

Issue: LGBTQ+ Rights

LGBTQ+ Rights in Virginia in 2019: Talking Points

Status of LGBTQ+ Rightsⁱ

Gender change ✓ Legal, but requires surgery to qualify for protected status

Adoption Ambiguous: There is no specific exclusion for same-sex couples, but it is legal to deny adoption to them if the denial is based on religious grounds.

Discrimination (only state workers have protections) ✗ No protections

Housing discrimination ✗ No protections

Employment discrimination ✗ No protections (an executive order does protect state employees)

Openly serving in the Military ✓ Legal

Age of consent ✓ Equal

Blood donation ✗ Banned (indefinite deferral)

Conversion therapy Ambiguous: Currently legal.

2017 Legislature

- **HB 2025**, introduced by Nick Freitas (R–HD30) and co-patron Mark Cole (R–HD88). It protected pastors and other church leaders from civil or criminal punishment if they denied services to same-sex couples. However, the bill was also interpreted by some activists to include other faith-based organizations, like church-run schools and hospitals, allowing them to refuse visitation rights by same-sex couples and to deny children of same-sex parents the opportunity to attend parochial programs. **Vetoed by the governor**
- **SB 1324**, introduced by state Senator Bill Carrico (R–SD40). Similar to **HB 2025**, this bill invoked free-speech rights to allow organizations and service providers (such as homeless shelters and adoption agencies) to deny services to non-heterosexual couples. **Vetoed by the governor**

2018 Legislation

- Four bills were proposed to make anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-disability crimes hate crimes (**HB10**, **HB266**, **HB718**, **SB112**). All died in committee.
- Four anti-discrimination bills were proposed for housing, employment, and health insurance (**HB401**, **HB971**, **HB1466**, **SB202**). All died in committee.
- Seven bills were proposed to remove gendered terms from current legislation, making marriage benefits, adoptions, and filing previously-gendered crimes available to everyone (**HB409**–**HB415**). All died in the Courts of Justice Committee.

Courts of Justice

The Courts of Justice Committee in the House of Delegates (chaired by Rob Bell, R–HD58) killed every pro-LGBTQ+ bill in the 2018 session.

ⁱ <http://www.equaldex.com/region/united-states/virginia>

All legislative information collected from Richmondsunlight.com