

November 13, 2015

Senator Mike Lee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Raúl Labrador
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Lee and Representative Labrador,

As religious leaders from diverse faith traditions, we write to express our joint support for the revised First Amendment Defense Act (FADA) and to thank you for your leadership in sponsoring the bill. We recognize, as you do, that religious liberty is more than the freedom of worship. It includes the inalienable right of people of faith to exercise their religious and moral convictions in public life, including the conviction that marriage is the union of one man and one woman and that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage. We are pleased, therefore, to give strong support for the revised FADA, a non-discrimination act whose language was made public on September 14.

This new version of FADA is a commonsense proposal that would protect religious organizations and family-owned businesses from discrimination by the federal government. The bill's non-discrimination protections are modest, clearly enumerated, and include the protection of federal tax-exempt status and non-disqualification from federal grants and contracts. The modified FADA makes explicit that no one, as a result of FADA, will be denied any federal benefit or service to which he or she is entitled under the law. The new bill does not cover publicly traded for-profit entities, federal employees acting within the scope of their employment, or federal for-profit contractors acting within the scope of their contract.

The threat to religious liberty resulting from the Supreme Court's decision to redefine marriage is real, as the dissenting Justices in that case recognized, and therefore requires protection by Congress. Indeed, during oral argument, the Solicitor General, responding to a question whether a religious school could lose its tax-exempt status for opposing same-sex marriage, conceded that "It's certainly going to be an issue." We should not wait for this collision to occur between the federal government and people of faith. Instead, Congress should act now by passing FADA.

Importantly, the free exercise of religion is a pillar of our democracy that respects the public exercise of diverse religious beliefs, including the belief for millennia that marriage is the union of one man and one woman and that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage. In our pluralistic and inclusive society this belief deserves protection, while ensuring that those who disagree are not denied any benefit or service under federal law to which they are entitled. FADA does both, and we unite from our various faith traditions to give it our strong support.

Sincerely,

The Most Rev. Dr. Foley Beach
Archbishop and Primate
Anglican Church in North America

The Rev. John F. Bradosky
Bishop
North American Lutheran Church

Rev. Mark Chavez
General Secretary
North American Lutheran Church

Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone
Archbishop of San Francisco
Chairman
USCCB Subcommittee for the Promotion and
Defense of Marriage

The Rt. Rev. John A. M. Guernsey
Bishop, Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic
Anglican Church in North America

Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison
President
Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

Most Rev. William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman
USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious
Liberty

Russell Moore
President
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty
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Rev. Samuel Rodriguez
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National Hispanic Christian Leadership
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Rev. Dr. David Wendel
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