

TRANSADVOCATE

The 2008 Gainesville Bathroom Bill TV Spot Revisited

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Abstract

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Article



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Just this last year in Houston, the Campaign For Houston created what turned out to be an effective, creepy ad that more that implied that if one gave civil rights based on gender identity to Houstonians, then men would be given the legal right to enter public women's bathrooms unimpeded -- and then some would engage in child rape.

There was a referendum; the referendum repealed the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, otherwise known as HERO.

If you're a transgender person who came out after 2008, you likely aren't aware that this tactic was unsuccessfully tried before in Gainesville, Florida back in 2008. The Gainesville ad, created by the Citizens for Good Public Policy and posted to YouTube on June 28, 2008, wasn't quite as graphic (they didn't use the fearful face of a prepubescent child in a toilet stall to make their point), but they used the same messaging of that if one gave civil rights based on gender identity to Gainesvillians, then men would be given the legal right to enter public women's restrooms bathrooms -- and then some would engage in child rape.

Their website said the following about their Gainesville referendum effort:

Available statistical data suggest that a city the size of Gainesville typically has less than 10 residents with gender identity disorder. The ordinance was designed to accommodate them.

It also accommodates the 263 sexual offenders and/or predators living within Gainesville's city limits (Florida Department of Law Enforcement website, as of 5/28/08), thereby especially placing women and children at risk.

So, Media Matters' Rachel Percelay contacted >Gainesville, and posted their response in a broader article entitled Florida Experts Debunk The Transgender "Bathroom Predator" Myth.

Gainesville Has Prohibited LGBT Discrimination Since 2008 In 2008, Gainesville added gender identity protections to its anti-discrimination ordinance. The protections were affirmed in a 2009 referendum, which failed to overturn the non-discrimination protections for LGBT people in places of public accommodation. [Ballotpedia, accessed 12/4/15; The Gainesville Sun, 2/24/08]

Gainesville Police Department Cannot Recall "Any Incidents Related To The Ordinance." Officer Ben Tobias, Public Information Officer and Department Spokesman for the Gainesville Police Department, reported that the department could not recall any incidents related to the city's LGBT protections:

I have asked around, and none of us can remember any incidents related to the ordinance. I have been with GPD since 2005 and actually worked in the downtown area in 2008 when the ordinance came into existence. [Email to Media Matters, 12/4/15]

Media Matters has been fact-checking in multiple articles, debunking the bathroom bill/bathroom predator myth, which they describe as a myth that where municipalities and states pass LGBT-inclusive Equal Rights Ordinances/non-discrimination protections into law, these laws threaten women's safety in public restrooms.

Where we saw the creepy TV advertising warning of this Gainesville, Florida in mid-2008, that's not the answer to the "math equation" that the Citizens for Good Public Policy predicted.

It seems that there is an ad to be made here to counter the messaging that the Gainesville ordinance didn't accurately predict more predatory behavior in public women's bathrooms, and it looks and sounds like the ads we're seeing from others mimicking their messaging. It needs a tag line to the effect of "The opposition should know that's true, should know better than to lie, but still they lie."

The opposition to ordinary equality for transgender people is playing to the fears of ordinary Americans. We have real tools available to show they're lying, but we're not using these tools.

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