

2016

American Civil Liberties Union - Take Action

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TAKE ACTION TODAY!

With the help of dedicated volunteers and community activists, the ACLU of Virginia works to raise awareness about the importance of preserving the individual rights and liberties that are guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution.

There are several ways that you can support the important work of the ACLU of Virginia. One of the best is by visiting our online **Action Center** and supporting campaigns to encourage government officials to do the right thing with current issues. Here are the two actions you can take now to help protect civil rights and civil liberties in Virginia.

- **Let Gov. McAuliffe Know Solitary Confinement is Torture and Must End in Virginia!** Virginia must be a leader and take prompt and effective action, immediately, to limit and abolish the use of solitary confinement. Please tell the governor this practice must be eliminated in Virginia.
- **Tell Attorney General Herring He's Wrong on Policing for Profit!** Civil asset forfeiture is a process by which law enforcement takes private citizens' money and property without first getting a criminal conviction. It's called policing for profit.

Taking action is easy. Simply:

1. Visit www.acluva.org/get-involved/action-center.
2. Select the issue in which you are interested.
3. Complete the **Action Center** form for that issue. Some selected language will be provided but you will have the opportunity to add text in your own words.
4. Be sure the "Fight for Freedom" box is selected so you will receive future important alerts by email.
5. When you click "Send Message" your comments will be emailed directly to the appropriate officials.

Thank you for your support!
www.acluva.org





Employment Non-discrimination

All Virginians should have the right to a workplace free from discrimination and committed to equality of opportunity without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. No Virginian should fear losing their job because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. But, because there is no statewide law to protect people from discrimination on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity in the private or public workplace, a person can legally be fired or refused employment by any employer in Virginia (large or small) because they are LGBT.

Virginians, regardless of geography or political party, overwhelmingly support LGBT workplace rights. 73% of Virginians are in favor of a state law that protects lesbian and gay individuals from employment discrimination and eight of Virginia's top ten employers include sexual orientation in their employment policies. Here's why Virginia's businesses should care:

- 53% of the top 50 Fortune 500 Companies say that policies that prohibit sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, and extend domestic partner benefits to their employees, improve their bottom line.
- Concealment of sexual orientation is associated with increased psychological distress.
- LGBT-supportive policies can create a workplace climate where employees feel comfortable enough to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Supporting disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace has the net effect of improving the health and well-being of LGBT employees.
- Employees covered by non-discrimination policies report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than those who are not covered.
- Employees who are covered by LGBT supportive policies report higher emotional commitment to their employers, are less likely to leave their jobs, and are less likely to have searched for a new job within the past year.

The current state law already prohibits discrimination in state employment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, disability, or status as a special disabled veteran. It's past time for Virginia to extend this basic protection to LGBT individuals in both public and private employment.

What You Can Do:

- Stay Informed – Sign up for the ACLU of Virginia's Action Alerts at acluva.org (click "sign up"), "like" us on Facebook (facebook.com/acluofvirginia), and follow us on Twitter (@acluva); and
- Volunteer – Are you an activist (or would you like to be an activist) in your community? If so, we would love to work together to end employment discrimination. Email Bill Farrar at bfarrar@acluva.org.



Using Religion to Discriminate

Facts:

With increasing frequency, we are seeing individuals and institutions claiming a right to discriminate – by refusing to provide services to women and LGBT people – based on religious objections. Nationally, we’ve seen discrimination take many forms, including:

- Religiously affiliated schools firing women because they became pregnant while not married;
- Business owners refusing to provide insurance coverage for birth control for their employees;
- Graduate students, training to be social workers, refusing to counsel gay people;
- Pharmacies turning away women seeking to fill birth control prescriptions; and
- Bridal salons, photo studios, and reception halls closing their doors to same-sex couples planning their weddings.

Virginia is not immune from this national trend. In fact, the General Assembly has passed discriminatory measures during 3 of the 4 past legislative sessions:

- 2012 – State-funded adoption and foster care agencies may refuse to serve prospective parents or needy children based on the state funded agencies’ “religious convictions”;
- 2013 – Public colleges and universities must recognize and fund student political and religious organizations even if the organizations intentionally discriminate in their membership or leadership in furtherance of their religious or political mission; and
- 2014 – Genetic counselors may refuse service to patients based on the counselors’ “deeply held moral or religious beliefs.”

Sadly, using religion to legitimize discrimination is nothing new. For example, in the 1960s we saw institutions object to laws requiring integration in restaurants because of some owners’ beliefs that God wanted the races to be separate. Religious freedom in America means that we all have a right to our religious beliefs, but this does not give us the right to use our religion to discriminate against and impose those beliefs on others who do not share them.

What You Can Do:

- Stay Informed – Sign up for the ACLU of Virginia’s Action Alerts at acluva.org (click “sign up”), “like” us on Facebook (facebook.com/acluofvirginia), and follow us on Twitter (@acluva); and
- Volunteer – Are you an activist (or would you like to be an activist) in your community? If so, we would love to work together to end the use of religion to discriminate. Email Bill Farrar at bfarrar@acluva.org.