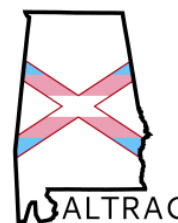


PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MONTGOMERY, Alabama (February 12, 2025) — Republican lawmakers in the Alabama House today passed Senate Bill 79, the “What Is a Woman” Act, invoking an extremely unusual set of procedures in order to do so. House Republicans approved these procedures the night prior in order to limit debate to 10 minutes, using committee business later in the day as an excuse. House Democrats fiercely objected to this process. Rep. Marilyn Lands questioned “why we invoked the 10 minute rule” and “why we’re having 3-day weeks so early in the session” (meeting for only 2 days to pass bills this week would be consistent with past practice). Indeed, Republicans chose to gavel in today when that was not required by rules or law, used this unusual process exclusively to vote on SB79, and adjourned immediately after.

Andrea Trenaman, an ALTRAC volunteer, described this morning’s floor process as “unprecedented.” “It just doesn’t make sense for House Republicans to put this bill, and only this bill, on a 10-minute cloture calendar and waste an entire legislative day with it. If they truly had support within their base, they could pass it easily as part of regular business, and leave themselves more time to work on issues that affect every Alabamian, like the cost of groceries and healthcare,” continued Trenaman. (Cloture is the process by which the majority may end debate early.)

In the House Health Committee, where the bill was heard yesterday, only three constituents were allowed to speak. Emi K., the first constituent to speak on the bill, observed that “this bill is the Alabama state government trying to tell you what a woman is — not too long ago the Alabama state government couldn’t tell you what a person was,” referring to how her great-grandparents were enslaved in Alabama.

Samuel Bartley, a biologist, then described the bill’s appeals to biology as “misused and irrelevant to the bill’s findings,” and described the bill’s authors as “not biologists.” Zephyr Scalzetti, who Rep. Pebblin Warren described on the House floor as appearing “more masculine than any man in this room,” noted that SB79 would force him to use the women’s restroom because he is transgender. These concerns did not appear to sway Republican lawmakers on committee, who unanimously voted to report the bill favorably.

Rep. Neil Rafferty offered an amendment to the bill to protect the “reasonable expectation of privacy” in spaces like restrooms and changing rooms. His amendment would have prevented the bill from being used as justification for “compulsory genital inspections” and “surveillance camera[s] or monitoring device[s]” in these spaces. Despite this amendment addressing numerous concerns presented by constituents to legislators for three consecutive years, Rep. Susan DuBose rejected it as “not a friendly amendment” in committee, and the full House rejected it along party lines.

“Republicans really tipped their hand by rejecting Representative Rafferty’s right to privacy amendment twice,” said Hunter Fuller, another volunteer with ALTRAC. “If this bill was really just about ‘common-sense definitions,’ this common-sense amendment would’ve passed easily.”

Rep. Rafferty also pressed Rep. DuBose on how the bill would accommodate intersex people, whose birth certificate sex markers are sometimes recorded as “Unknown.” DuBose stated that when the individual was old enough to, “they would make that choice” to live as the gender they know themselves to be, acknowledging that gender is both distinct from sex observed at birth and meaningful to a person’s identity.

Rep. Lowvorn, the House Rules Committee Chair, tried to assure the Democratic representatives that this type of rushed process would be rare, but his arguments fell flat with his colleagues. He even stated, “if you didn’t know how you were going to vote on it when you walked in the door today, then I’m concerned what type of work you’re doing.”

“SB79 was the only bill passed today. If this process should be rare, why make an exception for this bill? Why gavel in and use up an entire legislative day on this one bill? They have plenty of time left in the session — why not just hear the bill later?” asked Allison Montgomery, a volunteer organizer with ALTRAC. “And if representatives should know how they’ll vote before debate, why debate anything at all? Lowvorn’s arguments just don’t line up with how the legislative process actually works, which is concerning, especially since he’s the chair of the Rules Committee.”

The bill passed with 77 yeas, 12 nays, and 9 abstentions. It awaits Governor Kay Ivey’s signature.

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ABOUT ALTRAC: The Alabama Transgender Rights Action Coalition provides information and contact tools to Alabama citizens concerned about legislative attacks on queer and transgender people.

<https://altrac.works>