

Florida: So Much for “Parental Rights”

In late March, Florida governor Ron DeSantis was all about “parental rights,” signing what critics called a “Don’t Say Gay” bill, which he insisted was really all about protecting the ability of parents to guide their children’s upbringing, control what subject matter they were exposed to in the classroom, and be informed by schools of matters pertaining to their “mental, emotional, or physical well-being.”

Only three months later, he’s threatening to have parents investigated by the state’s “child protective” bureaucracy should they choose to take their kids to entertainment events he doesn’t approve of. And the same legislators who passed that “parental rights” bill now propose to make parental non-conformity with Ron DeSantis’s entertainment preferences a felony punishable by, among other things, termination of the “parental rights” they so recently postured as defenders of.

Why the sudden bootlegger’s reverse on “parental rights?”

Well, it seems that some parents, in some places, are taking their kids to “drag shows” — per Wikipedia, “a form of entertainment performed by drag artists impersonating men or women.”

Ron DeSantis and company consider that a prime opportunity to “own the libs” in the “culture war,” even if it means turning on a dime and abandoning their “parental rights” line.

In American culture, drag shows have been a thing for about a century. Until fairly recently they were mostly confined adults-only venues, especially “gay bars” and remote war zone locations where US troops had to provide their own entertainment.

But in recent years they’ve become increasingly popular outside the LGBTQ and military communities, in large part due to the “reality TV” series *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, now entering its 15th season.

When things become popular in the larger culture, they become interesting to kids too. And some parents are going to humor that interest.

DeSantis is obviously willing to throw those parents under the bus if he thinks it will increase his vote totals in this November’s gubernatorial election and, prospectively, the 2024 GOP presidential primaries.

I’m not going to try to sell you on drag shows, especially for kids. In my limited experience (I attended a few such shows with friends at “gay bars” back in the 1980s), they’re quite

entertaining, but usually feature dancing, dress, and humor with strong sexual overtones. I hear that “family-friendly” versions are a thing now, but haven’t seen those and thus have no opinion on them.

What I am going to try to sell you on is ... well, “parental rights.”

Being a parent means making choices, and while I hope you’ll make good choices, the types of entertainment you choose for your family are your business. Not mine. Not Ron DeSantis’s. Yours.

Any politician who says otherwise should be punished, not applauded.