Lesbian Gay voices together. Mm hmm. And I'm glad she's got this position. I think she'll be great for it.

J

Jimmy Carper 27:19

Another another. Congratulation. Is Lobo bookshop. There move? Everybody's moving.

**S** Sarah DePalma 27:27  
These are the units they're all going to upscale. Yeah, it's a good sign. Yes.

**J** Jimmy Carper 27:31  
Crossroads move to 1111 Westheimer right next to Hollywood Video and the old tower theater and they have this outdoor coffee coffee shop which is just filled-.

**S** Sarah DePalma 27:43  
Right here next, those books.

**J** Jimmy Carper 27:45  
And now Lobo is now at 3939. S, Montrose and that's in that complex that houses general Joe's and marble marble slab Creamery.

**S** Sarah DePalma 27:59  
Oh, okay. I thought they were an extra Crossroad books, but-.

**J** Jimmy Carper 28:02  
They're not. No, no, no,

**S** Sarah DePalma 28:02  
They're on Montrose Boulevard.

**J** Jimmy Carper 28:05  
Yes. It's a wonderful location. And it's kind of divided now. You can there's a front door in the back door, you go in the front door. And they're all the books and magazines and jewelry and music and all the things you'd expect from Lobo. And then the back of the area is the video rental area with a back door. So if you want to, if you're you don't want to see you don't want people seeing you renting videos, you can go in the back door and do it.

**S** Sarah DePalma 28:37  
Yeah. Yeah. I was like, Well, I'm glad to see this businesses growing upscale, because that's a

sign that they've been making money and they're gonna survive. Yeah. So that's good.

**J** Jimmy Carper 28:48

And they have a great staff at Lobo. Oh, great stuff.

**S** Sarah DePalma 28:52

I want to go to the interview with Nancy of your mind. Okay. And I look at the relationship that is developing between the Human Rights Campaign in with the transgender organizations across the country as one of the most positive signs that's happened in quite some time. A year ago at this time, we were beating each other up. I know. I remember that. We had quite a shouting match at one point in Washington. But Elizabeth Burch has really and she told us that she believed in equality and transgender inclusion. And she has been every bit as good as her word. Wow. They have been working with a group called Gender pack in Washington DC, working with transgenders and need help trying to get us included into end. I'm keeping us updated on what's going on in Congress. They have just done that been as true as their word. And I try to make sure they get the message out to people that yeah, people of good faith can disagree and organizations that good faith can disagree and if they make up their mind I used to work together. Amazing things happen. One of those one of the best things to come out that's come out of this. I've had an opportunity to meet our next guest. And Nancy, the gay and lesbian community may not know who gay who needs if you're Meyer is, but when they go to bed tonight, they ought to go and say, Boy, I'm sure glad she worked for us and not the other side. She, she's smart, she's intelligent, she's tough. She knows how to get her point across. I and I just think she's a credit to the organization. And so with that in mind, I thought maybe we ought to go to Nancy Bure Meyer, and we'll talk about the Human Rights Campaign fund, Human Rights Campaign. I got your n transgender rights. Okay. On our radio show in the past, you've heard us talk about the Human Rights Campaign. In fact, on our last program, we spent some time talking about the defensive Marriage Act, the real call, we asked you to contact your congressman and attempt to defeat this bill. Well, today with this, we have Nancy Drew Meyer, who is the senior policy advocate for the Human Rights Campaign. Nancy, welcome to the show.

**N** Nancy Drew Meyer 31:11

Well, thank you very much, sir. It's great to be here.

**S** Sarah DePalma 31:13

Many people in our audience, they may not know who the Human Rights Campaign is or what they do. So why don't we start out talking about that tell folks about HRC a little bit.

**N** Nancy Drew Meyer 31:23

Okay, that'd be great. The Human Rights Campaign is the nation's largest wasn't a political organization. We focus primarily on federal policy, which means we work on lobbying Congress

organization. we focus primarily on federal policy, which means we work on lobbying Congress, and dealing with the administration and other federal agencies. We have a political action committee, which means to get involved in elections and actually try and elect fair minded members of Congress. And we also do educational programs, like the National Coming Out project is has the HRC. And so we work a lot on visibility issues and telling people about our lives so that people understand who we are.

S

Sarah DePalma 31:57

Okay. Now, your title, honestly, is senior policy advocate. What does that job involve?

