



At a time when gays have been gaining victories across the country, the Republican Party in Montana still wants to make homosexuality illegal.

The party adopted an official platform in June that keeps a long-held position in support of making homosexual acts illegal, a policy adopted after the Montana Supreme Court struck down such laws in 1997.

The fact that it's still the official party policy more than 12 years later, despite a tidal shift in public attitudes since then and the party's own pledge of support for individual freedoms, has exasperated some GOP members.

"I looked at that and said, 'You've got to be kidding me,'" state Sen. John Brueggeman, R-Polson, said last week. "Should it get taken out? Absolutely. Does anybody think we should be arresting homosexual people? If you take that stand, you really probably shouldn't be in the Republican Party."

Gay rights have been rapidly advancing nationwide since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Texas' sodomy law in 2003's *Lawrence v. Texas* decision. Gay marriage is now allowed in five states and Washington, D.C., a federal court recently ruled the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy unconstitutional, and even a conservative tea party group in Montana ousted its president over an anti-gay exchange in Facebook.

But going against the grain is the Montana GOP statement, which falls under the "Crime" section of the GOP platform. It states: "We support the clear will of the people of Montana expressed by legislation to keep homosexual acts illegal."

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