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## EDITORIAL

# Fight back against the RFRA carpetbaggers

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### **It's territory we can defend and an economic fight we can win.**

It sounds like Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner is declaring war on the Hoosier State. Voicing an intention to poach jobs from us, he said he is going to “rip the economic guts out of Indiana. “I am one of the baddest, you know, enemies anybody can have. And when I set a goal, we do it. I don’t care what the headline is. I want the results. And we’re coming after Indiana big time.”

He was referring to furor over Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which he has called “a headline opportunity.” Never mind that Illinois also has an RFRA, as do some of the other states that are trying to capitalize on the backlash. The governors are among the many RFRA carpetbaggers rushing into the debris of our culture war to advance their own causes and issues.

Alas, the pressure from some of the bullies was so great that Gov. Mike Pence and legislative leaders caved, adding language to the RFRA to cross-our-hearts-and-hope-to-die promise that it will not ever be used to discriminate against gays, which it wasn’t meant to do anyway and could not have succeeded in doing. But the potential loss of hundreds of millions from conventions and tourism alone was enough to make them tremble with fear.

But this is territory the governor can defend and fight he can win. “We’ll stack Indiana’s low taxes, triple-A credit rating and excellent business climate against those of any other state any time,” said Christy Denault, communications director for Pence. “Our corporate taxes are going down, our workforce has been growing and we will continue to aggressively recruit new companies and new jobs to our state.”

That’s governor’s-office talk for “Bring it on, tough talker.” It’s a taunt more than backed up by the facts.

Rauner says that when a state’s business climate is in the top 10 as Indiana’s is, it should be expected that the other 40 states will be nipping at our heels.

Perhaps so, but right now Illinois is much too far away to take a bite. Chief Executive Magazine surveyed 500 CEOs to rank the best and worst states for business. Indiana was sixth. Illinois ranked 48th.

We pay our bills and stay out of debt. Illinois is a Big Government state and has the debt to prove it. Does business go where its tax bills will stay low or where it will be called on to bail out the state?

So, oh, yeah, bring it on.