

Virginia Governor Vows to Veto Religious Liberty Bill

After both chambers of the state's legislature passed bills to protect religious liberty, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe has vowed to veto them in the name of "tolerance."

The Senate version of the bill, which passed earlier this week on a narrow, 21-19, party-line vote, provides that "no person shall be required to participate in the solemnization of any marriage or subject to any penalty by the Commonwealth, or its political subdivisions or representatives or agents, solely on account of such person's belief, speech or action in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman." The bill also defined the term "person" to include:

- any religious organization,
- organizations affiliated with religious organizations,
- people employed by religious organizations who are acting in the scope of their duties—whether paid or volunteer,
- any representative or agent of a religious organization and
- members of the clergy.

McAuliffe has vowed to veto the bill because it "discriminates against people's basic rights," he said at a reception hosted by the pro-LGBT group Equality Virginia after the Senate's vote. He vetoed similar legislation last year, but the efforts in the legislature were renewed after he enacted an executive order last month that bans LGBT-discrimination from state contractors and state employees.

At the time, the governor said "the commonwealth of Virginia will not do business with entities that discriminate based on

sexual orientation or gender identity.” {eoa}