

Bruce Springsteen cancels North Carolina concert in protest against anti-LGBT laws

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On Friday, Bruce Springsteen canceled a planned concert in Greensboro, North Carolina as an act of protest against the state's passage of a discriminatory anti-LGBT law.

The law—known officially as the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act and nicknamed the “bathroom” law—prohibits transgender people from using the bathroom of the gender with which they identify, mandating instead that they use the one corresponding to their birth certificates. It also prevents local governments from banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and prohibits the establishment of a local minimum wage above the state minimum, among other reactionary labor reforms.

Springsteen announced the cancellation on his web site, writing, “No other group of North Carolinians faces such a burden. To my mind, it's an attempt by people who cannot stand the progress our country has made in recognizing the human rights of all of our citizens to overturn that progress.”

After expressing solidarity with groups and businesses boycotting North Carolina, Springsteen says of his own boycott, “Some things are more important than a rock show, and this fight against prejudice and bigotry—which is happening as I write—is one of them. It is the strongest means I have for raising my voice in opposition to those who continue to push us backwards instead of forwards.”

Springsteen has long been a principled artist who has continually—especially in his early albums—shown empathy for the plight of working people. In 2000, he performed a new song called “American Skin” about the police murder of Amadou Diallo in New York in February 1999, after the police officers involved were all acquitted. For this, he was blacklisted by police organizations in New York and slandered by Mayor

Rudolph Giuliani, among others.

He has been a prominent advocate for LGBT rights for many years, speaking out as a supporter of legalizing gay marriage prior to last year's Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage across the US.

In his protest, Springsteen joins a number of major corporations and organizations that have denounced the law, including some that have already pulled their businesses from the state. Shortly after the signing of the law, PayPal announced that it would relocate a new global operations center that was going to be built in Charlotte due to the passage of the discriminatory law. Fox, A&E and other Hollywood entities have said they will no longer film in the state, while the NBA is considering moving the 2017 All-Star Game from Charlotte. Google, Facebook and the Charlotte-based Bank of America have all released statements opposing the law.

While Springsteen's protest demonstrates his respect for democratic rights, the actions by PayPal and other corporations do not signal their readiness to defend such rights, but rather express their overriding concern for maintaining their public image. The corporations' protests are entirely self-serving and hypocritical, as each one conducts business globally with countries that have far more discriminatory laws than that passed in North Carolina.

The law passed in North Carolina was one of numerous such efforts nationally, which are being spearheaded by the Republicans and largely acquiesced to by the Democrats. In the past month alone, three states have passed anti-LGBT discriminatory laws, while half a dozen have enacted new abortion restrictions, all part of the reactionary campaign for “religious freedom.” The organization Human Rights

Campaign estimates that nearly 200 bills they classify as anti-LGBT have been introduced in nearly three dozen states since the start of 2016 alone.

This right-wing climate has been fomented by the Republican Party, particularly after last year's release of doctored videos that attempted to smear Planned Parenthood. Christian fundamentalist presidential candidate Ted Cruz has called the 2016 US presidential election the "religious liberty election." He has pledged to push for the enactment of the so-called First Amendment Defense Act within his first 100 days in office. The ACLU warns that the bill would "open the door to unprecedented taxpayer-funded discrimination against LGBT people, single mothers, and unmarried couples."



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