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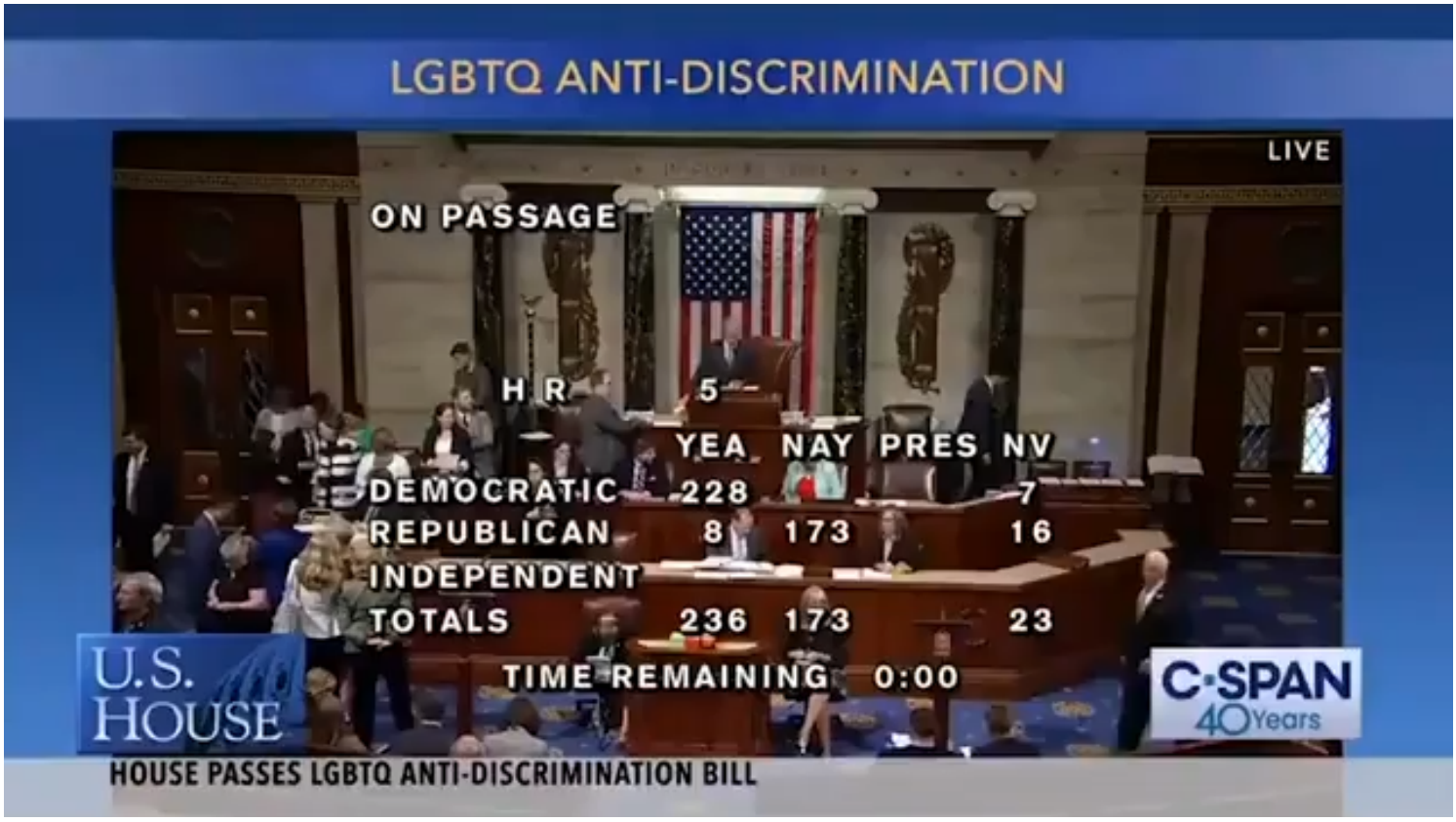
Most Republicans Say No One Should Be Fired for Being Gay yet Don't Back Anti-Discrimination Law: Poll

BY ALEXANDRA HUTZLER ON 10/11/19 AT 12:14 PM EDT



U.S. LGBTQ RIGHTS TRUMP ADMINISTRATION REPUBLICANS

A majority of Republicans don't think an employer should be able to fire someone based on sexual orientation, but less than half support an anti-discrimination law that would prohibit companies from doing exactly that.

According to a YouGov poll released Friday, 65 percent of Republicans say an employer should not be allowed to fire someone for being gay. Just 18 percent of Republicans polled said companies should be able to do so, and 17 percent weren't sure.

But there's a large disconnect between what Republicans think about the issue and how much legislative action they would take to remedy it.

According to the survey, half of American voters (51 percent) support the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act. The legislation would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in all aspects of employment for companies with at least 15 employees, including hiring, firing, promotion and compensation. The act was introduced in 2013 but has been stalled in Congress.

Only 40 percent of Republicans support the act, while 36 percent oppose it, according to the poll. Of the Democrats surveyed, 71 percent support the legislation while 19 percent are opposed.

In August, the Department of Labor proposed a policy that would allow federal contractors to discriminate against people who don't share their religious

views. The plan would permit employers to not hire lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, as well as those who don't share their religious beliefs. Advocacy groups have blasted the move as "dangerous" and "unconscionable."

In May, the House of Representatives passed the Equality Act, which would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, as well as for housing, credit and other federal programs. The legislation has not yet been taken up in the Senate but is unlikely to be successful in the GOP-controlled chamber.

Demonstrators in favor of LGBT rights rally outside the Supreme Court on October 8 as the court hears oral arguments in three cases dealing with workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. A new poll shows that a majority of Republicans don't think someone should be fired for being gay but don't support a proposed federal anti-discrimination law.

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In addition, the Trump administration is arguing that LGBTQ workers can be fired because of their gender identity or sexual orientation in three cases before the Supreme Court this term.

Earlier this week, the court heard oral arguments in a case about whether the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act bars employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and transgender status. The justices heard two arguments, the first from gay men who said they were fired because of their sexual orientation. The second case was brought forward by Aimee Stephens, a transgender woman who said she was terminated from her job when she announced she'd be embracing her gender identity at work.

If the Supreme Court rules that the Civil Rights Act does cover the LGBTQ community, it would apply employment protection to millions of people across the country. Conservative Justice Neil Gorsuch, who was appointed by Trump, said that the language in the legislation was "really close, really close" and that he feared a Supreme Court decision, instead of leaving the matter up to Congress, would cause "massive social upheaval."

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