



International Old Catholic Churches

Office of the Presiding Bishop

Monday, March 30, 2015
Monday of Holy Week

The Honorable Mike Pence
Governor of the State of Indiana
200 W. Washington St., Rm. 206
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Pence,

I come before you as the voice of the College of Bishops of the International Old Catholic Churches and as the Archbishop of the church to address your recent signing of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (SEA 101). We find this law to be a violation of long held constitutional freedoms and a violation of the tenants taught by Jesus Christ, who you claim to follow.

Further, your attempt to hide the true nature of this law from the people of this country by claiming that this law will not affect individuals, but rather pertains to Government Agencies only, is appalling. I would point out Section 6, Subsection 3 which states: **“(3) An instrumentality of a governmental entity described in subdivision (1) or (2), including a state educational institution, a body politic, a body corporate and politic, or any other similar entity established by law.”** In this section alone you open the door to corporations and other public entities to use this law for their own purposes. In Section 7, you further open that door when it says that a person is: **“(1) An individual. (2) An organization, a religious society, a church, a body of communicants, or a group organized and operated primarily for religious purposes. (3) A partnership, a limited liability company, a corporation, a company, a firm, a society, a joint-stock company, an unincorporated association, or another entity that: (A) may sue and be sued; and (B) exercises practices that are compelled or limited by a system of religious belief held by: (i) an individual; or (ii) the individuals; who have control and substantial ownership of the entity, regardless of whether the entity is organized and operated for profit or nonprofit purposes.”**

Now that we see in print the parties this law applies to, it is hard to believe that you would claim in a press release that, **“This bill is not about discrimination, and if I thought it legalized discrimination in any way in Indiana, I would have vetoed it. In fact, it does not even apply to disputes between private**

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parties unless government action is involved.” At very least, you are trying to mislead people concerning the law’s overall coverage. At worse, you have made a concerted effort to lie to your constituents and to the people of this great nation. A plain reading of this law shows that anyone who lives and breathes, including corporations which your political party has successfully claimed are living people, is covered by this law. Anyone, even a corporation, can claim that their religious freedoms have been violated by another government agency, corporation or other legal entity and as such invalidate the action by those people.

This opens the door to all sorts of horrible issues. Let us look at a few plain reading of the law examples. 1) Let us say that John Smith owns a bakery. Let us also say that John Smith belongs to a white supremacist group and their white power church. Let us say that Joe Doe, an African-American gentleman, comes into his bakery to buy his son a muffin. John Smith can now use the RFRA to deny Joe Doe service based on his firmly held religious beliefs. You may ask how this is possible. Well, the RFRA says that a government or its agents cannot restrict John Smith’s religious beliefs or practices and since anti-discrimination laws that protect African-Americans are enforced and enacted by the government, John Smith can use the RFRA to get out of obeying those laws. The same would apply to any race or peoples that John Smith’s religion believes is inferior.

2) What about a Muslim shopkeeper who refuses to serve women not dressed in full burkas? Since the law does not say what religious beliefs, the shopkeeper is also protected. So they can deny service to any women not dressed in a burka or women who are single parents. They can also refuse to serve Jews or Christians if they wish, because their religion (or a perversion of their religion) says they are to do so. And can they be stopped? No, because the RFRA protects their right to discriminate too.

You may believe that these are outrageous examples and that things like this would never happen in your fair state. Think again. Just across the border in Kentucky resides the Grand Dragon of the largest KKK body in the United States. If you think there are not business owners in your state who are members of the KKK, then you are delusional. This law would give them free license to discriminate against all sorts of people.

There is also the opening to those who are atheist as well. They have firmly held religious beliefs. They firmly believe that all religion is false. That in and of itself is a religious belief. The RFRA has now



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given them the ability to refuse service to Christians and other religious individuals based on that belief. Is that what you wanted when you sat down to sign this bill? I would certainly hope not.

You have already rung the bell. It will be very difficult to un-ring it. Had you consulted with others, had you actually read the bill, you might have saved yourself and your fair state from becoming social pariahs and from loses of millions of dollars in yearly revenue. However, you felt you knew better than anyone else. And your hubris has brought this shame on you and your fair state.

The only course forward is to completely repeal this law. It cannot be fixed as its whole purpose was to legalize discrimination against people. We both know, from the photos of your signing of this bill and from the wording that it was fashioned with one purpose in mind: to legalize discrimination against the LGBT community. We cannot stand by and remain silent while the rights of our brothers and sisters is being attacked.

We pray to almighty God and ask that you will work with your legislator to overturn this draconian law and return true religious freedom to all people who reside in Indiana.

In the Master's Care,

† *A. Edmund Cass*

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