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Back-to-School Tips for LGBTQ Parents

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Back-to-school time can be daunting for any parent, as we leave our children to the care of others and subject to peer circles that we can't fully control. LGBTQ parents may have particular concerns, too, about how welcoming and inclusive the administration, teachers, coaches, and students will be to our children, especially in states with school-related anti-LGBTQ laws. I'm not here to tell you it will all be fine, because I can't make such guarantees, but I will offer some advice based on seeing my son through 12 years of public school and into college.

Remember that much education happens at home. Perhaps not the academic subjects (although some of us



see **MOMBIAN**, page 4

Photo by Taylor Heery, via Unsplash.

Carnival Week in Provincetown

More than 100,000 visitors participated in the 45th annual week-long Provincetown Carnival week celebration that ran August 12-19. The 2023 theme was *Land of Toys*.

PHOTO BY
LAURA MOSKOWITZ

SEE MORE PHOTOS
ON PAGE 7



Couple allege discrimination by DCF over LGBTQ views

By Bay Windows Staff

Massachusetts couple Michael and Catherine "Kitty" Burke filed a complaint in early August against the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and other officials after their application to become foster parents was denied over their stance on LGBTQ children.

According to the complaint, in Jan-

uary 2022 the Burkes began the application process with DCF. They were screened to assess the couple's views on raising LGBTQ children.

The complaint contained a social worker's report which said the Burkes were asked how they would feel if a child in their care identified as LGBTQ or struggled with gender identity. According to the report, Kitty Burke responded by saying "let's take

the T out of it" and called gender-affirming care "chemical castration." She also said, "I'm going to love you the same," but that the child "would need to live a chaste life."

The social worker's report also indicated that the Burkes expressed hesitation around using a person's preferred pronouns.

see **DISCRIMINATION**, page 10



Reassembling America's fragments

After a sociopath, let diversity be our teacher

by Richard J. Rosendall | rosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

Learning to tell polite lies is part of the socialization process for young people. It is part of what keeps us all from going at each other's throats.

In her between-song patter at a concert years ago at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theatre, Broadway star Laura Benanti talked about her beloved late uncle Robert Wonerberger, who had been a popular soloist in the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington. One of the skills she had learned from him, she said, was how to praise people when you didn't really think they were very good. This got appreciative laughter from the audience.

Most people take these social niceties for granted. America's 45th presi-

dent, who would be our 47th, is not one of them. He was persona non grata among the social elite in New York because of his gracelessness and craziness.

He cannot fake it. He is a sociopath.

Mind you, some of us are better at faking it than others. But most of us do passably well most of the time, because we make the effort. It never occurs to Trump to make such an effort.

It is not simply that Trump is a son of wealth. I have gotten to know many wealthy people over the years, and most of them practice the nor-

see **ROSENDALL**, page 10

Boston's first new queer bar in a long time approved in the Back Bay

Courtesy Adam Gaffin
www.universalhub.com

On Thursday, Aug. 17, The Boston Licensing Board today approved the sale of the Pour House's liquor license to Dani's Queer Bar,

909 Boylston St. in Boston's Back Bay.

Manager Thais Rocha hopes to open a full-service restaurant and bar aimed at "LGBTQ+ women and non-binary people" later this summer or early this fall, in the old

Pour House location, using the license being acquired from landlord Charles Talanian.

The Pour House closed, like its neighboring bars, in the early months of the pandemic in 2020.



"I went to an English boarding school, dear. Trust me — you're in good hands."

— The Prince's response to his inexperienced Yank in "Red, White and Royal Blue".

more in Billy Masters on page 6!



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Back To School I'm HERE Badge Easily Identifies Safe and Supportive Educators

Submitted by NEA LGBTQ+ Caucus

The I'm HERE Safe Person/Safe Place Badge is designed for students to easily recognize educators who are safe and affirming individuals. Educators who voluntarily wear the badge do so to self-identify that they are safe and affirming to LGBTQ+ youth and their allies. Students often feel alone and isolated, especially in the school setting. According to the Human Rights Campaign, 54% of LGBTQ+ youth are battling symptoms of depression, compared to 29% of non-LGBTQ+ youth.

