

Critics petition Obama to abolish faith-based hiring bias

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—Concerned that faith-based groups can discriminate in hiring while receiving federal funds, a coalition of 130 organizations told President Obama the policy will tarnish his legacy of fair and equal treatment for all Americans.

The critics, including religious organizations such as the [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#) and the Union for Reform Judaism, asked the president to direct Attorney General Loretta Lynch to review a “flawed” 2007 Justice Department memo that said the [Religious Freedom Restoration Act](#) provides for an override of nondiscrimination laws for government-funded religious organizations.

“RFRA was not intended to create blanket exemptions to laws that protect against discrimination,” [the letter](#) sent to Obama states.

The White House has received the letter and a spokeswoman said, “It will respond in due course.”

A similar letter, supported by 90 organizations, was sent to then-Attorney General Eric Holder in June 2014.

In [a blog post](#), Americans United for Separation of Church and State noted signatories of the new letter say some government-funded groups cite the Justice Department memo to refuse medical care to some sexual abuse victims or discriminate against homosexual employees, saying they have religious objections.

Obama originally campaigned against the hiring discrimination policy that

dates to the George W. Bush administration, vowing to change it once he was in the White House.

“If you get a federal grant, you can’t use that grant money to proselytize to the people you help, and you can’t discriminate against them—or against the people you hire—on the basis of their religion,” Obama said in 2008.

“It’s time for him to fulfill that promise,” said Maggie Garrett, Americans United’s legislative director.