



GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

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Indiana Voters Reject Discrimination

To: The Human Rights Campaign

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

Indiana voters convincingly reject discrimination, even discrimination disguised as “religious freedom.” By a 2:1 margin, Indiana voters believe businesses should not be allowed to refuse service to people on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, even if this service violates their religious beliefs. In this outcome, Indiana voters reflect much of the national polling looking at reactions to self-titled religious freedom legislation in Indiana, Arkansas and many other states. Fully three quarters of voters describe the controversy surrounding this law as bad for business.

But even more striking is the impact this issue has had on Governor Mike Pence’s standing. A 53 percent majority argue the signing of this bill made them feel unfavorable toward Pence, just 38 percent feel favorable. Moreover, Pence enjoyed a strong 62 percent approval score in a survey released by the Indiana Association of Realtors earlier this year (February, 2015)¹. Now, only 43 percent describe his job performance as “excellent” or “good,” and the Governor is deadlocked (47 to 47 percent) in a trial heat for governor against potential Democratic opponent John Gregg.

Pence and his supporters in the legislature may have imagined this issue energizing their base without any real collateral impact outside of a minority of LGBT activists. They could not have been more wrong.

This memorandum summarizes the results of a statewide telephone survey of 500 likely 2016 voters in the state of Indiana, involving both land-line and cell-phone calling. The survey was conducted April 7-9, 2015 and carries a margin of error of +/- 4.38.

¹ Data from a Public Opinion Strategies poll commissioned by the Indiana Association of Realtors in February of 2015 - <http://www.indianaforefront.com/indiana-voters-pence-yes-obama-no/>

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Key Findings

- **Voters reject discrimination.** Indiana voters were initially asked whether businesses should or should not be allowed to refuse service to someone because of their sexual orientation or gender identify. Those voters who said “should not” were subsequently asked if they would still hold this view if the business says homosexuality violates their religious beliefs. In combining these results, 62 percent reject discrimination even if religiously justified, just 32 percent would allow it.

■ **Figure 1:** Should businesses be able to discriminate based on orientation or gender identity

<i>Q.8 Now I want to ask you about something different. Do you think businesses should or should not be allowed to refuse service to someone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity? Q.9 (IF SHOULD NOT IN SERVICE) What if the business says homosexuality violates their owners' religious beliefs, do you believe should or should not be allowed to refuse service to someone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity?</i>	Total
Should be allowed (Total)	32
Should in general	24
Should if it violates owners' religious beliefs	8
Should NOT be allowed (Total)	62
Should not, even if it violates owners' religious beliefs	59
Should not, unsure	2

These results track closely with a similarly worded and structured question asked by Washington Post/ABC News² in March, 2014 (28 percent should be allowed, 65 percent should not be allowed, even if violates religious owners beliefs). Rather than energizing base voters, this issue divides the conservative base. Only 49 percent of Republicans believe businesses should be allowed to refuse service if religiously justified, 41 percent do not. Among observant Christians, only 42 percent believe such discrimination should be allowed.

- **Discrimination is bad business and voters know it.** A striking 75 percent majority of Indiana voters describe the controversy surrounding this law as bad for Indiana businesses and the economy, just 10 percent believe it has been good for business. A 61 percent majority of Republicans understand the economic impact of this issue, as do 51 percent of voters who believe businesses should be allowed to discriminate.
- **This issue is hurting Governor Pence.** After providing voters with brief descriptions of both sides of this issue, we asked voters its impact on their feelings toward Mike Pence. By a 53 percent to 38 percent margin, this episode leaves an unfavorable impression of the Governor.

² Question from a March 2014, Washington Post/ABC National Poll - http://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2014/03/05/National-Politics/Polling/question_13293.xml?uuid=kwbJVKQjEeO4ZTiyVNkgYw

■ **Figure 2:** Favorability of Pence after signing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act

<i>As you may have heard, Governor Mike Pence recently signed into law the Religious Freedom Restoration Act which:</i>	
<i>Some people say allows business owners to discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity? And other people say protects business owners from acting against their own religious beliefs.</i>	
<i>Generally speaking, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of Governor Mike Pence for signing this bill into law?</i>	
	Total
Strongly favorable	21
Somewhat favorable	17
Somewhat unfavorable	13
Strongly unfavorable	40
Don't know/refused	9
Total Favorable	38
Total Unfavorable	53

Among younger voters, who strongly support LGBT rights generally and strongly oppose discrimination in this survey, 73 percent describe their impression of Pence as unfavorable in reaction to this issue. Even among Republicans, 29 percent suggest this issue has soured their impression of Pence, but the real impact is among swing voters (53 percent unfavorable, 25 percent favorable among Independents). And this is not an incumbent who can afford to alienate swing voters right now.

- **Overall reaction to Mike Pence is mixed.** Before this controversy, Governor Pence was very popular. Right now, he is not. In a February, 2015 survey publicly released by the Indiana Realtors Association, a 62 percent majority approved of Pence. In this current survey, only 43 percent describe his job performance as “excellent” or “good,” including just 39 percent of women and 22 percent of younger voters.

When Pence is paired against potential Democratic challenger John Gregg, he only manages 47 percent of the vote share (47 percent for Gregg). A 47 – 47 percent statistical margin is singularly unimpressive in a state where Republicans and Independent-lean Republicans outnumber Democrats and Democratic-leaners by a 50 to 39 percent margin.

Conclusion

Governor Pence and other conservatives in Indiana likely believed this issue would energize their base; in fact, it has divided Republicans while alienating swing voters, younger voters and, as suggested in media coverage, much of the business community in Indiana. Little wonder Pence beat a hasty—if also incomplete—retreat on this issue. But politicians in other states, and even politicians in red states like Indiana, now enjoy fair warning that voters do not support discrimination, however justified.