

LGBT Truckers

The Issue

There has long been no space for diversity in the white, male dominated culture of trucking, an industry that employs 7 million essential workers responsible for more than \$760 bn in transportation spend making up about 10% of the US GDP. Today, equal rights and equitable treatment for LGBT workers are the exception rather than the rule.

Outright discrimination and mental or verbal abuse against LGBTQ+ truckers are commonplace, creating collateral damage to employees, employers, and our democracy. The behavior of colleagues, employers, peers, or shippers can push members of the LGBTQ+ community back into the closet, depriving them not only of the dignity, but frequently the physical and emotional safety employees deserve. Companies remain ill-equipped to create work environments that are welcoming to LGBT drivers. A lack of awareness can escalate situations leading to turnover, liabilities, reputational exposure, and sometimes even the loss of life.

Yet, as the sector has been facing a chronic shortage of drivers and workers of all identities found their profession in this sector, the narrow, prejudice-laden culture has increasingly grown at odds with the reality of what the industry needs. The failure of the private and public sector to address these issues underscores the significance of the work LGBT Truckers has been pursuing.

Mission

LGBT Truckers is focused on achieving full equal, equitable, and safe treatment of all members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer+ community in the trucking industry. The organization is focused on:

- **Awareness Creation:** Increasing the sensitivity to LGBTQ+ issues with truckload carriers, brokers, dispatchers, shippers, consignees, and other organizations in the freight industry.
- **Community Building:** Establish a community for mutual support amongst LGBTQ+ drivers, family, and allies.
- **Education:** Sensitivity training, educational or advisory services to employers to attract and retain LGBTQ+ truck drivers more effectively by creating a culture of respect and policies for LGBTQ+ truckers to achieve equitable and equal treatment.
- **Policy Advocacy:** advocate for LGBTQ+ rights with policy makers in the relevant departments at federal and state level
- **Education:** Provide support and resources to LGBTQ+ truck drivers for job search, issue reporting, conflict resolution, and legal representation.
- **Health & Safety:** Implement measures for the emotional and physical health of LGBTQ+ employees whether at home, in the office or en route

Background

Originally named LGBT Truckers, LGBT Truckers was founded in 2008 by Shelle Lichti after her gay male friend and fellow truck driver terminated his life unable to deal with the emotional distress of a rape at a truck stop. What first started as a conference call line for LGBTQ+ truckers to find a safe zone in the community has attracted more than 5,000 followers on Facebook as well as a corps of active volunteers.

The organization has created awareness for the LGBT community at the Great American Truck Show, the Mid-America Truck Show, teamed up with Uber at San Francisco Pride and various other events in the country. It has supported corporate diversity efforts at Uber, Hirschbach Motorlines, and XPO. In 2019 at the Mid-American Truck Show in Louisville, KY, it launched the Rainbow Rider – a fully operating truck that Shelle personally and fearlessly drives through the country, despite frequent vandalism and attacks. Finally, the organization continues to support the mental and physical health of community members, including by facilitating counseling, safe practices and medical treatments. Shelle has led and funded this informal community of volunteers with proceeds from fund raising events, sales of swag as well as personal contributions.



Contact

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Select Media Coverage

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