

In Desperate Attempt to Lure Back Businesses, North Carolina Embraces Anti-Christ Agenda

North Carolina legislators on Thursday repealed a law regulating bathroom use for transgender people, hoping to lure back businesses and sports leagues that boycotted the Southern state because they saw the year-old law as discriminatory.

Democratic Governor Roy Cooper was expected to sign the replacement bill into law. It was unclear if the legislation would be sufficient to bring back the basketball games, concerts, financial firms and technology companies that abandoned North Carolina, costing its economy hundreds of millions of dollars.

The new measure rescinds House Bill 2, the so-called bathroom bill that required transgender people to use the bathrooms, changing rooms and showers in state-run buildings that correspond to the sex on their birth certificate rather than their gender identity.

It also bars cities and school districts from enacting their own anti-discrimination rules for nearly four years. That leaves the state without protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity, drawing harsh criticism from advocates for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

"This is not a repeal of HB 2," James Esseks, director of the ACLU LGBT Project, said in a statement. "Instead, they're reinforcing the worst aspects of the law."

Social conservatives also were unhappy. Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the NC Values Coalition and an outspoken

supporter of House Bill 2, said lawmakers had let the state down.

"The truth remains, no basketball game, corporation, or entertainment event is worth even one little girl losing her privacy and dignity to a boy in the locker room, or being harmed or frightened in a bathroom," Fitzgerald said in a statement.

HB 2 was passed in response to an ordinance in the city of Charlotte that permitted transgender people to use the bathrooms matching their gender identity. The Charlotte ordinance alarmed social conservatives who, without evidence, feared it would endanger women and girls in intimate spaces.

NCAA Deadline

The compromise deal came together on Wednesday night, just ahead of a deadline set by the National Collegiate Athletic Association to amend its law so the state could host major collegiate athletic tournaments again.

The Republican leaders of the House of Representatives and Senate in the state capital, Raleigh, reached the deal with Cooper, an outspoken critic of HB 2. He unseated former Republican Governor Pat McCrory last year in large part because of the political and economic fallout from the law, political analysts say.

But Cooper's agreement to place a moratorium on local anti-discrimination laws until 2020 came as a disappointment to LGBT advocates, who had wanted an unconditional repeal of HB 2.

In basketball-crazed North Carolina, the withdrawal of NCAA games and the National Basketball Association All-Star game that had been awarded to Charlotte reverberated throughout the state.

Businesses such as Deutsche Bank and PayPal also reversed expansion plans in the state, and entertainers such as Bruce Springsteen and Itzhak Perlman canceled concerts.

The NCAA did not immediately comment on Thursday's action. House Speaker Tim Moore told reporters he had been told by business leaders the new measure would satisfy the organization's concerns.

Civil rights leaders said the provision that prevents localities from passing anti-discrimination laws was likely to keep the boycotters away. {eo}

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