



Visit Indy Statement on Indiana SB 101

Visit Indy, Mayor Greg Ballard and Indianapolis civic leaders, numerous Indianapolis businesses, and our state and local chambers of commerce all oppose the state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), SB 101.

In reviewing the bill, we saw the issue as divisive and likely to create misperceptions about our diverse, inclusive and welcoming community, which has obviously been the case.

While researching SB 101 and seeking legal opinions, we learned that 19 other states have similar RFRA laws that are all based on the Federal RFRA signed by President Clinton in 1993 (but which only applies to Federal cases) and that another 11 states have "strict scrutiny" language in their state constitutions consistent with what the Federal RFRA requires of the court in "religious freedom" cases.

Major cities such as Chicago, Orlando, Miami, New Orleans, Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Nashville, Charleston (SC) and many others are all subject to state RFRA laws. So while it is commonly believed that RFRA legislation is unique to Indiana, it is not.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Religious_Freedom_Restoration_Acts

In addition, to our knowledge, in the 22 years of the Federal and state RFRA laws, there has never been a case of LGBT discrimination or discrimination of any kind been that was decided in favor of the religious objector claiming RFRA protections. To its credit, there are many examples where the RFRA has protected non-discriminatory religious liberties and created a "level playing field" for all faiths as viewed by the courts.

However, despite the number of other states with RFRA's and the history of how the RFRA's have been applied by the courts, we believe there are potential protection issues with the Federal RFRA model and we fully support our friends in the LGBT community in seeking greater legislative assurances to eliminate any chance the RFRA could be used as a defense for discrimination.

Visit Indy cannot support any legislation that undermines Indianapolis' decades-long reputation for delivering world-class hospitality and service to ALL visitors and/or that could lead to the discrimination of any visitor.

We are actively working with other community leaders to share with Gov. Pence and state lawmakers that nuanced legal arguments and the RFRA's historical track record are not sufficient in addressing this issue in a way that meets the needs of the region's hospitality industry and, more important, our visitors.

In the meantime, Indy is open for business to ALL. The passage of the state's RFRA did not change who we are overnight, or the fact that our community values and appreciates ALL of our guests. We ask for your patience and support as we work with urgency to remedy the RFRA issues that concern many Indiana residents and our visitors, especially our friends in the LGBT community.

LEONARD HOOPS

President & CEO

Visit Indy