



## Mayor Drops “Bathroom Provision” From Discrimination Measure

Houston’s openly homosexual mayor, Annise Parker, has reluctantly dropped a provision from her proposed anti-discrimination ordinance that would have required all businesses and public places to allow transvestites and other self-identified “transgendered” individuals to use opposite-sex restroom facilities. Pro-family leaders, however, warned that the supposed compromise still leaves in place a dangerous proposed measure that will threaten religious liberty in the community.



In late April, Parker forwarded a proposed non-discrimination ordinance to the city council that would prohibit businesses, landlords, and both public and private employers and contractors from discriminating based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability. Additionally, the ordinance would prohibit discrimination against homosexuals and those who claim a gender at odds with their biological sex.

That “gender identity” issue became a particular sticking point with conservative, Christian, and pro-family residents, as Parker had included a provision that would have required businesses to allow “transgendered” individuals to access the restroom of the gender with which they happened to identify at a given time. Thus, a man who insisted he really identified as a woman would have had the freedom to step into a women’s restroom facility, and vice-versa.

“It shall be unlawful for any place of public accommodation or any employee or agent thereof to intentionally deny any person entry to any restroom, shower room, or similar facility if that facility is consistent with and appropriate to that person’s expression of gender identity,” the ordinance stated in part.

Over the ensuing weeks individuals and groups embracing traditional values came out strongly against the “Equal Rights” ordinance, charging that, in addition to the bizarre bathroom provision, the measure would require business owners and others with public accommodations to compromise their values for the sake of homosexuals and other troubled individuals.

For example, as has happened in other cities with non-discrimination ordinances, under the proposed Houston measure a Christian baker or photographer would not have the option of declining wedding services for same-sex couples.

“Tolerance should not be defined as casting aside and acting against one’s own beliefs to accommodate someone else’s,” wrote Ed Young, pastor of Houston’s Second Baptist Church, in an open letter on the ordinance. “Simply put, the homosexual community wants us to tolerate their behavior and beliefs but does not want to give the rest of us that same courtesy. On top of that, they want to use threats of criminal prosecution and fines to accomplish our acquiescence. Their rights should end where our morality and rights begin.”



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 15, 2014

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David Walls of the pro-family group [Texas Values](#), which has taken the lead in fighting to stop the ordinance, noted that “all legitimate anti-discrimination protections, including race, color, national origin, sex, and religion are already protected in state and federal law. The reality is that this ordinance will only serve to specifically impose ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’ as protected classes onto the private sector of Houston, while centralizing the power of investigation, fines [of up to \$500 a day], and punishment under the mayor.”

Walls warned that the proposed measure, much like one in San Antonio dubbed the “anti-Christian ordinance,” would represent a “direct threat to any person in Houston who holds a biblical or traditional view of marriage or sexuality, whether in government or in business.” Among other provisions, he said, the ordinance would

subject business owners and employers to criminal prosecution for refusing to participate in the celebration of the homosexual lifestyle because of their religious or moral convictions. “A similar law in New Mexico was used to force a Christian photographer to use her gifts and talents to affirm and participate in a same-sex ‘commitment ceremony’ that she disagreed with or face punishment by the state,” recalled Walls....

“... allow men access to women’s bathrooms, shower rooms, and locker rooms,” warned Walls. “The proposed ordinance requires Houston businesses to make all women’s bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms available to all who are dressed in female attire, without regard to biological sex. This will place women and children at risk.”

Walls added that the proposed ordinance would increase “government interference in the private sector. It would essentially substitute the judgment of Lesbian Mayor Parker for that of the employer regarding what qualities or characteristics are most relevant to a particular job. Houston businesses could be forced under penalty of law to hire people that openly promote behavior that is contrary to their religious convictions.”

During a May 6 public debate of the controversial ordinance, which Mayor Parker had originally attempted to push through with a minimum of media attention, the Houston City Council heard nearly four hours of comments from residents, with much of the feedback coming from conservative individuals concerned that the law would place them and their families, along with their religious convictions, in jeopardy.

On May 14, with concerns that the entire ordinance could be postponed or scrapped, Mayor Parker announced a “compromise,” agreeing to drop the bathroom provision of the bill so that the rest of the ordinance would likely go through with little effort. “The base ordinance is still the same,” Parker said after the announcement. “It says you can’t discriminate.”

Later the mayor tweeted “to my trans sisters/brothers: you’re still fully protected in Equal Rights Ordinance. We’re simply removing language that singled you out.”

A final vote on the measure has been delayed until May 28, and Texas Values is asking residents to [take action](#) by contacting Parker and the City Council and demanding the ordinance be scrapped. “The City Council must vote no on any proposal of this type as it threatens public safety and violates the religious freedom of the people of Houston,” advised Texas Values.



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