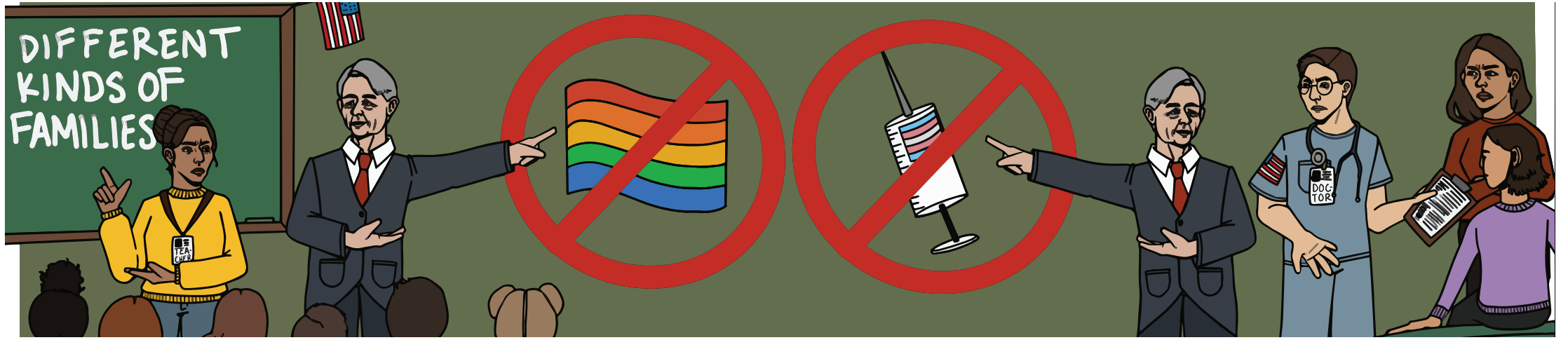


Anti-LGBTQ attacks in Texas need to stop



ART BY Asher Hagan

The recent spike in anti-trans and LGBTQ legislation in Texas is overly harmful



Asher Hagan
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I did not learn about gay people in a classroom. The first time I saw a gay flag was when I was seven years old. It belonged to my neighbors, my neighbors who were two men. I did not know what the flag was, just that it was pretty and it was not until years later that I even realized my neighbors were queer. Now, I have that flag on my wall. I identify with it and it feels like my state wants to take it away from me.

Texas is a historically conservative, Republican state as proven by the fact that Texas has not voted Democrat in a presidential election since 1976. Over their time in power, the Republican party has slowly devolved into hateful rhetoric and a corrupt version of the "American way."

It is hard to pin down when the higher powers in the GOP started to turn against every minority under the sun, but for many people it can be traced back to the election of 2016 with Donald Trump. Since this election, there have been movements such as Black Lives Matter, an increase in demands for gun control, and more bills than ever restricting LGBT individuals.

According to PBS, as of mid-March over 400 anti-LGBT bills have been proposed in America in the year 2023

alone, and, according to the Human Rights Campaign, Texas is one of the states leading this sudden push for anti-LGBT legislation.

This year Texas lawmakers have made a major push for things such as limiting gender-affirming health care as well as limiting the teaching of LGBT subjects in both public and charter schools. These bills are overtly harmful and incredibly destructive. They will quite literally kill children and will absolutely not stop the rising number of people in younger generations that identify as LGBT. Not to mention that the worst part of these bills is the fact that these lawmakers don't actually care about the people they are affecting.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, despite bills like these becoming more common, of the 315 anti-LGBT bills proposed in 2022, only 9% of them became law. So now the question: if so many of these bills aren't becoming law then why have them? It's simple: to make a statement. Many lawmakers don't care if these bills become law because they don't actually care about the people and/or children these bills are affecting. They care about the fact that people on the far right can rally behind these ideals. It is not about legislature, it is about proclaiming your hatred for a group of people.

There are six main bills in both the House and the Senate in Texas that prohibit those under 18 from receiving gender-affirming healthcare such as hormones, surgeries, and puberty blockers. One of these bills is Texas House Bill 1686, which, as of March 27, has passed in the Texas House of

Representatives. The bill had public testimony on March 24 and, according to an estimate from the Texas Tribune, there were more than 2,800 people signed up to testify in regards to this bill. Of the 2,800 people just under 100 of them were there to actually support the bill's potential passing. The testimony was abruptly cut off before many people got to speak in the House.

