

TRANSADVOCATE

Interview with Delta county “castration” school board member: turns out she’s linked to anti-LGBT groups

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Published November 25, 2013 | Updated March 31, 2026

https://www.transadvocate.com/interview-with-delta-county-castration-school-board-member-turns-out-shes-linked-to-anti-lgbt-groups_n_10921.htm

Abstract

Recently Katherine Svenson, a Delta county School Board member in Colorado, found herself the topic of controversy after remarking that trans kids should be castrated before they use the restroom. What news reports failed to note was that Svenson is the co-founder of an anti-gay ministry: Here’s some of what TellASIA spends its time doing: It so [...]

Article

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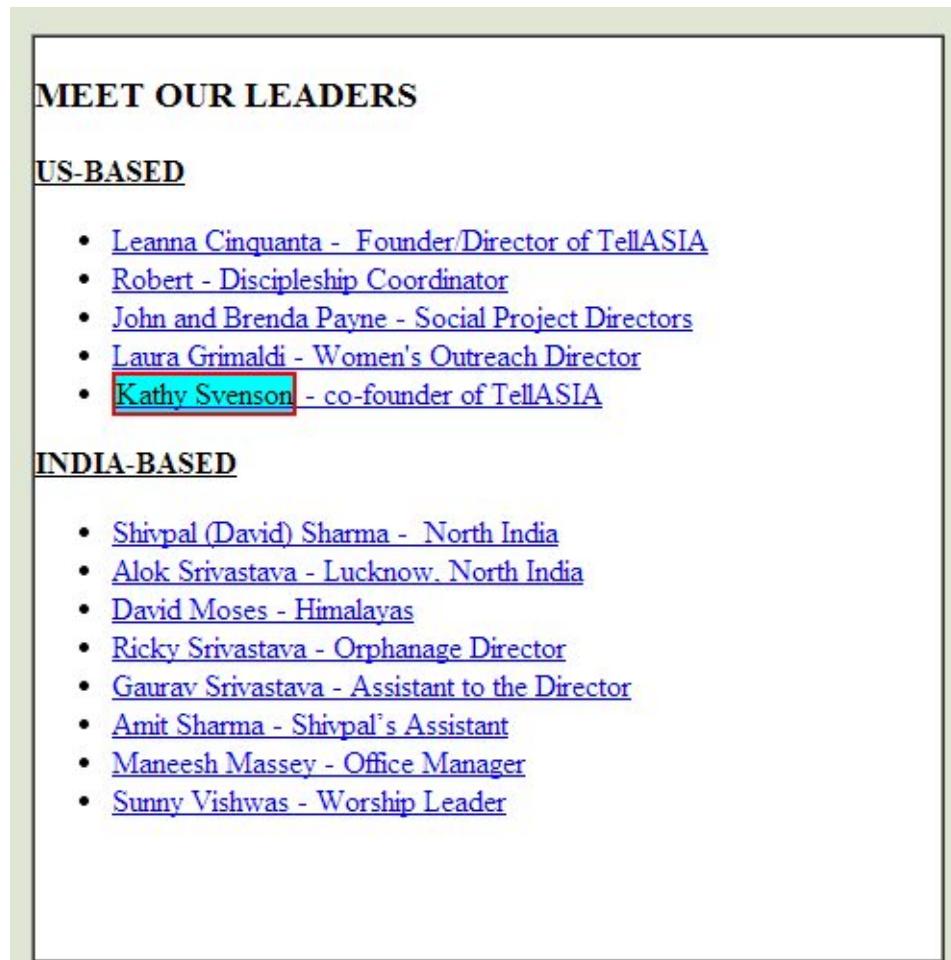


Figure 1. Cached 2010 copy of TellASIA founding members

Here's some of what TellASIA spends its time doing:

It so happened that the dates of the final conference coincided with the date when South Korea's government was scheduled to vote on a bill that proposed legalizing gay marriage and other anti-biblical legislation. This created the perfect workshop environment to go along with my teaching! I challenged every person in the hall to sign the petition that was being circulated, and to encourage others to do the same, and counselled the leaders on how to build unity with other churches and Christian networks to multiply their influence. By God's grace the bill didn't pass so we won an initial victory, though it will go back on the table at a later date. - TellASIA, May 2013

TellASIA is currently run by Svenson's daughter, Leanna Cinquanta. Svenson spent seven years managing the ministry's office and is, according to Svenson, still actively involved with the group.

