



Texas Republicans file bills targeting drag shows.

Republican State Rep. Jared Patterson (R-Denton) is one of three lawmakers who filed bills in the Texas Legislature aiming to make it illegal for a bar or restaurant to host a drag show unless classified as a “sexually oriented business.” Texas HB 643 would make it illegal for restaurants and bars to host drag shows unless they are classified as a strip club. “If you want to be a sexually oriented business, that’s fine, but you need to play by the same rules as everyone else,” Rep. Patterson said. Patterson admits the bill needs to be tightened to target sexually explicit shows. He said that’s why they filed the bill early, to get feedback. SOURCE: Daranesha Herron, KVUE-ABC, January 17, 2023.

Why do so many Gen-Z youth hate America?

In previous generations, rebellious youth were always a topic of consternation. But something has changed that should have today’s older generations very worried. In the last ten years, there has been a sharp decline in national pride among younger Americans. This is not an accident, but a deliberate attempt by the left to destroy America from within, through leftist indoctrination in our schools. A recent Morning Consult poll found that only 16 percent of Gen Z is proud to be American. Gen-Z “Zoomers” are the first generations raised with ‘cancel culture’ and forced conformity of thought. To break with the pack and proclaim American exceptionalism is verboten. This growing problem will require older generations do more than just tsk-tsking. They must educate the young people in their lives about the great American experiment; one that requires continual effort from all to ensure its success. SOURCE: Karol Markowicz, Fox News Opinion, January 17, 2023.

FDA defends abortion pill access in Texas.

An order granting the motion from conservative legal group Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) to stop the distribution of the abortion pill, Mifepristone, would improperly undo “longstanding scientific determination,” attorneys for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wrote in a Jan. 13 court filing. The Biden administration’s response comes as it seeks to maintain abortion access after the Supreme Court’s ruling overturning Roe v. Wade. ADF, known for Supreme Court victories such as its protection of a Christian baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple, argued in its November legal filing against the FDA that the agency used accelerated approval regulations to improperly characterize pregnancy as an illness. SOURCE: Celine Castronuovo, Bloomberg News, January 18, 2023.

Paxton sues Biden to defend religiously-affiliated adoption agencies.

“There are so many vital religious institutions in Texas... that can [ensure] foster children are protected and... find good homes. The [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rule] would force them either to adopt a radical woke agenda or surrender their mission of helping children... It’s a disgrace that the Biden Administration is playing politics with... foster care and adoption services... [This] lawsuit aims to put our children first and to protect religious freedom.” SOURCE: Attorney General of Texas Press Release, December 12, 2022.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of humans, are created, strengthened, and maintained.”

~ Winston Churchill

GREAT AMERICAN QUOTE

“Our American tradition of neighbor helping neighbor has always been one of our greatest strengths and most noble traditions.”

- Ronald Reagan

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Redefining Marriage and the Threat to Religious Freedom

By Jennifer Vermeulen, *Texas Eagle Forum*

In late November 2022, the Respect for Marriage Act (RFMA) was passed by the U.S. Senate without the inclusion of an amendment proposed by Republican senators to protect religious freedom and institutions. Congressional Democrats claimed the new federal law codifying the 2015 Supreme Court *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision allowing same-sex marriage was necessary after Justice Clarence Thomas suggested in his concurrence opinion for *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) that the "Court's substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*" should be reconsidered.

Twelve Senate Republicans joined all 50 Senate Democrats to secure the supermajority needed to advance legislation in the Senate. Those voting to pass the RFMA relied on assurances from the bill's proponents that it would make into law the core tenets of *Obergefell* without undermining religious liberty. The act claims to provide protections for religious individuals and institutions who still believe that marriage is between one man and one woman, but it does nothing of the sort.



Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) spearheaded the effort to force an amendment prohibiting the federal government from retaliating against any person or group for adhering to sincerely held religious beliefs and moral convictions about marriage. But his amendment failed to make it into the final version of the bill.

"Despite the support of every voting Republican but one, and even a Democrat, the Respect for Marriage Act just passed without my amendment, which would have prevented the government from retaliating against religious individuals and institutions for their sincerely held religious beliefs regarding marriage," Lee said in a December 2022 statement.¹

"Under the RFMA's current language, many religious schools, faith-based organizations,

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and other non-profit entities adhering to traditional views of marriage would be at risk of losing tax-exempt status and access to a wide range of federal programs. Many small businesses would also be affected.”

Religious Liberty is Under Attack.

Legal experts have been warning for years about the tension between legalized same-sex marriage and the right to religious freedom. There is a legitimate risk that, without robust protections in place, federal recognition of same-sex marriage could inflict harm on those who, for reasons of sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction, do not embrace same-sex marriage.

This threat to religious liberty was highlighted in a now-famous exchange between Justice Alito and then-Solicitor General Donald Verrilli during oral arguments for *Obergefell*, in which Verrilli correctly acknowledged that, once same-sex marriage is recognized nationwide, many colleges, universities, and other non-profits could lose their tax-exempt status if they refused to recognize same-sex marriage.

Under the RFMA, anti-discrimination lawsuits can be filed against religious individuals or institutions, who do not receive any meaningful protection under the new law. It is only a matter of time before anti-discrimination lawsuits over the nature of marriage begin.

Stephen Minnis, president of the Catholic Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, warned in a November 2022 interview that faith-based organizations “will have a tough time living... under this legislation.”

“In fact,” he said, “giving religious institutions a tough time seems to be the point of the legislation. But the U.S. Constitution guarantees free exercise of religion, not just expression of religion.”²

Religious Organizations will be Targeted.

