

## Gay rights laws expose divisions in GOP's ranks

By Jennifer Steinhauer

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WASHINGTON » In Indiana, the Republican mayor of Indianapolis argued against the law the Republican governor had signed. In Ohio, a group named the Young Conservatives for the Freedom to Marry attempted to get rid of anti-gay language from the Republican Celebration platform. In Arkansas, the Republican governor faced a backlash from company and asked the Republican-led legislature to recall legislation noticed as discriminatory to similar-sex couples.

The Republican Celebration is in the middle of an argument with itself.

State laws observed as discriminatory against gay couples have laid bare and intensified longtime divisions in the party involving social conservatives opposed to gay rights and the pro-business wing of the celebration that sees economic peril in the fight.

"This is a pro-business celebration with a gay exception, and that exception comes into play more than and over again," mentioned Charles Francis, who was a founder of the Republican Unity Coalition during the George W. Bush administration, which failed in its effort to do away with sexual orientation difficulties from the party's agenda.

The divisions had been on certain display Wednesday in Little Rock, Ark., exactly where Asa Hutchinson, the Republican governor, referred to as on state lawmakers to either recall or amend legislation billed as a religious freedom measure, so that it mirrored a federal law approved in 1993.

Hutchinson, who was reacting to the anger in Indiana against the Republican governor, Mike Pence, and a similar law, mentioned he understood the divide in Arkansas and across the nation over the query of very same-sex marriage and its impact on people's religious beliefs. His personal son, Seth, he said, had asked him to veto the bill, which critics say could allow folks and firms to discriminate against gays and lesbians.

"This is a bill that in ordinary occasions would not be controversial," Hutchinson mentioned. "But these are not ordinary instances."

That was clear in California, exactly where Jeb Bush, a most likely Republican presidential candidate, took a strikingly different tone on Wednesday than he had on Monday in discussing

the laws. On Monday Bush had wholeheartedly praised Pence, but speaking to a group of potential supporters at the Four Seasons Hotel in East Palo Alto on Wednesday, Bush backed a change to the Indiana law that would present some level of protection to gays and lesbians, which Pence had endorsed soon after a firestorm of criticism.

"By the finish of the week, I think Indiana will be in the appropriate spot, which is to say that we need to have in a massive, diverse country like America we want to have space for people today to act on their conscience that it is a constitutional ideal that religious freedom is a core worth of our country, " Bush stated.

But in Iowa, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, who is running for president, strongly defended Pence.

"Religious liberty is not some cockamamie new theory that the Indiana legislature just figured out yesterday," Cruz said to a standing-area-only crowd at Morningside College in Sioux City. "It was literally among the founding principles of our nation, and we have to be in a position to clarify that cheerfully and with a smile."

Most other probably Republican presidential candidates have supported the Indiana law, but some major organization groups, nervous about a perception that the celebration is anti-gay, have criticized it. In one more sign of the divisions, 11 Senate Republicans voted final week to assure the approval of a price range amendment delivering Social Safety and veterans advantages to gay couples.

Quite a few other folks, especially U.S. Senate candidates up for re-election in swing states, are siding with groups that want to extend rights to gay couples.

"Life comes down to who you really like and who loves you back, and government has no location in the middle," said Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., and one of the 11 Republicans to vote for the budget amendment. "Married, identical-sex couples deserve equal treatment below the law, such as when it comes to their Social Security and veterans benefits."

Final month, Kirk signed a pal-of-the-court short, and was the lead Republican sponsor of an employment Non-Discrimination Act, which passed the Senate in the 113th Congress. Other individuals who voted for the measure, sponsored by Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, had been Sens. Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire and Rob Portman of Ohio, Republicans who are anticipated to face hard re-election fights next year.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the nation's biggest business enterprise organization, also signaled its opposition. "The U.S. Chamber doesn't condone discrimination of any type, in any type," the group mentioned in a statement. "We help those legislative leaders in Indiana and Arkansas who seek to clarify the law to shield this identical principle."

Other Republican-dominated states have moved in a distinct direction. In Utah, the Republican governor signed a bill that extends state anti-discrimination protection to gays in the areas of housing and employment, a measure passed by a Republican legislature and supported by the Mormon Church.

The present battle in Indiana was presaged in 2014, when Gov. Jan Brewer, R-Ariz., came beneath intense stress from the company neighborhood and the National Football League and vetoed Senate Bill 1062, which would have changed state law in ways similar to Indiana. Brewer cited "unintended and negative consequences" of the bill.

The tug of war involving social and small business-minded conservatives has been long simmering and surfaced even when George W. Bush sought to privatize Social Security, and some social conservatives feared the move would drive women into the workforce.

The challenge of abortion has provided an additional flash point. Although there is more unity amongst Republicans in opposing abortion rights, quite a few would prefer to, alternatively, steer the conversation toward the economy, health care and national safety.

"There has constantly been this tension," stated Michael D. Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a conservative assume tank, "both in terms of tactics, mainly because the economic conservatives wanted to talk about taxes and the economy, and on the electoral strategy," since those social concerns frequently alienated suburban moderates and price Republicans elections, he said.

"There is no doubt that the continued opposition of gay rights is an electoral loser," he added. "Younger Republicans are as pro-life as older Republicans, but gay rights is a big generational shift and Republicans are going to have to obtain a way to deal with that situation."

Assistance for exact same-sex marriage has steadily grown more than the last decade, a startling turnaround from a period when Republicans employed ballot measures opposing similar-sex marriage to drive turnout in some states, such as Ohio. Now, 52 % of Americans support gay marriage, according to a Pew Research Center poll, compared with 40 percent who oppose it in 2001, Americans opposed it by a 57 % to 35 percent margin in the exact same poll.

But how the problems resonates with voters in 2016 remains unclear. "It is not going to be the kind of issue that 2016 candidates will place at the major of their agenda," stated Whit Ayres, a Republican political consultant. "The most significant challenges among candidates will be the ones among voters, which are the economy, overall health care, education, ISIS, national security and so on."

Francis, a management consultant, dropped his Republican affiliation immediately after the battles in 2006 more than the marriage situation and married a man. "We gave it our best effort and failed," he mentioned of his earlier efforts. "I consider the jury is nevertheless out on no

matter whether the Republican Party will be capable to resolve this chasm prior to the coming generation of millennials are entirely gone."

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