

What is with this Massachusetts Family Institute logo?

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ABSTRACT

The conservative group's "No Bathroom Bill" effort targets legislation that would expand the 2011 Massachusetts transgender civil rights law, prohibiting discrimination against transgender people in public places, such as shopping malls and restaurants.

FULL TEXT

TRANSLATION: The logo for the Massachusetts Family Institute's latest campaign is hardly the next Nike swoosh. It's more like a flush. The conservative group's "No Bathroom Bill" effort targets legislation that would expand the 2011 Massachusetts transgender civil rights law, prohibiting discrimination against transgender people in public places, such as shopping malls and restaurants. Opponents say the bill isn't needed and could allow men who identify as women to use women's bathrooms and locker rooms -- creating invasion of privacy issues, or worse. The provision "could be exploited by sex predators," said Andrew Beckwith, the institute's president.

That's the scary message the logo is supposed to convey: A man -- presumably transgender -- peeks over a bathroom stall partition to observe a woman. "We're trying to get people's attention," Beckwith said. Mission accomplished: This is equal parts weird, creepy, and funny.

But it's also surprisingly ambiguous. Couldn't the woman figure be the transgender one? Where's the toilet? Why doesn't that stall have a door? Observers might also interpret the image to mean something entirely different. Like "Co-ed wall climbing strictly prohibited." Or, "Please, no pole vaulting over co-workers!"

-- MARK POTHIER

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