



Opinion Poll

North Carolina Small Business Owners Oppose Denying Services to LGBT Customers

November 16, 2017

Executive Summary

As the U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear arguments in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* case, addressing the rights of business owners to deny services to LGBT individuals, it's important to understand the perspective of small business owners on this issue. New scientific opinion polling shows entrepreneurs in the Tar Heel State strongly believe business owners should not be able to deny goods and services to LGBT customers based on their religious beliefs or because of their right to free speech or free artistic expression, and that nondiscrimination policies are good for North Carolina's business climate and their own business's bottom line.

The poll, conducted for Small Business Majority by Chesapeake Beach Consulting from October 4 to October 23, 2017, found North Carolina small business owners don't think business owners should be able to deny goods or services to someone who is LGBT based on their religious beliefs, right to free speech or right to free artistic expression. Additionally, the poll found small business owners support enacting federal and state laws to protect LGBT individuals from discrimination in places of public accommodation and in the workplace.

Specifically, the poll found nearly 6 in 10 (59%) North Carolina small business owners believe business owners should not be able to deny goods or service to someone who is LGBT based on the owner's religious beliefs. Nearly half of entrepreneurs (46%) strongly hold this belief. Similarly, 50% of entrepreneurs believe business owners should not be able to deny services related to a wedding for a same-sex couple based on the owner's religious beliefs.

Small business owners were asked about legislation considered in several states that would allow business owners to deny goods or services to LGBT customers based on their religious beliefs. Nearly 6 in 10 respondents (58%) feel that enacting such a law would hurt the business climate in North Carolina.

Survey participants were also asked their opinions on denying goods or service based on a business owner's belief that the service violates their right to free speech. A plurality of North Carolina small business owners (48%) believe a business owner should not be allowed to deny services to a customer because the owner claims that service violates their right to free speech, compared to 32% who feel a business owner should be allowed to deny services for this reason. This sentiment is even higher when it comes to wedding-related services: roughly 6 in 10 respondents (59%) don't think a business owner should be able to deny services related to a wedding for a same-sex couple because the owner believes it violates their right to free speech. Similarly, 55% of small business owners don't believe that a business owner should be able to claim an exemption to nondiscrimination laws if they believe serving a customer goes against their right to free artistic expression.

It should come as no surprise then that North Carolina small business owners show strong support for state and federal laws that would protect against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as a federal law that would protect LGBT individuals from discrimination in places of public accommodation, such as restaurants, hotels and other businesses that are open to the public. Nearly 6 in 10 (59%) believe employers should not be able to fire or refuse to hire someone who is gay or transgender based on the employer's religious beliefs. Additionally, half of North Carolina small business owners (50%) agree that nondiscrimination laws improve the business bottom line by attracting the best and brightest employees, regardless of whether the employee is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

It's important to note that respondents were politically diverse: 47% are Republican or Republican-leaning independent, 35% are Democrat or Democratic-leaning independent, and 17% are pure independent.

Methodology

This poll reflects an Internet survey of 500 small business owners nationwide with 1-100 employees, with an oversample of 111 small business owners in North Carolina. The poll was conducted by Chesapeake Beach Consulting for Small Business Majority between October 4 and 23, 2017. The margin of error for the North Carolina oversample is +/-9.5%.

Main Findings

- **North Carolina entrepreneurs believe business owners should not be able to deny goods or service to LGBT customers based on their religious beliefs:** 59% of small business owners do not think that a business owner should be able to deny goods or service to someone who is LGBT based on their religious beliefs. A 46% plurality feel strongly about this. Additionally, 50% of small business owners feel that a business owner should not be able to deny services related to a wedding for a same-sex couple based on their religious beliefs.
- **North Carolina small business owners think legislation that permits discrimination on religious grounds is bad for business:** Small business owners were asked about legislation considered in several states that would allow business owners to deny goods or services based on their religious beliefs. Fifty-eight percent of small business owners feel that such legislation would hurt the business climate in North Carolina.
- **Entrepreneurs believe businesses should not be able to discriminate based on claims that service violates their right to free speech or their right to free artistic expression:** A plurality of North Carolina entrepreneurs (48%) believe business owners should not be able to deny services to a customer because the owner believes that service violates their right to free speech, as opposed to 32% who feel a business owner should be allowed to deny services for this reason. A majority of 59% think business owners shouldn't be able to deny services related to a wedding for a same-sex couple because the owner believes it violates their right to free speech. Additionally, 55% of North Carolina small business owners believe small business owners should not be able to claim an exemption to nondiscrimination laws if they believe serving a customer goes against their right to free artistic expression.
- **North Carolina small business owners oppose employment discrimination against LGBT individuals based on religious grounds:** 59% of small business owners do not think an employer should be able to fire or refuse to hire someone who is gay or transgender based on their religious beliefs.
- **Small business owners support federal and state legislation to prevent employment discrimination against LGBT employees:** 63% of North Carolina entrepreneurs would favor a federal law that protects LGBT individuals from discrimination in the workplace, while 67% would also favor a state law protecting these individuals from employment discrimination.
- **Small business owners favor a federal law protecting against LGBT discrimination in places of public accommodations:** Nearly two-thirds of North Carolina small business owners (62%) would favor a federal law protecting LGBT people from discrimination in places of public accommodation, such as restaurants, hotels and other businesses open to the public.
- **Nondiscrimination laws improve businesses' bottom lines:** Half of North Carolina small business owners believe that laws protecting against discrimination improve the business bottom line by attracting the best and brightest employees, regardless of the employee's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Laws that prohibit workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity help attract and retain employees:** 50% feel that laws prohibiting workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity contribute to a robust employee pool, while 48% of North Carolina small business owners say that such laws help attract and retain employees.
- **Respondents are politically diverse:** 47% are Republican or Republican-leaning independent, 35% are Democrat or Democratic-leaning independent, and 17% are pure independent.

