

House Steamrolls Religious Liberty, Votes to Pass LGBTQ Bill

The House voted Thursday to pass landmark LGBTQ legislation in a move that critics say would crush religious liberty.

The vote was 224 to 206 with three Republicans joining the Democrat majority to vote "Yes."

The bill, known as the Equality Act or , passed 236-173 in the House in 2019 although it died in the Senate. Now, it's possible the Senate will give it a real look.

The legislation expands the 1964 Civil Rights Act by broadening the definition of protected classes to include sexual orientation and gender identity. At the same time, it falls short on religious exemptions, potentially forcing individuals or faith-based organizations to choose between religious beliefs and following the law.

Pastor Sam Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, characterized it as a move to exchange the human rights of one group for another. "We cannot protect one minority by disenfranchising the sincerely held religious beliefs of another minority," he said.

Many conservative groups like the Southern Baptists, Heritage Foundation and the Family Research Council oppose the Equality Act, citing religious liberty.

Republican Rep. Chris Stewart of Utah is offering an alternative approach that has picked up bi-partisan support. The Fairness for All Act would offer LGBTQ civil rights protections in areas like housing and employment while protecting religious freedom.

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