



Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

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Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman

November 19, 2013 Statement by Archbishop William E. Lori, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

“Joining together with so many who reflect our Nation’s great religious diversity, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of President Clinton’s signing of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. RFRA has proven to be one of the most important legislative achievements for religious liberty in this country in a generation. Its enactment was prompted by a 1990 Supreme Court decision, *Employment Division v. Smith*, that substantially lowered the level of protection that the free exercise of religion receives under the United States Constitution. Many scholars continue to disagree with that decision, but few would disagree with the Court’s observation in that case that a society respectful of religious liberty can be expected to be solicitous of that value in legislation. Although RFRA’s application to states was struck down in a later court decision, it continues to apply to the federal government, and its text has proven to be the inspiration for state RFRA’s which are equally protective of religious freedom.

“We join with many others in marking RFRA’s enactment and in calling, on this important occasion, for a searching and sensitive examination, in every branch of government, of how religious freedom can continue to be protected and advanced in this country.”