With the unprecedented rise in anti-LGBTQ+ laws, policies, hate speech, and systemic discrimination, students need to know who they can speak to if they are being bullied, threatened, or harassed or can get age-appropriate answers from someone they trust. Further research conducted by HRC finds that 31% of LGBTQ+ youth, 43% of transgender youth, and 40% of questioning youth have been bullied at school, compared to 16% of their non-LGBTQ+ peers. According to the Trevor Project, many students lack access to affirming spaces, with only 55% of LGBTQ+ youth reporting that their school is LGBTQ+ affirming and only 37% saying that their home is LGBTQ+ affirming. The I'm Here badge is designed to address this need in our schools.

The I'm HERE Safe Person/Safe Place Badge is an easy way for students to identify a trusted adult who is there to listen to them, acknowledge them, and support them when others won't. The QR code located on the back of the badge leads educators to an online toolkit that houses resources from leading LGBTQ+ organizations. The QR code is intended for educators to easily find resources for their own education on many LGBTQ+ issues.



Photo via www.nea-lgbtqc.org.

To join the more than 95,000 educators who have self-identified as a safe person visit www.nea-lgbtqc.org.

The NEA LGBTQ+ Caucus works to provide educators, education support professionals, and students with safe schools free of anti-LGBTQ+ bias and intolerance, and to provide sound education programs for all students. The mission of the NEA-LGBTQ+ Caucus is to eliminate institutional discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia, monitors and participates in the development of NEA policies and activities, providing resources and fostering better communication among educators, students, and communities.

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Oppose Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester Anti-LGBTQ+ Policies

By Love Your Labels,
YWCA Central Massachusetts,
and MassEquality

We, the undersigned organizations, institutional leaders, elected officials, and concerned residents, strongly denounce the recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies enacted by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester. This policy, which mandates the updating of student handbooks to ban same-sex relationships and expression/behaviors inconsistent with birth-assigned sex, is a regressive step that has far-reaching consequences for the well-being and inclusivity of over 9,000 students across 21 elementary and secondary schools in Worcester County. This policy not only contradicts the core principles of inclusivity and acceptance, but also perpetuates harm to LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly youth, who deserve a safe and supportive educational environment.

The policy's coverage of gender identity and sexual orientation, including the potential for expulsion for actions deemed "confusing" or "scandalous," perpetuates a culture of intolerance and discrimination. This is compounded by Bishop McManus' history of opposing pro-LGBTQ+ and anti-racist initiatives in schools, such as the revocation of the Nativity School's Catholic status in 2022.

As advocates for inclusivity, equality, and the welfare of all our youth, we firmly reject these harmful policies. We echo the sentiments of national and state-wide LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations and individuals, stressing the necessity of acceptance, support, and affirmation for LGBTQ+ students. Policies that marginalize, deny identities, and perpetuate harmful stereotypes run counter to the values of justice, compassion, and respect that should guide educational institutions.



Photo via change.org.

We firmly believe that faith and acceptance can coexist. It is possible to hold religious beliefs while recognizing the humanity and rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. The Catholic Church has a moral obligation to ensure that its educational institutions provide nurturing environments where all students can thrive, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

We urge the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester to reconsider and revoke these policies, embracing a stance that values and uplifts all young people in our community. We call for a comprehensive review of the existing policies informed by a dialogue with LGBTQ+ advocates, community members, and experts to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment within its educational institutions. Our shared goal should be to create environments that nurture personal growth, respect individual identity, and empower our youth to flourish and learn.

We collectively demand accountability from this institution that wields significant influence over the lives and education of our youth, and advocate for an inclusive and compassionate approach that honors the dignity and humanity of each individual.

Visit the petition at www.change.org

Mombian

Continued from page 1

parents can contribute here, too), but definitely the core lessons about values and ethics. If we can convey our values through our own words and actions, we can give our children tools to assess and interpret what they are taught elsewhere, even if that differs.

