



Human Rights Campaign’s LGBTQ ‘emergency’ is all about money and politics

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The Human Rights Campaign, in its words, has “officially declared a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ people in the United States.”

It wants us to know it’s taking this momentous step “for the first time ever.”

As a private organization supported by fundraising appeals, HRC may issue what declarations it pleases, “official” or otherwise.

Is this in fact an emergency arising “for the first time ever” since HRC’s founding in 1980, a point in American history at which gay sex was illegal in most states, bar raids might cost you your job, and marriage and military service were still decades away?

The basis for HRC’s dismay is the enactment into law of more than 75 bills it opposed in state legislatures, a much bigger crop than usual.

The great majority of these laws relate to transgender issues, mostly as they arise among minors and in schools.

For my part, I agree with HRC’s position on some of these bills.

Florida enacted a micromanaging set of bathroom rules that — if they get enforced, which seems unlikely — will hassle many unoffending persons just trying to go about their lives.

Tennessee passed a law limiting public drag-show performances that was almost instantly blocked by a conservative federal judge as an unconstitutional restriction on expression.

Clearly, states are taking more actions in this area that are dumb, illiberal or coercive.

All that said, I wish HRC would concede that there are legitimate debates about many transgender-related issues — on matters such as sports competition, intimate privacy, prison management and how, when and whether underaged persons should be given medical therapies.

When I took a closer look at some of what HRC calls anti-LGBTQ bills, I had more questions.

Idaho passed a law mandating, to quote the Associated Press, that “parents be told of changes in students’ mental, emotional or physical well-being” that manifest at school.

The law doesn’t mention gender identity at all, AP says, but critics worry that among those whose struggles will be reported back to parents are kids with gender issues.

Should it matter in classifying such a law that it responds on its face to concerns that are widely held by parents and unrelated to gender?

But HRC doesn’t like to concede issues might be complicated or involve trade-offs and accommodations.

It’s more often 100% or nothing with the group, and if you demur your position might get called one of “hate,” which at least is better than the loose “groomer” talk from some on the other side.

New York senator/scholar Daniel Patrick Moynihan observed that institutions that fight each other come to resemble each other.

I’m reminded of Moynihan’s quip when I compare the fundraising mail I get from LGBTQ, Inc., on the one hand and social conservatives on the other. (For my sins, I’m on both sorts of lists.)

The hectic, apocalyptic tone is of a piece. It’s “unprecedented assaults on our rights” with the one and “unprecedented assault on the family” with the other.

The quest to find ways for a diverse society to live together with rights and respect for all doesn’t seem to work as well in getting people to open, click through and give.

Nikki Haley, reputedly one of the calmer Republican presidential candidates, suggested the other day that fear of encountering transgender kids in their locker room was a major reason teenage girls experience suicidal thoughts. Say what?

A final point — as many gays and lesbians have observed recently — is that the L, G and B experiences diverge widely from the T.

Pretty much every legal change that gay men and lesbians needed has been accomplished, and cultural barriers have largely fallen as well.

Most aren’t besieged, at emergency levels or otherwise.

The request that they feel an emergency vicariously, in solidarity, is all about coalition politics.

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