

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS NEED MORE PROTECTIONS

Bill Donohue comments on yesterday's congressional hearings on the First Amendment Defense Act (FADA):

Religious rights, encoded in the First Amendment, are under attack on many fronts, most conspicuously in the collision between those rights and the rights of homosexuals. That is why we need FADA.

This issue was brought to a head when the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the *Obergefell* decision that eventually led to the legalization of same-sex marriage. At that time, the U.S. Solicitor General was asked if churches might lose their tax-exempt status if they opposed gay marriage, and he said it "certainly [is] going to be an issue."

No other reason is necessary to prove the necessity for FADA. If the public good that houses of worship provide is going to be denied—that is what the forfeiture of their tax-exempt status would mean—simply because the clergy hold to biblical prescriptions regarding sexuality, then the principal victim is the First Amendment.

We have already seen public servants be punished for defending the Judeo-Christian understanding of marriage in a book. Worse, we have seen lawmakers argue that municipal workers have no right to hold to "thoughts, beliefs, and opinions [that] are different from the city's." This isn't a brief for liberty—it is a textbook endorsement of totalitarianism.

Gay activists want to add discrimination against sexual orientation to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. That is what is driving this issue. But that law protects people based on their ascribed characteristics, such as race and sex, not

their lifestyle.

Moreover, the 1964 law has been flagrantly misinterpreted by the courts to allow affirmative action, even though the plain language of the legislation prohibits discrimination against anyone. Ergo, if sexual orientation were added, it could pave the way for gay quotas in hiring, turning a bizarre issue into a positively absurd one.