

IMPACT STATEMENT

Legislation title: Amend Civil Rights Code to add non-religion such as atheism, agnosticism and non-belief to the definition of "Religion." (Ordinance; amend Code Chapter 23.01)

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Purpose of proposed legislation and background information:

Discrimination on the basis of non-religion such as atheism, agnosticism, and non-belief occurs in the United States as attitudes that religion is a precondition for morality prevails. For example, a survey conducted during the 2012 election season found that only 54% of Americans would vote for a "well-qualified" atheist presidential candidate. In 2013, a Bertelsmann Stiftung Organization study found that about half of American respondents considered atheists a threat to them. Individuals who are non-religious have also faced discrimination in the workplace, the subject of the *Meltebeke v. Bureau of Labor and Industries Oregon* Supreme Court case.

In a 2015 nationwide survey conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute, 42% of Portland residents self-identified as religiously unaffiliated ("atheist," "agnostic," or "nothing in particular"). This ranked Portland as the most religiously unaffiliated major city in the country followed by San Francisco (33%) and Seattle (33%). To clarify protections to the number of Portland residents who may be non-religious, amendments are proposed to Portland City Code Chapter 23.01. This aligns with the City's intent to remove discriminatory barriers to equal participation in employment, housing, and public accommodations in the City of Portland.

Further amendments are recommended to bring citations to the Oregon Revised Statutes up to date in the City Code Chapter 23.01 and maintain accuracy, as well as amendments that support the City's efforts to use inclusive language in City policies.

Financial and budgetary impacts:

There are no financial or budgetary impacts that are expected to result from adoption of this ordinance.

Community impacts and community involvement:

Clarifying protections for the number of Portland residents who may be non-religious will remove discriminatory barriers to equal participation in employment, housing, and public accommodations in the City of Portland.

The community group Freedom From Religion Foundation – Portland Area Chapter (FFRF) initiated the proposal to change City Code Chapter 23.01 through conversations with Commissioner Fritz and the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU). Commissioner Fritz recommended FFRF connect with the Human Rights Commission (HRC). Subsequently, FFRF President Cheryl Kolbe spoke during the public comment period at an HRC meeting. After reviewing the proposal, conducting their own research, and consulting legal and public policy leadership from the American Atheists national organization, the HRC voted to support the change.

Commissioner Fritz staff and the City Attorney's staff worked to develop the ordinance and elicited feedback from FFRF (including lawyers at FFRF who worked on similar legislation in Madison, WI), the HRC, and ACLU throughout the process and consulted City Equity Managers and Office of Equity and Human Rights staff.

Budgetary Impact Worksheet

Does this action change appropriations?

- YES:** Please complete the information below.
 NO: Skip this section