**Transgender Bathroom Rights Questioned Nationally**

Lexi Churchill, Humera Lodhi, DJ Pointer and Meiying Wu

A pixie cut, “The Narrows” t-shirt and thin black choker dotted with a single pearl - that’s what made up Ian Koopman’s image Tuesday, March 7.

As a transgender man at Rock Bridge high school, the senior knows it might not be a typical masculine look. But it's what he liked for that day. This is how he exists.

For Ian, conversations about the rights of transgender people happening at the state and national level are missing the point. The country is focused on bathrooms, but for Ian, it’s about so much more.

“If you just try to make it about restrooms you're really sort of dodging the essential question of how we view trans people in society and what we think their rights are as human beings. Koopman said. “It's just how we view people in our society and if we really think people should be second class citizens.”

Koopman continues to use the women’s restroom, the space he’s always been comfortable in. But not all transgender students share this preference.

Over the past several years, the national discussion about transgender rights focuses on bathrooms. Questions like what facilities transgender students can use and how to implement those rules have challenged legislators nationwide.

Under the Obama Administration, transgender student’s rights were expanded under Title IX, the government’s civil rights statute. This addition allows transgender students to use the bathroom of the gender they identify with.

Within the first few weeks of its term, the Trump Administration reversed this protection.

In response to new reversal, the United States Supreme Court sent a transgender bathroom case back to lower courts to be reconsidered. Because Trump’s policy change came after the court’s ruling, by the time the case made it to the Supreme Court, it was not up to date.

Sandra Davidson, an MU law professor, said when there is insufficient information in a case, the Supreme court sends it back to fill in the holes.

Davidson also said the stall may come down to a lack of justices.

“Right now we do not have a complete supreme court,” Davidson said. “Especially on these issue that are divisive, and I should imagine this one might be, if you think you’re going to have a 4-4 split so that the lower court decision is going to be the one that will stand up anyway, you might want to wait and see if you’re going to have another colleague.”

At a lower level, states are taking the issue into their own hands. There’s been a number of conflicts in states like Maine and North Carolina that passed laws reconstructing transgender rights.

In Missouri, a similar policy is also looking to redefine transgender rights. Missouri Senator Ed Emery, R-Lamar, has proposed a bill that requires students to use the restroom of their “biological sex” when in “states of undress” in public schools.

This is the second year Emery has proposed this bill. Last year it didn’t receive a hearing, but this year it’s been taken up by a Senate committee.

To Emery, this bill maintains long standing expectations in public school privacy.

“It would really be no different than it always has,” Emery said. “The difference is that now we have these new kind of imaginary genders that don't occur biologically or scientifically they just occur in the mind and so now that the courts and the Obama Administration have essentially created these new genders and until just very recently we've had two genders.”

Emery says the purpose of the bill is to protect the privacy of all students, not just transgender ones.

However, transgender people that are affected by these policies, like Koopman, are concerned about the practicality of policy implementation.

“Is there even a way you can enforce this in an ethical manner when you're dealing with minors at school?” Koopman asked. “The only way you check assigned genders is by looking at genitals. So I just don't even know how any sort of school official would tackle that, or even feel comfortable doing that to students.”

For Koopman, the bill represents a lack of support the transgender community.

Koopman also points out that not all students’ appearance stands out. Many pass as cisgender on a daily basis.

Therein lies an administrative problem. Knowing who is being regulated is no simple task.