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Bryan Fischer: Special protections threaten religious liberty

READER'S VIEW GAY RIGHTS

BY BRYAN FISCHER - Idaho Statesman

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On the pages of the Statesman, Amy Herzfeld expressed her determination to continue pressing for legislation that will grant special workplace protections to those who engage in homosexual and transgender sexual behaviors (April 3, Reader's View).

Laws that provide special rights and privileges based on "sexual orientation" or "gender identity" are bad public policy because they represent a clear and present danger to religious liberty, freedom of conscience and freedom of association. Such laws are quickly used to harass, intimidate and punish individuals, businesses and organizations that adhere to traditional, time-honored values regarding human sexuality.

What follows is just a sampling of what happens under "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" statutes:

Ⓢ A Christian photographer was fined \$6,637 by the New Mexico Civil Rights Commission for declining to photograph a lesbian commitment ceremony, even though same-sex unions have no legal status in the state.

Ⓢ Christian fertility doctors in private practice in California have been barred by the state Supreme Court from declining to artificially inseminate lesbian patients on conscience grounds.

Ⓢ Catholic Charities of Boston shut down its work of finding homes for hard-to-place adoptive children because Massachusetts' "sexual orientation" law required staff to place children in homosexual households.

Ⓢ The Methodist Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association was found guilty of violating New Jersey's discrimination law for declining to rent space to a lesbian couple for a civil union ceremony.

Ⓢ The Cradle of Liberty Boy Scouts of Philadelphia were evicted from a building they had occupied since 1928 because the organization does not allow homosexuals to serve as Scoutmasters, even though the Supreme Court has upheld the Scouts' policy.

Ⓢ eHarmony, a match-making site for heterosexuals, was compelled to create a dating site for homosexuals, despite the fact that hundreds of such sites already exist.

Ⓢ A nightclub in the Midwest is being sued for denying entrance to a cross-dressing male because he insisted on using the women's restroom, despite the club's common-sense concern for patron safety and privacy. This case demonstrates that privacy protections for every bathroom, dressing room and locker room will disappear under "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" legislation.

Congress is even now considering "hate crimes" legislation, which provides enhanced penalties for those convicted of bias crimes against homosexuals.

The problem here is that this gives more protection to some victims of crime than others, which violates the fundamental principle of American justice that we are all equal under the law. Every victim of violence ought to have the full protection of the law regardless of his sexual orientation.

The murder of a cross-dressing man is a cause celebre in Colorado right now. We join with homosexual activists in wanting his murderer prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

But we want justice for the victim because he was made in the image of God, not because he dressed as a woman and wore breast gels. We want every victim of homicide, regardless of sexual orientation, to have the same legal protection, no less and no more. Every crime, in fact, is a hate crime.

In addition, "hate crimes" laws are "thought crimes" laws. They punish an individual not for what he did but for what he was thinking when he did it. But as Thomas Jefferson said, "the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions."

Religious freedom is the first right guaranteed to us in the First Amendment. Special rights for homosexuals receive no explicit mention in the Constitution whatsoever. Yet now we must choose between liberty and the homosexual agenda because, it turns out, we can't have both.

Bryan Fischer is executive director of Idaho Values Alliance.