

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Governor of Georgia
206 Washington Street
111 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA, 30334

Dear Governor Deal:

As recently as the fall of 2015, you were quoted in the press as supporting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) for passage here in Georgia. This is totally consistent with your past support of RFRA when you were a member of Congress, and I want to thank you for your past support of RFRA.

I would like to urge you to become more of an advocate for religious liberty here in Georgia by asking Speaker David Ralston to either pass SB 129, without the harmful amendment added last year in committee that guts the bill, or either to pass HB 837, in its current language without any amendments, before Crossover Day. Both of these bills track the federal RFRA which you supported.

RFRA, as I am sure you are aware, offers broad protections for religious liberty, but only by directing our Georgia judicial system to use the same standard of review that the U.S. Supreme Court uses when reviewing First Amendment Free Exercise claims. Georgians deserve at least the same First Amendment protections that many other states have already provided to their citizens. To leave Georgia out in the cold means that Georgia's citizens have even less First Amendment protection than citizens of other states and even inmates in federal prisons who are covered by the federal RFRA.

In addition to RFRA, we now need SB 284, the First Amendment Defense Act, to be on your desk for your signature this year. In light of the Supreme Court's ruling on *Obergefell*, those who voted for our Constitutional Amendment to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman have been disenfranchised by five oligarchs on the Court. These five justices have disregarded the fact that each state in the United States is guaranteed a republican form of government in our U.S. Constitution and that the federal government has no constitutional jurisdiction over family law. Our State Constitution, which reflects the will of the people, should be honored.

However, with this situation as it stands, Georgians at least need protection from activist judges and bureaucrats who have shown across this nation, and also in Georgia (recall Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran, Dr. Eric Walsh, student Jennifer Keeton - to name a few) that they are willing to use the strong arm of government to bully individuals, organizations, and businesses to conform to the new orthodoxy concerning homosexual relationships, and these cases were before *Obergefell*. In light of that decision, such tactics will only escalate.

State and local governments will exercise power to coerce uniformity to the new orthodoxy and not even make room for people to disagree with *Obergefell*, the same pattern that has happened in Canada. If government can force uniformity in such a sacred area as marriage, what can it not do? This Republic was set up to be a form of limited government, yet we have strayed dangerously far from the original design.

On the passage of Virginia's religious liberty bill in 1786, James Madison wrote that he believed that the bill's passage "extinguished forever the ambitious hope of making laws for the human mind." In our day, he would be

appalled on just how wrong he was and greatly disturbed that Americans were trading their birthright for a bowl of pottage.

I am requesting your active and vocal support for SB 284 as written, except, however, that government public servants also need their First Amendment rights protected. They should not have to consider that becoming a government employee may require doing some task that would be contrary to their sincerely-held religious faith.

Thank you for your consideration of my request, and I hope you will give it your utmost attention.

Sincerely,