

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN WORKPLACE SECURED IN MASSACHUSETTS

A bill that would secure protection for workers who desire to observe religious holidays without penalty has been passed by the Massachusetts legislature and signed by Governor William Weld. Unfortunately, the bill was not retroactive, thus leaving Kathleen Pielech and Patricia Reed—the two principals who were initially victimized when they didn't show for work on Christmas day in 1992—without relief.

In February 1995, the Catholic League submitted an amicus brief in the case of Pielech and Reed v. Massasoit Greyhound, Inc. When the case was brought before the Supreme Judicial Court in 1995, it struck down the existing law that protected religious rights in the workplace as unconstitutional. But when a new law was passed extending religious rights to those not affiliated with an organized church or sect (a sincerely held belief was sufficient to grant protection), the Supreme Judicial Court, on November 27, 1996, upheld that law's constitutionality.

Over the past several months, the Catholic League was in contact with the Massachusetts Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, House Speaker and Senate President urging them to restore religious liberty in the workplace. The league is grateful for the action taken but regrets that the bill was not retroactive.