

# Armour: NCAA's next moves should be out of Indiana

Nancy Armour, USA TODAY Sports 8:03 p.m. EDT March 26, 2015



(Photo: Brian Spurlock, USA TODAY Sports)

The NCAA should be applauded for swiftly and strongly expressing its disapproval of Indiana's new law that cloaks discrimination in "religious freedom."

But it can't stop there.

It is too late to pull this year's Final Four from Indianapolis, given it is next weekend and there's no other city that would have an arena and several thousand hotel rooms available. But the NCAA can – and should – tell Indiana lawmakers that their prejudice and mean-spiritedness has cost the state the privilege of hosting any other collegiate sporting event.

The 2016 women's Final Four currently scheduled to be held in Indianapolis? Not anymore.

The early-round games for the men's tournament that Indianapolis is looking forward to hosting in 2017? They'll be moved somewhere else.

The 2021 men's Final Four that was awarded to Indianapolis last fall? That will be going to a more enlightened state, like Minnesota.



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[As Final Four nears, NCAA opposes Indiana religious freedom law](http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaab/2015/03/26/ncaa-tournament-final-four-indiana-religious-freedom-law-gay-rights/70492134/)

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Swimming, hockey, cross country, gymnastics, rowing, soccer, tennis – Indiana won't be seeing any of their championships any time soon, either.

And in what would be the biggest threat of all, the NCAA ought to tell Gov. Mike Pence and his lunatic-fringe lawmakers that it no longer feels at home in Indiana and will look at moving its headquarters from Indianapolis to a state where God-given diversity is something to be celebrated rather than feared.

"The NCAA national office and our members are deeply committed to providing an inclusive environment for all our events," NCAA president Mark Emmert said in a statement shortly after Pence signed the law Thursday.

"We are especially concerned about how this legislation could affect our student-athletes and employees."

As well the NCAA – and anyone else doing business in Indiana – should be.

The law gives businesses the right to refuse service to gay and lesbian couples, but it's really intended to allow the bigots and small-minded to discriminate against people they fear and don't understand. Hard as Pence tried to spin it Thursday, this was nothing more than appeasement for conservative groups still bitter over their failure last year to add an amendment to the Indiana constitution banning same-sex marriage.

Conservatives like to play the "religious freedom" card at the mere suggestion gays and lesbians – or anyone they consider different – deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. You know, as all people should be.

Never mind that one of the founding principles in this country is the separation of church and state, specifically included in the Constitution so no one could use their faith as an excuse to bully or demean others. Or that these folks are on the wrong side of history, with gay marriage now legal in 37 states and the Supreme Court expected to strike down remaining barriers this summer.

Discrimination, in any form, demeans us all, and the NCAA is right to be concerned.

The NCAA already struggles to attract quality people for its top positions. The hours are long, the work is often thankless and there's rarely a day that goes by that the organization isn't being criticized for its decisions and policies. Telling future employees they won't be welcome in the state where they'll be living and working is only going to make hiring the right people harder.

Then there's the message this law sends to young people. According to The Trevor Project, gay, lesbian and bisexual teens are four times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youths. A law like Indiana's tells these vulnerable youth – some of whom are NCAA athletes – that they don't matter, that their lives have less worth.

"We will work diligently to assure student-athletes competing in, and visitors attending, next week's Men's Final Four in Indianapolis are not impacted negatively by this bill," Emmert said in his statement. "Moving forward, we intend to closely examine the implications of this bill and how it might affect future events as well as our workforce."

Indiana lawmakers naïve enough to consider this an idle threat should talk to their counterparts in South Carolina, which has been banned from hosting any NCAA championships since 2001 because the Confederate flag flies at the state capitol.

The NCAA is in the business of college athletics, not social justice. But some issues are simply too important to view from the sidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_  
Duke?



