Leigh: SB239, a bill that would have required the state to report the number of crimes involving transgender individuals, was killed in the Senate. The Senate also voted down a concurrent resolution to present a resolution of displeasure to the mayor of Charlotte. But one measure did pass: SB578, a bill that would have prohibited the Charlotte ordinance granting rights to transgender people from being adopted in other cities in the state.

As everyone knows, the cause of all this is HB2, the state law that reversed Charlotte’s ordinance granting rights to transgender people, though it also prevented local anti-discrimination ordinances, bans victims of workplace discrimination from suing in state courts, and restricted cities’ ability to dictate wages and employment conditions to private employers.

“It’s been said the law bans municipal minimum-wage laws, but such laws were already banned. There’s a reason that no North Carolina city had a higher minimum wage than the state’s $7.25.”

In an old rabbinic tale, a man goes to a wise rabbit to atone for the sin of spreading gossip. The rabbit considers his appeal, and then asks him to bring a feather pillow. The man is confused by the request, but he complies. The rabbit has the man go outside and rip the pillow apart. The day is very windy and the feathers all blow away.

The rabbit then asks the man to gather the feathers and fix the pillow. The man protests that this is impossible, as the feathers are gone for good. “Precisely,” says the rabbit. “So it is with gossip. Once a piece of gossip leaves your mouth, it’s as if it’s carried away on the wind, and you can never get it back.”

What reminded me of this story was the deteriorating reputation of North Carolina in the national consciousness and especially the business world. It’s running out of our control, much like feathers on the wind.

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In the month since the law was passed, corporations such as PayPal and Deutsche Bank have canceled plans to locate or expand in North Carolina, costing us hundreds of jobs. Entertainers ranging from Bruce Springsteen to Cirque du Soleil have canceled concerts and shows. Renowned Broadway composer Stephen Schwartz has revoked performance rights to his musicals (including “Godspell” and “Children of Eden”) in North Carolina.

Conventions and meetings from Wilmington to Asheville have been moved to other states. The 2017 NBA All-Star game will be moved out of Charlotte if the law isn’t changed. And the federal government is reportedly assessing whether the law disqualifies North Carolina from receiving $4.5 billion a year in education funding.

Some have started tallying the economic loss from HB2, but such calculations are likely to understate the economic impact. Because it’s not just about numbers. It’s also about reputation.

To be sure, it’s not clear how long HB2 will last as a law. The Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals (which has jurisdiction over North Carolina) just ruled in a Virginia case that restrictions on how transgender people use bathrooms are discriminatory.

But even if HB2 is repealed or overturned, will our reputation be restored? After all, the national media are talking about us, and comparing laws in other states to North Carolina’s HB2. If we don’t watch it, we’ll become a touchpoint — a catchphrase — for discrimination. States like that tend not to thrive economically.

The danger was driven home to me when I saw a national article about a North Carolina judge who threw a breast-feeding woman out of his courtroom. It wasn’t as outrageous as the headline made it seem, and it’s the sort of thing that happens all over the country. But the editor saw “North Carolina” and ran it. My guess is that it wouldn’t have run before HB2.

Once a narrative is fixed in the public’s mind, it’s hard to undo it. Will North Carolina be able to put the feathers back in the pillow?