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**Jury ACCESS Act Approved by Senate Committee as Part of Appropriations Bill**

**ACT BANS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST JURORS BASED ON SEXUAL  
ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY**

July 26, 2013—The National LGBT Bar Association commends the Senate Appropriations Committee for approving the bipartisan Jury ACCESS Act as part of the 2014 financial services appropriations bill. The Jury ACCESS (Access for Capable Citizens and Equality in Service Selection) Act prevents discrimination in jury selection based on sexual orientation or gender identity. It was reintroduced in January by Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and co-sponsored by Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

The LGBT Bar worked closely with Senator Shaheen's office in drafting and supplementing the Act to ensure that the LGBT community would be protected in federal jury non-discrimination policy.

"The Jury ACCESS Act is an important piece of legislation for the LGBT community and we are pleased to see it move forward within the Appropriations bill," said D'Arcy Kemnitz, Executive Director of the LGBT Bar. "Serving on juries is a fundamental right required by our government and LGBT individuals should not have to fear discrimination or embarrassment during the selection process. We commend Senators Shaheen, Collins and Whitehouse for their leadership on this issue and dedication to equality."

Currently, the United States Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin and economic status. Failing to include sexual orientation and gender identity denies countless individuals a jury of their peers. Serving on a jury is a civic duty and to infringe upon that right is prejudicial. Equality extends to the courtroom and especially to juries. No one should be subjected to discrimination simply for performing a civil duty.

The Jury ACCESS Act would amend the federal statute to include sexual orientation and gender identity, protecting those groups from removed from a jury without cause. Striking jurors on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity would be prohibited under federal law for the first time.

"Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity simply has no place in the United States," said Senator Shaheen. "The judicial process should represent our nation's principles of inclusion and acceptance, and eliminating the discriminatory exclusion of LGBT jurors is a necessary step to meeting that goal."

The appropriations bill passed through the committee with a bipartisan vote of 16-14. The full bill covers issues of government spending and included the Jury ACCESS Act because the finance committee within the Appropriations Committee oversees the judiciary.

The [National LGBT Bar Association](#) is a national association of lawyers, judges and other legal professionals, law students, activists, and affiliated lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender legal organizations. The Association promotes justice in and through the legal profession for the LGBT community in all its diversity. This year marks the 25 anniversary of the [Lavender Law<sup>®</sup> Conference and Career Fair](#), the only one of its kind for LGBT and allied legal professionals.

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