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Survey of 111 Small Business Owners in North Carolina
October 4-23, 2017

- Q1.** Please indicate your gender
- Male 47%
 - Female 53%
- Q2.** What state is your business in?
- NC 100%
- Q3.** Do you own your own for-profit business?
- Yes 100%
 - No 0%
 - Don't know/Refused 0%
- Q4.** How many people do you employ including yourself?
- One 23%
 - 2 to 9 59%
 - 10 to 29 11%
 - 30 to 49 5%
 - 50 to 100 3%
- Q5.** How many people do you employ part-time? These would be people you employ who require a W-2 form.
- Zero 68%
 - One 6%
 - Two 5%
 - Three 3%
 - Four 5%
 - 5+ 13%
- Q6.** Approximately how many people have you employed as contractors or 1099 employees over the past year?
- Zero 64%
 - One 11%
 - Two 5%
 - Three 4%
 - Four 2%
 - 5+ 15%

- Q7.** How long have you been in business?
- | | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Less than one year..... | 5% |
| One to three years | 20% |
| Four to six years | 15% |
| Seven to 10 years | 14% |
| More than 10 years..... | 46% |
| Don't know/Refused | 0% |
- Q8.** As you may know, federal law prohibits discrimination in places of public accommodations, such as restaurants, hotels and other businesses that are open to the public on the basis of race, national origin, religion, or disability. However, federal law does NOT explicitly protect someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Would you favor or oppose a federal law protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people from discrimination in places of public accommodation?
- | | |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Strongly favor | 41% |
| Somewhat favor..... | 22% |
| Somewhat oppose | 10% |
| Strongly oppose..... | 14% |
| Don't know | 14% |
| Refused | 0% |
| TOTAL FAVOR | 62% |
| TOTAL OPPOSE | 23% |
- Q9.** Do you believe that a business owner should be able to deny goods or service to someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender based on the owner's religious beliefs?
- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Yes, strongly | 16% |
| Yes, not strongly..... | 14% |
| No, not strongly..... | 14% |
| No, strongly | 46% |
| Don't know | 11% |
| Refused..... | 0% |
| TOTAL YES | 30% |
| TOTAL NO | 59% |
- Q10.** Several states have considered legislation that would allow business owners to deny goods or services based on their religious beliefs. If a law like that was proposed and enacted in your state, what effect do you think it would have on the business climate in your state?
- | | |
|---|------------|
| Would definitely hurt the business climate..... | 34% |
| Would probably hurt the business climate..... | 23% |
| Would neither help nor hurt the business climate..... | 21% |
| Would probably help the business climate..... | 4% |
| Would definitely help the business climate..... | 3% |
| Don't know | 15% |
| Refused..... | 0% |
| TOTAL WOULD HURT THE BUSINESS CLIMATE | 58% |
| TOTAL WOULD HELP THE BUSINESS CLIMATE | 6% |

Q11. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? A business owner should be able to deny services related to a wedding for a same-sex couple based on the owner’s religious beliefs.

Strongly agree.....	23%
Somewhat agree	17%
Somewhat disagree	14%
Strongly disagree.....	36%
Don’t know	10%
Refused	0%
TOTAL AGREE	40%
TOTAL DISAGREE	50%

Q12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? A business owner should be able to deny services to a customer because the owner claims that service violates their right to free speech.

Strongly agree.....	14%
Somewhat agree	17%
Somewhat disagree	23%
Strongly disagree.....	25%
Don’t know	20%
Refused	1%
TOTAL AGREE	32%
TOTAL DISAGREE	48%

Q13. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? A business owner should be able to deny services related to a WEDDING for a same-sex couple because the owner claims it violates their right to free speech.

Strongly agree.....	12%
Somewhat agree	17%
Somewhat disagree	22%
Strongly disagree.....	37%
Don’t know	12%
Refused	1%
TOTAL AGREE	29%
TOTAL DISAGREE	59%

Q14. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Small business owners should be able to claim an exemption to nondiscrimination laws if they believe serving a customer goes against their right to free artistic expression?

