

The Coalition Against Religious Discrimination

February 27, 2013

Re: CARD Opposes Federally Funded Employment Discrimination Permitted Under the Amendment Offered in Nature of a Substitute to S. 47, the Violence Against Women Act of 2013

Dear Representative:

The 60 undersigned religious, education, civil rights, labor, and women's organizations write to voice our opposition to the language of the substitute to S. 47, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA). We oppose the amendment in the nature of a substitute insofar as it would alter the nondiscrimination clause from the Senate -passed bill to remove protections that bar federally funded religious discrimination. Government funds should not be used to underwrite employment discrimination within government-funded projects and activities.

We appreciate the important role religiously affiliated institutions historically have played in addressing many of our nation's most pressing social needs, as a complement to government-funded programs. Indeed, many of us are directly involved in this work. We also recognize that the separation of church and state is the linchpin of religious freedom. In our view, effective government collaboration with faith-based groups does not require the sanctioning of federally funded religious discrimination.

In accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, religious organizations may prefer co-religionists in hiring when using their own private funds. What the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination (CARD) objects to is allowing organizations to use *government* funds to discriminate against a qualified individual based on nothing more than his or her religious beliefs. VAWA should protect against taxpayer dollars being used to underwrite jobs for which religion is a factor in hiring decisions.

Adopting the language in the substitute would be inconsistent with the longstanding principle that federal dollars must not be used to discriminate. Accordingly, CARD opposes the substitute language and supports the reinstatement of nondiscrimination language into the bill.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers in Action
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists, Inc.
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American Ethical Union
American Humanist Association
American Jewish Committee (AJC)
Americans for Religious Liberty
Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Anti-Defamation League
Atheist Alliance of America
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Catholics for Choice
Center for Inquiry
Council for Secular Humanism
Disciples Justice Action Network
Equal Partners in Faith
Family Equality Council
Feminist Majority
Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Hindu American Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Science and Human Values
Institute for Humanist Studies
Interfaith Alliance
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
Lambda Legal
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Legal Momentum
Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers
NAACP
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Organization for Women
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National
People For the American Way
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Secular Coalition for America
Secular Student Alliance
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Texas Faith Network
Texas Freedom Network
The Sikh Coalition
Transgender Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Law Project