

Stop Congress from Rolling Back Key Civil Rights Protections

Feb. 10, 2005: Over the last two years, Congress has made clear that it would not allow government-funded religious discrimination. Despite this, the Bush Administration and several Members of Congress continue to promote religious discrimination with taxpayer funds. The first major legislative attempt this year to roll back key civil rights protections will soon be considered on the House floor.

The legislation -- the Job Training Improvement Act (H.R. 27) -- would jeopardize civil rights and religious freedom because it would roll back protection against discrimination or misuse of government funds by religious organizations. For the first time ever, it allows religious organizations involved in federal job training programs to discriminate according to religion when hiring staff for these taxpayer-funded services.

Government can and does work collaboratively with faith-based organizations. When these organizations receive public dollars, however, they must play by the same rules as other non-profits. Whether an organization is faith-based or not, there must be adequate protections in place to protect individual civil rights and religious freedom. The Job Training Improvement Act would eliminate these necessary protections.

TAKE ACTION! Urge Your Representative to Protect Civil Rights!

The Job Training Improvement Act must not allow taxpayer-funded discrimination. Unless Congress explicitly prohibits discrimination, the Bush Administration has made it clear that it will allow religious organizations that take federal funds to discriminate against applicants for jobs on the basis of religion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, HIV status or any other characteristic that a religious organization finds objectionable. All federally funded employers must protect, not gut, the civil rights of all Americans.

Congress must not roll back civil rights legislation. If this act passes in its current form, it would be an unprecedented repeal of longstanding civil rights protections. It is critical that Congress continue to expand-not contract-our civil rights laws. We need to move forward, not backward.

This Act would allow violations of the Constitution. The Constitution prohibits the government from using federal dollars to fund religious discrimination in hiring for government-funded jobs. The Job Training Improvement Act would therefore authorize unconstitutional religious discrimination. If passed, this bill would expose the federal government, state and religious organizations to liability for violating the Constitution.

-Elenora Giddings Ivory

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