

1. WHAT DOES THE ORDINANCE DO?

All hardworking Omahans should have the chance to earn a living and provide for themselves and their families without fear of being unfairly fired for reasons that have nothing to do with their job performance. The Equal Employment Ordinance would work to ensure fairness in the workplace by prohibiting discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

2. WHY DOES OMAHA NEED THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE?

All Omaha workers should be treated fairly and equally. The Equal Employment Ordinance expands existing city laws to guarantee those same protections to gay and transgender workers. An August, 2011, poll discovered that a 73% majority of Nebraska residents recognize discrimination as a problem in our country and 32% describe discrimination as a major problem. A June, 2011, local study by the University of Nebraska Medical Center recommended that community leaders reduce barriers that prevented gay and transgender Omahans from being out in order to improve public health and workplace performance. According to the Williams Institute, up to 43% of gay persons and 90% of transgender persons report some form of workplace discrimination or harassment – including being fired, not being promoted, or being passed over for a job – because of their identity and not their workplace performance.

3. WHO IS PROTECTED BY THE ORDINANCE

All Omaha workers are currently protected from various forms of workplace discrimination based on race, religion, gender, age, and disability, among others. The Equal Employment ordinance would simply guarantee gay and transgender workers the same protections that already exist for these other groups.

4. HOW WILL THE ORDINANCE BE ENFORCED?

The ordinance allows gay and transgender people to file claims of discrimination with the city using the process that currently exists for other, similar claims.

5. WILL THIS CAUSE LAWSUITS THAT WILL DRIVE AWAY BUSINESS?

No. The many cities, companies and states that have implemented employment discrimination protections have not seen any significant surge in litigation. The Williams Institute found that complaints of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation were filed at an average rate of three to four per year for every ten thousand employees.

6. WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES?

An October, 2011, poll of small business owners by the Center for American Progress found that: 67% of small business owners report absolutely no costs associated with non-discrimination policies. The few companies that did cite costs noted that those costs were negligible, representing less than 1% of annual operating costs; 7 out of 10 small business owners nationwide already have such policies in place.

7. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO BUSINESSES?

Already, all but 2 of the top 50 "Fortune 500" companies include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies; 7 out of 10 companies also include gender identity. Companies with these workplace policies report the following economic benefits: Recruitment and retention of the best talent; Ideas and innovation drawn from a diverse work force; Increased employee productivity and lower costs for business

8. WILL A BUSINESS HAVE TO INSTALL A NEW BATHROOM?

No, this is a myth. This ordinance does not affect building code.

9. WHAT OTHER CITIES HAVE ENACTED A COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE?

As of January 25, 2012, 162 other municipalities in the United States have adopted an ordinance similar to the one proposed in Omaha. With some city ordinances in effect since the 1970's, both large cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and smaller, regional cities such as Kansas City, Minneapolis, Denver and even Council Bluffs have determined that fairness in the workplace will help build successful communities.

10. HOW WILL THIS ORDINANCE AFFECT MY PERSONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS?

This ordinance does NOT affect personal religious beliefs or practices; it contains specific exemptions for church and religious organizations allowing the ordinance to be flexible enough to respect differences while meeting the requirements of the law.

11. DOES OMAHA SUPPORT THIS ORDINANCE?

According to an August, 2011, statewide poll, Nebraskans strongly support ending workplace discrimination against gay and transgender persons; in fact, 73% of Nebraskans support protecting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from employment discrimination. In the city of Omaha, support increases to almost 8 in 10 people.

12. WHY IS THIS ORDINANCE SO IMPORTANT FOR THE GROWTH OF OMAHA?

The Equal Employment Ordinance will bring the city of Omaha in line with successful employment practices of corporate America and other municipalities of our size to help attract and retain businesses and talented employees.