**Transgender Students Win on Restroom Rights**

By [THE EDITORIAL BOARD](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/opinion/editorialboard.html) The New York Times APRIL 20, 2016

A federal appellate ruling on Tuesday protecting the right of transgender students to use restrooms according to their gender identity is an important marker in a national debate that has prompted battles in courtrooms and legislatures across the country.

The Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit is the first federal court to affirm the Obama administration’s position on this question. The Department of Education and the Department of Justice have asserted in individual cases that barring transgender students from using restrooms and locker rooms based on their gender identity violates Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in education.

[The current case](http://pdfserver.amlaw.com/nlj/GLOUCESTER_CA4_20160420.pdf) was brought in 2015 by a male transgender student against the school board in Gloucester County, Va., after it passed a measure barring him from using the boys’ restroom. Writing for the majority in the 2-to-1 ruling, Judge Henry Franklin Floyd found that the lower court did not give due deference to the federal government’s interpretation of Title IX when it ruled against the student, [Gavin Grimm](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/27/opinion/for-transgender-americans-legal-battles-over-restrooms.html).

The ruling is also the latest blow to a discriminatory law [North Carolina](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/opinion/transgender-law-makes-north-carolina-pioneer-in-bigotry.html) passed last month, which mandated that people use public restrooms that match the gender on their birth certificate, regardless of their gender identity or appearance. North Carolina, which is also covered by the Fourth Circuit, is now bound to lose discrimination lawsuits filed by transgender students who would be forced to use the wrong restrooms.

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The North Carolina law, which also prohibits cities from passing anti-discrimination laws to protect gay and transgender people, has already set off a strong backlash from the private sector, educators and religious leaders. This week’s ruling gives Gov. Pat McCrory and North Carolina lawmakers another compelling reason to repeal the law.

The appeals court remanded the case back to Judge Robert Doumar of Federal District Court, instructing him to re-evaluate Mr. Grimm’s request for a preliminary injunction. Judge Doumar, who spoke dismissively about gender identity when he heard the case last year, should swiftly grant Mr. Grimm the injunction he should have gotten months ago.

It can be easy to forget that these debates are about personal dignity. Mr. Grimm was remarkably clearheaded and eloquent at a [school board meeting in 2014](http://nyti.ms/1HUdPWc) when he defended his right to use the boys’ room. Since the school board rejected his plea, Mr. Grimm has sought to get through the school day without using the restroom at all. When he must, Mr. Grimm, a high school junior, uses the nurse’s restroom, an alternative he understandably finds humiliating and stigmatizing. He’s endured that indignity long enough.