



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on November 30, 2010

The Right Grope at TSA Airport Security

I got an e-mail the other day from a transgendered group about their special problems with the new naked pictures and federal groping at the airports.

“You have the right to have manual search procedures performed by an officer who is of the same gender as the gender you are currently presenting yourself as,” explained NCTE, the National Center for Transgender Equality.

Given the differences between individuals regarding the frequency and severity of mood swings, etc., I suppose the gender identity that one is “currently presenting yourself as” could be something that switches by the decade, year, month, or even the day or hour.



The government might think that’s all a little too subjective, with the very basics about a person in flux, but why not? Let’s say your junk, as it’s now referred to, is the same as that of the top scorers in the NFL but you depart from the left coast on the way to grandma’s house for some Christmas turkey feeling all revved up and happy but also unusually frilly. So off you go to the airport as a sharp girl, dressed by Prada.

Flying home after spending a week where they’re still clinging to their mud boots, holy books, and military-style hunting rifles, let’s say you’re now feeling much more in touch with your original equipment and you head off to the airport in a rented Jeep and dressed up in what [www.thinkfashion.com](#) calls the “new line of badass gear for men!” from Tommy Hilfiger.

So everything’s different for this flight home, more macho, and now you belong in the men’s line for an officially prescribed same-gender pat down by a male? Not necessarily. NCTE says you have the right to be groin-searched by “an officer who is of the same gender you are currently presenting yourself as,” but there’s also this from NCTE about the fluidity of the whole matter: “This does not depend on the gender listed on your ID, or on any other factor. If TSA officials are unsure who should pat you down, ask to speak to a supervisor and calmly insist on the appropriate officer.”

The “any other factor” means that the correct gender line for the federal stroking and patting is determined by the individual passenger, not a government agent. So someone trapped in a body with male junk, dressed in Hilfiger’s most macho gear, can still get in the women’s line as a female and get a female groper. The passenger could point out, correctly, that there are plenty of female deer hunters in plaid shirts with their own guns who drink Yuengling straight out of the bottle.

Or, given that this is America, not Iran, you can change lanes if your self-identity changes while you’re stuck in line. It’s “the gender you are currently presenting yourself as” that applies, no time limits, no quotas on gender changing, where your correct place in line for a same-sex pat down is not determined



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or made inflexible by way of clothes, hair style, ID, original junk, or “any other factor.”

Some people might not like all this switching, but for those who are especially oscillating, the body they’re comfortable in can change after four or five Jack Daniels in the airport lounge. They walk in as Tom Cruise in *Top Gun* and end up looking at the jets and humming Bette Midler’s “Wind Beneath My Wings.”

As for NCTE’s recommendation about acting “calmly” during all the groping, how calm can they expect a female agent to be if she’s in the middle of patting and exploring the groin of a passenger, a “female” who is actually a male who’s “presenting” himself as a woman, and she stumbles onto what feels like a hidden tube of explosives in the fancy Prada undies? I can picture the instantaneous and instinctive fear on the agent’s face, her startled yelp, and the subsequent stampede.

I asked three of my retired buddies at Starbucks the other morning, males, if they’d rather be patted down by a man or a woman at the airport and they all said without a moment’s hesitation that they’d rather the opposite sex do the job. One added that “she should be a Catholic girl” — more trustworthy, I guess, after the years of guilt infusions, to not go the whole way.

As it’s turned out, those poor guys don’t have a choice. It’s only those lucky devils in the transgendered community who get to pick. For the rest of us, for those who’ve stuck with the original program, who see junk as the determinant of behavior, it’s now simply a matter of obediently getting into the correct gender line and patiently waiting for the next command from the government loudspeakers.

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