

The Coalition Against Religious Discrimination

February 8, 2005

SUPPORT THE SCOTT-VAN HOLLEN AMENDMENT TO RESTORE CRITICAL CIVIL RIGHTS PROTECTIONS IN H.R. 27

Dear Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Kildee:

We, the undersigned religious, civil rights, labor, education, health and advocacy organizations are writing to urge you to support the Scott-Van Hollen amendment to the Job Training Improvement Act (H.R. 27) to restore current law and continue to protect critical civil rights protections designed to protect workers against religious discrimination in federally-funded job training programs. Since their inception in 1982, these job-training programs have included important civil rights protections against employment discrimination based on religion in programs that receive federal funds.

The 1998 Workforce Investment Act consolidated these earlier job-training programs and simply recodified the nondiscrimination provision included in the original Job Training Partnership Act of 1982. The 1998 legislation, which included this nondiscrimination provision, received strong bipartisan support from both the House and Senate at the time of its passage in the 105th Congress. Since its inclusion in the 1982 JTPA, it has enjoyed bipartisan support. The original Job Training Partnership Act was sponsored by then Senator Dan Quayle, and was reported out of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee then chaired by Senator Orrin Hatch. Finally, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Job Training Partnership Act, which contains the very same civil rights provision that H.R. 27 now seeks to repeal as it applies to religious organizations. This twenty-one year old provision has worked well since the inception of this program, allowing religious organizations to provide government-funded services while maintaining America's bedrock commitment to protecting both civil rights and religious liberty.

We strongly urge you to support the Scott-Van Hollen amendment and oppose the unjustified and unnecessary assault in H.R. 27 on our nation's commitment to eradicating employment discrimination in government-funded jobs.

Sincerely,

American Association of University Women  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Counseling Association  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO  
American Federation Teachers  
American Humanist Association  
American Jewish Committee  
American Jewish Congress  
Americans for Religious Liberty  
Americans United for Separation of Church and State  
Anti-Defamation League  
Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs  
Central Conference of American Rabbis  
Equal Partners in Faith  
General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church  
Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America  
Human Rights Campaign  
Legal Momentum (formerly NOW Legal Defense)  
National Association of Social Workers

National Council of Jewish Women  
National PTA  
OMB Watch  
People for the American Way  
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office  
Service Employees International Union SEIU, AFL-CIO  
Texas Faith Network  
Texas Freedom Network  
The Interfaith Alliance  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries  
Women of Reform Judaism