

## EDITORIAL CARTOON

**BOYCOTT GONE BAD**

Protesting of Indiana's and Arkansas' religious freedom acts attacks citizens, not government

Sheila Raghavendran | Editor-in-Chief

A firestorm of raging opponents has been swarming the Indiana legislature in protest of its Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) signed by Republican Governor Mike Pence.

The “ambiguity” in Indiana’s bill has left many protesters angry over its wishy-washy leeway for discrimination against LGBT people. Furthermore, the RFRA bills in Indiana and Arkansas—which “mirrored” each other, according to Blue Nation Review—are worrisome because while the federal RFRA provides exemptions from “burdens imposed by the government, both Indiana and Arkansas laws allow RFRA to be raised in lawsuits where the government is not a party,” according to The Washington Post. This is where things get a little muddy.

The un-amended RFRA allows people to refuse to follow the law if it conflicts with their religious beliefs or practices. The Washington Post offers the example of Muslim police officers who grow beards because of religious obligations despite police

grooming requirements—it seems harmless. In Indiana and Arkansas, however, there are currently no laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. Because of this, people who refuse to comply with laws that infringe on religious duties—“religious objectors” as they are dubbed—are not breaking any laws by refusing services to LGBT people.

Indianapolis, where this firestorm swelled to its peak, had already enacted a city-specific law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, along with 11 other areas in Indiana, according to the Indy Star—including Bloomington, home of Indiana University. According to The Washington Post, Indianapolis had formed “an image of openness and diversity,” which was tarnished by Pence’s RFRA.

Because of the massive nation-wide backlash, Pence signed an amendment on Thursday, April 2. This amendment, according to the Indy Star, prevents “religious objectors” from refusing service to LGBT peo-

ple.

Hooray! Right? Wrong. Here’s the catch: the amendment is only applicable in those 11 Indiana communities that previously took the lengths to bar discrimination against LGBT people.

But more mind-boggling than the discriminative law itself is the lengths others have taken to cut off interaction with Indiana altogether, as if punishing the whole state for solely the legislature’s faulty law. Though the bill was signed over three weeks ago and the firestorm has slightly subdued, its repercussions are long-lasting.

According to Indiana University’s student newspaper, the Indiana Daily Student, Seattle, San Francisco, New York state and Connecticut cut off non-essential trips to Indiana; Wilco canceled an Indianapolis concert (which is now back on due to the law’s amendment); Angie’s List, based in Indianapolis, canceled a \$40-million expansion that could have potentially added 1,000 jobs. Nick Offerman from Parks and Recreation canceled his touring comedy show with his wife, tweeting, “Congrats @GovPenceIN WE ARE CANCELING Indiana Summer of 69 tour 5/16. I WILL PLAY @IndianaUniv this Weds and donate my \$ to HRC. #Usuck”.

I’m a huge proponent of LGBT rights. I’m eyeing the “NO HATE IN

OUR STATE” Indiana t-shirt flashing on the Human Rights Campaign website, as Indiana will be my home for the next four years. But depriving Indiana of travel, entertainment, jobs—due to the government’s misstep, not the people’s—I think it is unfair. Effective? Maybe. But mature? Not really.

Nick Offerman’s tweet got a variety of responses. Some commended him for #BoycottingIndiana, but some, like @ryanpreferred, are against the law but didn’t appreciate Offerman’s cancellation. He responded, “this isn’t fair. We hate this law and Gov Pence is a worthless Gov. I worked hard to go to this show”.

And that’s exactly it: people who have nothing to do with this poor legislation are being punished via celebrities and companies stripping Indiana of their services. I understand that the goal is for the citizens to get fired up and increase protest against the law, but there’s a line. There’s a line between activism and unfairness, and many of these celebrities and companies have crossed that line, taking something away from people who don’t deserve to be cut off, even if their state’s government does.

That firestorm of raging opponents should blaze on—but toward Governor Pence, not the people of Indiana.