

Chaos in House After GOP Votes Down LGBT Measure

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Brandon Weathersby
Thursday, 19 May 2016 15:06 -



MADISON - Today, Republicans once again took major efforts to ensure discrimination continues against members of the LGBT community. When Speaker Paul Ryan was asked if his leadership team pressured members to switch their votes he said "I don't know the answer. I don't even know," and then continued to tell reporters he supports the legislation that allows discrimination against the LGBT community. Speaker Ryan is either incompetent about what is going on in his party or worse...

Read excerpts from the article below.

[Chaos in House after GOP votes down LGBT measure](#)

The Hill // Cristina Marcos and Mike Lillis

May 19, 2016

The House floor devolved into chaos and shouting on Thursday as a measure to ensure protections for members of the LGBT community narrowly failed to pass after Republican leaders urged their members to change their votes.

Initially, it appeared Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney's (D-N.Y.) amendment had enough votes to pass, as "yes" votes piled up to 217 against 206 "no" votes.

But it eventually failed on a 212-213 vote after a number of Republican lawmakers changed their votes from "yes" to "no."

GOP leaders held the vote open as they pressured members to change sides. Infuriating Democrats, they let lawmakers switch their votes without coming to the House floor.

"Shame! Shame! Shame!" Democrats chanted as they watched the vote tally go from passage of Maloney's amendment to narrow failure.

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Twenty-nine Republicans voted for Maloney's amendment to a spending bill for the Department of Veterans Affairs and military construction projects, along with all Democrats in the final roll call.

"This is one of the ugliest episodes I've experienced in my three-plus years as a member of this House," Maloney, who is openly gay, said while offering his amendment.

The amendment would have effectively nullified a provision in the defense authorization that the House passed late Wednesday night. The language embedded in the defense bill states that religious corporations, associations and institutions that receive federal contracts can't be discriminated against on the basis of religion.

Democrats warn that such a provision could potentially allow discrimination against the LGBT community in the name of religious freedom. Maloney's amendment specifically would prohibit funds to implement contracts with any company that doesn't comply with President Obama's executive order banning federal contractors from discriminating against LGBT workers.

When asked about the vote-switching, Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) denied knowing whether his leadership team pressured Republicans.

"I don't know the answer. I don't even know," Ryan told reporters.

He defended the provision in the defense bill.

[...]

Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.), who, like Maloney, is a member of the Congressional LGBT Caucus, said he saw Rep. Robert Dold (R-Ill.) approach Maloney on the floor and lambast his own GOP leadership team for their handling of the vote.

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[...]

Procedurally, once the clock expires on a vote, the lawmaker holding the gavel usually asks if any members want to change their votes. At that point, the electronic voting machines are switched off, and any vote-changing members are expected to approach the front of the chamber, known as the well, to make their switch in person.

In this case, the Speaker pro tempore never asked that question; GOP leaders simply kept the vote open to allow members to make the switch electronically without revealing themselves.

[...]

The decision to leave the clock open marks a sharp break under Ryan, who assumed the Speaker's gavel with vows to return to regular order and an insistence on obeying House rules, including the use of the vote clock. It's a dynamic that was not overlooked by Democrats following Thursday's vote.

[...]

Read the full article [here](#).