

## Judge Strikes Down Controversial Tennessee Law Targeting Drag Performances in Public



A federal judge in Memphis, Tennessee, has temporarily blocked a law restricting drag performances in public from going into effect, ruling that it was likely "vague and overly broad" in its restriction of speech. The law, signed by Tennessee Governor Bill Lee in February, aimed to restrict drag performances in public or in front of children, putting the state at the forefront of a Republican-led effort to limit drag in at least 15 states in recent months.

The judge, U.S. District Judge Thomas Parker, an appointee of Republican former President Donald Trump, said the state had failed to justify with a compelling interest the restrictions it aimed to impose. Lee had said the law would protect children from being "potentially exposed to sexualized entertainment, to obscenity."

The judge sided with Friends of George's, a Memphis-based LGBTQ theater group that filed suit against the state. The Tennessee bill was part of an upswing in recent months in Republican efforts to regulate the conduct of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people.

Several planned drag events were canceled over the winter after protests, and many venues felt forced to make previously family-friendly drag shows into adults-only events. Much of the debate in Tennessee has been over whether drag is inherently a sexually explicit art form.

### **Start hiring the best legal talent today - submit your job openings with BCG Attorney Search.**

Performers and civil rights groups have condemned the proposed drag regulations, saying they are unconstitutional and redundant under existing obscenity laws. They would lead to further harassment and violence against gay and transgender people.

The judge's decision to block the law's implementation is a win for the LGBTQ community and a setback for Republican-led efforts to regulate drag performances. The ruling recognizes that the law is likely both vague and overly broad and fails to provide a compelling justification for the restrictions it aims to impose.

It also recognizes that the law could have a chilling effect on free speech and expression, particularly for members of the LGBTQ community. By restricting drag performances in public or front of children, the law would limit the ability of LGBTQ people to express themselves and connect with their communities.

The ruling is also a reminder that the fight for LGBTQ rights is far from over, with many challenges ahead. While the judge's decision is a step in the right direction, it is only a temporary victory, and there is still much work to be done to protect the rights of LGBTQ people in Tennessee and across the country.

Overall, the ruling is a positive development for the LGBTQ community and a reaffirmation of the importance of free speech and expression. It is a reminder that the fight for LGBTQ rights is ongoing and that we must continue to stand up for our rights and demand equal treatment under the law.