If the people of Texas truly wanted this bill to be passed, if they truly wanted to "protect the children," they would be there testifying in favor of HB 1686, but they weren't there. Instead, parents, doctors, and young children testified for their right to be who they are in the state of Texas. Banning transgender healthcare can have massive effects on a child's mental health. According to the Trevor Project, suicide is the leading cause of death among people 10-24 and LGBT youth are four times as at risk of committing suicide than their peers.

Many Republican lawmakers have taken this to say that because of the higher suicide rates among trans and LGBT youth, parents should not encourage their children to transition nor should children be allowed to transition for fear of decreased mental health. However, in 2021, the American Medical Association stated that taking gender-affirming care away from people is what leads to decreased mental health. If these lawmakers in Texas wanted to

actually do what is best for children, then they would let gender-affirming care be available instead of pushing trans children out of Texas then advocating for parental choice.

Parental choice is one of the big pushes from Governor Greg Abbott as of late. It is a push for it to be the parent's decision as far as where their child goes to school, disregarding the cost of tuition or zoning district. I find it very ironic that Abbott thinks that parents should have a say in where their children go to school and what they learn but doesn't think that parents should have the right to decide what is best for their children medically. Even if you are not transgender or affected by these restrictions, some proposed Texas bills still may affect you.

Currently in Texas there are three main bills that talk about restricting the education of LGBT topics. Education and the queer community has been a particular soft spot for conservative lawmakers in recent years. Even outside of Texas, particularly in states such as Florida, mentions of the LGBT community have been removed from many curricula with things such as "Don't Say Gay" bills. Similar

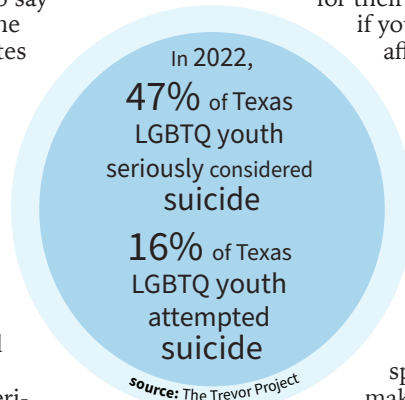
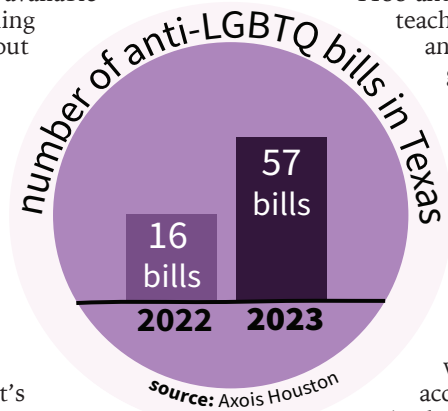
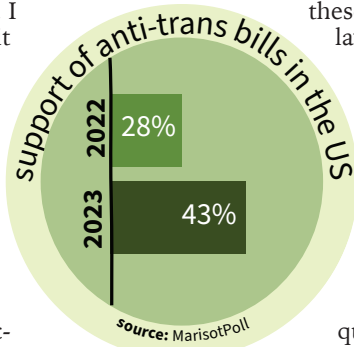
bills have been introduced to Texas legislatures. Proposals like House Bills

1155 and 1541 would ban the teaching of LGBT subjects and people from Kindergarten to eighth grade. Both have very similar wording to that of Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill which passed last year.

Arguably the most terrifying of these kinds of bills is Texas Senate Bill 8, a 27-page bill that would set up savings accounts for every student in the state of Texas and boost parental choice in schools.

This bill would not only allow students to go to schools with tuitions more easily but also, according to one singular paragraph in the document, ban the teaching of LGBT subjects from kindergarten to 12th grade. This is scary to me because it is simply slipped into this document with one, four-line paragraph and is the most restrictive of Texas' attempts to limit queer education.

Overall, this should not be happening. That's the simple truth. There are so many other things going on in the world that the government, both federal and state, should be concerned with. They should be concerned about issues like deadly mass shootings instead of worrying about children's sex organs. Lawmakers can't hide behind the pretense of "it's all for the children" then be silent when children lose their lives to gun violence. These are children's lives, not political statements. I can only hope that lawmakers start to realize the people they are actually affecting and focus on more important things.



Ticket prices for Taylor Swift are worth it



Lillian Hoover
Dispatch Reporter

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When your favorite singer announces their long-awaited world tour, you might be willing to spend a great deal more than you should for tickets and be ready to put up with any problems that may arise. But for most people, these prices can be too absurd, which causes many die-hard fans to skip out on the experience of a lifetime.

