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At Pride Event, Biden Vows to Protect Rights of L.G.B.T.Q. A

"This administration has your back," the president told a group of Pride Month revelers out



By Katie Rogers

Reporting from Washington

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Standing on a stage decorated with rainbows and speaking to a crowd that included survivors of gay nightclub shootings and transgender rights advocates, President Biden on Saturday said his administration would work to counter a recent series of Republican-led bills and laws targeting the L.G.B.T.Q. community.

"We're taking on these civil rights violations," Mr. Biden said at a Pride Month event held at the White House on Saturday afternoon, "because that's what they are."

At the Pride event — which had been postponed earlier in the week because of smoke from the wildfires in Canada — the president said that his administration had taken steps to protect the civil rights of L.G.B.T.Q. Americans, including appointing an official within the Department of Education who will monitor and address the growing number of local bans on books with references to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

Neera Tanden, the White House domestic policy adviser, told CBS News that the official would provide guidance to school districts and warn them that book bans "may violate federal civil laws if they create a hostile environment for students."

According to a fact sheet released by the Biden administration, the Justice Department and other agencies will also designate officials to work with members of the L.G.B.T.Q. community on issues of concern. Federal funds will be dedicated for support programs for the parents of L.G.B.T.Q. youth, police training on helping victims of hate crimes and security briefings for health care providers and activist organizations.



The event at the White House was postponed because of the wildfire smoke that covered the Northeast earlier this week. Pete Marovich for The New York Times

Since 2021, at least 20 Republican-led states have passed bills regulating the lives and medical care of young transgender people. Conservative activists and parents have led efforts to ban books about L.G.B.T.Q. people and have protested outside of events where drag queens read to children.

"This year's Pride is caught between the push and pull of progress," Jill Biden, the first lady, said during her own set of remarks, referencing the slate of conservative bills and laws. "Outside the gates of this house are those who want to drag our country backwards."

Mr. Biden also assailed laws that have allowed business owners to discriminate against L.G.B.T.Q. people based on their religious or personal beliefs.

“When a person can be married in the morning and thrown out of a restaurant for being gay in the afternoon, something is still very wrong in America,” Mr. Biden said.

Mr. Biden called on Congress to pass the Equality Act, which would strengthen protections against discrimination for L.G.B.T.Q. Americans. The president also repeated his plea for Congress to pass an assault weapons ban, citing past mass shootings at the nightclubs Club Q and Pulse.

Both efforts have little to no chance of passing in a divided Congress.

Several Republican presidential candidates, including former President Donald J. Trump and Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, have supported broad restrictions on gender-affirming care for transgender people and on L.G.B.T.Q. matters in education and public life. They have framed the measures as efforts to protect children and defend against liberal views in America’s culture wars. A majority of Americans support same-sex marriage, but the public has more complicated views on transgender rights, according to polling compiled by the Pew Research Center.



“This year’s Pride is caught between the push and pull of progress,” said Jill Biden, the first lady.
Pete Marovich for The New York Times

Mr. Biden and his advisers have argued that the rights of transgender people and others in the L.G.B.T.Q. community should not be used as grist for culture-war battles, an argument the president emphasized at length on Saturday.

“These bills and laws attack the most basic values and freedoms we have as Americans,” Mr. Biden said. “The right to be yourself. The right to make your own health decisions. The right to raise your children.

“I recognize, for a lot of folks across this country, maybe it’s not you, your kid, your family members going through whatever a transgender child and family is going through. But I think we all agree: If it were you, you’d want the space to figure it out with your family and your doctor.”

As vice president, Mr. Biden became a public supporter of same-sex marriage before President Barack Obama had processed his “evolving” views on the matter.

“I am absolutely comfortable with the fact that men marrying men, women marrying women and heterosexual men and women marrying one another are entitled to the same exact rights, all the civil rights, all the civil liberties,” Mr. Biden said in May 2012. Mr. Obama soon said that he supported same-sex marriage.

Eleven years later, same-sex marriage is the law of the land, and Mr. Biden is president.

“This administration has your back,” he said to applause on Saturday.

People who gathered at the White House offered a gesture of support for the president and his efforts: “Four more years,” they chanted.

“You enrich every part of American life,” Mr. Biden told the crowd. “You are some of the bravest most inspiring people I’ve ever known, and I’ve known a lot of good folks.”

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