We can also make our homes inclusive even if our schools are not, buying or borrowing LGBTQ-inclusive kids' books and ones with protagonists of identities that we both do and do not share. Yes, I believe schools should offer these materials, too, so that all students can have a full view of themselves and their world, but when they don't, we can still do so at home.

Be visible if you safely can, but listen to your kids. LGBTQ parents are often advised to meet with our kids' teachers and/or school administrators before the start of the year to answer any questions they may have and make sure they will be inclusive of our families. That can be helpful, especially when kids are young and/or starting at a new school—but it's also not right for every family at every time. Sometimes we may feel it unduly stresses our differences; we may prefer a quieter visibility, such as simply showing up for Parent's Night and introducing ourselves as our kids' parents. And as our children grow older, they may prefer to come out about their family in their own time and way. We should always be guided by what our children are experiencing and feeling, though, no matter which path we choose—which means encouraging open communication and letting them know we are always there for them.

Be active in the school community. Kids often benefit from parental involvement in their schools—and for LGBTQ parents, our presence can contribute to an important visibility (though see the tip above on listening to our children here). We can join the PTA or other parent groups, participate in our kids' classrooms as guest readers and the like, or help chaperone field trips. Right now, too, when anti-LGBTQ policies are being pushed forward in many school districts, participating in school board meetings can be critical.

Nevertheless, sometimes our work schedules or other important obligations (like other children or an aging parent) mean we cannot be as active as we'd like. We shouldn't feel guilty if we can't do everything—but we should ask ourselves if there are alternate ways of helping. Can't attend a meeting? Make phone calls or send e-mails to encourage others to show up. Help another parent prepare their remarks; share helpful resources online. And no matter what, vote!

Pick your battles and plan your tactics. Chances are, there are many ways our kids' schools could be more inclusive, starting with basic policies for safety and respect, to updating school forms, stocking LGBTQ-inclusive books, incorporating LGBTQ history and biographies in the curricula, and starting a Gender and Sexualities Alliance (GSA), among other things. If you feel moved to make change, evaluate what is likely going to have the biggest impact on students' lives and what is most likely to actually happen in your location. These two things may not always coincide, so you'll have to prioritize; sometimes you'll want to start small, while other times you'll want to address a critical immediate need, such as a piece of anti-LGBTQ policy or legislation. Consider, too, what efforts may al-

ready be underway, and where you may find allies among other parents and school personnel.

Know that help is available. One excellent new resource is Safe Schools for All (safeschoolsforall.org), a project from GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), GLSEN, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), and PFLAG, with information about student rights and what to do if you experience bullying, harassment, or discrimination. And the new Parenting with Pride site (parentingwithprideflorida.org), from Equality Florida and a host of partner organizations, offers tools, resources, and more to help parents and families "create communities where every LGBTQ+ child feels safe, affirmed, and loved." While intended for families in Florida, much of it is broadly applicable and may be useful to those in other states as well. I also list a range of LGBTQ back-to-school resources at my own website, mombian.com.

A purported concern for children has always driven much anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, and schools and young people are on the front lines right now. LGBTQ families have long shown, though, that we can survive and thrive despite the obstacles—and today, there are more resources and more ways of communicating with other LGBTQ families and allies than ever before. I have no doubt we have a difficult road ahead, but I also firmly believe we are up to the challenge.

Wishing your children and you a school year full of happiness and learning.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of *Mombian* (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, plus a searchable database of 1300+ LGBTQ family books.

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Saturday	August 19th	10 AM - 2 PM	Boston Public Library – Roslindale Branch, 246 Washington Street Boston, MA 02131
Thursday	August 24th	3 PM - 7 PM	Boston Public Library – Roslindale Branch, 4246 Washington Street Boston, MA 02131
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Equal Housing Opportunity



billy masters

Continued from page 1

Picture it — your beloved Billy, lauded, admired, some might even say venerated — incognito at the **Jonas Brothers** at the Boston Garden (I don't care what they call it now). **Nick Jonas** is at the lip of the stage, walking backwards, towards a gaping hole. I'm sure you've heard of ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. So imagine when I — far from ordinary — saw Nick Jonas inches away from plummeting to his death. Readers, I can't explain what came over me. But I suddenly heard my voice bellowing, "LOOK OUT, NICK!" If you watch the video, you see him cock his head just a bit — surely straining to hear a voice coming down from on high. Between my mouth and his cock — well, something magical happened. I hate to say I saved his life, but I think the facts speak for themselves.

