

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ATTACKED; SMEAR CAMPAIGN UNFURLS

Holy Week will be remembered not for religious observances in 2015, but for an assault on religious liberty. It was ignited by social media, and quickly took on a life of its own, bringing in gay activists, left-wing non-profit groups, the media, the entertainment industry, academia, the clergy, and big corporations. The cultural ramifications will be felt for years.

The Catholic League wasted no time coming to the defense of Indiana Governor Mike Pence. On March 26, he signed a law that was based on a federal law passed in 1993, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Not only had there been no controversy when the federal law was introduced by liberal Democrats, it was signed by President Bill Clinton. Subsequent to that time, 30 states adopted their own RFRA, without a fuss. So what broke?

The 1993 law was passed to rectify a 1990 Supreme Court decision, *Employment Division v. Smith*, that nullified religious exemptions from otherwise valid laws. Under RFRA, the government could not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification, and even then it had to be done in the least restrictive way. In 1997, the high court said that RFRA applied only to states that had their own religious liberty acts.

Governor Pence signed the Indiana RFRA because he did not want his state to be without the protections afforded by federal law. What broke this time around is that by 2015 the gay lobby had become more powerful than ever before: it succeeded in convincing many elites that RFRA could be used to discriminate against gays. Never mind that none of these laws say anything about sexual orientation.

No sooner had Governor Pence signed the law when he was attacked by the president of the NCAA. The Indiana-headquartered collegiate sports organization threatened to pull future events from the state because the law allegedly permits discrimination. Bill Donohue immediately wrote a stinging reply (click [here](#)).

The hysteria, dishonesty, and hypocrisy that marked the anti-RFRA campaign was mind-boggling. The critics made it sound as if Christians were going to seek out gays for punishment; they lied about the contents of the bill; and they were downright two-faced in their opposition. The hostility of this campaign forced the bill to be amended.

Regarding the hypocrisy, Apple CEO Tim Cook exploded in rage at the bill, yet he invests heavily in Muslim-run nations that murder gays for being gay. Moreover, it was RFRA's critics who threatened violence—not its supporters (the owners of a pizza store who said they would not service a gay wedding received death threats).

It is a sad day when those who support religious liberty are demonized, especially during Holy Week.