

# Commission on Human Rights

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## **Soldier for Justice Award to Vicco KY mayor for protecting people from discrimination with 'Kentucky Small Town Courage'**

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The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights has awarded Vicco, Kentucky Mayor Johnny Cummings with a special award to recognize him and the city for creating local civil rights protections to the Vicco community and for expanding civil rights protections to cover people from discrimination who are not protected by federal and Kentucky laws.

Kentucky Commission on Human Rights Education and Outreach Field Supervisor Juan Pena presented the Kentucky Unbridled Spirit for Justice Award to Cummings at the recent Vicco City Council meeting.

“Mayor Cummings and the City of Vicco are to be commended for creating a local ordinance that includes the classes of sexual orientation and gender identity,” said John J. Johnson, executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights.

“People belonging to these classes are not protected from discrimination by the United States or the Kentucky Civil Rights acts, and this move to do so on a local level demonstrates the kind of courage that our state's small Appalachian towns are known for,” Johnson said.



*From Left to right are Vicco City Commissioner Claude Branson, Vicco City Commissioner Lula Gibson, Vicco Mayor Johnny Cummings, Kentucky Commission on Human Rights Education and Outreach Field Supervisor Juan Pena, and Vicco City Commissioner Jimmy Slone.*

Vicco is in Perry County and has a population of 335 people. It became only the fourth city in the state to pass such an ordinance and is the first rural and small Kentucky town to do so. In fact, it is believed at this point by media to be the smallest municipality in the United States to pass a law that protects from discrimination people who are Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The ordinance was passed on Jan. 14.

In addition, the Vicco ordinance will ban discrimination based on the classes of race, religion, gender and age. The local law will be enforceable in the areas of housing, employment and public accommodations.

Louisville, Lexington and Covington, are the other Kentucky cities with “fairness” ordinances, which are local civil rights ordinances that include the classes of sexual orientation and sexual or gender identity. Louisville and Lexington are the two largest urban centers in the state, and Covington is just across Ohio River bridges from the large city of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights Unbridled Spirit for Justice Award to Mayor Cummings states: “For his leadership in adopting local legislation to protect people from discrimination based on the classes of race, disability, national origin, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation and gender identity in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodations.”

“The Unbridled Spirit for Justice Award is given by the commission to people who are human and civil rights foot soldiers, individuals who stand in the gap, performing necessary, basic, and sometimes unrecognized tasks, without whom civil rights achievements would not be made,” Johnson said.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights is the state authority that enforces the Kentucky Civil Rights Act and the U.S. Civil Rights Act for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Kentucky Civil Rights Act protects people from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, and disability in the areas of housing, employment, public accommodations and financial transactions. It further protects people in the area of employment from discrimination based on age (40 years old and over) and based on tobacco-smoking status. The law further protects in the area of housing families with children under the age of 18 years old and women who are pregnant. It is against the law to retaliate against any person who makes a discrimination complaint to the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights. Commission rulings on discrimination complaints have the authority of a court of law.

For help with discrimination, contact the commission at 1.800.292.5566. The TDD number is 502.595.4084.