



NEWS RELEASE
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**The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report:
*Peaceful Coexistence: Reconciling Nondiscrimination Principles with Civil Liberties***

Washington, DC – The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, is pleased to announce the release of its report *Peaceful Coexistence: Reconciling Nondiscrimination Principles with Civil Liberties*. In the context of the continuing national debate, the report offers a detailed examination of the balance struck in the law between faith-based exemptions from otherwise applicable nondiscrimination laws, and legal protections established in nondiscrimination law such as the right to marry.

The report also sets out findings and recommendations for policy-makers in considering the effect of recent Supreme Court opinions. One important Commission finding is that the “U.S. Supreme Court has recently reaffirmed the foremost importance of civil liberties and civil rights, including nondiscrimination laws and policies,” and that “[r]eligious exemptions to the protections of civil rights based upon classifications such as race, color, national origin, sex, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, when they are permissible, significantly infringe upon these civil rights.”

Regarding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), the Commission found that in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* the Supreme Court affirmed the narrowness of the analytical framework within which claims of government interference with the free exercise of religion must be construed under the Act. The Court also affirmed that meticulous factual inspection is necessary in the process of adducing - or rejecting - exceptions to civil liberties and civil rights protections.

A principal recommendation of the Commission is that “[o]verly-broad religious exemptions unduly burden nondiscrimination laws and policies. Federal and state courts, lawmakers, and policy-makers at every level must tailor religious exceptions to civil liberties and civil rights protections as narrowly as applicable law requires.”

Commission Chair Martin R. Castro stated, “Our country was founded by those fleeing religious persecution. We must, therefore, always be vigilant to ensure that religion not be used as a pretext to persecute those whose civil rights and civil liberties should be protected.”

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