



## How President Trump will make politics better for gay Americans

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Barely over a decade ago, President George W. Bush was re-elected primarily because he promised to block gay marriage. Adviser Karl Rove saw it as a winning strategy to push the issue, and it worked. That's where the country was in 2004.

The Supreme Court has since declared same sex marriage the law of the land. President-elect Donald Trump agrees that it's a settled issue, something he reiterated on "60 Minutes" Sunday. Trump also praised the LGBT community at the Republican convention. He praised the conservative audience for cheering for his embracing of gay Americans. Gay libertarian billionaire and Trump supporter Peter Thiel essentially did the same thing in Cleveland.

"I am proud to be gay," Thiel said to applause. "I am proud to be a Republican. But most of all, I am proud to be an American!"

Of course, this is just rhetoric (the president-elect is reportedly considering an openly gay man as U.N. Ambassador). It's also Trump, who says many things, many of them contradictory (one of the many reasons I opposed him throughout the election).

But this shift in the GOP and on the right is still significant in ways those still upset by the election results might not be appreciating.

The American Conservative's Rod Dreher, who has opposed same sex marriage, says that Trump has actually helped to consolidate gay rights as a national political consensus, "Liberals who call Donald Trump anti-gay are doing it only out of reflex, not out of any thoughtful consideration of who the man is and his record, such as it is." Dreher added, "A reader pointed out in the comments thread here last night that Trump is the first president in US history to enter office supporting gay marriage."

Indeed he is. Obama didn't embrace same sex marriage until 2012, reversing his earlier opposition. "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. I am not in favor of gay marriage," Obama said in 2008. Hillary Clinton didn't embrace same sex marriage until 2013, reversing her previous opposition.

Top national Democrat leaders only truly became pro-gay in the way most progressives might expect in the last four years. That would mean, by default and ideologically, Republicans would

be the party that would be an obstacle to any social progress on this front. Republicans would be the “anti-gay” party, to be crass.

Now they’re simply not — at least with Trump at the helm. That constant and expected political roadblock is essentially gone. Call me optimistic, but whatever social conservative Mike Pence thinks about the gay community is unlikely to trump his boss’s New York values.

Cato’s Walter Olson makes a similar prediction at the New York Post. “I was not a Trump backer in last week’s election, but you don’t have to support him to see the pattern.” Olson observed, “Since he began testing the political waters in the 1980s, he has repeatedly and visibly distanced himself from the rut much of the GOP was mired in on this set of issues,” exploring a number of times Trump has come down on the pro-gay side of a controversy, long before the reality TV star thought about running for president.

This is something new for Republicans.

I remember being irritated with the Bush-Cheney campaign strategy in 2004 as a pro-gay marriage conservative who was vocally opposed to the Iraq War, the Patriot Act and so much else of that administration’s entire “war on terror” narrative. It bothered me in the first place that most Republicans were so wrongheaded about gay issues, but perhaps even more that Bush’s horrible record would get a pass due to this inane distraction.

Throughout the 2004 election, I specifically remember thinking that I could not wait for the day when gay marriage wouldn’t be an issue anymore, particularly on the right, for both LGBT people and for a better politics.

That day is here, and you don’t have to like Donald Trump to see this silver lining.