N

Nancy Drew Meyer 32:05

That's basically a fancy title for a lobbyist, one of about five full time lobbyists we have here. And being a lobbyist is really about being an educator and sort of a salesperson at some level. I spent a lot of time going up to the hill and talking to Capitol Hill. And talking to both members of Congress and their staff, we do a lot of work with staff, educating them about the issues that we're facing and about our community, and trying to get them to do the right thing on legislative issues that that they face up in Congress.

S

Sarah DePalma 32:44

Now, of course, lobbyists have sort of gotten a, I guess, kind of a bad rap. I know many lobbyists. In fact, I do some lobbying myself. And I think most people might be surprised at lobbyists or you know, are, are just everyday folks trying to do a job.

N

Nancy Drew Meyer 32:59

It's to this image out there that as a lobbyist, I fly people to Puerto Rico to play golf, and I don't play golf, and I've never been to Puerto Rico. It's really, it's really not as mysterious a job as people think it is. It's really about putting together good information, accurate information, timely information, getting it to the right people, and building relationships, a lot of what gets done on Capitol Hill happens because of relationships you have with people in important positions on Capitol Hill. And it's not anywhere near as glamorous as some of the myths or misconceptions out there about it's really a lot of hard work. And it's and it's just about talking to people and helping people to understand what's going on.

S

Sarah DePalma 33:43

I do a lot of lobbying, particularly at the state level. And I know there's, for example, there's kind of a feeling in Texas, that the politicians are slimy. And yet most of the politicians I know, particularly state legislators work incredibly long hours for virtually no pay. So the reputation is really not.

N

Nancy Drew Meyer 34:02

It's true. I mean, members of Congress, I mean, I don't know why somebody would want to be a member of Congress, because they spend incredibly long days here, and then they go home and they campaign and they meet with constituents, and it's really hard to sort of have any kind of personal life. And obviously, their their compensation for that you get to make the law of the land, which is a pretty interesting job, but it is a lot of work and and they just they're on all the time.

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Sarah DePalma 34:32

Now, one of the things that I found in lobbying is it seems like there are two different types. One is either reactive, you know, where somebody has a bill and you find out about last minute, or the other courses bill where you try and introduce them yourself. So when we start talking about a reactive kind of lobbying, how does that happen? What would that involve?

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Nancy Drew Meyer 34:52

Well, basically, there are a number of folks in Congress, Senator Jesse Helms from North Carolina and Rob presentative Bob Dole from California being perhaps to the most notorious, who ever made a living out of attacking the Lesbian Gay community in Congress and going after us in a variety of different ways introducing discriminatory language, they don't call us and tell us they're going to do it, we usually find out about it at the last minute, as you say. And that's particularly difficult if it's done in the form of an amendment not not every thing that goes through Congress is done as a separate bill. Sometimes, there are amendments or sort of addition put on to bigger bills. And in that case, we might have a matter of, you know, like an hour's notice, as opposed to, you know, even a week, it makes it very difficult to respond, because you don't know what it's going to be about. And you don't know you have to like, be very, very fast about developing the responses and getting people to stand up and oppose this stuff. So it's a very challenging thing. One of the other examples that of a bill that is has been introduced is the Defense of Marriage Act. And, you know, there was some rumor that it was going to happen, and the Family Research Council, which is a religious, political extremist organization, on the other side of this debate, had mentioned that it was coming, but we didn't know who was going to introduce it or when. And, you know, it just makes it really difficult to prepare for something like that. But that was introduced last week, and we actually did that a hearing on it on Wednesday.

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Sarah DePalma 36:24

About that Bob, those gone will help slow down at billing.

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Nancy Drew Meyer 36:30

Not necessarily, although Bob Dole was a co sponsor that legislation in the Senate, it's probably one of the last things because before he left the Senate, which is quite unfortunate. But the lead sponsor of the bill was the person actually introduced it, as opposed to just add their name to it after the fact is a guy by the name of Don Nichols from Oklahoma. He is vying for the

Senate majority of slots are the top Republicans won in the Senate as a number of other people, including Trent Lott from Mississippi. They are in fact more conservatives in battle. So it is not necessarily good news for us that that Bob Dole was leaving, because the people who are in line to fill his position are perhaps even more conservative than Bob Dole.

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Sarah DePalma 37:15

For those who don't know, you. Gingrich was once a protege of Trent Lott. So this is not good news in the Senate.

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Nancy Drew Meyer 37:22

No, indeed, No, indeed, Trent Lott is, is it's going to be bad news for us.

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Sarah DePalma 37:27

Okay, well, now, when a bill comes up like that, and you've got, say, two or three hours to react, how do you actually go about that? I think listeners would be interested to find out what what's involved with something like that?

