

Most Americans Side With Gays in Religious Freedom Flaps—What Does This Mean for Christians in America?

A majority of Americans believe businesses should not be allowed to refuse services based on their religious beliefs in the wake of controversies in Indiana and Arkansas over gay rights and religious freedom, a Reuters/Ipsos poll found on Thursday.

The poll, conducted April 6 to 8, also found that 52 percent of Americans support allowing same-sex couples to marry, far more than the 32 percent who oppose it.

The survey results suggest a split over the issue between Americans and some of the politicians who represent them.

Indiana's Republican governor, Mike Pence, triggered a firestorm in his state this month by signing a law that would allow businesses to refuse services to certain groups or people based on their religious beliefs.

Gay rights activists saw the law as discriminatory and the resulting backlash forced Indiana's state legislature to make changes to the law.

Days later, Arkansas's Republican governor, Asa Hutchinson, forced his state legislature to change a similar law in order to avoid having it blow up into a controversy in his state.

The poll found solid opposition to allowing businesses to refuse services or refuse to hire people or groups based on religious beliefs.

Fifty-four percent said it was wrong for businesses to refuse

services, while 28 percent said they should have that right. And 55 percent said businesses should not have the right to refuse to hire certain people or groups based on the employer's religious beliefs, while 27 percent said businesses should have the right.

The Reuters-Ipsos poll found divisions among Americans on where same-sex marriage laws should be made.

The largest grouping, 34 percent, believes same-sex marriage laws should be made by the U.S. Supreme Court declaring a nationwide constitutional right.

Another 22 percent said same-sex marriage laws should be made at the state level by voter referendum. Eleven percent said laws should be made by state legislators and 8 percent would leave it up to Congress. The poll found 24 percent did not know how best to handle it.

The poll said 55 percent want to see all states – even those that do not permit same-sex marriages – recognize such unions from states where same-sex marriage is legal.

For the survey, 892 people aged 18 years old and over were interviewed online. The Reuters/Ipsos online poll was measured using a credibility interval. It has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.

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