



March 25, 2015

**RE: Oppose Inhofe Amendment #381 to S. Con. Res. 11, the Budget Resolution**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), **we write to urge you to oppose Inhofe Amendment #381 to S. Con. Res. 11, the budget resolution.** For nearly 100 years, the ACLU has been our nation's guardian of liberty, working in courts, legislatures, and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and the laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country. With more than a million members, activists, and supporters, the ACLU is a nationwide organization that fights tirelessly in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C., for the principle that every individual's rights must be protected equally under the law.

This amendment, which purports to prevent discrimination, would in fact sanction it. The ACLU has profound respect for and demonstrated commitment to religious liberty, reproductive freedom, and LGBT equality, and Senator Inhofe's amendment represents a dangerous setback for all three. This amendment promotes the use of religion to discriminate and is intended to trample upon the rights of millions of Americans, including women who need reproductive health services and committed and loving same-sex couples and their children.

Religious liberty is one of our nation's most cherished values. It guarantees us the freedom to hold any belief we choose and the right to act on our religious beliefs—but it does not allow us to discriminate against others. The right to exercise one's religion is not without bounds, and it should not be. Our Constitution has long been understood to require that religious exercise should not interfere with others' rights, safety, or an ordered society. Unfortunately, Senator Inhofe's amendment would do just that, by opening the door to discrimination in many different ways.

For example, it would endorse taxpayer-funded discrimination, even though the Constitution prohibits the government from funding discrimination or providing aid to private institutions that engage in it. The amendment supports the notion that an organization or business can ignore the terms of a government contract or grant it voluntarily seeks and refuse to provide services to women and families who need them because of a religious objection. This amendment suggests that the interests and financial stability of organizations with religious objections should be placed above the needs of

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the very people they claim to serve. The implications of such an approach could be far-reaching. Needy children could be denied services because the organizations receiving taxpayer funding to help them limit eligibility to the children of married heterosexual couples. Survivors of human trafficking and sexual assault, including unaccompanied migrant youth, could be denied even the basic information they need to access reproductive health care because the government-funded organizations charged with caring for them refuse to provide it.

In addition, the amendment would promote the expansion of laws that could result in people being treated unfairly or that could even cause harm. For example, a federal employee could refuse to serve a gay couple who apply for Social Security or a lesbian couple who seek help from FEMA after losing their home in a natural disaster. A woman experiencing pregnancy complications could go to a medical professional seeking compassionate care and be denied the information she needs to make an informed decision about her health.

All these scenarios are antithetical to American values: we cannot accept the discrimination and serious harm that could befall countless individuals and families across the country in the name of religious liberty as conceived by Senator Inhofe's amendment.

**We urge you to oppose Senator Inhofe's Amendment #381. Because of the importance of this vote to three core areas of the ACLU's work—freedom of religion and belief, reproductive freedom, and LGBT rights—we will be scoring it.**

Sincerely,



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