I suppose I ought to be grateful that entertainment titans such as Walt Disney chairman and chief executive Bob Iger and Netflix’s chief content officer, Ted Sarandos, are making it clear that Georgia’s restrictive new abortion law could be bad for the state’s up-and-coming film industry. Iger said Disney would be unlikely to keep filming in the state if the law went into effect, because “many people who work for us will not want to work there.” Sarandos went a step further and said Netflix would join the legal efforts to block the law. Still this latest counterattack in the culture wars makes me feel more cautious than celebratory. Watching some of the biggest players in Hollywood issue mild statements that hint at commitments they may not have to fulfill for years, if ever, is a reminder of just how low we’ve set the bar for what constitutes meaningfully ethical behavior by corporations. From ethically sourced diamond engagement rings to nationwide Starbucks closures for diversity training, companies have never seen greater opportunities for profit — or at least, a greater need for political damage control. But the dream of a corporation so politically pristine that it can turn our consumption decisions into ethical acts is a myth, or worse, a diversion. In the entertainment field, we can celebrate “Black Panther,” “Captain Marvel” or Netflix’s big deals with black, female and gay artists all we want. But those of us who look to giant corporations to be political allies are setting ourselves up for disappointment. They are merely in the fight to monetize our political enthusiasms.

Consider Netflix. Sarandos got the company out in front of its peers by suggesting that the Georgia abortion ban would drive Netflix productions, which include Dolly Parton’s anthology series and Michael B. Jordan’s superhero series “Raising Dion,” out of state. WarnerMedia has announced that it will reevaluate whether to produce new projects in Georgia, and Kristen Wiig’s Lionsgate comedy will find a new location for its shoots. But Netflix weighs its values differently when there’s a question of gaining access to lucrative foreign markets. Earlier this year, the company complied with a “take down request” from Saudi Arabia’s government, pulling an episode of “Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj” that criticized Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman so that it would no longer be accessible to Saudi viewers. Marvel, a Disney subsidiary, changed the ethnicity of a character from Tibetan to Celtic to placate Chinese censors and audiences. Iger may express concern about employees who are reluctant to work in post-abortion restriction Georgia. But he was willing to discuss the possibility of opening an amusement park in Saudi Arabia during the prince’s 2018 goodwill tour, despite the fact that, at that time, the country still banned women from driving cars. Even if entertainment companies tear themselves away from Georgia, it’s unlikely to be a major sacrifice. There are plenty of incentives to be found elsewhere, even if Georgia’s was among the richest. Some state lawmakers may even decide to sweeten the pot for studios that decide to do the right thing: This month, California Democratic Assemblywoman Luz Rivas introduced a bill that would provide tax incentives to companies that pull their productions out of states with abortion restrictions and move them to California. Principle is nice. But it’s even better if you can get paid twice to embrace it, once in the form of corporate welfare and a second time by viewers who want to endorse your politics. When that’s not an option, the pursuit of tax incentives can become an overriding concern. As Judd Legum reported in his Popular Information newsletter, Netflix chief executive Reed Hastings gave $143,000 to Republican legislators in Missouri — 13 times as much as he gave the state’s Democrats — likely in an effort to revitalize the state’s film production tax incentive program. That same Republican-controlled legislature passed a restrictive abortion bill this month. Since this column was published, Hastings has said that his donations to anti-abortion lawmakers in Missouri were aimed at boosting charter schools, not at restoring tax credits for film production. Additional reporting by CNN suggests that the company is mounting a lobbying effort to restart Missouri’s tax incentive program.

Conservatives who criticize Hollywood as liberal may take the industry’s approach to Georgia’s abortion ban as further proof that the movie and television businesses are hopelessly biased. But inasmuch as the entertainment industry is actually liberal, its decisions about where to take stands are driven as much by the desire to retain vocal young employees and to avoid the sort of entanglements that make for bad headlines. In this environment, conservative criticism actually serves as a sort of subsidy to Hollywood with liberal observers; it’s easy to believe that a business that spends so much time angering the sanctimonious must be doing something right, and doing it for the right reasons. That perception allows executives to get credit for waving in the direction of sacrifice, while pursuing profit and market access in other areas of their business. If Hollywood wants to monetize its perceived liberalism and make arguments for its social significance by pointing to the values it exports overseas, it ought to offer more than vague promises, throwaway efforts at representation, and late-breaking expressions of horror about abusive workplaces. The corporations that dominate the entertainment industry are in the business of entrancing, not saving, us. We’ll have to do that ourselves.