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BY MARK P. JONES, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 09/01/23 9:00 AM ET

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Republicans in many states have advocated for, introduced and passed a wide range of restrictive legislation related to

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transgender individuals during recent legislative sessions.

Survey data from three diverse states — red Texas, purple Arizona and blue California — suggests that the Republican focus on this topic is driven in part by three factors firmly rooted in public opinion.

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First, these proposals enjoy majority or at least plurality support among each state's general population. Second, they enjoy overwhelming support among the state's Republican residents. And third, they divide the state's Democratic residents. Public opinion therefore provides strong incentives for Republicans to author and advocate for such policies.

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their positions regarding three distinct public policies: first, a ban on transgender individuals choosing their preferred sex-designated bathroom; second, a ban on transgender participation in women's sporting events; and third, a ban on medical treatments that alter minor children's biological characteristics for the purposes of gender-transition.

The surveys found that in all three states, these three policies enjoy majority (Texas and Arizona) or at least plurality (California) support within the general population.

By more than two to one, an absolute majority of Texans (61 percent to 25 percent) and Arizonans (54 percent to 27 percent) believe that transgender individuals' use of bathrooms should be based on biological sex rather than gender identity. The California population is more evenly divided on this question (45

percent to 35 percent), but a significant plurality shares this view.

Four times as many Texans (68 percent to 16 percent), three times as many Arizonans (63 percent to 20 percent) and twice as many Californians (53 percent to 26 percent) believe that only biological members of the female sex should be allowed to play in girls' and women's sporting events.

An absolute majority of Texans (53 percent to 32 percent) and Arizonans (51 percent to 30 percent) supports legislation that would ban the provision of medical care for the purpose of transitioning minors. A narrower plurality of Californians (41 percent to 35 percent) also supports such a ban.

Republicans constitute the largest partisan group in both Texas and Arizona, where 40 percent and 38 percent of the survey respondents identify as Republican, compared to just

28 percent of California respondents. Republicans across all three states overwhelmingly support the three transgender policies described above.

In Texas and Arizona, approximately 9 of 10 Republicans support all three of these policies. In California, Republican support for these policies ranges from two-thirds (banning gender-transitioning medical procedures on minors) to four-fifths (for sex-designated bathrooms).

Democrats, who comprise 45 percent of Californians, 33 percent of Arizonans, and 32 percent of Texans, are notably more divided than Republicans when it comes to all three of these policies.

Half of Democrats in all three states believe that transgender individuals should be allowed to choose any bathroom regardless of its sex designation, whereas one

quarter believe they should not and another quarter are unsure

Democrats in all three states are relatively evenly divided into thirds, between those who support, oppose and feel uncertain about transgender participation in women's sporting events.

Finally, a plurality of Democrats (but not a majority) in all three states opposes legislation banning medical care to gender-transition children. Between one-quarter (in Arizona and California) and one-third (in Texas) of Democrats support such a ban.

This helps explain the political lay of the land. As long as such restrictive transgender policies enjoy overwhelming support among Republicans and majority support within the general population, and as long as they divide Democrats, we should expect to see Republican lawmakers

advocate for and introduce them in state legislatures across the country.

We should also expect transgender policy to figure prominently in many 2024 Republican primary campaigns and in many 2024 general election campaigns.

*Mark P. Jones is the Joseph D. Jamail Chair in Latin American Studies at Rice University. He is a professor in the Department of Political Science, the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy's Political Science Fellow, and the faculty director of the Master of Global Affairs Program.*

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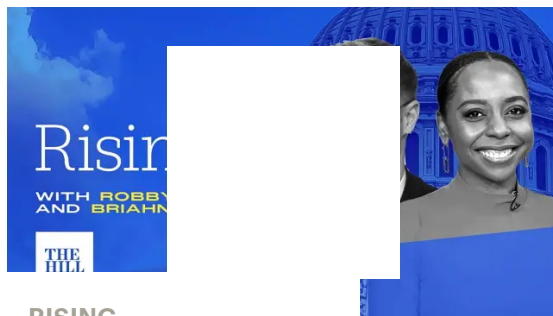
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