



NEWS ADVISORY

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For immediate release

Mayor John Engen Supports Mayors Across U.S. in Sanctions of Indiana

MISSOULA - Mayor John Engen supports mayors around the nation who have expressed disappointment in the state of Indiana's passage of their SB 101, a "religious freedom" law that could open the door to discrimination against people based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Further, the Missoula mayor urges Indiana Gov. Mike Pence and Indiana's General Assembly to draft and pass a state law prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and education based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The City of Indianapolis has had such a provision for almost a decade. The City of Missoula passed its Illegal Discrimination ordinance with the same protections in 2010.

Missoulians value our role as a champion of equality for all Montanans, Mayor Engen said.

"While it's unlikely that we'll be doing any business with or travel to the state of Indiana, I'm happy to stand with other mayors, business and community leaders in support of equal rights for all citizens," he said. "Missoulians have worked hard to ensure our city protects all her citizens, and I would be remiss if we didn't offer our endorsement for positive change in Indiana."

Since Indiana Gov. Mike Pence signed the controversial bill into law, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and San Francisco Mayor Edwin M. Lee have banned city employee travel to Indiana in light of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. They've been joined by the mayors of Portland, the District of Columbia, Indianapolis, Minneapolis and St. Paul, as well as the governors of Washington and Connecticut. Apple CEO Tim Cook, Yelp, the NCAA, and Angie's List have all condemned the bill, which is expected to have serious economic consequences for the state.

Missoula City Council Vice President Jason Wiener joined Mayor Engen in calling on Indiana to provide LGBT residents the same level of heightened protections RFRA extends to religious groups.

“RFRA requires a compelling interest test for evaluating actions that impose burdens on religious exercise,” Wiener said. “The least Indiana should do is join cities and states across the nation in establishing the same high hurdle to discrimination in housing, employment and accommodations based on sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Missoula City Council president Marilyn Marler as well asked people to speak up.

“Indiana’s legalization of discrimination is unacceptable,” she said. “It is important for Americans everywhere to make that clear.”

For a list of all of the elected officials, businesses, and celebrities standing against Indiana’s RFRA, visit <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2015/03/30/here-are-all-the-people-and-businesses-protesting-indianas-religious-freedom-law/>.

Read Missoula’s Illegal Discrimination ordinance here:

http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1030#Chapter_9_64

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