



As RFRA Sits In Senate, Disagreements On Potential Implications Continue

The House proposal to implement a state Religious Freedom Restoration Act has experts questioning its potential implications as the clock ticks nearer to the deadline for Senate action on the legislation.

Senate Majority Leader Randy [RICHARDVILLE](#) (R-Monroe) has been cool to the idea of pushing RFRA through the Senate before the end of the year, noting it could come up "if we have time."

Richardville said last week that there is not a passionate fervor in his caucus for the bill, but noted that many would be generally supportive if it were put in front of them. However, he made clear that it's not a top priority during a conversation with reporters last week.

"We've got a lot of other things we've been waiting on for a long time, and that's a relatively new thing to our caucus," he said. "I'm not going to let things leap frog to the front of the prioritized agenda unless I get a clamoring for it."

The bill is based on the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which was enacted in 1993. In 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the law didn't apply to the states, but 19 states have enacted a RFRA legislatively to keep the law in place.

The House voted to enact a similar state effort to ensure the protections are in place (See "[Religious Freedom Restoration Bill Flies Out Of House](#)," 12/4/14).

Outside of the Capitol, many experts and activists have weighed in, with supporters calling it a protection offered by the federal government and several other states and critics labeling it an attack on the LGBT community.

David **SCHER**, a principal with Washington, D.C.-based law firm The Employment Law Group, is in the latter camp. Although federal law clearly states people can practice whatever religion they desire, Scher said RFRA takes the idea too far.

"This statute takes that concept far beyond what the Bill of Rights was intended to mean," Scher said. "It is offensive, angry and vindictive, and will have a severe negative effect on the LGBT community."