

Is “Intentions=Results” a Straw Man?

I was struck by this passage in the recent WaPo profile of the Federalist Society:

The newly solidified conservative majority on the court will inevitably decide more cases in line with the society’s ideals — which include checking federal power, protecting individual liberty and interpreting the Constitution according to its original meaning. In practice, this could mean fewer regulations of the environment and health care, more businesses allowed to refuse service to customers on religious grounds, and denial of protections claimed by newly vocal classes of minorities, such as transgender people.

Question: Given this framing, how many readers would *not* leap to the conclusions that due to the influence of the Federalist Society...

1. The environment and health will deteriorate.
2. A noticeable number of businesses will refuse service on religious grounds.
3. Transgender people will on balance be worse off.

After all, the laws the Federalist Society opposes *intend* to help the environment and health, and *intend* to reduce religious and trans discrimination. And Intentions=Results, right?

You could call this a straw man, but I don’t think so. This is how I was taught until I starting learning economics in my senior year of high school. And until I opened those economics books, Intentions=Results was precisely how I saw the world. It’s mind-boggling to think that there are lots of people who *silently* reach the economist’s epiphany that Intentions and Results are two very different things.

At least to me.