Of course, there are other music stories in which I don't figure so prominently. Like, for instance, we just learned a shocking revelation about **Beyoncé**. A media outlet snagged a photo of her luggage, which included a large box labeled "Beyoncé Toilet Seats". Yes, **Queen Bee** requires sitting on a very particular throne — even on the road.

Britney Spears was photographed visiting **Lance Bass** and his twins Violet and Alexander. She captioned it, "I am a new auntie for Lance's babies!!! They are absolutely gorgeous babies!!!!" It depends on how you define the term "new"...the kids are almost two! She may be a "new auntie", but she's certainly not an attentive one. Although, she's had loads of reasons to be distracted. Brit just got married last year. So, you know — newlyweds. And then there's the latest news — she's getting a divorce. OK, who had 62 weeks in the pool?

Someone named **Tory Lanez** has been sentenced to 10 years in prison after shooting **Megan Thee Stallion** in the foot. It happened at the end of a party at **Kris Jenner's** house in 2020 — proving definitively that nothing good happens at a party at Kris Jenner's house. Tory claims shooting Megan was an accident. Should anyone want to make a film about this incident, I have the perfect title: "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?"

It's oft said there's no such thing as bad press, but **Lizzo** probably begs to differ. After multiple backup dancers filed suit against her for sexual harassment with a banana, another woman has come forward with a tale of her own — **Brooklyn Elizabeth Brown** claims that Lizzo slept with her boyfriend of 10 years! It happened when Lizzo and **Myke Wright** were co-hosting "Wonderland" on MTV back in 2018. I can't imagine this is that big a scandal. Doesn't this happen all the time with co-hosts? OK, maybe not on "The View", but definitely on "GMA3".

At long last, my impressions of "Red, White and Royal Blue". The Amazon Prime flick is based on the "New York Times Best Selling" novel of the same name. Full disclosure — I have not read the book. But one colleague described it as the Hallmark version of **Paul Rudnick's** "Playing the Palace" — which I enjoyed very much. Both owe a debt of gratitude to "Political Animals", which starred **Sebastian Stan** as the gay son of a US President (also produced by **Greg Berlanti**). The writing of this film is short on subtlety. Calling the Prince of England "Your royal hardness" or "Little Lord Fuckleroy" might seem cute on paper, but is cringeworthy when spoken aloud. It was directed by **Matthew López**, who wrote the award-winning play "The Inheritance" — and if that isn't a downward career trajectory, I don't know what is! While there are the occasional good moments in his work, all of a sudden you get a shot of the Washington Monument or the Eiffel Tower after the sex scene — oooh, how clever! In an interview, Matty made a point of saying how vital it was to get a shot of the prince's face during the "moment of insertion" — yes, that's the term he used. I bet you won't find

something like that in a **Candace Cameron Bure** flick!

I don't think it's too early to announce the winner of the Worst Accent in a Made—for—TV Movie will be **Uma Thurman** as the Texas-born US President. My God, it's like a bus and truck tour of "The Ann Richards Story"! That said, her character handles her son's coming-out beautifully, if not believably. You see, believability has nothing to do with movies in the Hallmark/Lifetime vein. They are all hampered with a formula and a deliberate style of acting, which I really abhor. This film is not helped by a soundtrack straight out of the Bugs Bunny/Road Runner cartoons! And speaking of animals, has a dog ever appeared less excited when its master came home from an overseas trip? The Prince's pup did everything but yawn — which I assume will be in the outtakes!

Aside from the egregious Uma, the acting is acceptable. **Taylor Zakhar Perez**, who plays Uma's son, is delightfully delicious and is quite believable...when he's not mugging (mostly limited to the first 10 minutes). **Nicholas Galitzine** as the Prince is somewhat blander, but likable enough. They have chemistry and varying degrees of attractiveness in their corner. If the idea of a fairytale ending has not been beaten out of you by reality, then you might really enjoy this flick. But I kept thinking how much more interesting it would have been if the President had been a Republican. Anyhoo, like Mary Todd Lincoln said long before me — all in all, it was entertaining.

