Beat: Miscellaneous

Washington governor bans state-funded travel to Indiana over controversial law

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USPA News - Washington Governor Jay Inslee said Monday that he will impose an administration-wide ban on state-funded travel to Indiana over a controversial religious rights bill there that opponents say could give businesses the right to refuse to serve gay people. "I find Indiana`s new law disturbing, particularly at a time when more and more states and people in America are embracing civil rights for everyone. Washington will join other states and cities in opposing this law and I will impose an administration-wide ban on state funded travel to Indiana," Inslee said in a statement released by his office.

"IndianaÃ¢€™s law appears to legalize private discrimination," the governor added, referring to Indiana`s Senate Bill 101. "We in Washington stand for equality. I applaud those companies and organizations that have spoken out against the law and said they would not locate or expand operations in Indiana." Senate Bill 101 was signed into law by Indiana Governor Mike Pence last week and takes effect on July 1. The bill specifies that the state`s government cannot "substantially burden" a person`s exercise of religion, unless the government can demonstrate that doing so would further a "compelling governmental interest" and is the least restrictive means of doing so. Condemnation of the bill has grown over the past few days amid fears that the bill will allow businesses to refuse to service gay people. Earlier on Monday, Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy banned all state-funded and state-sponsored travel to states that have enacted legislation to protect religious freedom but which do not prohibit discrimination for classes of citizens. The only exception is for travel necessary for the enforcement of state law, to meet contractual obligations or for the protection of public health, welfare and safety. Malloy said his executive order applied to the state of Indiana, but he did not specify which other states were included. NBC News reported earlier that 19 states across the country have so-called religious freedom laws, all except for Indiana`s which were enacted before same-sex marriage was legalized across much of the United States.

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