Strongly agree.....	8%
Somewhat agree	16%
Somewhat disagree	21%
Strongly disagree.....	34%
Don’t know	20%
Refused.....	1%
TOTAL AGREE	24%
TOTAL DISAGREE	55%

Q15. Do you think that an employer should be able to fire or refuse to hire someone who is gay or transgender if working with a gay or transgender employee conflicts with the employer's religious beliefs?

Yes, strongly	22%
Yes, not strongly	10%
No, not strongly	14%
No, strongly	46%
Don't know	8%
Refused	1%
TOTAL YES	32%
TOTAL NO	59%

Q16. As you may know, federal law prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of gender, age, race, religion, or disability. However, federal law does NOT explicitly protect someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Would you favor or oppose a federal law protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people from discrimination when it comes to employment?

Strongly favor	41%
Somewhat favor	23%
Somewhat oppose	12%
Strongly oppose	15%
Don't know	8%
Refused	2%
TOTAL FAVOR	63%
TOTAL OPPOSE	27%

Q17. Currently, 29 states do not have laws protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals from discrimination. Would you favor or oppose a state law protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people from discrimination when it comes to employment?

Strongly favor	46%
Somewhat favor	21%
Somewhat oppose	8%
Strongly oppose	15%
Don't know	9%
Refused	1%
TOTAL FAVOR	67%
TOTAL OPPOSE	23%

Thinking about laws which prohibit discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity...

Q18. Would you say these laws definitely help attract and retain employees, probably help attract and retain employees, probably don't help attract and retain employees or definitely don't help attract and retain employees?

Definitely help attract and retain employees	21%
Probably help attract and retain employees.....	27%
Probably don't help attract and retain employees.....	23%
Definitely don't help attract and retain employees	9%
Don't know	19%
Refused.....	2%
TOTAL HELP ATTRACT AND RETAIN EMPLOYEES	48%
TOTAL DON'T HELP ATTRACT AND RETAIN EMPLOYEES	32%

Q19. Would you say these laws definitely contribute to a robust employee pool, probably contribute to a robust employee pool, probably don't contribute to a robust employee pool, or definitely don't contribute to a robust employee pool?

Definitely contribute to a robust employee pool	23%
Probably contribute to a robust employee pool	27%
Probably don't contribute to a robust employee pool	18%
Definitely don't contribute to a robust employee pool.....	12%
Don't know	21%
Refused.....	0%
TOTAL CONTRIBUTE TO A ROBUST EMPLOYEE POOL	50%
TOTAL DON'T CONTRIBUTE TO A ROBUST EMPLOYEE POOL.....	30%

Q20. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own personal point of view?

Laws that protect against discrimination improve the business bottom line by attracting the best and brightest employees, regardless of whether the employee is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

OR

Laws that require employers to hire gay and transgender people may be well intended, but the legal and implementation costs end up hurting businesses and their bottom line.

Strongly improve the bottom line.....	32%
Not strongly improve the bottom line	19%
Not strongly hurt business and their bottom line	14%
Strongly hurt business and their bottom line.....	18%
Don't know	15%
Refused.....	2%
TOTAL IMPROVE THE BOTTOM LINE	50%
TOTAL HURT BUSINESS AND THEIR BOTTOM LINE	32%

Now, I have just a few questions for statistical purposes...

Q21. How would you categorize your business?

Professional services, including finance, insurance, legal, accounting, IT.....	21%
Retail	11%
Real estate and construction.....	15%
Healthcare or education.....	5%
Recreation and leisure	9%
Wholesale and distribution of goods	3%
Manufacturing	5%
Restaurant or food service	2%
Other nonretail service.....	25%
Not sure	4%
Refused to answer	2%

Q22. In what year were you born?

18-29	10%
30-44	30%
45-54.....	23%
55-64.....	25%
65+	12%

Q23. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Democrat	25%
Independent	29%
Republican.....	37%
Other.....	5%
Don't know	4%
Refused.....	0%

Q24. If Independent, Other or Don't know, do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? **(N=42)**

Closer to Democrats.....	26%
Closer to Republicans	26%
Neither.....	36%
Don't know	10%
Refused.....	2%

Q25. Again, just for statistical purposes, what was the gross revenue of your business in 2016? Just stop me when I get to the right category.

Less than \$100,000	50%
Between \$100,000 and \$250,000.....	17%
Between \$250,001 and \$500,000	9%
Between \$500,001 and \$1 million.....	5%
Between \$1 million and \$2 million.....	5%
Between \$2 million and \$5 million	5%
More than \$5 million	3%
Don't know	1%
Refused.....	5%

Q26. What is your race?

White	80%
African American or Black.....	11%
Hispanic or Chicano.....	4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0%
American Indian	2%
Other.....	2%
Biracial or multiracial	1%
Don't know	1%
Refused.....	0%