

April 22, 2015

Mr. (Madam) Chairman and members of the committee: My name is Dana Hodges, and I am the Associate State Director for Concerned Women for America of Texas. I am speaking today in favor of HB 3567.

For over thirty-six years, our national and state organizations have fought for religious freedoms, believing these to be inalienable and part of the core foundation of our country. Our Founding Fathers sought for themselves, their families and future generations a place to freely live out their faith without fear of persecution or retribution. It is why it is the first freedom protected by our beloved Bill of Rights. Because of their efforts to protect religious liberty, I am able to freely believe the tenets of my faith which enables me to live out my Christian faith. It is the foundation upon which every facet of my life rests. To be faced with, even the suggestion of, being forced to ignore, even abandon, my deeply-held religious beliefs, strikes at the very essence of who I am as a person and who we are as a country.

Texas is a diverse state. Because of that diversity, there are many places where people of different faiths and beliefs can go where their ideologies are accepted. Any effort of government to force a pastor or church to solemnize a marriage ceremony that goes against their sincerely held religious beliefs is in complete violation of our Constitution, as an infringement our religious freedom and it is a gross violation of our inalienable rights.

This scenario however is not far-fetched, given the cultural shift we are seeing around the country. But such an attempted would effectively turn faithful pastors into criminals. The Bible says we are to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). So in reality pastors have no choice. Forcing them and/or churches to accept marriages that go against the whole counsel of the inerrant Word of God places them in a position of hostility toward God, which they could never accept.

CWA of Texas urges you to pass HB 3567 in order to protect the freedom of religion of pastors and churches in our great state.