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Nancy Drew Meyer 37:39

Well, first of all, remember to breathe, right? I'm gonna panic. And basically, we pull together as quickly as possible, like one page of like, what, what does that legislation does? What are the arguments against it, and then we get it out as broadly as possible, depending on the time we have. And obviously, that's easier in the Senate, because there's only 100 senators as opposed to 435 house numbers. But you get it out as widely as you can in the time that you have to do it. And we use a variety of mechanisms. To do that, including like back fax boards, we have services, we can fax stuff out on an immediate basis. We haven't set up email with Jeff. But that's probably something we should think about doing. But mostly we get on the phone. And we talk to staff and we tell them what's going on, to try to get the information. And typically we would focus on either people we want to have go to the floor and speak about this issue that usually they have debate on on the floor of the House or the Senate and you want our friends to get up and articulate those, those arguments and why this is bad legislation. And then we would focus on what we would call swing votes. So it probably wouldn't go and we wouldn't talk to the to the Trent lots and and the Jesse Helms and the you know, all of the really conservative folks because we're not going to get their vote no matter what. So we go to our friends to make sure they know what's going on. And then we go to the swing folks, people who have mixed records on our issues, to try and give them the strongest arguments we can to get them to do the right time.

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Sarah DePalma 39:15

So it's almost like crisis management.

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Nancy Drew Meyer 39:19

Absolutely, absolutely. And it's sort of an all hands on deck kind of thing. You know, when something like that comes up, you know, the entire organization sort of like pulls together and everybody sort of takes a piece and, and make sure that we do everything we can to get the information into the hands of the people who need it. And then sometimes they'll even go up to the hill as they sort of head over because the actual floor where they vote is in a separate building from where they spend most of their time in their offices, but they have to walk from one to the other. So we'll even sometimes go up and stand outside if it's a nice day and try and catch members on their way in and talk to them directly. Oftentimes members will hand out materials inside the chamber, we're not allowed in the chamber only members of Congress and their staff, but they'll sometimes do like a flyer that talks about the issues, we can sometimes hand out flyers outside, but we can't do it on the floor. So we try and get the information out in as many ways as possible.

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Sarah DePalma 40:16

Now, when you have a bill that you're trying to introduce, I know from my own experience in different legislatures, that it that's a, that's a little bit more time consuming. But I think a lot of people have misconceptions about how a bill gets introduced and what happens to it, particularly in Congress. I want to talk about that a little bit. I don't know we have some a generic bill that you want to introduce, or how would you go about that?

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Nancy Drew Meyer 40:40

Well, you develop sort of a concept of what you want to have happen, you know, and sort of what you want the bill to do. And then the first thing you need to do is find a member of Congress who would be willing to introduce it, because groups don't introduce legislation, only members of the body do only members of Congress. So you would go and you would work with, you'd find a member of Congress is sort of agrees with your perspective on what that it's necessary to have this bill enacted into law that has a good cause a good purpose and would be a good thing. And then you sort of negotiate about what the language should say, and you work with the lawyers to make sure that the language does exactly what you want it to nothing more, nothing less. And when you're comfortable with that, the member of Congress actually introduces the bill. And sometimes you spend some time getting other members of Congress to what we call co sponsor the bill, which is to basically sign your name onto it. And it shows sort of a high level of support for the legislation and basically guarantees their support through the process for the legislation. And so then you introduce the bill. And then the bill typically gets referred to a committee. And depending on what the bill does, it would go to a number of different committees. And then sort of the committee process starts where you would have hearings, and then the committee would have a chance to amend the bill. And then if you're lucky, it gets to the floor of a lot of bills get introduced and actually just go to committee and just sit and nothing actually happens to them. And then in Congress, it's what we call it to your session. So every two years, things have to be reintroduced. So that's kind of kind of the beginning of that process.

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Sarah DePalma 42:10

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Saran DePalma 42:18

Now, one of the things I've noticed that I was telling somebody the other day that I was involved in the legislative process in Colorado, and everywhere that we went in the state legislature, we found we found folks the forum on the family folks trailing us. And they were of course, they are highly organized. These repeat, they have complete computer lists, they know what's in committee, they know when it's going to come up. They know who's going to do it. You might talk a little let's talk a little bit about the opposition, and particularly the right wing. And I think, you know, folks reading the paper that they're organized, but they don't really know how they operate.

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Nancy Drew Meyer 42:57

It's true. They are very organized and part of why this organized is that they're very well resourced. They have a lot of money. But, you know, something like a group, like the Christian coalition has about 1.5 million numbers. The Human Rights Campaign, although we're the largest lesbian and gay organization in the country, as 150,000