Republicans have long been sounding the alarm that religious liberty is under attack in the United States. It seems that many people, particularly younger Gen Z Americans, have grown deaf to the concerns in legal and cultural debates surrounding religious liberty and same-sex marriage, gender ideologies, and more.

Roger Severino, Vice President of Domestic Policy at the Heritage Foundation, stated in a September 2022 interview that the reason Democrats proposed the RFMA was “to put salt on a wound and to target people of faith who disagree. There’s still a sizeable number of people in this country who believe... that marriage is a union of one man and one woman. [T]hose views deserve to be treated with respect. They come

from honorable premises, and they reflect the truth about marriage... [RFMA] is designed to tar such people as being unfit... in polite society, [or in] the public square.”

“The practical effect... will have nothing to do with the benefits of same-sex couples. It’ll have everything to do with excluding people of faith from their tax-exempt statuses for houses of worship, from adoption agencies that believe that the best... place for a child in placement would be with a married mother and father, and for those who contract or receive grants from the government who want to live according to their beliefs with respect to marriage. Those are the groups who are going to be targeted.”³

Religious Freedom is a God-Given Right.

The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution begins, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” But religious freedom is more than the ‘freedom to worship,’ as the Left so cleverly tries to imply. Religious freedom means people shouldn’t have to go against their core values and beliefs to be welcome in society, treated justly under the law, or left unmolested by the government.

But religious freedom is also not license to break the law. If that were the case, the state would be unable to protect Muslim women and girls from honor killings in the name of Islam. The Supreme Court has said the federal government may limit religious freedom when it has a “compelling interest” to protect the common good and limit people’s ability to harm others.

But when cultural support for traditional values begins to wane, the debate over the ‘compelling’ interests of the state becomes fraught with danger for religious people and institutions. When people begin to view government as an instrument of conformity rather than a guarantor of rights, the generational struggle for liberty becomes perilous.

Our Founding Fathers did not invent the rights they wrote into our founding documents. The right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights - these come from God, our Creator, and are endowed on all people. The exercise of government power ends where these divine rights begin - in the hearts, minds, and lives of every individual.

Sources:

1. “Sen. Mike Lee ‘disappointed’ with passage of Respect for Marriage Act without his amendment,” *Gebhardt Daily*, 12/1/2022.
2. “Faith Leaders Warn So-Called Respect for Marriage Act Will Hack Away at Religious Freedom,” *The Daily Signal*, 11/15/2022.
3. “The New Gay Marriage Bill,” *The Heritage Foundation*, 09/26/2022.

We Shall not Weary, We Shall not Rest.

By Richard John Neuhaus

*Editor's Note: The Pro-Life movement celebrated a long-awaited victory in June 2022 when the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, overturned *Roe v. Wade*. The 6-3 majority opinion authored by Samuel Alito, with a concurrence by Clarence Thomas, returned the decision of whether to allow abortions back to the states. By January 2023, 24 states – including Texas – had passed, or were in the process of passing, near-total bans on abortion. But as John Seago, president of Texas Right to Life, recently pointed out: "We have spent the last six months articulating that even with *Roe* overturned, there is still a lot we need to do in Texas... This is the first session [of the Texas State Legislature] after *Roe* has been overturned, so it's important that we take decisive action now to address all the lingering and significant challenges that remain for the movement."*

The pro-life movement that began in the twentieth century laid the foundation for the pro-life movement of the twenty-first century. We have been at this a long time, and we are just getting started.

All that has been and all that will be is prelude to, and anticipation of, an indomitable hope. All that has been and all that will be is premised upon the promise of Our Lord's return in glory when, as we read in the Book of Revelation, "he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be sorrow nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And all things will be new.

That is the horizon of hope that, from generation to generation, sustains the great human rights cause of our time and all times—the cause of life. We contend, and we contend relentlessly, for the dignity of the human person, of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, destined from eternity for eternity—every human person, no matter how weak or how strong, no matter how young or how old, no matter how productive or how burdensome, no matter how welcome or how inconvenient. Nobody is a nobody; nobody is unwanted. All are wanted by God, and therefore to be respected, protected, and cherished by us.

We shall not weary, we shall not rest, until every unborn child is protected in law and welcomed in life. We shall not weary, we shall not rest, until all the elderly who have run life's course are protected against despair and abandonment,



protected by the rule of law and the bonds of love. We shall not weary, we shall not rest, until every young woman is given the help she needs to recognize the problem of pregnancy as the gift of life. We shall not weary, we shall not rest, as we stand guard at the entrance gates and the exit gates of life, and at every step along the way of life, bearing witness in word and deed to the dignity of the human person—of every human person.

We do not know, we do not need to know, how the battle for the dignity of the human person will be resolved. God knows, and that is enough. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta and saints beyond numbering have taught us, our task is not to be successful but to be faithful. Yet in that faithfulness is the lively hope of success. We are the stronger because we are unburdened by delusions. We know that in a sinful world, far short of the promised Kingdom of God, there will always be great evils. The principalities and powers will continue to rage, but they will not prevail.

Whether, in this great contest between the culture of life and the culture of death, we were recruited many years ago or whether we were recruited only yesterday, we have been recruited for the duration. We go... refreshed in our resolve to fight the good fight. We go... trusting in the words of the prophet Isaiah that "they who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength, they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Excerpted from Mr. Neuhaus' 2008 National Right to Life Committee address and published on [FirstThings.com](https://www.firstthings.com).