

**ARKANSAS SENATE**  
90th General Assembly - Regular Session, 2015  
**Amendment Form**

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**Subtitle of Senate Bill No. 975**

TO AMEND ARKANSAS LAW CONCERNING THE ABILITY OF A STATE, COUNTY, MUNICIPAL, OR  
OTHER GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY TO REGULATE THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION.

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**Amendment No. 1 to Senate Bill No. 975**

Amend Senate Bill No. 975 as originally introduced:

Add Senators J. Hutchinson, J. Hendren, Hickey, Irvin, J. English, B. Pierce, Elliott, L. Chesterfield, Burnett, J. Cooper as cosponsors of the bill

AND

Add Representatives Ballinger, Shepherd, Bennett, M. Gray, Rushing, Vaught, Davis, Gates, Bragg, Collins, Pitsch, Dotson, Boyd, Cozart, Beck, G. Hodges, Eads, Hillman, Eubanks, Wardlaw, Henderson, Richmond, Brown, Womack, and Sullivan as cosponsors of the bill

AND

Delete Senator G. Stubblefield as a cosponsor of the bill

AND

Page 1, delete lines 8 through 11, and substitute the following:  
"AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS LAW CONCERNING THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION; TO ENACT THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT; TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

AND

Delete the subtitle in its entirety and substitute:

"TO AMEND ARKANSAS LAW CONCERNING  
THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION; TO ENACT  
THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT; AND  
TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY."

AND



Delete everything after the enacting clause and substitute the following:

"SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 16, Chapter 123, is amended to add an additional subchapter to read as follows:

Subchapter 4 – Religious Freedom Restoration Act

16-123-401. Title.

This subchapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Religious Freedom Restoration Act".

16-123-402. Legislative intent.

It is the intent of the General Assembly:

(1) To restore the compelling interest test as set forth in Sherbert v. Verner, 374 U.S. 398 (1963), and Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205 (1972) and to guarantee its application in all cases in which free exercise of religion is substantially burdened;

(2) That this act be interpreted consistent with the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, 42 U.S.C., § 2000bb, federal case law, and federal jurisprudence; and

(3) To provide a claim or defense to persons whose religious exercise is substantially burdened by government.

16-123-403. Definitions.

As used in this subchapter:

(1) "Demonstrates" means meets the burdens of going forward with the evidence and of persuasion;

(2) "Exercise of religion" means religious exercise;

(3) "Government" includes a branch, department, agency, instrumentality, political subdivision, official, or other person acting under color of state law; and

(4) "State law" includes without limitation a law of a political subdivision.

16-123-404. Free exercise of religion protected.

(a) A government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, except that a government may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person is:

(1) In furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and

(2) The least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

(b)(1) A person whose religious exercise has been burdened in violation of this section may assert that violation as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and obtain appropriate relief against a government.

(2) Standing to assert a claim or defense under this section is governed by the general rules of standing under statute, the Arkansas Rules of Criminal Procedure, the Arkansas Rules of Civil Procedure, or any court holding from the state's appellate courts.

16-123-405. Construction and applicability.

(a) This subchapter applies to all state law, and the implementation

of state law, whether statutory or otherwise, and whether adopted before or after the effective date of this act.

(b) State statutory law adopted after the effective date of this act is subject to this subchapter unless the state statutory law explicitly excludes the application by reference to this subchapter.

(c) This subchapter does not authorize any part of a government to burden a religious belief.

16-123-406. Interpretation.

(a) This subchapter does not affect, interpret, or in any way address that portion of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibiting laws respecting the establishment of religion or of Article 2, § 25 of the Arkansas Constitution concerning protection of religion.

(b) Granting government funding, benefits, or exemptions, to the extent permissible under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibiting laws respecting the establishment of religion or of Article 2, § 25 of the Arkansas Constitution, shall not constitute a violation of this subchapter.

(c) As used in this section, "granting", with respect to government funding, benefits, or exemptions, does not include the denial of government funding, benefits, or exemptions.

16-123-407. Exemptions.

The Department of Correction, the Department of Community Correction, a county jail, and a detention facility are exempt from this subchapter.

SECTION 2. EMERGENCY CLAUSE. It is found and determined by the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas that there is not a higher protection offered by the state than the protection of a person's right to religious freedom; and that this act is immediately necessary because every day that a person's right to religious freedom is threatened is a day that the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is compromised. Therefore, an emergency is declared to exist, and this act being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, and safety shall become effective on:

(1) The date of its approval by the Governor;

(2) If the bill is neither approved nor vetoed by the Governor, the expiration of the period of time during which the Governor may veto the bill; or

(3) If the bill is vetoed by the Governor and the veto is overridden, the date the last house overrides the veto."

The Amendment was read the first time, rules suspended and read the second time and \_\_\_\_\_  
By: Senator J. Hutchinson  
BPG/BPG - 04-01-2015 18:03:11  
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Secretary