In addition to co-founding a ministry that boasts about its efforts to oppress LGBT people, Svenson is also a member of a notorious anti-gay/anti-trans group run by anti-feminist extremist, Phyllis Schlafly.

The Controversy

On November 21, a Colorado news station reported that Svenson had created a controversy when she handed out a report to the other school board members which warned of an impending menace: transgender children. KREX news reported, “The article in the Education Reporter discusses a new law passed in California, which allows students to use whatever bathroom they wish based on their self-identified rather than biological gender.”

While not quoted in the news report (though it was briefly shown on the screen), here’s what the article said:

In August, California Gov. Jerry Brown signed a law mandating that all public school students be allowed to use whatever bathroom they wish based on their self-identified rather than their biological gender. Even the youngest students will be introduced to transgender issues because the law applies to all students, including those in kindergarten. Older students will use whatever locker room they wish. - Internet version of the Eagle Forum’s “Education Reporter” newspaper sent to their members, September 2013

According to a staff member of Schlafly’s organization, the Eagle Forum, members get a print copy of the newsletter “Education Reporter,” which is what Svenson shared with her fellow School Board members and media:

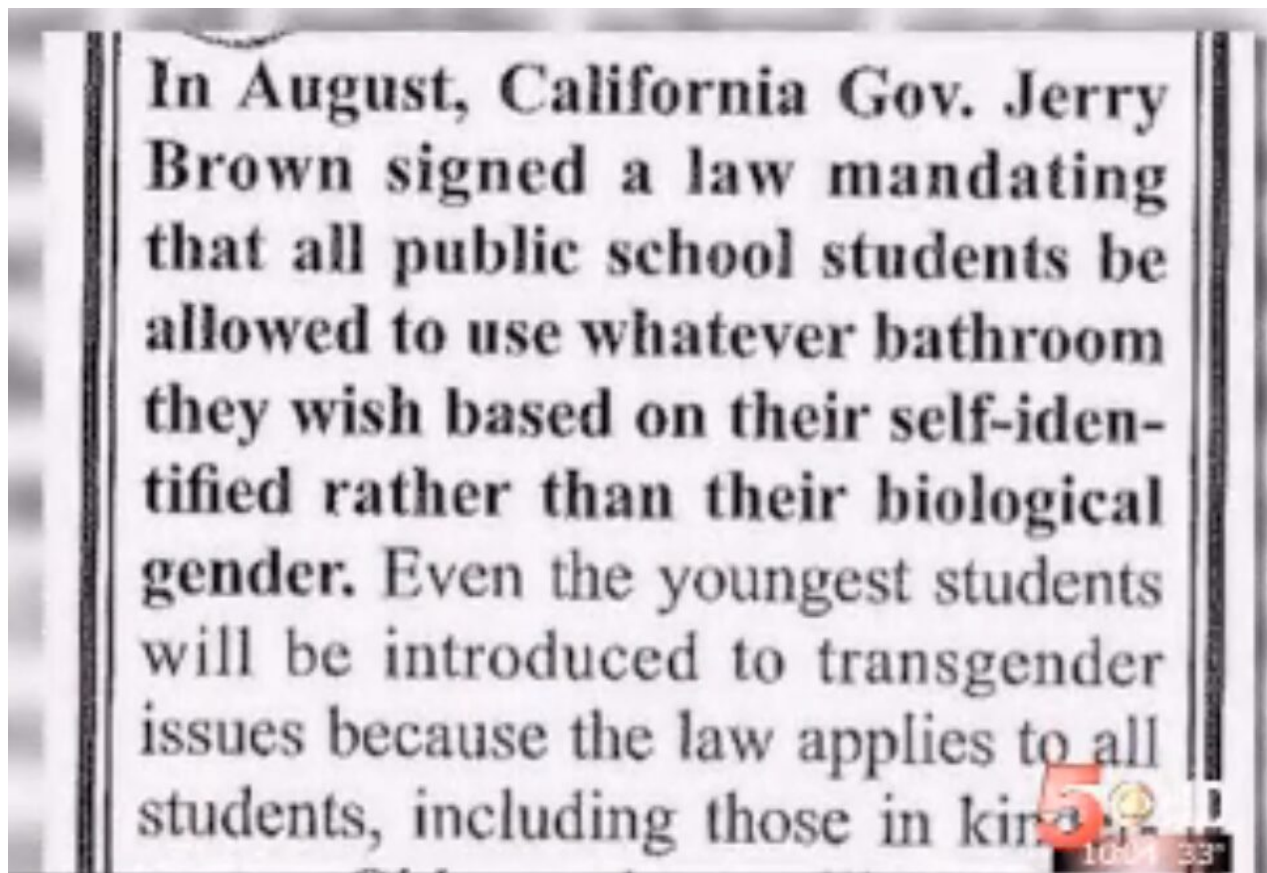


Figure 2. CBS affiliate KREX Ch 5 News Report featuring Schlafly's report

Not only did the news report seem to perpetuate the false ‘trans kids pick restrooms on a whim’ meme, it also failed to note that the “Education Reporter” is Schlafly’s anti-LGBT publication.

