

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Ending the Backlash on LGBTQI+ Issues

A plan to reestablish a foothold on key LGBTQI+ issues.

By Caleb Smith and Winnie Stachelberg

Today's conservative backlash to transgender issues is being weaponized by those who want to reverse hard-won civil rights protections. Right-wing attacks on transgender Americans have become a predictable feature of modern campaigns; the far right spends hundreds of millions of dollars attacking not just transgender people but, increasingly, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, too. The toxicity of this debate is threatening some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Civil rights are fundamental to the very concept of America. Regardless of the party in power, nobody should be harassed or targeted by the government because of who they are. At the same time, Americans are interested in commonsense responses to these issues. Leaders must be able to confirm to the public that they understand basic truths—in particular, that there are differences between men and women—if they want to reclaim their footing, defuse the right's attacks, and, in so doing, defend civil rights protections for all Americans.

The Center for American Progress plan provides a policy platform that:

- **Affirms Americans' shared values.** We should all be able to agree that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect; that all Americans should be able to work, access federal services and housing, and enjoy public spaces; and that politicians should not interfere with medical decisions or the health of patients.
- **Holds that everyone should be safe from discrimination and harassment.** Transgender people didn't choose to be transgender, and no child should be bullied, harassed, mocked, or made to feel worthless. This isn't about ideology or politics; it's about human decency, and Congress should pass nondiscrimination protections that protect everyone from mistreatment based on who they are.
- **Understands that restrictions on sports may be appropriate based on the level of competition.** The NCAA recently restricted transgender women from playing in women's sports, while the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association allows full participation. That is where these decisions should lie:

with organizations such as sports governing bodies or local school districts that understand the competitive demands of sports and their students' needs and not with politicians. And leaders should recognize that all athletes deserve fair competition and a level playing field.

- **Allows parents to make medical decisions without interference from politicians.** Decisions about if or when minors access transgender medical care should be made by parents, not politicians. Parents' decisions about the types of treatments that their teens do—or do not—receive are complex and difficult, and parental consent has always been and should always be required before minors receive transgender medical care.
- **Applauds all who serve.** All Americans who are qualified and willing should be able to serve their country, and no one should be excluded from participating in military service or contributing to their community due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBTQI+ people are our parents, siblings, neighbors, and family. Discrimination against them harms each of us. As a nation, we are all better off when everyone is treated with fairness and respect—by the law and by their fellow Americans.