If "Red, White and Royal Blue" whet your appetite for more middling gay made—for—TV fare, you won't have to wait long. The Hallmark Channel has announced "Notes for Autumn" will air on September 16th. This film is about a classical pianist (**Ashley Williams**) who needs a break from her city life. Her gay best friend is an author with writer's block (**Luke Macfarlane**) who needs a break from his life in the wilderness. They decide to swap homes...and hilarity ensues, I'm sure. Luke becomes entangled with his new neighbor, played by the dashing **Peter Porte**. I dunno anything else, except I feel safe in predicting we won't see a single "moment of insertion".

Staying on topic, our "Ask Billy" question comes from Gary in West Hollywood: "I think I saw the journalist from 'Red, White and Royal Blue' in 'The Inheritance' in L.A. Am I right? He's so sexy."

Thank you! I knew I knew him from somewhere. I saw that production of "The Inheritance" at the Geffen Playhouse in Brentwood, since it starred my pals **Bill Brochtrup** and **Tuc Watkins**. **Juan Castano** played Toby, one of the lead roles, and was really great. As I previously mentioned, "The Inheritance" was written by **Matthew López**, who directed "Red, White and Royal Blue" — so there's your connection. Since Gary made me do some research, Juan also played **Zachary Quinto's** husband in "I Am Michael", and was in the reboot of "Tales of the City" for Netflix — in which he donned some sexy leather gear. Since Juan has played lots of gay roles, you're probably wondering if he is. "I would say that for the majority of my life I identified as straight," he told a reporter. "But as I got older I think my sexual preference has gotten more fluid. I am, as my friends say, on the spectrum." In other words, he's left his options open — and heaven knows what else! Having seen him in the flesh, I can confirm that he looks even better out of his clothes, as you can see on BillyMasters.com.

When we're inheriting a hot Latino, we've definitely come to the end of another column. If you're interested in seeing **Taylor Zakhar Perez's** abs and ass, you might wanna check out www.BillyMasters.com — the site that always turns the other cheek. As for your questions, send them along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I'll get back to you before my next moment of insertion. So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Photo via Nick Jonas, Facebook.

Nick Jonas



Photo via Britney Spears, Twitter.

Britney Spears & Lance Bass with Violet & Alexander



Photo by Sabbi via Wikimedia Commons.

Uma Thurman

CONTINUED FROM COVER

CARNIVAL WEEK IN PROVINCETOWN

ALL PHOTOS BY LAURA MOSKOWITZ



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Nationalbriefs

California store owner fatally shot in dispute over Pride flag; officers kill gunman

CEDAR GLEN, Calif. (AP) — A California business owner was shot and killed after a dispute over a LGBTQ Pride flag displayed outside her store, according to authorities.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's officials said Laura Ann Carleton, 66, was pronounced dead at the scene of the shooting Friday night.

Sheriff's officials said that during the initial altercation at Carleton's clothing store, the suspect "made several disparaging remarks about a rainbow flag that stood outside the store before shooting Carleton." He then fled the scene.

Deputies were able to locate the armed suspect and he was fatally shot after a confrontation with the officers. The man had not been identified as of Sunday.

Carleton, who preferred to be called "Lauri," is survived by her husband and nine children in a blended family. She owned and operated the MagPi clothing store in Cedar Glen. The unincorporated community in the San Bernardino Mountains is roughly 60 miles (96 kilometers) east of downtown Los Angeles.

An LGBTQ group in nearby Lake Arrowhead said Carleton didn't identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, but spent time helping and advocating for everyone and was defending her Pride flags placed in front of her shop on the night of the shooting.

Law enforcement agencies in several states have investigated the destruction of rainbow Pride flags as potential hate crimes in recent years.

Judge blocks Georgia ban on hormone replacement therapy for transgender minors

By Sudhin Thanawala
Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A federal judge has blocked the state of Georgia from enforcing part of a new law that bans doctors from starting hormone therapy for transgender people under the age of 18.

