

Your support for the Portland Ordinance to assure non-believers are protected against discrimination

This change, proposed by Commissioner Fritz's office and initiated by FFRF – Portland Area Chapter and ACLU of Oregon will assure equal protection for non-believers in the City of Portland against discrimination based on employment, housing, and accommodations. Please show your support for this important change!

Background for this project

In July 2018 FFRF Portland Area Chapter contacted ACLU of Oregon and they jointly began work with Commissioner Fritz's office on this project to give non-belief the same discrimination protections granted to religion in the City of Portland. To the best of my knowledge, we would be the second city to do so (passed in 2015 in Madison, WI, location of FFRF headquarters).

In the City of Portland the definition of what is included in the protected class of religion is unclear. In such cases, City Code defers to State Code. However, the Oregon State Code is also unclear on what is included in the category of religion. Thus far, courts in Oregon have ruled that non-belief is protected in the same manner as religion. However, in some cases, courts in other location in our county have ruled in the opposite direction. And there is no guarantee that all Oregon courts would determine that non-belief is protected under the category of religion.

This change would clarify that the City does in fact grant to non-believers that same protections (against discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations) granted to religious people. It would not be left to the discretion of a judge to determine if non-believers are or are not protected.

Ways to support this ordinance change

Attend the City council meeting

Date & Time: Wednesday, February 13, time certain of 10:15 am (30 minutes requested)

Location: City Hall, 1221 SW Fourth Ave, Portland, Oregon.

The invited guests who will speak during that time include:

Human Rights Commission (has approved this change)

Representative from Commissioner Fritz's office

Cheryl Kolbe, President, FFRF – Portland Area Chapter

Kimberly McCullough, Policy Director, ACLU of Oregon

The general public may sign up to make a public comment (time limit of 3 minutes).

Individuals who are unable to attend Council in person may watch it live streamed at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/28258> The Council agenda is posted the Friday before at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/26997>

Write a letter in support of the ordinance

Letters of support may be sent to CCTestimony@portlandoregon.gov

In the subject line, include 'Support for Non-Belief Ordinance'

Note: All letters must be received by Monday, February 11 to allow time to provide the information to the City Council. Keep in mind that this is a City Ordinance and will only apply to the City of Portland.

Key talking points

- If you are representing an organization, giving the organization name, its purpose, and size of the organization
- The current code is unclear, opening the door for the courts to decide if non-believers are protected from discrimination in the same manner as those in a religion.
- Protection against discrimination is beneficial to Portland businesses and to all who live or do business in Portland
- We are not asking for any special privileges. We are merely asking to be treated the same as those from a religion
- Be brief. Remember that the invited guests will be providing background/support for this proposal. If you give public comment, respect the 3 minute time limit.
- Be respectful. We are very pleased that the Council has worked with us on this issue

Want to learn more or read the proposed change?

See the proposed ordinance and the city code changes at xxxxxxxxxxxx

We are hoping for a display of widespread and strong support for the change! Your participation, by attending, giving public comment, and/or writing a letter is greatly appreciated! Let's help make this change a reality!

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