



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 23, 2023

Texas University President Nixes “Derisive, Divisive and Demoralizing” Drag Show

Calling a planned campus drag show “derisive, divisive and demoralizing misogyny,” the president of West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) canceled the show Monday, setting up a probable First Amendment showdown.

“West Texas A&M University will not host a drag show on campus,” President Walter Wendler declared in a letter to students, faculty, and staff that was obtained by [MyHighPlains.com](#).

The planned March 31 show, “A Fool’s Drag Race,” was sponsored by the LGBTQ+ student organization Spectrum and other student groups. Its purpose was to raise money for the Trevor Project, which Wendler wrote “focuses on suicide prevention — a noble cause — in the LGBTQ community.” (In reality, reported the [Daily Caller](#), “the Trevor Project participates in transgender activism and has promoted research touting the positive impact of medical gender transitions for minors,” which [other studies](#) dispute.)



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From the perspective of the pro-drag crowd, it was bad enough that Wendler canceled the show. Worse still, he grounded his decision in the principles of Christianity and the Founding Fathers.

“I believe every human being is created in the image of God and, therefore, a person of dignity,” he explained. “James Madison and Thomas Jefferson ... declared the Creator’s origin as the foundational fiber in the fabric of our nation as they breathed life into it.”

“Does a drag show preserve a single thread of human dignity?” he asked. “I think not. As a performance exaggerating aspects of womanhood (sexuality, femininity, gender), drag shows stereotype women in cartoon-like extremes for the amusement of others and discriminate against womanhood.”

Wendler dubbed drag shows “derisive, divisive and demoralizing misogyny, no matter the stated intent.”

Then he pitched the wokesters a curveball: “As a university president, I would not support ‘blackface’ performances on our campus, even if told the performance is a form of free speech or intended as humor.” Blackface, after all, consists of a white person pretending to be black, usually (these days) as a form of mockery. How does that differ from a male pretending to be female, often for comic effect? “Mocking or objectifying in any way members of any group based on appearance, bias or predisposition



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is unacceptable,” penned Wendler.

He further suggested that drag shows could violate federal antidiscrimination law, calling them “acts of prejudice” that “are harmful and wholly inappropriate,” notwithstanding proponents’ “fancy rhetorical footwork or legal wordsmithing.”

“I will not appear to condone the diminishment of any group at the expense of impertinent gestures toward another group for any reason,” Wendler announced, “even when the law of the land appears to require it.”

Pro-LGBTQ forces, naturally, took issue with Wendler’s anti-drag sentiments.

“Drag is not a mockery — it is a celebration,” Spectrum said in a [statement](#). “Drag is a celebration of many things; queerness, gender, acceptance, love, and especially femininity. To call it a mockery or misogynistic is to miss the entire point of what drag is, and what drag means.” The group called for Wendler to reinstate the drag show, apologize, and resign.

Members of the community and students have also circulated online petitions demanding Wendler reverse his decision, though at least one group, the Young Conservatives of WTAMU, has created its own petition expressing support for him.

A more serious challenge to Wendler comes from the very “law of the land” he referenced, which may well be interpreted by the courts to protect drag shows at state schools as a form of free expression.

“Someone bring this man some smelling salts and a copy of the Constitution,” [tweeted the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression \(FIRE\)](#). “Students have a well-established First Amendment right to organize campus drag shows and FIRE will be making sure Mr. Wendler promptly sashays out of their way.”

In addition, Texas law requires universities to treat student organizations and their “expressive activities” neutrally without regard to their “political, religious, philosophical, or academic viewpoint.”

Although Wendler’s heart is in the right place, FIRE’s Alex Morey told the [Texas Tribune](#), his pocketbook could be in danger. “It’s really surprising how open he is about knowingly violating the law,” she said, “especially because government officials who violate clearly established First Amendment law will not retain qualified immunity and can be held personally liable for monetary damages.”



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