

**§ 2000cc-1. Protection of religious exercise of institutionalized persons**

**(a) General rule**

No government shall impose a substantial burden on the religious exercise of a person residing in or confined to an institution, as defined in section 1997 of this title, even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, unless the government demonstrates that imposition of the burden on that person—

- (1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and
- (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

**(b) Scope of application**

This section applies in any case in which—

- (1) the substantial burden is imposed in a program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance; or
- (2) the substantial burden affects, or removal of that substantial burden would affect, commerce with foreign nations, among the several States, or with Indian tribes.

(Pub. L. 106-274, §3, Sept. 22, 2000, 114 Stat. 804.)

**§ 2000cc-2. Judicial relief**

**(a) Cause of action**

A person may assert a violation of this chapter as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and obtain appropriate relief against a government. Standing to assert a claim or defense under this section shall be governed by the general rules of standing under article III of the Constitution.

**(b) Burden of persuasion**

If a plaintiff produces prima facie evidence to support a claim alleging a violation of the Free Exercise Clause or a violation of section 2000cc of this title, the government shall bear the burden of persuasion on any element of the claim, except that the plaintiff shall bear the burden of persuasion on whether the law (including a regulation) or government practice that is challenged by the claim substantially burdens the plaintiff's exercise of religion.

**(c) Full faith and credit**

Adjudication of a claim of a violation of section 2000cc of this title in a non-Federal forum shall not be entitled to full faith and credit in a Federal court unless the claimant had a full and fair adjudication of that claim in the non-Federal forum.

**(d) Omitted**

**(e) Prisoners**

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to amend or repeal the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995 (including provisions of law amended by that Act).

**(f) Authority of United States to enforce this chapter**

The United States may bring an action for injunctive or declaratory relief to enforce compliance with this chapter. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to deny, impair, or otherwise affect any right or authority of the

Attorney General, the United States, or any agency, officer, or employee of the United States, acting under any law other than this subsection, to institute or intervene in any proceeding.

**(g) Limitation**

If the only jurisdictional basis for applying a provision of this chapter is a claim that a substantial burden by a government on religious exercise affects, or that removal of that substantial burden would affect, commerce with foreign nations, among the several States, or with Indian tribes, the provision shall not apply if the government demonstrates that all substantial burdens on, or the removal of all substantial burdens from, similar religious exercise throughout the Nation would not lead in the aggregate to a substantial effect on commerce with foreign nations, among the several States, or with Indian tribes.

(Pub. L. 106-274, §4, Sept. 22, 2000, 114 Stat. 804.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in text, was in the original "this Act", meaning Pub. L. 106-274, Sept. 22, 2000, 114 Stat. 803, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 2000cc of this title and Tables.

The Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995, referred to in subsec. (e), is Pub. L. 104-134, title I, §101(a) [title VIII], Apr. 26, 1996, 110 Stat. 1321, 1321-66, as amended. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1996 Amendment note set out under section 3601 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure, and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Section is comprised of section 4 of Pub. L. 106-274. Subsec. (d) of section 4 of Pub. L. 106-274 amended section 1988(b) of this title.

**§ 2000cc-3. Rules of construction**

**(a) Religious belief unaffected**

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to authorize any government to burden any religious belief.

**(b) Religious exercise not regulated**

Nothing in this chapter shall create any basis for restricting or burdening religious exercise or for claims against a religious organization including any religiously affiliated school or university, not acting under color of law.

**(c) Claims to funding unaffected**

Nothing in this chapter shall create or preclude a right of any religious organization to receive funding or other assistance from a government, or of any person to receive government funding for a religious activity, but this chapter may require a government to incur expenses in its own operations to avoid imposing a substantial burden on religious exercise.

**(d) Other authority to impose conditions on funding unaffected**

Nothing in this chapter shall—

- (1) authorize a government to regulate or affect, directly or indirectly, the activities or policies of a person other than a government as a condition of receiving funding or other assistance; or