In a ruling issued Sunday, U.S. District Court Judge Sarah Geraghty granted a preliminary injunction sought by several transgender children, parents and a community organization in a lawsuit challenging the ban.

"The imminent risks of irreparable harm to Plaintiffs flowing from the ban —including risks of depression, anxiety, disordered eating, self-harm, and suicidal ideation—outweigh any harm the State will experience from the injunction," the judge wrote.

An email to a spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office was not immediately returned. Geraghty said her ruling will block enforcement of the ban on hormone replacement therapy until a further court order or a trial.

The Georgia law, Senate Bill 140, allows doctors to prescribe puberty-blocking medications, and it allows minors who are already receiving hormone therapy to continue.

But it bans any new patients under 18 from starting hormone therapy. It also bans most gen-

der-affirming surgeries for transgender people under 18. It took effect on July 1.

Geraghty's ruling was an "incredible victory for Georgia families," attorneys for the plaintiffs said in a statement. The American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and the law firm O'Melveny & Myers are representing the plaintiffs.

"This law unapologetically targets transgender minors and denies them essential health care," they said. "The ruling restores parents' rights to make medical decisions that are in their child's best interest, including hormone therapy for their transgender children when needed for them to thrive and be healthy."

At least 22 states have now enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors, and most of those states face lawsuits. A federal judge struck down Arkansas' ban as unconstitutional, and federal judges have temporarily blocked bans in Alabama and Indiana as well.

The plaintiffs in the Georgia lawsuit did not ask to immediately block the surgery ban, which remains in effect.

Doctors typically guide kids toward therapy or voice coaching long before medical intervention.

At that point, puberty blockers and other hormone treatments are far more common than surgery. They have been available in the U.S. for more than a decade and are standard treatments backed by major doctors' organizations including the American Medical Association.

During two days of hearings earlier this month, Geraghty heard conflicting testimony about the safety and benefits of hormone therapy to treat adolescents with gender dysphoria —the distress felt when people's gender expression does not match their gender identity.

Experts for the families said the benefits of gender-affirming care for adolescents are well-established and profound. State government experts raised concerns about the risks of hormone treatment and the quality of studies establishing its effectiveness.

In her ruling, Geraghty said witnesses for state health officials set a very high bar for evidence of hormone therapy's benefit and a low bar for evidence of its risks. She noted that experts agreed that prolonged use of puberty blockers was harmful to a person's health and inadvisable.

For the transgender children in the suit, "time is of the essence," she wrote, and SB 140 could cause them to suffer heightened gender dysphoria and unwanted and irreversible puberty.

Associated Press legal affairs writer Denise Lavoie in Richmond, Va. contributed to this report.

Veto overridden: Ban on gender-affirming care for minors takes effect in North Carolina

By Hannah Schoenbaum
Associated Press/Report for America

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Transgender youth in North Carolina lost access Wednesday to gender-affirming medical treatments after the

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Republican-led General Assembly overrode the governor's vetoes of that legislation and other bills touching on gender in sports and LG-BTQ+ instruction in the classroom.

GOP supermajorities in the House and Senate enacted —over Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's opposition —a bill barring medical professionals from providing hormone therapy, puberty-blocking drugs and surgical gender-transition procedures to anyone under 18, with limited exceptions.

The law takes effect immediately. But minors who had begun treatment before Aug. 1 may continue receiving that care if their doctors deem it medically necessary and their parents consent.

North Carolina becomes the 22nd state to enact legislation restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors. But most face legal challenges, and local LG-BTQ+ rights advocates vow to take the ban to court. The Senate voted 27-18 to complete the veto override after the House voted 74-45 earlier. Two House Democrats joined all present Republicans in supporting the override bid.

Democratic Sen. Lisa Grafstein, North Carolina's only out LGBTQ+ state senator, said the gender-affirming care bill "may be the most heartbreaking bill in a truly heartbreaking session."

Republican Sen. Joyce Krawiec, the bill's primary sponsor, argued the state has a responsibility to protect children from receiving potentially irreversible procedures before they are old enough to make their own informed medical decisions.

