

U.S.

'State of Emergency' Declared For LGBTQ+ People By Human Rights Campaign

BY **NICK MORDOWANEC** ON 6/6/23 AT 12:21 PM EDT





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For the first time in its 40-plus year history, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has issued a "state of emergency" in response to a record number of bills introduced across state legislatures this year that has already surpassed numbers from 2022.

The stern alert is a response to what HRC—the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) civil rights organization—has cited as inordinate pieces of legislation introduced in 41 of the 50 states, described as the "worst year on record." Legislation has especially focused on transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming youth, leading to a loss of access to life-saving medical care in certain instances.

The 2023 legislative session included more than 525 bills introduced, of which 220 of them targeted transgender people. Of those 525, 76 had been signed into law as of Monday—more than any year on record, and more than double over last year. In comparison, 115 such bills were introduced in 2015.

"The multiplying threats facing millions in our community are not just perceived—they are real, tangible and dangerous," HRC President Kelley Robinson said in a statement. "In many cases they are resulting in violence against LGBTQ+ people, forcing families to uproot their lives and flee their homes in search of safer states, and triggering a tidal wave of increased homophobia and transphobia that puts the safety of each and every one of us at risk."

"Our number one priority will always be ensuring that LGBTQ+ people are safe and have the tools they need to defend and protect themselves against acts of hostility, discrimination and—in the most extreme cases—violence."



Participants march in the 2022 San Diego Pride Parade on July 16, 2022, in San Diego, California. The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ+ civil rights organization, on Tuesday issued the

DANIEL KNIGHTON/GETTY IMAGES

As part of a legislative report issued with its proclamation of warning, the HRC highlighted the following statewide bans as specific causes for concern:

- Transgender sports bans: Such bans have passed in 21 states and affect an estimated 30 percent of high school-aged transgender youth, or approximately 90,100 of the estimated 300,100 transgender youth aged 13-17 in the U.S., according to [data](#) from June 2022 published by the UCLA Law School's Williams Institute.
- Currently, about 31 percent of all transgender youth aged 13 to 17 are living in states where they can no longer access life-saving, best practices medical care. Such bans have [passed in 20 states](#) but have been introduced in over 30 states, HRC reported, "meaning that at its height, half of all transgender youth in the U.S. were at risk of losing access to gender-affirming care."
- Nine states have passed bathroom bans, affecting nearly 15 percent of transgender people over age 13—or more than 243,000 of the 1.6 million transgender people nationwide. It also bars individuals from using bathrooms and locker rooms while in K-12 public school buildings.

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The [report](#) also took aim at Florida Governor [Ron DeSantis](#), a candidate for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination, for "weaponizing his position as a lawmaker to [target LGBTQ+ families](#), Black and brown Floridians, immigrants and private businesses."

The bills introduced nationwide are not just about the laws but also threaten the way the LGBTQ+ community's members are treated in general society, John Sovec, a California-based psychotherapist and author who has written about LGBTQ+ topics, told *Newsweek* via phone.

as the laying of the groundwork in the 1980s during the Ronald Reagan administration.

"A lot of them are passing, but what this is also doing is opening up language and vitriol and hate and assault on the community," Sovec said. "We're looking at stepping in at local school levels and banning books about LGBTQ+ identity. It's almost like you're trying to make our community disappear.

"And that's a really fearful place to be...As I read these bills passing it brings up anxiety inside of me. You know, some of the places I traveled to speak to—am I going to be safe there? That is not a feeling I've had for most of my life as this openly queer man."

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The HRC warning comes as a [slew of conservative boycotts](#) have put LGBTQ+ individuals in the crosshairs, including notable brands like [Bud Light](#) and Target—which have been [greatly affected with negative market value](#) due to a galvanizing on the right.

Sovec expects the heat to continue to smolder due to the current election cycle now being in full swing.

focus people on that can become a political campaign.

"And I do believe we are becoming fodder for a very conservative election cycle that we're going through, and that is a dangerous thing because human lives are at stake here."

Newsweek reached out to the HRC via email for additional comment.

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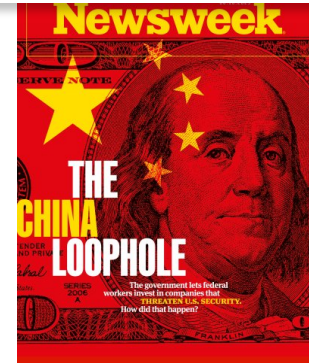
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