

Teasley's bill would protect religious freedom in Georgia

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DEAR EDITOR:

Is Religious Freedom Worth Protecting in Georgia? Absolutely! And state Rep. Sam Teasley (R-Marietta) has taken the necessary first step by prefiling HB29, the "Preventing Government Overreach on Religious Expression Act."

Georgians of all faiths need the assurance that they can live out their faith without the fear of government retaliation. This bill will provide those assurances.

So why the need for a state religious freedom bill? For starters, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act passed in 1993 was intended to prohibit unwarranted burdening of religion by both federal and state governments.

However, in 1997 the Supreme Court ruled that RFRA applies only to federal law, not state law. Since that court ruling, 19 states have passed their own versions of RFRA, including all states contiguous to Georgia. Without a state RFRA, Georgians may have no recourse when they suffer religious discrimination from state and local municipalities.

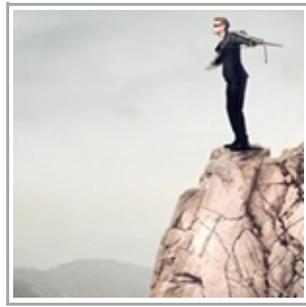
Readers should also be aware that Georgians are already being subjected to religious discrimination. From Savannah to Ellijay; from Pine Mountain to Suwanee, religious discrimination is more common in Georgia than most people realize.

Consider these actual examples: restrictions on Christian clubs at Savannah State University; restrictions on public prayer in Ellijay; restrictions on the distribution of religious literature in Pine Mountain.

Religious freedom is the bedrock of all other liberties and valued as one of our most cherished constitutional rights. Protecting religious freedom was so important to our Founders they placed it at the top of the list of the Bill of Rights. Isn't it time that we step up to protect religious freedom here in Georgia? Future generations are depending on us.

Tanya Ditty *Concerned Women for America of Georgia*

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