

The Columbus Dispatch

City police on wrong side of head-scarf ban

The Monday *Dispatch* article “Lawyer offers new head-scarf support” again highlighted an area of concern for Americans across the political spectrum. Denying a woman of the Muslim faith the ability to serve on the police force unless she violates her religious convictions by removing her hijab is not the way to foster diversity and inclusion.

It is because of similar cases that many civil-rights groups and a nearly unanimous Congress supported the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. This law requires the federal government to justify to the courts that it has a “compelling interest” when it enforces laws or policies that infringe on religious practices. Additionally, the law requires that where there is a “compelling governmental interest,” if this interest infringes on a religious practice, it is to be advanced via the least restrictive means possible.

Recent controversy notwithstanding, most organizations still recognize the value that this law continues to provide minorities.

The city’s position is a great example of government making a decision that doesn’t properly consider the needs of religious minorities and denies them the opportunity to participate fully in public life. Especially since this is an accommodation that numerous police forces have implemented successfully, as *The Dispatch* has noted in a previous article.

This policy misjudges Ohioans’ acceptance of diversity and the common respect we wish for all members of the broader American community. Columbus and Mayor-elect Andrew J. Ginther should reconsider this position.

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