



**USA
TODAY**TM
A GANNETT COMPANY

Thousands try to sway Arizona gov on anti-gay bill

Gov. Jan Brewer must make a decision by late Saturday.



(Photo: Matt York, AP)

Story Highlights

- Proponents say bill simply tweaks existing state laws, protects religious beliefs
- Opponents say allowing discrimination will cost Arizona economically

- Governor has boosters among both religious conservatives, business owners

PHOENIX --- February 26, 2014 --- Gov. Jan Brewer's office has been flooded with more than [20,000 e-mails, letters and phone calls](#) from Arizonans and people across the USA trying to influence her decision on a bill that would allow religious beliefs to be a basis for refusing service to gays and others.

Brewer, who has until late Saturday to make her decision on Arizona Senate Bill 1062, is meeting privately Wednesday with people on both sides of the debate.

STORY: [Ariz. gov takes time on anti-gay bill](#)

STORY: [Ariz. worries Super Bowl is in danger](#)

The Republican governor has not said publicly how she will act. But her recent statements seem to indicate a veto is imminent.

"I assure you, as always, I will do the right thing for the State of Arizona," a tweet posted to her official Twitter account said late Tuesday.

The legislation landed on her desk Monday, and as each day has passed, emotions surrounding the debate have heightened. Many are questioning why Brewer is taking so long to act.

Speculation is that the governor will veto the bill no later than Friday evening. The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which is among the business groups strongly opposed to the bill, is scheduled to honor her then.



Some political insiders believe Brewer has allowed furor over the legislation to build to thwart social conservatives' attempts to push a similar bill later. SB 1062 bill shields businesses from being sued if they deny service to individuals based on sincerely held religious beliefs.

Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer at the National Governors Association conference Feb. 24, 2014 in Washington.(Photo: Getty Images)

E-mails obtained by *The Arizona Republic* through a public-records request highlight the passion behind the debate. The newspaper asked Brewer's office for a representative sample of correspondence. The office produced four e-mails.

The subject line of one from Michelle Cruz sent Tuesday said one word, "Faith." She urged the

governor to sign SB 1062.

"Our Constitution guarantees that in America, people are free to live and work according to their faith," Cruz wrote. "Yet as religious hostility grows throughout the nation, it has become clear that his fundamental right is under attack. That's why I ask you to sign SB 1062, to make it clear that all people of faith are welcome in our state. No one should be forced to forfeit their religious beliefs simply because they go to work or start a business. Please stand up for religious liberty and Sign SB 1062!"

Likewise, Marlene Stigsell asked Brewer to sign the bill, saying religious liberties are being threatened.

"SB 1062 will help avoid the situations being experienced around the country where businesses are being forced to close because of their owners' faith," Stigsell wrote.

On the other side, Kathleen Laird wrote the legislation is "bad for business, bad for Arizona's economy, will encourage frivolous lawsuits, and encourages discrimination of classes of people who are not covered under anti-discrimination laws."

And Debra Mulligan wrote to Brewer that the legislation "is totally unnecessary."

"Arizonans value freedom and equality," Mulligan wrote. "Please support the Golden Rule by vetoing this bill. If it passes into law, it will only open the door to discrimination and create a legal and bureaucratic mess — once again propelling the state into the spotlight for all the wrong reasons."

MORE: [3 Ariz. state senators backtrack on service refusal bill](#)

MORE: [Arizona business leaders urge veto of religion bill](#)

The Hispanic National Bar Association said Wednesday that it is canceling its 2015 convention in Phoenix because of the legislation, one of the first groups to pull an event from the state.

Principal John Boyd of The Boyd Co., based in New Jersey, helps companies re-locate around the world. He said clients are concerned about setting up shop in Arizona.

He said his company has monitored the legislation closely and concern about the proposal has surpassed that of the tough immigration law known as SB 1070 that Brewer signed into law four years ago.

"This is reminiscent of what we experience years ago over the MLK fiasco," Boyd said Wednesday. Corporate clients are worried how the legislation, if signed into law, would affect their abilities to recruit and retain workers.

"Arizona is in a fistfight for the best workers," he said. "Any barrier to attracting the best workers is a huge negative."

Contributing: *The Associated Press*



SHARE 150 CONNECT [24 TWEET](#) 36 COMMENTEMAILMORE