

"Restoring religious liberties to the people of North Dakota"

Religious Liberty Restoration Amendment

Questions and Answers for Pastors

What should I do?

1. If possible, find a parish coordinator to handle most of the tasks. The coordinator would be responsible for finding petition circulators, setting up tables, instructing the circulators, and other such tasks.
2. Preferably choose two of these weekends to collect signatures:
May 23rd
June 6th
June 13th
June 20th (Note: petitions must be mailed by July 23)
3. Consider mentioning the importance of our religious liberties in your homily.
4. Use a prepared announcement to share the details of the signature gathering.
5. Keep the message positive. The purpose of the initiative is to restore religious liberty as a fundamental freedom.

Why do we need this amendment? Why now?

For most of our history, religious exercise was considered a fundamental liberty. Laws that infringed upon religious liberty were subject to the highest level of scrutiny. If a law injured the an individual's exercise of religion government was required to show that it had compelling governmental interest and that it had adopted the least restrictive means of advancing that interest.

In 1990 the U.S. Supreme Court significantly eroded that protection by holding that this level of scrutiny did not apply unless the law was intended to restrict religion. Few laws, however, explicitly target religious beliefs. Congress restored the original standard and for all federal laws with the passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in 1993, and for most cases involving land use and institutionalized persons in 2000. About half of the states, through legislation or state court action, have restored the protection for cases involving their state laws. The North Dakota Religious Liberty Restoration Amendment would extend this same level of protection to North Dakota.

Where can I find more information?

Both the North Dakota Catholic Conference and our coalition partner, the North Dakota Family Alliance, will post information about the issue and the petition process as we

proceed. Everything you need to collect signatures at your parish is included with this packet.

Are there legal restrictions on this kind of political activity?

No. The restrictions on political activities by churches apply only to activities supporting or opposing a *candidate* for political office or a *political party*. There are no restrictions on activities in support of or opposition to a ballot initiative.

Should the church/clergy be involved in such “political activity”?

The Church teaches that all Catholics have a moral obligation to participate in the political process. Both the Holy Father and the U.S. Bishops have stated that this obligation extends to protecting the religious liberties, which are among the fundamental rights of the human person.

How many signatures are needed to qualify for the November ballot?

25,688.

Can I pass on the petition to other churches and organizations?

Yes. However, each copy of the petition must remain with the assigned circulator. It would be better, therefore, to give the organization a new copy of the petition and have that organization assign a circulator.