



Government
[Ask The Mayor: Frankfort's Chris McBarnes](#)



Education
[Monthly Conversation With Mitch Daniels: It's All About Relationships](#)



[Donate Your Vehicle](#)

Government

10:19 AM TUE MARCH 24, 2015

Indiana House Passes RFRA, Even As Letters Opposing It Pour In

By [BRANDON SMITH](#) (@PEOPLE/BRANDON-SMITH) & NETWORK INDIANA

The House Monday approved a bill that supporters call a shield protecting people of faith. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act creates a judicial test for Indiana courts that ensures a government can only restrict religious practices if it has a compelling reason and does so in the least restrictive way.



<http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wbaa/files/201502/statehouse.jpg>

Five Republicans joined Democrats in voting against the bill, which still received 61 votes of support.

Credit Noah Coffey / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/noahwesley/>

Supporters, such as Rep. Tom Washburne (R-Inglesfield), say the bill helps ensure Hoosiers live in harmony with each other.

“It’s important that we allow our citizens who hold religious beliefs – and maybe even those that we would be appalled by – to be able to express those,” Washburne says.

But opponents such as House Minority Leader Scott Pelath (D-Michigan City) say the impetus for the bill – that people of faith are being persecuted – is a paper tiger.

“It’s an issue made up for the purpose of being able to go in front of a few Indiana citizens and thump your chest that you stood up for certain social causes,” Pelath says.

Pelath says the real fear should be that RFRA will be used to discriminate against some Hoosiers, particularly those in the LGBT community. The bill passed 63-31, mostly along party lines, with five Republicans joining Democrats in opposition.

Earlier in the day, opponents delivered some 10,000 letter from Hoosiers opposing the measure.

Members of the Freedom Indiana coalition of businesses and individuals brought the letters to the office of House Speaker Brian Bosma (R-Indianapolis), urging him to reject the bill, which has also passed the Senate.

Freedom Indiana spokeswoman Jennifer Wagner with says that’s on top of thousands of phone calls made as part of a campaign from the same group that fought HJR-3 last year, the resolution calling for a referendum on a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage.

Bill supporters say RFRA opponents are stretching the way the bill could be interpreted

when they claim businesses would take liberties allowing them not to serve gays and lesbians.

TAGS: [RFRA \(/term/rfra\)](#) [Brian Bosma \(/term/brian-bosma\)](#) [Scott Pelath \(/term/scott-pelath\)](#) [Jennifer Wagner \(/term/jennifer-wagner\)](#) [Religious Freedom Restoration Act \(/term/religious-freedom-restoration-act\)](#) [HJR-3 \(/term/hjr-3\)](#) [LGBTQI \(/term/lgbtqi\)](#) [Tom Washburne \(/term/tom-washburne\)](#)

0 Comments

WBAA

 Login ▾

 Recommend

 Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

 Subscribe

 Add Disqus to your site

 Privacy