

Elder Mendinghall has asked that we forward these notices to you from the Pacific Union Conference Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty as a way of endorsing Alan Reinach's efforts to keep us informed. Please share this information with your congregation and encourage them to support the work of religious liberty by writing letters and making calls to your local state legislators.

*Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Department of Public Affairs & Religious Liberty*

June 18, 2002

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE SNEAKS BILL TO REQUIRE STATE CONTRACTORS TO PROVIDE DOMESTIC PARTNER BENEFITS

In an attempt to sneak an unexpected bill past determined opposition, AB 1080 (Kehoe, D-San Diego) was introduced just last week in the California Assembly to require all businesses contracting with the State to provide domestic partner benefits to employees. This violates the sincerely held religious convictions of numerous contractors, both religious institutions and private businesses. This would impact all colleges receiving Cal Grants, all hospitals, and a wide range of other businesses, including private social service providers.

"The coercion of individual conscience is unprecedented," said Alan J. Reinach, Esq. Director of Public Affairs & Religious Liberty for the Pacific Union Conference. "This bill would require countless contractors to violate sincerely held religious beliefs, or go out of business."

Indeed, the loss of such social services is expected to have a significant impact on Californians, especially those most in need of such services.

"The Adventist Church does not oppose state law providing for the availability of domestic partnerships, or allowing employers to grant domestic partner benefits," said Dr. Bradford Newton, legislative affairs director for the Pacific Union Conference. "However, the church does object to California coercing employers to violate their own fundamental beliefs."

For years, this office has been warning about the inevitable clash between gay rights and religious freedom in the context of religious organizations becoming dependent on government funding sources. Our worst nightmare has just become reality. This may be the worst bill we've seen in the California legislature in a long time, but even if we defeat it, it won't be the last. This conflict is now front and center. For those advocating so-called "faith-based initiatives," meaning increased government funding of religious charities, the handwriting is on the wall. Partnering with government has now become practically suicidal.

WHAT TO DO NOW:

For up to date information on this bill, see the Capitol Resource Institute's website, <http://www.capitolresource.org/>. Your letters and phone calls to your state legislators are needed now.