Gender-affirming care is considered safe and medically necessary by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and the Endocrine Society. While trans minors very rarely receive surgical interventions, they are commonly prescribed drugs to delay puberty and sometimes begin taking hormones before reaching adulthood.

Some LGBTQ+ rights advocates in the Senate gallery began yelling after Republican Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, who was presiding, cut off Grafstein to let another lawmaker speak. Several people were then escorted out by capitol police.

Earlier, the Senate and House voted minutes apart to override another veto of a bill limiting LGBTQ+ instruction in the early grades. The law now requires that public school teachers in most circumstances alert parents before they call a student by a different name or pronoun. It also bans instruction about gender identity and sexuality in K-4 classrooms, which critics have previously likened to a Florida law opponents call "Don't Say Gay."

Nathaniel Dibble, 19, and other LGBTQ+ youth who rallied outside the Legislative Building, said the bill would make schools unsafe for transgender students who could be outed by a teacher to unsupportive parents.

But bill sponsor Sen. Amy Galey, an Ala-

mance County Republican, said parents have a right to know details about their children's education. "Parents need to be brought into the conversation from the very beginning, not treated with suspicion or as the source of that anguish," she said.

Both chambers also voted Wednesday to override Cooper's veto of another bill banning transgender girls from playing on girls' sports teams from middle and high school through college. It, too, immediately became law.

A day of divisive deliberations saw anger and emotion boil over at times.

Democratic Rep. John Autry of Mecklenburg County, who has a transgender grandchild, choked up while debating the gender-affirming care bill on the House floor. "Just stop it," he begged his Republican colleagues before they voted.

Cooper blasted the Republican-controlled chambers for what he called "wrong priorities" even before lawmakers were done voting.

"The legislature finally comes back to pass legislation that discriminates," he said, his statement warning of repercussions for North Carolina families and students.

Parents of trans and nonbinary children, like Elizabeth Waugh of Orange County, said before the voting that they have been weighing whether to move their families out of North Carolina so their children will have unrestricted access to gender-affirming health care.

Waugh's nonbinary child did not begin receiving treatment before Aug. 1 and would need to travel elsewhere if they want to start taking hormones.

"I have felt like I had a lump in my throat for months," she said. "Just talking to other families who are dealing with this, I mean, the pain that they are feeling, the suffering, the fear for their children —it's devastating."

The House kicked off the day's rush of votes with the athletics bill, and the Senate completed that override soon after.

A former Olympic swimmer, Rep. Marcia Morey, spoke about the possible emotional impact of the law on young athletes.

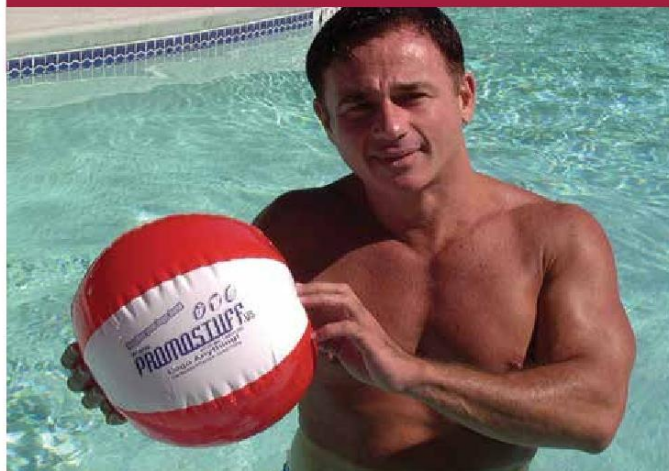
"This bill affects 10-, 11-, 12-year-olds who are just starting to learn about athletics, about competition, about sportsmanship," said Morey, a Durham County Democrat. "To some of these kids, it could be their lifeline to self-confidence."

She and other critics said limits on transgender participation are discriminatory and will unfairly exclude a small number of students.

But recent high school graduate Payton McNabb, of Murphy, said she's living proof that the law is needed to protect the safety and well-being of female athletes.

