



# DO NO HARM ACT:

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR TOOLKIT

## Background:

Americans United for Separation of Church and State is proud to support the H.R. 1450/S. 593, the Do No Harm Act, in Congress. The Do No Harm Act would restore the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to its original intent - protecting religious practice while ensuring religious freedom is not used to harm and discriminate against others. But we need your help to make sure our communities and lawmakers join us in supporting this important legislation!

Visit AU's [Do No Harm Fact Sheet](#) for more details about the bill. You can look up your U.S. Senators and Representatives to [see if they support the Do No Harm Act](#).

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are a great tool to build support for the Do No Harm Act. Members of Congress routinely read the LTE section of their hometown newspaper to understand what's on their constituents' minds. In addition, LTEs can reach a large local audience and show widespread support (or opposition) to an issue. With just 15-30 minutes, you can write and submit an LTE. Below is a sample LTE and some pro tips, but please feel free to make your LTE your own! For instance, including a brief example from your community or state where religious freedom is being misused to support discrimination would be a powerful addition to your LTE.

As you're writing your Letter to the Editor, keep these key facts about the Do No Harm Act in mind:

- The Do No Harm Act amends the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and restores RFRA to its original intent.
- Religious freedom is a shield to protect religion, not a sword to harm others.
- The Do No Harm Act would ensure that people can rely on RFRA to protect their religious practice, so long as it would not harm others.

After you've written your LTE, submit it to the opinion section of your local newspaper. Information about submission can be found on your newspaper's website.

Please reach out here with any questions at [field@au.org](mailto:field@au.org). We're available and ready to help.

## Sample LTEs:

I am disappointed that Senator/Representative [NAME] has not yet cosponsored the Do No Harm Act. [OR I hope that Senator/Representative [NAME] will soon add his/her support for the

Do No Harm Act.] Religious freedom is a fundamental American value. Unfortunately, religious freedom claims today are being misused to permit discrimination against LGBTQ people and deny access to healthcare, particularly for women. The Do No Harm Act would ensure that everyone is able to practice their religion, so long as they don't harm others. Religious freedom should be a shield that protects, not a sword that harms. I urge Senator/Representative [NAME] to protect the religious freedom of all Americans and support this bill.

I am proud of Senator/Representative [NAME] for cosponsoring the Do No Harm Act. Religious freedom should be a shield to protect religion, not a sword to harm others. Today, however, the Trump administration is misusing religious freedom to undermine the rights of LGBTQ people and deny people, particularly women, access to healthcare. The Do No Harm Act would ensure that people still get heightened legal protections to safeguard their religious practice, but only when they aren't harming others. I hope other Members of Congress support this bill and it soon passes in Congress.

Religious freedom means that everyone should be able to practice their religion or no religion at all, so long as they do not harm others. That is why I am proud that Senator/Representative [NAME] cosponsored the Do No Harm Act. Today, religious freedom is being misused to deny rights to LGBTQ people and prevent women from accessing necessary healthcare. That is not religious freedom--that is discrimination. The Do No Harm Act ensures that religious freedom laws act as a shield to protect religion and not a sword to harm others. I hope others will support this bill and it will soon be adopted by Congress.

#### **LTE Tips & Tricks:**

- Newspapers are more likely to publish a letter if it has a local angle or is in response to an article, another letter or opinion piece that appeared in that paper. Be sure to add local details or the title/date of a previous article/OpEd - even when working from a template LTE.
- Brevity is best. A short letter stands a better chance of being published. Many newspapers limit letters to 250 words or less. Be sure to follow the paper's guidelines for length, content and submission.
- Use short, direct sentences in a polite, active voice and avoid jargon. Sincere, personal observations and concise points are more powerful and will be remembered better than lengthy legalistic arguments.
- Send your letter promptly – within a day or two, if possible. The longer you wait, the less timely your comments become and the less likely it is the newspaper will print it.