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Gerald Dryden · 3 days ago · 3 min read

# Does Speaker Johnson's Election Forewarn Federal Anti-LGBT Legislation?

On October 25, 2023, fourth-term Representative of Louisiana Mike Johnson was elected Speaker of the House. [1] Within three weeks, he laid the groundwork to avoid the feared projected partial government shut down. [2] So why does Johnson consistently score a zero on the Human Rights Campaign's Congressional Scorecard? [3] The answer has long caused controversy: Speaker Johnson is ardently anti-LGBTQ+. [4]

It goes beyond calling homosexuals "deviant," "sinful," "morally wrong," or "dangerous," (which Johnson has done); [5] Johnson's life work seems to be dedicated to promoting anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs. [6] Before joining Congress, Johnson worked for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a designated hate group dedicated to criminalizing same-sex activity. [7] Among other things, ADF advocates against same-sex marriage, argues in favor of private businesses discriminating against LGBTQ+ people, and asserts that transgender people should not be allowed to use the bathrooms corresponding to their gender identities. [8]

Johnson wrote several works advocating against the LGBTQ+ community. [9] In an amicus brief to the Supreme Court during *Lawrence v. Texas* (the case that "struck down the nation's remaining anti-sodomy laws"), [10] Johnson argued to keep same-sex sodomy criminalized on the basis that homosexuals would spread more sexually transmitted diseases, thus constituting a "distinct public health problem." [11] Additionally, he authored two editorials: one explaining the lack of a "right to sodomy in the Constitution," [12] and the other categorizing gay marriage as a steppingstone to inter-species relationships—suggesting that homosexuality is "inherently unnatural... [and] ultimately harmful and costly for everyone." [13] In a third op-ed, Johnson outright declared "homosexual marriage [as] the dark harbinger of chaos and sexual anarchy that could doom even the strongest republic." [14]

In 2015, as a Representative in the House, Johnson introduced the Marriage and Conscience Act which would effectively permit the discrimination of same-sex couples in Louisiana. [15] Recently, he proposed a federal equivalent to Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill. [16] Speaker Johnson tethers his actions to his religion: "Go pick up a bible," he maintains. "That's my world view. That's what I believe and so I make no apologies for it." [17]

Yet Johnson claims, in response to "criticism for his previous comments on same-sex marriage," that he is "a rule of law guy." [18] The law is the law and he'll act in accordance, he says, acknowledging the Supreme Court's legalization of same-sex marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. [19] How can we square these comments with Johnson's history?

The LGBTQ+ Community faced a record-breaking number of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation these past few years. [20] State legislatures introduced 520 bills and enacted at least 75 this year alone. [21] The Human Rights Campaign placed the community under a state of emergency since June 6, 2023. [22] People may see Speaker Johnson in an optimistic, forward-looking light because of his pragmatic work to avoid a government shutdown. But a look at his past record should leave the LGBTQ+ community and its allies, at a minimum, concerned.

