



## SPECIFIC EXEMPTIONS

Religious exemptions are expected to come in both broad and specific forms. The differences are unique enough to watch for both, and specific exemptions are likely to be the most prolific. Micro-targeted religious exemptions are expected in the areas of wedding related services, delivery of marriage licenses, and delivery of child welfare services. By carving out religious exemptions in certain areas of business and service, Texas opens itself to a hugely expanded risk of expensive lawsuits challenging any law, policy, regulation, government action, or decision that an individual sees as conflicting with his or her religious beliefs.

Potential legislation would create a new class of lawsuits that may be brought against governments or employers that require work environments that do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. This would allow an employee to sue their employer if they are disciplined for creating a hostile work environment or discriminating against LGBT customers, so long as the employee claims a religious basis for the discrimination. Potential legislation would also create a right of refusal for any business to violate local nondiscrimination laws if the business owner believes that serving a customer whose marriage the business owner dislikes would violate that business owners religious beliefs. Goods that are made available to the public should be made available without discrimination based on race, religion, nation of origin, sex, ability, veteran status, sexual orientation, family status, gender identity or gender expression. Texans value the right of any person to work hard and strive for the American dream. Using religion as a weapon to excuse discrimination flies in the face of Texas values.

### **Facts:**

- Nothing is more vital to Americans than the protection of religious liberty – that’s why it’s the first thing in the Bill of Rights and is protected by Texas Constitution and statute.
- Texas led the nation in protecting religious liberty when it passed our existing protections in 1999, which have been a model for other states.
- Passing new regulations on religion that allow one narrow religious interpretation to be imposed on the public would damage the freedom that all Texans currently enjoy to practice their faith in public and at home.
- Creating a brand new kind of lawsuit is an invitation to frivolous litigation brought by opportunists.
- Businesses seeking to form in or relocate to Texas are looking for an environment that will embrace and celebrate their diverse workforce. As we saw in Arizona, Indiana, Georgia and North Carolina, businesses believe these new laws create an unstable business environment. If Texas is to continue to be an economic powerhouse we must maintain a stable environment that doesn’t elevate one narrow religious interpretation over the ability of business to flourish.
- A law that conflicts with personal religious belief, no matter how deeply held, is not a violation of religious liberty.

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