

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, February 24, 2010

House Bill No. 3110

HOUSE BILL NO. 3110 - By: PETERSON, REYNOLDS AND SULLIVAN of the House and JOLLEY AND LAMB of the Senate.

An Act relating to public health and safety; creating the Freedom of Conscience Act; defining terms; prohibiting employers from discriminating against certain persons for refusing to perform specified acts based on certain beliefs; providing defense; prohibiting forced participation in specified acts by certain persons under certain circumstances; providing immunity from liability; providing for equitable relief and damages; providing statute of limitations; repealing Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, Chapter 36, O.S.L. 2008 (63 O.S. Supp. 2009, Sections 1-728, 1-728.1, 1-728.2, 1-728.3, 1-728.4 and 1-728.5), which relate to the Freedom of Conscience Act; providing for codification; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

1 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma
2 Statutes as Section 1-728.6 of Title 63, unless there is created a duplication in
3 numbering, reads as follows:

4 This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Freedom of Conscience Act”.

5 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma
6 Statutes as Section 1-728.7 of Title 63, unless there is created a duplication in
7 numbering, reads as follows:

8 As used in the Freedom of Conscience Act:

1 1. “Health care facility” means any public or private organization, corporation,
2 authority, partnership, sole proprietorship, association, agency, network, joint venture,
3 or other entity that is involved in providing health care services, including a hospital,
4 clinic, medical center, ambulatory surgical center, private physician’s office, pharmacy,
5 nursing home, university hospital, medical school, nursing school, medical training
6 facility, inpatient health care facility, or other place where health care services are
7 provided;

8 2. “Human embryo” means a human organism that is derived by fertilization,
9 parthenogenesis, cloning, or any other means from one or more human gametes or
10 human diploid cells;

11 3. “In vitro human embryo” means a human embryo, whether cryopreserved or not,
12 living outside of a woman’s body;

13 4. “Participate in” means to perform, practice, engage in, assist in, recommend,
14 counsel in favor of, make referrals for, prescribe, dispense, or administer drugs or
15 devices, or otherwise promote or encourage; and

16 5. “Person” means any individual, corporation, industry, firm, partnership,
17 association, venture, trust, institution, federal, state or local governmental
18 instrumentality, agency or body or any other legal entity however organized.

19 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma
20 Statutes as Section 1-728.8 of Title 63, unless there is created a duplication in
21 numbering, reads as follows:

1 An employer shall not discriminate against an employee or prospective employee by
2 refusing to reasonably accommodate the religious observance or practice of the employee
3 or prospective employee, unless the employer can demonstrate that the accommodation
4 would pose an undue hardship on the program, enterprise, or business of the employer,
5 in the following circumstances:

6 1. An abortion as defined in Section 1-730 of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

7 The provisions of this section shall not apply if the pregnant woman suffers from a
8 physical disorder, physical injury, or physical illness which, as certified by a physician,
9 causes the woman to be in imminent danger unless an abortion is immediately
10 performed or induced and there are no other competent personnel available to attend to
11 the woman. As used in the Freedom of Conscience Act, the term “abortion” shall not
12 include the prescription of contraceptives;

13 2. An experiment or medical procedure that destroys an in vitro human embryo or
14 uses cells or tissue derived from the destruction of an in vitro human embryo;

15 3. An experiment or medical procedure on an in vitro human embryo that is not
16 related to the beneficial treatment of the in vitro human embryo;

17 4. An experiment or medical procedure on a developing child in an artificial womb,
18 at any stage of development, that is not related to the beneficial treatment of the
19 developing child;

20 5. A procedure, including a transplant procedure, that uses fetal tissue or organs
21 that come from a source other than a stillbirth or miscarriage; or

1 6. An act that intentionally causes or assists in causing the death of an individual
2 by assisted suicide, euthanasia, or mercy killing.

3 SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma
4 Statutes as Section 1-728.9 of Title 63, unless there is created a duplication in
5 numbering, reads as follows:

6 A. No health care facility is required to admit any patient or to allow the use of the
7 health care facility for the purpose of performing any of the acts specified in Section 3 of
8 this act.

9 B. A physician, physician's assistant, registered nurse, practical nurse, pharmacist,
10 or any employee thereof, or any other person who is an employee of, member of, or
11 associated with the staff of a health care facility in which the performance of an activity
12 specified in Section 3 of this act has been authorized, who in writing refuses or states an
13 intention to refuse to participate in the activity on moral or religious grounds shall not be
14 required to participate in the activity and shall not be disciplined by the respective
15 licensing board or authorized regulatory department for refusing or stating an intention
16 to refuse to participate in the practice with respect to the activity.

17 C. A physician, physician's assistant, registered nurse, practical nurse, pharmacist,
18 or any employee thereof, or any other person who is an employee of, member of, or
19 associated with the staff of a health care facility is immune from liability for any damage
20 caused by the refusal of the person to participate in an activity specified in Section 3 of
21 this act on moral or religious grounds.

1 SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma
2 Statutes as Section 1-728.10 of Title 63, unless there is created a duplication in
3 numbering, reads as follows:

4 A. No health care facility, school, or employer shall discriminate against any person
5 with regard to admission, hiring or firing, tenure, term, condition, or privilege of
6 employment, student status, or staff status on the ground that the person refuses or
7 states an intention to refuse, whether or not in writing, to participate in an activity
8 specified in Section 3 of the Freedom of Conscience Act, if the refusal is based on
9 religious or moral precepts.

10 B. No person shall be required to:

11 1. Participate in an activity specified in Section 3 of this act if the individual's
12 participation in the activity is contrary to the person's religious beliefs or moral
13 convictions;

14 2. Make facilities available for an individual to participate in an activity specified
15 in Section 3 of this act if the person prohibits the activity from taking place in the
16 facilities on the basis of religious beliefs or moral convictions; or

17 3. Provide any personnel to participate in an activity specified in Section 3 of this
18 act if the activity is contrary to the religious beliefs or moral convictions of the personnel.

19 SECTION 6. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma
20 Statutes as Section 1-728.11 of Title 63, unless there is created a duplication in
21 numbering, reads as follows:

1 A. For the purposes of this section, “damages” do not include noneconomic
2 damages, as defined in Section 1-1708.1C of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

3 B. A person who is adversely affected by conduct that is in violation of the Freedom
4 of Conscience Act may bring a civil action for equitable relief, including reinstatement or
5 damages, or both reinstatement and damages. An action under this subsection may be
6 commenced against the state and any office, department, independent agency, authority,
7 institution, association, or other body in state government created or authorized to be
8 created by the State Constitution or any law. In an action under this subsection, the
9 court shall award reasonable attorney fees to a person who obtains equitable relief,
10 damages, or both. An action under this subsection shall be commenced within one (1)
11 year after the cause of action accrues or be barred.

12 SECTION 7. REPEALER Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, Chapter 36, O.S.L. 2008
13 (63 O.S. Supp. 2009, Sections 1-728, 1-728.1, 1-728.2, 1-728.3, 1-728.4 and 1-728.5), are
14 hereby repealed.

15 SECTION 8. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public
16 peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof
17 this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

18 COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, dated 02-23-10 - DO PASS,
19 As Coauthored.