

Liberals Outraged Over Draft of Religious Liberty Bill

Prior to President Donald Trump's appearance at Thursday's National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., the liberal media and groups hostile to Christianity revealed a "leaked" draft of an executive order that would protect religious liberty in the U.S.

The White House has not confirmed the accuracy of the reports, but according to the leaked documents, the executive order contains the following action points:

- Requires the entire federal government to respect all federal statutes and Supreme Court decisions regarding the free exercise of religion in that it does not merely protect the "freedom to worship"
- Recognizes that "religious organizations" consists of more than just places of worship and religious charities, but rather all organizations operated by religious principles
- Defines "religious exercise" as including "all aspects of religious observance and practice," not just those required by a citizen's particular faith
- Instructs all agencies of the federal government to "reasonably accommodate" the religion of federal employees
- Instructs the secretaries of health and human services, labor and treasury to grant relief to all organizations not exempted from the Obamacare abortifacient and contraception mandate
- Requires that all citizens have the ability to purchase health care plans that do not cover abortion or subsidize plans that do
- Prohibits discrimination against child welfare providers on the basis of organizations' religious beliefs

- Instructs all agencies to provide protections and exemptions to all religious organizations that contract with the federal government or receive grants
- Prohibits the revocation of nonprofit tax status to religious organizations that speak or act on the belief that marriage is the union of husband and wife, that a person's sex is based on "immutable biology," or that life begins at conception
- Prohibits recognition of the revocation or denial of accreditation to an organization because of such beliefs
- Instructs all agencies that they may not take adverse action against federal employees, contractors or grantees because of their speech about marriage outside of their employment, contract or grant, and that agencies shall reasonably accommodate such beliefs inside of employment, contract or grant

In the wake of the president's decision to let his predecessor's transgender protection order stand, this would appear to be a compromise "live and let live" order that would protect the religious liberties of those who disagree with the LGBT movement's agenda. But if you listened to what liberal groups like John Podesta's Center for American Progress had to say about it, you would get an entirely different impression.

CAP wrote the following about the draft order:

If the rumors are accurate, this executive order would legalize broad discrimination against LGBT people, women and their families by giving federal employees and any recipients of federal funds—including for-profit companies—free rein to discriminate against LGBT people and anyone who does not comply with their beliefs. And on top of that, the draft order directs every federal agency to gut protections for LGBT people—from executive orders to agency rulings and guidance.

Make no mistake: Trump's order could return America to a

time when people could be denied federal rights and services any day in any place because of who they are or who they love. This would be the most extreme anti-LGBT action taken by a president in American history. While the White House remains vague about whether such an order will be announced soon, civil rights groups are staying vigilant. You should too.

On the other hand, Dr. Ryan Anderson of the Heritage Foundation wrote that the draft is “good policy and entirely lawful” and should be enacted in an article he wrote for The Daily Signal. He wrote that liberals shouldn’t be concerned by the potential executive order:

Opponents to the executive order misrepresent the order by claiming it would repeal an Obama-era executive order elevating LGBT status to a protected class in federal contracts.

As bad and unnecessary as President Barack Obama’s order was, this new order does not repeal it.

Rather, it protects the religious liberty rights of all Americans in very tailored ways that address problems of today.

It ensures that the government will not discriminate against beliefs that are under assault, and protects religious organizations’ right to maintain their mission and identity in their staffing decisions and programming, while not losing the ability to partner with the government.

Kelly Shackelford, president and CEO of the First Liberty Institute, echoed many of those sentiments:

As a candidate, President Trump promised to support religious freedom for all Americans. Two specific pieces of legislation he said he would support are the First Amendment Defense Act and the repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

This executive order is very similar to the policy suggested in those two pieces of legislation, as well as fulfilling other promises the president made on religious freedom. By proposing this order, President Trump is simply following up on his campaign promises.

Through this order, President Trump is expressing a principle most Americans agree upon: the government should never use what people believe as a weapon to attack them or punish them.

If Americans agree on anything, it is that people have a right to disagree in freedom and without punishment. I am grateful President Trump is standing by his campaign promises to defend people of all faiths.