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Chaos In The House Over Vote On LGBTQ Protections

BY AIVI NGUYEN • MAY 23, 2016

On Thursday, May 19, 2016, the U.S. House of Representatives went to vote on an amendment to a defense authorization bill that had passed the day before. The amendment sought to overturn the “religious liberty amendment,” a Republican provision in the bill that protected federal contractors from claims of discrimination based on religious beliefs. Democrats criticized the religious liberty amendment, accusing Republicans of trying to sidestep President Obama’s 2014 Executive Order barring discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation in federal contracts.

The proposed amendment up for vote on Thursday offered LGBTQ protections to counteract the religious liberty amendment.

Initially, it looked like the amendment would pass and the House Democrats were audibly pleased as the clapping and whistling could be heard during the voting and tallying. At the time the vote was supposed to end, 217 members had voted in favor, including 35 Republicans, and only 206 opposed.

However, the vote was left open long after the two-minute allotment, while Republican members encouraged their colleagues to change their votes. Democrats can be heard protesting and demanding that rules be followed.

Then votes began to change. When the first Republican vote changed, Democrats booed loudly. As more votes changed, there were chants of “Shame! Shame! Shame!” After all was said and done, the amendment did not pass by one single vote, 212 to 213.

House members have taken to social media to express their very polarizing opinions about how the vote went down. The tension surrounding this vote is indicative of the public’s disagreement over LGBTQ rights and it is clear that this issue is an important one in the upcoming election.