

Transgender Equality

States hold future over trans rights



Do you think the transgender bathroom issue should be handled by state or federal laws?

State
26%

Federal
74%

Statistics

55% of all reported LGBT homicide victims were trans women

78% of trans kids K-12 experienced harassment

Trump's policy causes concern for trans rights

Camille Herren and Jess Turnage Reporters

In the aftermath of President Trump being elected to one of the most respected positions in the United States, controversy has stirred around the nation provoking protests regarding social and political issues. Recently the states have been granted the power to rule over a rising debate in America — LGBTQ rights.

Obama's presidency enhanced Title IX's rights, an education amendment that prohibits gender discrimination, by enforcing the protection of the rights of transgender students, allowing them to use the bathroom of their choice in school. However, President Trump has taken a different approach shifting the focus from federal power to states' taking their own initiative.

Trump's decision has sparked praise and criticism throughout the country. Questions have been raised on the extent to which institutions should recognize transgenders as a gender identity.

"Gender identity is so crucial. It's such a crux of a person's identity. And to undermine that, in something that is as trivial as which to bathroom a person has to use is humiliating. It's degrading, and it's wrong," senior Sara

Goodie from Clarke Central High School said. "I just think it's absurd that children in schools can't go to the bathroom that they feel comfortable in. It's just a step back. I don't see any good coming from forcing anyone to go to the bathroom where they don't feel comfortable. Or to go to any space they feel they shouldn't be."

Junior Grant Daniels from Oxford High School has noticed transgender people treated differently but supports Trump's decision. He says it will affect the transgender people depending on the state's ruling.

"Transgenders are undoubtedly going to be affected by this because they will have to reclassify themselves with their gender they changed from or risk potentially breaking the law if they choose to stand up with their changed gender," Daniels said. "I do think Trump did what he could to protect it in some parts because I'm sure the Republican leaders were wanting him to do away with it completely."

The concern that transgender students could potentially be in danger arises in states that decide to prohibit their usage of the bathroom of their choice. Senior Javeius Lyons from Lafayette High School thinks that students could

potentially feel unsafe and uneasy.

"I live in Mississippi and we are in the Bible Belt. We are not particularly progressive. At my school, we do not have any open transgender students yet. [The students] are not usually accepting of the LGBTQ community. We would stick on the side of [using] the bathroom [for] the gender that your mother and father assigned you and I think it will put a lot of them in harm's way," Lyons said.

Others believe states' ruling over this issue is the right solution. Despite the possible consequences for transgender students, it is argued that states will be content if they decide on behalf of the beliefs of their people.

"I just think it's not something that the federal government needs to be involved with. I think there's much bigger issues that need to be worried about. I think [it] can be easier decided on state to state basis," senior Dana Berry from Nation Fort said.

Schools have addressed the LGBTQ community and transgender people through programs and clubs which are intended to support their sexuality and identity. Despite the lingering of thick atmospheres, communities and schools have tried to bring

people together.

"I live in Mississippi, [which is] a deep red state so society does look at them in a strange way but I've never come into a situation where I've seen a transgender confronted about their change," Daniels said. "We have clubs and other sorts that fight for those things. The GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) would probably be the biggest club for that and also a new club called Project Hope which is an anti-bullying deal which could definitely tie in to the idea."

President Trump's decision over the transgender issue brings forward the past questioning of gender identity and gender fluidity. While there is the traditional belief over gender identity, others stand for equal comfort, safety and education for all — even access to the bathroom of their choice.

"Overall the atmosphere has changed rapidly in the past few years. I think the district has really cracked down and said there will be no discrimination based on gender. Period. That includes transgender people, that includes gender queer people. It doesn't matter how you identify, you can use the bathroom and you can get an education. Because you deserve it. And that's that," Goodie said.

Transphobia stirs in Alabama today

Andrea Graves Reporter

The state of Alabama's history concerning transgender individuals is long and confusing. Bills are passed and repealed, often contradicting with bills still in use today.

Take Oxford, Alabama's bathroom bill as an example. According to a law passed in April of 2016, transgender people could face up to six months in jail or a \$500 fine for using the gender bathroom that they identify as. The bill followed after retailer Target announced that in Target stores across the

nation, transgender individuals — both customers and employees alike — were open to use the bathroom that corresponds with their identified gender. As Oxford contained a Target store, Oxford City Council members were bombarded by complaints from residents concerned with the store's policy and wanted to combat any crimes "which may include, but not limited to, voyeurism, exhibitionism, molestation and assault and battery," inflicted by trans individuals, according to the ordinance. In May of 2016, this bill was repealed by a City Council vote of 3-2. Oxford was warned that federal funds could be pulled from the city, as the anti-trans bill violated the equal protec-

tion clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by targeting transgender people to unfair treatment.

Many trans individuals in the state of Alabama have been targeted by oppressors and subjected to discrimination and even bodily harm. Jessi Dye was fired on her first day as a nursing home caretaker, solely for being transgender. After half a day of training at the Falkville based facility, a management official called Dye into his office, before interrogating her on her sexuality and gender identity. After admitting she was a transgender woman, Dye was terminated and was asked to leave the facility. When Dye asked if it was due to her identity as a

trans woman, the management official confirmed her query. The nursing home later implemented a policy prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

As President Trump sweeps through his first 100 days in office, tolerance and acceptance of trans individuals and the LGBT community as well as other minorities has declined, opening the door for harassment. However, people continuously defend LGBT rights and the safety of our fellow Americans. In order to create a more tolerable environment for our trans youths, we need to take action to make a better, more productive environment that promotes the safety and

