

# Franklin Graham Takes a Bold Stand Against NFL's Christian Persecution

As Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal continues to contemplate whether or not to sign a bill to protect religious freedoms in his state, a number of corporate interests have weighed in.

But now, in an official statement, evangelist Franklin Graham has weighed in on the issue, as well. He shared his comments on social media after learning of the threats issued by the National Football League to remove Atlanta from consideration for a future Super Bowl date.

"Atlanta is a great location for the Super Bowl, but the NFL has come out against Georgia's religious exemptions bill, threatening that it could impact Atlanta's consideration in the Super Bowl selection process for 2019 and 2020," he said. "LGBT forces and corporate super powers are using this threat to try to stop the bill that would protect pastors from performing same-sex marriages and give faith-based organizations permission to deny use of their facilities for things outside their religious beliefs."

House Bill 757, also known as the Religious Freedom Protection Act and the Pastor Protection Act, would protect pastors, faith-based organizations and business owners with sincerely held religious beliefs from being forced to violate their conscience. The bill has passed the Georgia House of Representatives and Senate, and is supported by a number of conservative and faith leaders.

In response, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said through a spokesman, "NFL policies emphasize tolerance and inclusiveness, and prohibit discrimination based on age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or any other

improper standard. Whether the laws and regulations of a state and local community are consistent with these policies would be one of many factors NFL owners may use to evaluate potential Super Bowl host sites.”

Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank has been eager to get the Super Bowl back in his home city for years. And because of the NFL’s reaction, he has also joined the chorus of corporate interests opposed to the legislation.

“I strongly believe a diverse, inclusive and welcoming Georgia is critical to our citizens and the millions of visitors coming to enjoy all that our great state has to offer,” he has said. “House Bill 757 undermines these principles and would have long-lasting negative impact on our state and the people of Georgia.”

Other corporate interests that have weighed in against the legislation include the Walt Disney Company, which frequently films on location in the state, and the Coca-Cola Company, which is headquartered in Atlanta. Dozens of other corporations have also attacked the legislation, saying it promotes discrimination.

Graham, however, disagrees with those assessments:

“It does not legalize discrimination as opponents are trying to say, rather it helps contain the growing discrimination against Christians who simply want to live out their faith. The bill has already passed both houses of the Georgia legislature and has the support of Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle.”

Deal has said he will make his decision in the next few weeks. In the meantime, Graham is urging his followers to join him in taking a bold stand for religious freedom.

“Let’s pray that Gov. Deal will protect the religious freedoms of Georgians,” he said. “Write him and let him know how you feel about this—stand up against this NFL blitz!”