The same can be said for the Taylor Swift Eras tour which recently kicked off in America and is headed internationally soon. This being said, Taylor fans all over the nation have been upset at the overpriced tickets and queue crashes on the Ticketmaster website.

As I tried obtaining my own tickets for Taylor Swift's Houston and Arlington shows, I was met with these same issues that made it quite an agonizing experience to buy concert tickets. And prices aside, the Ticketmaster website wouldn't let any of my ticket purchases through, until all that was left were the back-of-the-barrel nosebleed seats. Of course, I still had to buy them because it's Taylor Swift, but at a painful price.

Given these events, many people are putting the blame in the wrong places, when they should be blaming Ticketmaster and similar corporations monopolizing sky-high ticket prices.

Given the staggering and record-breaking interest in pre-registering for tickets, one would think that would have been a clue to Ticketmaster that the actual sale date for tickets would also be record-breaking. And thus, the company should have prepared. Clearly,



ART BY Lillian Hoover

they were not. In addition to Swifties flooding the website for pre-sale tickets, millions of bots attacked the site as well, leading to peak demand four times greater than seen before. Just for Ticketmaster to cancel sales to the eagerly awaiting general public, as there were no tickets left.

So, since the resale market is the only option left for fans, it begins a difficult decision of how much money one is willing to spend. In the week leading up to the recent Arlington, Texas shows, tickets on StubHub and VividSeats were starting in the low \$400 range. But considering that this gives fans a chance to see the 12-time Grammy-winning Taylor Swift perform since her reputation tour in 2018, tickets are well worth the price of admission.

The fan experience at the Eras tour is one a Swiftie will not forget. Swift described the

Eras tour as "a journey through the musical eras of my career" which has spanned an amazing 17 years. Each show covers the 10 "Eras" of Taylor Swift, in an epic 44-song marathon, lasting over three hours. Very few performers, like Swift, have such stamina on stage and she's going to be keeping up this pace for an amazing 52 dates on her US Eras tour.

Fans were provided with bracelets that lit up in sync with the show, providing an amazing artistic effect regardless of where one was sitting. This also explains why there was a strict "no lights allowed" policy for the show which some fans had been worked up over.

Swift's show also included 10 full sets and costume changes, one for each of her Eras, or studio albums spanning her career. Every aspect of the show's aesthetics from her costumes to visual effects, lighting, pyro-

technics, and set design were spectacular. Swift captured the very essence of each of her Eras in a visual, sensual experience for her fans. This was shown with her Donatella-Versace-designed rhinestone bodysuit and Christian Louboutin sparkling boots to match her Lover Era and a gorgeous sequin ball gown for her Speak Now Era.

One of the most Twitter-worthy aspects of her performance has been her infamous stage "dive." This is when Swift literally looks like she's diving on stage. In reality, fans have learned that there's an inflatable airbag under a portion of the stage where the floor opens up. Initially, there is a red glow that turns green when it's safe for Swift to literally dive through an opening on the stage. She then "swims" underneath the stage (presumably doing a quick costume change), and then hops back up on the other side to continue her performance. Truly amazing.

And to top things off, in true Swift style, she donated to the local Tarrant Area Food Bank ahead of her tour stop in Arlington. The TAFB would not release the exact amount of her contribution, but called Swift a "Hunger Hero." Once again revealing just how amazingly fabulous and thoughtful Taylor Swift has been.

And so, while Taylor Swift's Eras tickets were highly overpriced, criticism should be placed solely on Ticketmaster, bots, and scammers. But this doesn't mean that fans who were able to obtain tickets will come home with empty pockets and frown on their face. Truly any amount of money is worth getting to see Taylor Swift and all the entertainment that comes with her tour. So, don't feel too hard on yourself if you spent an absurd amount on tickets because you won't be disappointed.

BULLDAWGS SPEAK OUT!

What do you think of TikTok potentially being banned?

Gina Linsalata
Freshman

If Tik Tok was banned I would feel bad because a lot of people like meeting Online friends through that platform. I use it for that too.

Avery Mongoya
Sophomore

I think that Tik Tok should not be banned in the US because (a) it's a violation of the First Amendment and (b) information isn't being sent to China. It's actually banned there.

Genevive Hill
Junior

I have negative feelings about Tik Tok in terms of how it affects things like mental health, but if we give the government the power to ban it then what other powers are we giving them.

Mindy Le Jeune
Teacher

I'm fairly neutral. I try to stay away from social media. Social media can be a time suck, anxiety inducing thing so I try to keep it out of my space.

INTERVIEWS AND PHOTOS BY Asher Hagan