

Maine Senate kills transgender-bathrooms bill

GLENN ADAMS, Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — The state Senate voted Wednesday to kill legislation addressing the use of public restrooms by transgender individuals, a bill that supporters said was meant to help businesses and schools in an untenable situation but that opponents said was fueled by bigotry and hatred.

Following similar action by the House a day earlier, senators voted 23-11 to kill a bill that said the state [Human Rights Commission](#) doesn't have to find unlawful discrimination when transgendered people are not allowed to use a bathroom, shower room or other public accommodation based on their gender identity.

Opponents believed the legislation would have restricted transgenders from using restrooms of the sex with which they identify.

Newport Republican Rep. [Ken Fredette](#)'s defeated bill stemmed from a pair of cases that are now being decided in [Superior Court](#). In Orono, a boy who identifies as a girl wasn't allowed to use the girls' bathroom in a middle school. In Auburn, a restaurant barred a transgender woman from using the ladies' room.

Fredette sought to give school systems and business owners more leeway in making decisions affecting who should use their restrooms. It was not, he said during the House debate, an attempt to prohibit transgender people — those who are born with one gender but identify with the other — from using the bathrooms.

But opponents said that rather than protecting businesses and schools from litigation over the issue, it will invite more.

"Anyone who goes down this path will be inundated by lawsuits," Sen. [Philip Bartlett II](#), D-Gorham, said during Wednesday's debate. "My guess is that most businesses in the state won't want to have anything to do with this."

Bartlett added that the bill "is unnecessary, it is mean-spirited, it is unworkable," and appeared to be motivated by "bigotry and hatred."

Independent Sen. [Richard Woodbury](#) of Yarmouth also asked for the bill's defeat, saying it is "highly discriminatory."

Sen. [David Hastings](#), R-Fryeburg, rejected assertions about the bill's motivation, saying "bigotry, hatred or the wish to discriminate against any Maine citizens" had nothing to do with it.

The [Maine Civil Liberties Union](#), the gay rights organization EqualityMaine and the [Maine Women's Lobby](#) were among the groups opposing the bill. Rep. [Emily Cain](#) of Orono, the [House Democratic](#) leader, the bill's rejection "a victory for human rights."

Gov. [Paul LePage](#)'s administration testified in favor of the bill, saying it was not taking a stand on moral grounds but rather in hopes of helping businesses.

Read more: <http://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Maine-Senate-kills-transgender-bathrooms-bill-1414945.php#ixzz1S6px12YF>