



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 30, 2015

Media Stirs Up Controversy Over Indiana's Religious Freedom Law

When a white policeman shot a black man in Ferguson, Missouri, last summer, it should have been a page two story in the local papers, and then forgotten. But the media saw their chance to promote their agenda, and Ferguson became front page news for months on end.

Indiana's religious freedom bill, signed into law by Governor Mike Pence on Thursday, [has unleashed](#) a similar outpouring of angst by people who should know better: Hillary Clinton, grade B movie stars Ashton Kutcher and Miley Cyrus, CNN, and the *New York Times*. The word is out: Indiana now has legalized discrimination against gays and lesbians!



In reality the law adopts the same approach to the exercise of religious freedom under the First Amendment and government interest as the bill that Hillary's husband signed into law back in 1993: It protects Indiana's citizens from unnecessary and unreasonable government coercion. That bill, by the way, passed the House unanimously and the Senate overwhelmingly (97 out of 100 votes). It has provided protection for more than 20 years from the federal government placing excessive burdens on the exercise of religious freedom unless it can show "compelling interest" in such a burden, and then does so only through the "least restrictive means."

The language of Clinton's bill and Indiana's bill is nearly identical. From the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993:

Government may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

From Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act:

A governmental entity may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if the governmental entity demonstrates that application of the burden to the person: (1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

In normal times, Governor Pence's comments following his signing of the bill would have been duly noted and then filed:

Faith and religion are important values to millions of Hoosiers and with the passage of this legislation, we ensure that Indiana will continue to be a place where we respect freedom of religion and make certain that government action will always be subject to the highest level of scrutiny that



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respects the religious beliefs of every Hoosier of every faith.

That should have been the end of it. But then word went out from the powers-that-be that this was an issue that could be distorted to good advantage. Tweeted Mrs. Clinton: “Sad this new Indiana law can happen in America today.” Added the honorable Ashton Kutcher, star of such profoundly important films as *Dude*, *Where’s My Car?*, *Just Married*, and *My Boss’s Daughter*: “Indiana are you also going to allow Christian establishments to ban Jews from coming in? Or Vice Versa? Religious freedom???” #OUTRAGE.”

One of the facts overlooked by the propagandists and twisters is that Indiana is late to the game, with 19 other states already having laws with nearly identical language on their books and 11 other states with similar language obtaining the same result. Said Pence:

This was a measure that, frankly, Indiana should have enacted many years ago. It gives our courts guidance about evaluating government action and puts the highest standard.... It essentially says: if a government is going to compel you to act in a way that violates your religious beliefs, there has to be a compelling state interest [to do so].

But when leftist mouthpieces such as CNN and the *New York Times* picked up the mantra of discrimination, Pence became incensed. The headline from CNN was self-explanatory, parroting the line: “Bill Allows Businesses to Reject Gay Customers,” while the *New York Times* was only slightly more circumspect, noting in its opening paragraph of its coverage, “A new law in Indiana allowing businesses to refuse service to same-sex couples in the name of religious freedom has put sports officials under pressure.”

Pence exclaimed:

Is tolerance a two-way street, or not? There’s a lot of talk in this country today having to do with people on the left. But here Indiana steps forward to protect the constitutional rights and privileges of freedom of religion for people of faith and families of faith in our state, and this avalanche of intolerance that has been poured on our state is just outrageous....

We’ve been doing our level best to correct the gross mischaracterization of this law that has been spread all over the country by many in the media. Frankly, some of the media coverage of this has been shameless and reckless, and the online attacks against the people of our state.... I’m just not going to stand for it!

Even Josh Earnest, Obama’s mouthpiece, had to do his version of the Washington-Two-Step to avoid admitting that the president himself had voted for an Illinois law nearly identical to the one just adopted in Indiana. Said Earnest, in what must rank as one of the all-time artful dodges: “If you have to go back two decades [when Senator Obama voted for the Illinois bill] to try to justify something that you’re doing today, it may raise some questions about the wisdom of what you’re doing.”

Based on that response, one wonders if Earnest would disagree even more strongly with going back more than 200 years — to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution — to guide us as to what we should be doing politically, or to go back millennia — to time of Jesus — to guide us as to how we should live our lives.

Interestingly, in his interview on ABC’s *This Week on Sunday*, Pence did a bit of dodging of his own when he [repeatedly avoided answering a question](#) about whether or not “a florist in Indiana can now refuse to serve a gay couple without fear of punishment.” Of course, if the governor of Indiana is unable



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or unwilling to answer this question, it does make one wonder what the law actually accomplishes or was intended to accomplish.

Could this tempest in an Indiana teapot turn into another Ferguson, with leftist media howling about a law that merely balances governmental interest with religious freedom? The volume is already ramping up.

Photo shows opponents of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act outside the State House: AP Images

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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