

May 15, 2008

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the undersigned religious and civil rights organizations, we write to express our opposition to the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (WRFA/H.R. 1431) in its current form and to urge you to refrain from cosponsoring this legislation until our concerns have been addressed. While we support the goal of improving protections for religious freedom in the workplace, we believe that significant changes must be made to WRFA to ensure that it does not result in adverse consequences for civil rights or health care protections.

The problems with WRFA come not from the good intent of the sponsors, but from the way that courts and employers would likely apply its poorly drafted language. WRFA is intended to ensure that employers accommodate employees' religious practices and observances that do not interfere with their job or significantly inconvenience the employers, such as wearing religious garb or taking time off for religious holidays. However, the bill also includes vague language that could result in significant harm to the civil rights or health care of fellow employees, employers and third parties. We are gravely concerned that WRFA as currently drafted could be read to override federal, state or local laws, employer policies against discrimination, and the provision of health services.

We are working with the sponsors and supporters of this legislation to address these concerns. We strongly believe in the principle of protecting the free exercise of one's religious beliefs that serves as the rationale for this legislation. But any broadening of religious accommodations in the workplace must be accompanied by adequate protections for the civil rights and health care of all citizens. No American should face discrimination at work, at home or in their communities, or lose access to health care.

We urge you to refrain from cosponsoring WRFA until it incorporates these protections. As always, please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Human Rights Campaign
National Council of Jewish Women
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Women's Law Center
Planned Parenthood Federation of America