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| 1. Mark your confusion. 2. Show evidence of close reading (annotation - underlining, sketching, making connections, etc.) 3. \*CP2-Write a 150-200 word reflection.   \*CP1-Write a 200-250 word reflection.  \*H- Write a 250-500 word reflection. |

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# **Religious Freedom Restoration Act: What You Need to Know** *Source:* Erin McClam, *www.NBCnews.com*

A furor has erupted over an Indiana law that opponents say could give businesses the right to refuse service to gay people. And the controversy is reaching its height just as the Final Four comes to town. Gov. Mike Pence, a possible Republican presidential candidate, says that the law is meant to protect free exercise of religion. The Republican leaders of the Indiana Legislature said Monday that the law does not permit discrimination of any kind, and they pledged to work quickly on language to clarify it. On the other side are public figures as varied as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Miley Cyrus and the chief executive of Apple. The backlash grew on Monday when the state of Connecticut announced plans to suspend government travel to Indiana. Here's what you need to know:

The law is known as Senate Bill 101. Pence signed it into law last week. It takes effect July 1. The text says that the state cannot "substantially burden a person's exercise of religion" unless it is furthering a "compelling government interest" and acting in the least restrictive way possible.

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Nineteen states have so-called religious freedom laws. They are modeled after a federal law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, signed by President Bill Clinton in 1993. It passed the House without objection and cleared the Senate by a vote of 97-3. Clinton said at the time that the law subjects the federal government to "a very high level of proof before it interferes with someone's free exercise of religion." Some legal experts have said that Indiana's law differs from the federal law, and most other similar state laws, in ways that could allow businesses a wider berth to discriminate.

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Gay marriage has been legal in Indiana since last October, when the Supreme Court declined to take up a challenge to a federal appeals court ruling. Indiana does not have a state law specifically protecting gay people from discrimination.

As The Washington Post pointed out over the weekend, the other 19 states that passed so-called religious freedom laws did so before gay marriage became legal in most of the country. Last February, then-Gov. Jan Brewer of Arizona vetoed a similar law. "I sincerely believe that Senate Bill 1062 has the potential to create more problems than it purports to solve," she said at the time. The backlash against the proposed law in Arizona was severe, and mirrors what is happening in Indiana. The NFL was even said to be considering moving the Super Bowl out of the state. Social conservatives say that the law would stop the government from compelling people to do things they object to on religious grounds, like catering or providing flowers for a gay wedding.

Monday, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, a Republican presidential candidate, said in a Senate floor speech that Pence was "giving voice to millions of courageous conservatives across this country who are deeply concerned about the ongoing attacks upon our personal liberties." Pence told The Indianapolis Star on Saturday that he was in talks with legislators and that a clarification could come this week. On Sunday, he gave a lengthy interview to ABC's "This Week" and defended the bill. He said it was a "red herring" to suggest that the law is a license to discriminate. "This isn't about disputes between individuals; it's about government overreach," he said. "And I'm proud that Indiana stepped forward."

But he sidestepped direct questions on whether the law sanctions discrimination. George Stephanopoulos, the anchor, then asked him: "Yes or no, should it be legal to discriminate against gays and lesbians?"

Pence answered:

“George, you're — you're following the mantra of the last week online, and you're trying to make this issue about something else. What I am for is protecting, with the highest standards in our courts, the religious liberty of Hoosiers. I signed the bill. We're going to continue to explain it to people that don't understand it. And in — and if possible, we will find a way to amplify what this bill really is in a legislative process. But I stand by this law.”

Mark Emmert, president of the NCAA, expressed concern last week about "how this legislation could affect our student-athletes and employees." And in an interview on Monday, Emmert said he was "deeply concerned" about the law. He hinted that the NCAA might have second thoughts about future events in Indiana. College basketball's Final Four begins in Indianapolis on Saturday night. The tourism organization Visit Indianapolis told Forbes that the economic impact is more than $70 million.

Elsewhere, the outcry has been widespread. Washington Gov. Jay Inslee on Monday banned official state travel to Indiana, saying the law "appears to legalize private discrimination."

"I find Indiana's new law disturbing, particularly at a time when more and more states and people in America are embracing civil rights for everyone," Inslee wrote in an executive order.

Tim Cook, who as CEO of Apple is the most prominent openly gay corporate official in America, published an Op-Ed in The Washington Post describing laws like Indiana's as "very dangerous."

"These bills rationalize injustice by pretending to defend something many of us hold dear," he wrote. "They go against the very principles our nation was founded on, and they have the potential to undo decades of progress toward greater equality."

Angie's List said it was canceling a proposed expansion in Indianapolis. Miley Cyrus, in an Instagram post, used an expletive to refer to the governor and said: "The only place that has more idiots that Instagram is . . . politics."

And on Monday, the country's largest union of public employees, known as AFSCME, announced that it would move an October conference out of Indianapolis because of what it called an "un-American law."

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Brian Bosma, the speaker of the state House, said that the law does not allow discrimination against "any segment of the Hoosier community." He said that lawmakers would be willing to "put an exclamation point on that," and to work quickly. Both he and the Republican leader of the state Senate said that Pence could have given clearer answers on "This Week." Tim Lanane, the leader of the minority Democrats in the state Senate, said that there is only one fix — "repealing this hateful act."

Answer one of the following prompts:

* Should a business be allowed to pick and choose which customers to provide service to based on religious grounds? (For example, should a bakery have the right to refuse to make a cake to be served at a gay wedding? Should an atheist florist be allowed to refuse to make floral arrangements for an Orthodox synagogue?)
* Should outside businesses or sports teams (or celebrities) be playing a role in this heated debate? Why or why not?
* Many supporters of the bill, Mike Pence included, are accusing critics of it as being intolerant. Do you agree with this sentiment, or do you view it as hypocritical? Why or why not?
* Pick statement or selection from the text and respond to it.