

March 9, 2021

To the Congregations of the Ohio District,

It is rare that legislation being considered by the United States Congress catches our attention in the Ohio District, let alone causes us anxiety. However, a bill called the “Equality Act” has done just that.

The Equality Act was passed by the United States House of Representatives on February 25, 2021. At its core, the bill strikes biological sex from the 1964 Civil Rights Act, replacing it with sexual orientation and gender identity.

It is unclear whether the Equality Act will reach the floor of the United States Senate. Even if it does reach the Senate, the bill may go through any number of revisions. That said, the Equality Act is worth consideration.

As Christians we resonate with “equality.” Scripture speaks of all people being born in sin and being sinful (Romans 3:23, Psalm 143:2). Jesus gave his life, and was raised from the dead, for the forgiveness of sins of all people (John 3:16-17, Romans 5:18). As believers in Jesus, God the Father had made us equals (Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11).

However, there are grave concerns that the Equality Act will not provide this kind of Scriptural equality. For example, at this time the Equality Act does not extend constitutional protections for the initial months of life in the womb. Instead, it would seemingly nationalize abortion on demand without consideration for the unborn infant.

Likewise, there are concerns that the Equality Act could infringe on religious liberty. For example, it is possible our Lutheran schools could lose federal funding because we will not compromise our biblical teaching about marriage or sexual identity.

While these are only a couple of issues raised by the Equality Act, I think it gives you an idea about the bill. As for how we could response to this bill, I have three suggestions:

- Keep informed about the bill, especially if it reaches the floor of the Senate.
- Pray for the Senators and their staffs, especially that they would take into account the rights of all Americans when considering this act, including those not yet born.
- If you are so moved, fulfill your vocational role as a citizen by communicating with your senators. Since the Ohio District includes churches from three states, we have the opportunity to influence six senators.

I recognize that our primary concern is the mission of God. We will continue in our faith and life regardless of what happens with civil authorities. However, I still thought the Equality Act was worth highlighting.

### **2020 Congregational Statistical Reports**

The deadline for reporting congregational statistics this year is March 31. As of March 8, only 23 of our congregations had submitted a statistical report to Synod. This means we are still looking for reports from 136 congregations.

The statistical report gives each congregation the opportunity to reflect on the past year. Due to the pandemic, I think this year it's especially important for congregations to learn from the report. In addition, the reports help the District determine how to best utilize resources.

If your congregation needs assistance using the online reporting tools, or help accessing their login information, contact Synod at [rosters.stats@lcms.org](mailto:rosters.stats@lcms.org) or the LCMS Church Information Center at: **888-843-5267**.

Until next week, the Lord bless and guide,



Rev. Dr. Kevin Wilson, President  
Ohio District, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

### **Informational Links**

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)  
[Ohio Department of Health](#)  
[Mike DeWine – Governor of Ohio](#)  
[West Virginia Health & Human Resources](#)  
["Team Kentucky" COVID-19 Page](#)