

New Media Bill Risks Silencing Christian Broadcasters Through 'Lawfare'

Florida's Senate Bill 752 is drawing serious concern from Christian broadcasters who fear it could be used to suppress their speech through a flood of legal attacks.

The National Religious Broadcasters issued a strong warning to lawmakers this week, saying the bill has "a very real possibility of weaponizing a wave of 'lawfare' against Christian broadcasters," according to the group's general counsel, Michael Farris.

As reported by Fox News, the bill would change how publishers respond to defamation claims, particularly when it comes to online archives.

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Farris explained that under SB 752, plaintiffs could demand changes to old publications for two reasons: either a court has ruled the content is false, or "the publisher or broadcaster 'receives notice of facts that would cause a reasonable person to conclude that such statement was false.'" That second part is the concern—Farris says the "reasonable person" standard is "inherently ambiguous in this context and is often a matter of perspective or opinion."

What does that look like in real life?

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Farris gives a powerful example: "If a transgendered male

presents as a female and competes in girls' sports, and a Christian broadcaster says that a male has been competing in women's sports," they could face legal action under this bill. And that's not just for new content—this could apply to older articles as well. "The claim would be that reasonable people would conclude that transgendered males are in fact females," and calling them male could be considered "false and defamatory."

Farris warns this opens the door to a series of legal issues: "This possibility opens up a very real possibility of weaponizing a wave of 'lawfare' against Christian broadcasters simply for standing up for what they believe to be true."

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He closes with a plea to Florida lawmakers: "This legislation should be defeated for now." While there may be legitimate concerns the bill is trying to address, Farris says they can be resolved "without risking unanticipated harm to broadcasters and publishers—many of which share your worldview."

The bill has already passed through the Senate Judiciary Committee with an 8-2 vote. Let's hope lawmakers take a closer look so this doesn't turn into a tool for silencing faith-based speech.

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