

February 24, 2014

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
Governor, State of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007
Re: Senate Bill 1062 (exercise of religion; state action.)

Dear Governor Brewer,

As religious leaders from abundant and diverse religious communities in Arizona, we prayerfully ask you to carefully consider a veto of Senate Bill 1062, exercise of religion; state action. Like you, we are guided by our faith and our moral obligation to do what is best for our communities.

As people of faith, we are ardent supporters of religious freedom for all Americans. We know that it is the religious freedom to worship as we chose that makes our country and our state great. Religious organizations have a long established First Amendment ability to operate according to their own beliefs and we as faith leaders hold that right as sacred and will do all in our power to preserve it.

However, we also know that there is a difference between sacred space and commercial space. When providing a service to the public, businesses cannot pick and choose whom to serve and whom to deny. This is basic discrimination and it has nothing to do with religious freedom.

Senate Bill 1062 claims to strengthen already robust religious freedoms in Arizona yet the reality is the opposite. As the Danbury Baptist Association understood when in 1801 they asked President Thomas Jefferson to ensure that their right to worship as a minority religion would not be curtailed by the majority, we understand that religious freedom protects our freedom to worship. Yet freedom of religion does not give businesses the right to discriminate based on the beliefs of individuals.

This legislation will have immense and negative consequences on all communities, including religious communities. First, it sends the message that one's particular religious interpretation can become the law of the land. As diverse religious leaders, this suggests a movement toward state-sanctified religion that makes the free exercise of religion for all of us more difficult. Second, as religious leaders we know that families are harmed when legislation unfairly opens up members of our communities to discrimination. As a state, we know we can do better than that.

Let us celebrate our diverse faith traditions and our courageous acts in the name of all that is Holy, and continue to serve as messengers of peace and goodness as you have encouraged us to do as Governor of Arizona. We ask that you do this with us, and respectfully request that you veto Senate Bill 1062.

Yours In Prayer,

Robert T. Hoshibata
Resident Bishop, The Desert Southwest Conference
The United Methodist Church

The Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith
Bishop of Arizona
The Episcopal Diocese of Arizona

Stephen S. Talmage
Bishop, Grand Canyon Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

John A. Linder
Senior Rabbi
Temple Solel, Paradise Valley

Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Brown
District Executive, Pacific Southwest
Unitarian Universalist Association

The Very Rev. Troy Mendez
Dean
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Phoenix

Rev. Doug Bland
Pastor
Community Christian Church, Tempe

The Rev. Paul L. Campbell
Executive Director
Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center, Carefree

Rev. Stephen Govett
Pastor
Asbury United Methodist Church, Phoenix
Phoenix

Rev. Brian Frederick-Gray
Pastor
Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Scottsdale

Rev. Christiane Heyde
Minister
Sky Island Unitarian Universalist Church,
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Rev. Steven Holm
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Brian Kemp Schlemmer
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Rev. Dr. Don Longbottom
Senior Minister
Church of the Beatitudes, Phoenix

Cynthia L. Pelletier
Vice District Leader
Arizona, Phoenix

Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer
Conference Minister, Southwest
United Church of Christ

Most Rev. Mark Elliott Newman, OC
Presiding Bishop
Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch

Keith Campbell
Pastor
Harmony in Phoenix

Mari Chernow
Rabbi
Temple Chai, Phoenix

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Al Gephart
Pastor Emeritus
University Presbyterian Church, Tempe

Rev. Dr. Robin B. Hollis
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St. James Episcopal Church & Preschool,
Tempe

Elana Kanter
Rabbi
The New Shul, Scottsdale

The Rev. Eric O. Ledermann
Pastor
University Presbyterian Church, Tempe

Rev. Vernon Meyer, PhD
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United Church of Christ, Sun Lakes

Rev. James B. Pennington
Senior Pastor Soka Gakkai International-
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Unity of Phoenix

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