



# C&F REPORT

## Media Misrepresent Report on Corporate 'Gay' Advocacy

***AP, Others Wildly Exaggerate Findings in HRC Survey***

*News analysis*

By [Robert H. Knight](#)

**"92% of Major U.S. Firms Protect Gay Workers,  
Group Says"**

— *Philadelphia Inquirer* headline, August 14, 2002

**"Most major companies have policies prohibiting  
discrimination against gays and lesbians, and more  
than two-thirds offer health benefits to same-sex  
domestic partners, an advocacy group said  
Tuesday."**

— *Associated Press* reporter Jonathan Salant, August 13,  
2002

**"More than nine out of 10 major U.S. companies  
have policies prohibiting discrimination against  
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advocacy group reported."**

— *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 14, 2002

It sounds impressive, but it is false. Less than 1 percent of American firms have either "sexual orientation" policies or offer domestic partner benefits.

The Human Rights Campaign, the leading homosexual pressure group, sent a survey to 700 companies, but received fewer than 100 responses. They then added information from other companies to compile a list of 319 companies, many of which had already been identified as agreeable to homosexual initiatives. HRC then reported that 92 percent of this select group had "sexual orientation" policies and that 69 percent had

domestic partner policies.

Major media treated this biased sample as if it applied to every company in America. None noted that only 13 percent of the 700 firms that were sent the survey had bothered to respond. HRC's own Web site claims that only 2,200 companies in America (out of 5.6 million firms) have "sexual orientation" policies and that 4,500 offer domestic partner benefits.

About 17,000 companies have 500 or more employees, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. More than 2.5 million firms have from one to 4 employees. Even if the data reported by HRC were extrapolated to only companies with 500 or more employees, the percentage having homosexual policies would be less than 30 percent. There is no denying that more companies have been adopting such policies, but the scope of the development has been greatly exaggerated.

"It sounds like the media is trying to create a bandwagon effect, saying that 9 out of 10 companies are doing this, and that if you are part of that 8 percent that aren't, you're part of the narrow-minded fringe that still doesn't get it," said Rich Noyes, director of media analysis at the Alexandria, Va.-based [Media Research Center](#).

How could such distortions slip through so many editors?

"I think a lot of journalists are good with words, but not with numbers," Noyes said. "This seems like an easy thing to grasp. But if the number seems about right to an editor, I don't think there is a lot of investigation before it gets into print."

Are editors and reporters less skeptical when it comes to claims made by certain groups? "I think the media elite tend to share the view that gay issues are issues where the public needs to be educated and modernized and I think they don't like stories that play into what they regard as antiquated stereotypes," Noyes said.

HRC's 24-page report, the "Corporate Equality Index 2002," centered on the finding that 13 companies in America had 100 percent ratings from HRC on "gay" issues. The report did not claim, as AP, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and other news outlets reported, that "most" companies had "sexual orientation" policies or domestic partner benefits.

Many of the firms offering domestic partner benefits were coerced into doing so by a San Francisco city ordinance

requiring such policies by firms that do business in the city, including major airlines, which sued unsuccessfully to be exempted.

At the press conference, HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch praised corporate America, saying, "the truth is, it's corporate America that has been the unlikely hero in the movement for equality for gay and lesbian Americans."

Here's more perspective: HRC selectively surveyed 319 companies. One-third of them were based in New York or California. HRC could find only 13 corporations in America that garnered a 100 percent score on their corporate "equality" index (which includes "transgender" issues): Aetna Inc.; AMR Corp./American Airlines; Apple Computer Inc.; Avaya Inc.; Eastman Kodak Co.; Intel Corp.; J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.; Lucent Technologies Inc.; NCR Corp.; Nike Inc.; Replacements Ltd.; Worldspan L.P.; and Xerox Corp."

Another 82 companies scored high but failed to make the 100 percent list only because they did not include transgenderism in their policies, HRC said.

"At the other end of the scale, three companies scored zero: CBRL Group Inc./Cracker Barrel; Emerson Electric Co.; and Lockheed Martin Corp. None of the three have any policies aimed at treating their GLBT employees fairly and all three have resisted shareholder resolutions urging them to include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies," the report said.

In other words, the companies that treat everyone the same, with no special recognition based on sexual proclivities, are singled out for being "anti-gay."

*The Washington Post* reported that some companies "said they were delighted to receive a high ranking from the Human Rights Campaign.

"Taking a stand against discrimination — whether based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or anything else — is not politically correct," said Donald J. Carty, chairman and chief executive officer of American Airlines. "It is simply correct, and it is the right thing to do."

Carty has also stated his support for the proposed federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act, a bill sponsored by Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) that would force all employers with 15 or more employees to adopt homosexuality and bisexuality

as specially protected categories. (HRC has resisted including a "transgender" ("gender equity") provision in ENDA, making it ironic that its "perfect score" for companies includes this element.)

Here is how HRC explains the methodology used in their survey:

"The 2002 HRC Corporate Equality Index rated 319 companies that were drawn from the following sources:

- The 2002 Fortune 500
- The 200 largest privately held companies from the 2001 Forbes Private 500
- Other companies with at least 500 employees that sought a CEI [Corporate Equality Index] rating or about which HRC WorkNet [HRC's database on companies] had sufficient information to derive a score."

HRC said it gathered data on some companies through "gay" employee groups, news stories and the Gay & Lesbian Values Index, which HRC recently took over from another homosexual group. Of 221 firms, 92 percent reported a "sexual orientation" policy, and 69 percent offered health insurance benefits to domestic partners.

HRC's press conference was carried on C-SPAN, which routinely covers homosexual activist events but in recent years has failed to cover several countervailing pro-family events critical of homosexual activism. Recently, C-SPAN declined to cover a seminar on the homosexual agenda in the schools, as well as one at the National Press Club exposing the pedophilic underpinnings of Judith Levine's much-publicized book, *Harmful to Minors*. Both events were sponsored by the Culture and Family Institute, an affiliate of Concerned Women for America (and publisher of this article).

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