

# View from Here: Speaking out on RFRA

Hannah Smith Kiefer 3:43 p.m. EDT April 23, 2015



(Photo: John Terhune/Journal & Courier)

When Gov. Mike Pence signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, I knew the coming days were going to be busy.

I was tasked with writing reaction stories and getting comment on the issue from local politicians. I remember thinking, "No one is going to say anything about this; it's too political."

But longtime reporters at the Journal & Courier told me not to be so sure.

I'm originally from Carmel, and I moved to Lafayette after a brief stint in Tennessee. In both of those areas, politicians usually stayed silent on political issues, for fear of losing approval or re-election. Even as Tennessee passed a controversial abortion rights amendment last year, politicians opposing the measure were noticeably quiet.

I thought the same would be true in Greater Lafayette with RFRA.

I was wrong.

Almost as soon as the bill caught state and then national attention, local leaders spoke up — and loudly.

While Republicans in the Statehouse debated what to do, Republican Mayor John Dennis and the West Lafayette City Council voted unanimously to pass a resolution reaffirming their commitment to inclusion of all residents and visitors, including those in the LGBTQ community.

I met with Mayor Tony Roswarski, who spent hours poring over the bill to see if it would override Lafayette's local ordinance.

Although Purdue University administration stayed conspicuously quiet on the issue, its senate did not, calling for a total repeal.

Of course leaders in other Indiana towns spoke up as well, but leaders in Greater Lafayette were among the first.

Regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum, there's something to be said for living in a community where politicians will stand up for what they believe is right or, in this case, wrong. It's rare in a time when the next campaign begins as soon as the previous election ends.

Like much of the community, I was proud of our local leaders for not only preaching politics during election season but for living out the beliefs for which they were elected.

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