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Bill de Blasio mandates transgender access to NYC bathrooms



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New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio testifies during a joint legislative hearing on local government on Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2016, in Albany, N.Y. (AP Photo/Mike Groll) more > (/multimedia/image/ap_state_budget_de_blasiojpeg/)

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By Bradford Richardson (/staff/bradford-richardson/) - The Washington Times - Monday, March 7, 2016

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio on Monday issued an executive order granting people access to the public facilities that correspond with their gender identity.

"We want people to know they can go about their lives and not be excluded," Mr. de Blasio said during a press conference at the Chelsea Recreation Center. "That's why this is so important. This is about affirming the right of someone to follow through on their own identity."

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The law will allow transgender people to use public bathrooms and locker rooms of the opposite sex.

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Citing the city's prominent place in the gay rights movement, Mr. de Blasio said New Yorkers have an "obligation" to lead the nation with regard to transgender equality.

"New York City is the birthplace of the fight for LGBT rights, and we continue to lead in that fight so every New Yorker can live with dignity," Mr. de Blasio said.

The order requires all city-owned buildings — including schools, city offices and gyms — to allow people to use the bathrooms and locker rooms of the gender with which they identify. Public schools in New York City were already required to allow students to use the facilities on that basis.

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Bianey Garcia, a transgender woman and advocate who sits on the board of Make the Road New York, said she felt “humiliated” when she was prevented using the women’s restroom by a restaurant owner.

“That day I felt humiliated, but like so many others, I didn’t think of making a complaint or telling anyone because of fear, frustration and disbelief,” Ms. Garcia said. “Access to the ladies bathroom is my right as a transgender woman, as a human being.”

Opponents of expanding access to facilities on the basis of gender identity contend such laws will create a whole host of issues, from exposing young girls to older men in changing rooms, to discouraging bystander intervention when potentially predatory men are seen accessing women’s restrooms.

Joseph Backholm, executive director of the Family Policy Institute of Washington, said laws like Mr. de Blasio’s fail to understand that transgender people are not the only ones whose rights need to be protected.

“Here’s what we need to realize: Everyone in this debate has rights,” Mr. Backholm said. “Transgender people have the right to go to the bathroom. But everybody else in the state of New York or the city of New York or whatever state we’re in, they all have legal rights to privacy that are real. And the problem is governments choosing one person’s rights over everybody else, rather than recognizing that everybody has an interest here, and we need to behave like adults and make sure that nobody gets to say my rights trump your rights because I say so.”

The order is the latest victory for an emboldened nationwide transgender movement that seeks public recognition and acceptance through access to sex-segregated amenities.

The Charlotte City Council in North Carolina last month passed a similar mandate, but the state legislature said it plans to block the measure before it is ever implemented.

In South Dakota last week, transgender advocates scored a major victory when Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard vetoed a law that would have prohibited students in public schools from using opposite-sex restrooms, locker rooms and shower facilities.

But voters in Houston overwhelmingly defeated an anti-discrimination ordinance in November that would have granted transgender people access to restrooms corresponding with their gender identity.

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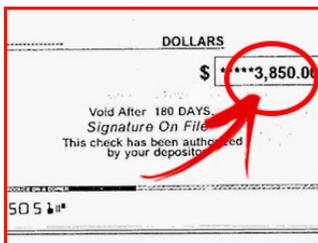
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