

## Florida Drag Show Law Trial Postponed to June 2024



In a closely-watched legal battle, a trial to determine the constitutionality of a new Florida law targeting drag shows has been delayed until June 2024. The law, championed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, has been the subject of significant controversy and legal challenges since its proposal.

The controversial law in question aims to penalize venues that allow children into "adult live performances," although it does not explicitly mention drag shows. However, the legislation's sponsor made it clear that the law was primarily directed at such performances. Under this law, venues found in violation face fines, and their liquor licenses could be suspended or revoked. Moreover, individuals attending such performances could also face misdemeanor charges.

The legal challenge against the law was brought forth by the owner of a popular Hamburger Mary's restaurant and bar in Orlando, which frequently hosts drag shows, including family-friendly performances inviting children to attend. The restaurant owner argued that the law was overly broad, written vaguely, and violated First Amendment rights by suppressing freedom of speech.

A federal judge issued a temporary injunction, preventing the law from being enforced until the trial could take place. The injunction was a significant victory for those opposing the legislation. However, the state of Florida appealed the decision, leading to further legal complexities.

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According to a recent filing in federal court in Tallahassee, the trial, which was initially expected to begin earlier, has been rescheduled to start in June 2024. The trial is slated to last for two days and will be decided by a judge, foregoing the involvement of a jury.

In a notable development, U.S. District Judge Gregory Presnell clarified that the injunction applied not only to the restaurant that brought the lawsuit but to all venues in Florida. This clarification broadened the scope of protection for venues potentially affected by the law, providing temporary relief until the trial's conclusion.

The outcome of the trial will carry significant implications, not only for the venues hosting drag shows in Florida but also for the broader drag community and LGBTQ+ rights in the state. The law's detractors argue that it is discriminatory, targeting a specific form of artistic expression and adversely affecting the livelihoods of performers and businesses that cater to diverse audiences.

Moreover, critics point to a broader pattern of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation during Governor Ron DeSantis' tenure. Before announcing his candidacy for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination, DeSantis focused heavily on anti-LGBTQ+ measures during his time as governor. Apart from the drag show law, other bills he signed sought to ban gender-affirming care for minors and restrict discussions of personal pronouns in schools. These measures have sparked widespread protests and debates over individual rights and inclusivity.

The trial to determine the constitutionality of Florida's law targeting drag shows is set to be a critical legal battle, shaping the landscape of LGBTQ+ rights and freedom of expression in the state. The delayed trial gives supporters and opponents of the law more time to prepare their arguments and strengthen their cases.

As June 2024 approaches, the eyes of the nation will be on Florida's courtroom, anticipating the outcome that will have far-reaching ramifications. The trial's conclusion will determine whether this law targeting drag shows stands or falls, impacting not only the drag community but also setting a precedent for how states address LGBTQ+ rights and artistic freedom in the future.

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