

General Electric Shareholder Meeting – Proposal #6
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I'm Justin Danhof of the National Center for Public Policy Research, and I rise to move proposal #6.

Last spring, our CEO joined with a host of corporate leaders in distorting religious freedom laws. Regarding Indiana's effort to protect its citizens' deeply held religious beliefs, he wrote, "I am very concerned about the potential impact the Religious Freedom Restoration Act could have on our company and employees." Since that time, many more corporations have joined this mob effort to quash religious liberty.

Mr. Immelt was speaking on behalf of this company, and I'm sorry to say he was bending the truth.

The federal government and 31 states have heightened religious freedom laws. This is all they do. First, they say that the government should not interfere with an individual's religious freedom unless doing so is necessary to reach an important government goal. Second, they say that if the government can reach its important goal in a way that does not abridge religious freedom, it should choose the other method. That's it. The federal religious freedom restoration law was co-authored by Senator Ted Kennedy and signed into law by President Clinton. Its purpose is to protect religious rights, which are civil rights. The state laws imitate the federal law.

Mr. Immelt expressed concern that religious freedom laws will lead to discrimination. Never mind that the laws only require the government to avoid interfering with religious freedom if it can do so while still achieving important government goals – one of which, in every state of the union, is outlawing discrimination. Mr. Immelt wrote this letter on GE's behalf, stating, "we have zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind."

Our proposal takes Mr. Immelt up on this. GE operates in many nations where homosexuality is outlawed. In some of those countries, homosexual acts are punishable by death. Women have almost no rights in numerous countries in which GE does business. And try getting a fair trial in many of these nations.

Let us as shareholders of GE express our support for the company's "zero tolerance" on discrimination as Mr. Immelt said, and question why GE is operating in nations when doing so requires GE to discriminate, and to acquiesce in discrimination. Could a woman even work in a GE facility in Saudi Arabia without the permission of a male relative?

Our proposal simply asks management to prepare a report identifying GE's criteria for operating in regions with significant and systemic human rights violations. If the company is worried that basic religious freedom laws in the Hoosier State and elsewhere would "have a very negative impact on [its] employees and their communities," then we must question why the company operates in regions with actual discrimination and human rights atrocities. Please join me in supporting proposal #6.

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