

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas,

I want to thank each of you today for taking the time to consider our concerns and to contemplate how you can best serve your constituents.

From my personal perspective, HB36 is a valid and vital bill, of which I am a strong proponent, largely due to the protection it appears to provide for those of us who personally believe that the Bible is not only good & proper, but also due to the benefit to society in general.

As you know, the Bible and its' principles were used greatly in the founding of this great state and in this great nation that we have been privileged to be a part of today. In fact, our Ohio State Motto is proof of the influence that the Bible has had on us to this day.

Yes, it is true that one might find that in recent years there have been a minuscule number of pastors who have twisted scripture and have improperly presented the truth found in God's Word, but there have also been a great number of pastors who have properly proclaimed Biblical principles, and as a result.... generations have benefited.

The benefits of us proclaiming Biblical principles within our churches and communities far outweigh the benefits of silencing of them.

Once we peel back back the layers of arguments surrounding this bill, it is clear that the main purpose of those opposing HB36 is to "silence" their cynics and critics. However; this is nothing more than an attempt to eliminate "free speech".

Yes, a pastor is bound by God's Word to teach that there is in fact a right and wrong, and that men and women who go against His will are sinners, but a pastor is also bound to teach that God is a loving God and that He has our best interest in mind.

Pastors proclaim what Jesus taught.... things like... "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" Matthew 5:43-44

The point in sharing this with you today, is to remind you that a pastor's speech, is certainly NOT "hate speech", and yet this is what some today are claiming.

We have within our church several public servants and a couple of them are police officers. They have vocalized to me the importance of "security", "training" and "actual shooter" drills in the event of such a scenario.

These public servants do so of course, because they understand the incredible "HATE" outside our churches, synagogues, and other places of worship.

DISAGREEMENT is NOT HATE!

To prosecute a pastor for "hate speech", when he is simply agreeing with the Book that has been revered for thousands of years, is to SILENCE what has made our nation so great.

I plead with you to stand up for society, by standing up for pastors who seek to stand for the rights of others, pray for those who are in authority over them, like yourselves,... and care for those whom so many hate and despise.

Please protect a pastor's right to proclaim what he truly believes will help his neighbor.

Respectfully,

Pastor James C. Smith