News



President Joe Biden waves as he arrives Air Force One, Tuesday, March 29, 2024, in Hagerstown, Md. Biden is en route to Camp David.(AP/Alex Brandon)

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Washington, D.C. — April 1, 2024

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President Joe Biden is facing criticism from Donald Trump's campaign and religious conservatives for proclaiming March 31 — which corresponds with Easter Sunday this year — as "Transgender Day of Visibility."

The Democratic president issued the proclamation on Friday, calling on "all Americans to join us in lifting up the lives and voices of transgender people throughout our Nation and to work toward eliminating violence and discrimination based on gender identity."

But in 2024, the March 31 designation overlaps with Easter, one of Christianity's holiest celebrations. Trump's campaign accused Biden, a Roman Catholic, of being insensitive to religion, and fellow Republicans piled on.

"We call on Joe Biden's failing campaign and White House to issue an apology to the millions of Catholics and Christians across America who believe tomorrow is for one celebration only — the resurrection of Jesus Christ," said Karoline Leavitt, the Trump campaign's press secretary. She assailed what she called the Biden administration's "years-long assault on the Christian faith."

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said on social media that the "Biden White House has betrayed the central tenet of Easter" and called the decision "outrageous and abhorrent."

White House spokesperson Andrew Bates said the Republicans criticizing Biden "are seeking to divide and weaken our country with cruel, hateful and dishonest rhetoric."

"As a Christian who celebrates Easter with family, President Biden stands for bringing people together and upholding the dignity and freedoms of every American," Bates said. "President Biden will never abuse his faith for political purposes or for profit."

The advocacy group GLAAD said in a statement that people can both celebrate Easter and show their support for the trans community.

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"The date of Easter moves each year, while Trans Day of Visibility is always recognized on March 31, but this year right-wing politicians and talking heads are

using the coincidental timing to overshadow the hope and joy that Easter represents," said Sarah Kate Ellis, GLAAD president and CEO.

Biden first issued a proclamation on transgender visibility in 2021. Proclamations are generally statements about public policy by the president. But this year's overlap with Easter and the heated tensions from the presidential campaign made the latest transgender proclamation a way for many Republicans to question the Democrat's religious faith.

Biden devoutly attends Mass and considers his Catholic upbringing to be a core part of his morality and identity. In 2021, he met with Pope Francis at the Vatican and afterward told reporters that the pontiff said he was a "good Catholic" who should keep receiving Communion.

But Biden's political stances on gay marriage and support for women having the right to abortion have put him at odds with many conservative Christians.