Schlafly, notorious for her role in defeating the Equal Rights Amendment for women in the 1970s, is adept at using the “bathroom meme” - men in the women’s restroom - for political gain. In the 1970s, Schlafly took out full page ads warning that should equality for women happen, men would be able to use both the men’s and women’s restroom:

“Law professor Paul Freund objected in 1973 to being “quoted erroneously and out of context by certain opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment” and commented flatly, “I have not stated, and I do not believe, that the Amendment would require the sharing of rest room and prison cells by both sexes.” Yet in 1975 a huge anti-ERA advertisement in Baton Rouge papers credited him with the allegation that the ERA would integrate bathrooms.”

ERA will not protect privacy between the sexes in hospitals, prisons, schools, or public accommodations.

The Interview

While Svenson wasn't able to hear the phone conversation well enough to continue, she asked that we carry on our conversation via email. However, while Svenson was on the phone she confirmed that Schlafly is the source of the materials she shared at the school board meeting and that she was still an

active member of TellASIA.

In our email exchange Svenson said that she not only shared Schlafly’s propaganda with the school board, she also shared it with members of the public as well:

I would say [Schlafly’s organization] alerted me that our District would soon be needing to make decisions concerning the situation of men and women sharing what has always in the history of mankind been considered private - their nakedness. [I] shared her report with the school board and with other citizens in the audience saying that I wanted everyone to be aware of what was happening in the rest of the country because eventually it would come to western Colorado.

I asked her if she felt that trans kids posed a rape risk. Svenson thought they did saying, “Totally correct. And that’s all I’m saying, that on the basis of identifying them as of the male sex - capable of producing seed - that they have no place being within view of the private parts of the female sex - defined as having the capability of being fertilized.”

I then asked her about her comments during the School Board meeting, as reported in the media. I wanted to be sure that the media was presenting her comments fairly. I asked her if the following quote was correct:

“I would like to pass out something that shows people what is going on in the rest of the country. Massachusetts and California have passed laws relating to calling a student, irrespective of his biological gender, letting him perform as the gender he thinks he is, or she is.”

Svenson replied, “Correct. And then [the media] left-out what I said next, ‘That means boys will be able to play on girls teams. . .and to use the girls’ locker rooms!’”

I asked her to expound upon her castration comment and she was happy to do so:

And castration would only be one kind of plumbing change. I hear some men actually have a whole sex change; a sex change would qualify them as the definition of female -capable of being fertilized - and they could then use the girls facilities. I am not denying any boys any thing; they are free to use the boys facilities.

When I noted that the Delta School District Assistant Superintendent, Kurt Clay rejected her claims, Svenson said, “He cannot make any statement because the Board and our District has not even begun to discuss it.”

I moved on to ask her about the resistance she’s facing from her own constituents. I characterized their resistance and “being angry.” Svenson replied, “What I remember hearing is that some were ashamed of what I said. I would like to tell them, ‘Then you voted for the right person because I am not ashamed to stand-up for the protection of our girls.’”

When I raised the endemic issue of anti-trans bullying Svenson said, “I have read that boys with the gender identity that they are more like girls get bullied when they use the boys’ locker rooms[.] I say, if that is the case then the school will address the bullying problem. Letting them use the opposite gender facility would certainly not be a ‘solution’ for one kind of persons (boys with gender identity of

a girl) if it leads to an unsafe situation for another kind of persons (girls).”

On June 17, 2013, the Colorado Division of Civil Rights issued a ruling which makes Svenson’s fears rooted in extremist talking-points irrelevant. Additionally, the Florence, Colorado School Board just dismissed the Pacific Justice Institute’s claims that trans kids harass non-trans kids by their mere presence.

TransAdvocate podcast focusing on the situation in Delta Colorado

NOTE: I’ve left Svenson’s writing largely unedited. Edits are noted with brackets.

Suggested citation

Cristan Williams. "Interview with Delta county “castration” school board member: turns out she’s linked to anti-LGBT groups." TransAdvocate, November 25, 2013.

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