

The Coalition Against Religious Discrimination

August 25, 2016

The Honorable John McCain
Chair
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Mac Thornberry
Chair
Representative Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: CARD Opposes Taxpayer-Funded Employment Discrimination

Dear Senator McCain, Senator Reed, Representative Thornberry, and Representative Smith:

The 91 undersigned religious, education, civil rights, labor, and women's organizations write to voice our strong opposition to the sweeping language in Section 1094 of the House version (H.R. 4909) of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2017 (NDAA). That provision would authorize taxpayer-funded discrimination in each and every federal contract and grant. We urge the conferees to reject this provision during negotiations on the conference report.

Notably, a bipartisan group of four Republicans and six Democrats—led by Representatives Charlie Dent and Adam Smith—submitted an amendment to the House Rules Committee to strip Section 1094 from the House NDAA bill, but the Committee prevented the full House from voting on their amendment. The Senate bill (S. 2943) does not contain such a provision.

The government should not fund discrimination and no taxpayer should be disqualified from a job under a federal contract or grant because he or she is the “wrong” religion.

We appreciate the important role religiously affiliated institutions historically have played in addressing many of our nation's most pressing social needs, as a complement to government-funded programs. Indeed, many of us are directly involved in this work. We also recognize that the separation of church and state is the linchpin of religious freedom. In our view, effective government collaboration with faith-based groups does not require the sanctioning of federally funded religious discrimination.

Because it is inconsistent with the longstanding principle that federal dollars must not be used to discriminate, we urge you to adopt a conference report without Section 1094 of the House bill, a sweeping provision that sanctions taxpayer-funded employment discrimination.

If you would like further information, please contact Maggie Garrett, (202) 466-3234 x. 226, garrett@au.org or Dena Sher, (202) 466-3234 x. 281, sher@au.org.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women
African American Ministers In Action

Alliance of Baptists
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
American Humanist Association
American Jewish Committee (AJC)
Americans for Religious Liberty
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Anti-Defamation League
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
BiNet USA
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Campus Pride
Catholics for Choice
Center for American Progress
Center for Inquiry
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Council for Secular Humanism
Disciples Justice Action Network
Equal Partners in Faith
Equality Federation
Family Equality Council
FORGE, Inc.
Freedom for All Americans
Friends Committee on National Legislation
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
Hindu American Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Science and Human Values
Interfaith Alliance
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International (JWI)
Lambda Legal
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Voice
Marriage Equality USA
Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers
Movement Advancement Project

Muslim Advocates
Muslims for Progressive Values
NAACP
National Abortion Federation
National Association of Social Workers
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC)
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Churches, USA
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
People For the American Way
PFLAG National
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Pride at Work
Pro-Choice Resources
The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Secular Coalition for America
Secular Policy Institute
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
The Sikh Coalition
Sikh Council on Religion and Education
Southern Poverty Law Center
Texas Freedom Network
The Trevor Project
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Whitman-Walker Health
Women of Reform Judaism