"The veto of this bill was not only a veto on women's rights, but a slap in the face to every female in the state," said McNabb, who says she suffered a concussion and neck injury last year after a transgender athlete hit her in the head with a volleyball during a school match.

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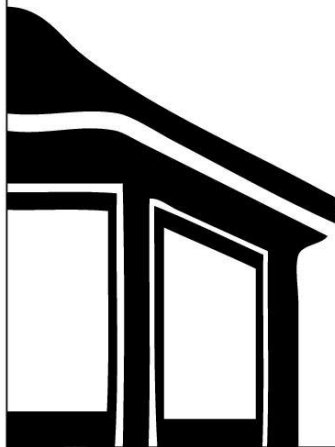
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mal social graces. Trump, however, thinks rules, laws, and the Constitution don't apply to him. His attitude was never a surprise given his notorious habit of refusing to pay contractors and leaving restaurants without paying his bill.

Trump is all about himself, and feels entitled to have others cater to him. His rabble rewards him for this. The foreign leaders he admires are all dictators. During his first presidential term, he attacked the diplomatic corps and NATO. He sought to undermine our civil service, and to use DOJ as his private crew of mob lawyers. He has made it clear that his demolition would resume on day one of a second term.

Hillary Clinton warned us in 2016 of the threat Trump posed. She won the popular vote, but could not overcome the Republican advan-

tage in the Electoral College. The question is, can any unifying figure emerge in an era of disinformation?

Speaking of which, it is tempting to revel in fabulist Rudy Giuliani being indicted on racketeering charges after leading RICO prosecutions early in his own career. We do well to note, however, that the jailed mobsters laughing at his plight are also fans of Trump.

Chris Christie, whose chances of claiming the Republican nomination are virtually nil, speaks of wanting a government that does big things again. Set aside Republicans' old mantra about small government and low taxes, which contradicts him. Christie's partisan ambitions prevent him from respecting the big things done by President Biden and congressional Democrats in the previous Congress including on infrastructure, climate change, and decreasing insulin costs. Small things are the likelier harvest of today's scorched-earth politics.

At this point, it hardly matters who the Republican nominee will be. The GOP's culture-war toxicity will only be defeated by consuming itself.

Unresponsive government is aided and abetted by those on the left for whom anything short of their idea of perfection merits contempt, thus justifying third-party candidates who only help—and often are funded by—the GOP. The greatest form of voter suppression is apathy that causes people to sit out the fight for our future.

Here in Arraignment Summer, things remain up in the air. The GOP could crash and burn. On the other hand, liberals and progressives could open a path to Republican victory by their usual internecine sniping.

The accountability represented by Trump's indictment on 91 counts across four cases is salutary but insufficient. We must work to build, or rebuild, a public square with space to cooperate

across our differences. But how do we do that?

Sooner or later, Donald and Rudy and Hillary and Joe will recede into the past. America's future depends less on personalities or programs than on our willingness to see one another as more than enemies to be literally or virtually zapped.

Ultimately, we cannot get around our diversity as a people. Monopolizing power by demonizing and disenfranchising those who are different from us is a dead end. To privilege political bomb-throwing risks turning the Bill of Rights into a suicide pact.

We need to mine our struggles for stories that connect rather than poison us. Even the shivers from a cautionary tale are better than touring the ruins of a republic.

Richard J. Rosendall is a writer and activist at rrosendall@me.com.

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Discrimination

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The social worker granted an "approval with conditions, specifically around religion and LGBTQIA++ related issues," but, according to the

complaint, their application was later denied by the department's Licensing Review Team.

The Burkes are represented by Becket Law, a nonprofit legal group focused on religious liberty characterized. Becket Law is characterized by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a "hardline religious-right groups" working to reverse LGBTQ

rights.

According to a statement from the firm released to NBC News, "The Burkes were devastated to learn that they were denied a license to foster or adopt any child in the Massachusetts child welfare system. They're asking the court to get rid of that discriminatory denial so that they will not be

barred from fostering or adopting children in the future, in Massachusetts or elsewhere."

The case highlights the targeting of transgender youth and LGBTQ rights, with different perspectives emerging. LGBTQ youth in foster care face significant risks, including high rates of suicide attempts.

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