

# The Washington Times

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## Transgender restrooms urged for schools

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The United States Students Association is urging the nation's colleges and universities to provide single-stall "gender neutral" restrooms for transgender students to protect them from harassment and physical attacks.

Transgender is the term used to designate people "whose sexual identity doesn't match what society expects" of their biological sex, says Kristy Ringor, spokeswoman for USSA, a Washington, D.C.-based national confederacy of hundreds of college-level student bodies. Transgender often describes someone who dresses and lives as the opposite sex but who has not had his or her body surgically altered.

"We're the nation's oldest student association, and we believe access to education should be open to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity or sexual identity," Ms. Ringor said.

She said transgender people "have a problem with bathrooms" that are for men or women only. "They face a risk of being assaulted if another person in there doesn't think they belong. If a person is not safe [in a restroom on a college campus], that person won't necessarily be able to go to college," Ms. Ringor said.

Because of those concerns, USSA's National Congress passed a resolution last summer committing the organization to support "gender neutral" restrooms. Ms. Ringor stressed that such facilities should not be equated with unisex restrooms used by both males and females.

Peter LaBarbera, senior policy analyst for the Culture and Family Institute, an affiliate of Concerned Women for America, responded with dismay to USSA's recommendations. "Maybe you are chronicling the decline of society by the number of restrooms it takes to accommodate all the different sex

identities and sexual orientations," he said.

Two students at the University of California at Los Angeles, who are both members of UCLA's Gay and Lesbian Association, brought USSA's position to light in an opinion piece published last week in the Daily Bruin, the university's student newspaper.

"In a statement heralding the arrival of the transgender liberation movement, the national chapter of the United States Students Association recommended that university bathrooms become gender neutral in order to accommodate the needs of the transgender community at UCLA," the students, Erwin Ong and Masen Davis, wrote.

A UCLA spokesman said he saw the column in the student newspaper but was unable to say whether any single-stall restrooms are planned for transgender students.

Tim Kelly, a spokesman for the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which Ms. Ringor described as "progressive," said that institution offers both "unisex bathrooms" and single-stall restrooms.

Mr. LaBarbera, who tracks homosexual activism, says transgenders are emerging as a vocal minority. "Right now, they are the young Turks of the whole gay movement," he said.

Meanwhile, a state lawmaker in West Virginia is distancing himself from the transgender-rights movement as he pushes a bill aimed at senior citizens that would put unisex restrooms at many of the rest stops along that state's interstate highways.

Sen. Mike Ross, a Democrat, said his bill has the backing of the AARP and other senior citizen groups. It's designed to prevent a recurrence of a situation that occurred at a West Virginia rest stop in July, when a woman entered the women's restroom and her husband, an Alzheimer's patient, went into the men's room. "That was the last time she saw her husband," Mr. Ross said in a telephone interview.

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