



California Council of Churches **IMPACT**

4044 Pasadena Avenue
Sacramento CA 95821
(916) 488-7300
Fax: (916) 488-7310
www.churchimpact.org

May 10, 2016

Hon. Richard Bloom
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

AB 2844 – OPPOSE

The Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser
Executive Director

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of Public Policy

Kendra Lewis
Director of Development

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African Methodist
Episcopal Church

•
African Methodist Episcopal
Zion Church

•
American Baptist Churches

•
Armenian Church of America

•
Christian Methodist
Episcopal Church

•
Churches of the Brethren

•
Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

•
Community of Christ

•
The Episcopal Church

•
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

•
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

•
Greek Orthodox Church

•
Independent Catholic
Churches International

•
Metropolitan Community Church

•
Moravian Church in America

•
National Baptist Convention

•
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

•
Reformed Church in America

•
Swedenborgian Church

•
United Church of Christ

•
United Methodist Church

•
Church Women United

•
Orthodox Clergy Council

Dear Assembly Member Bloom:

California Church IMPACT represents 1.5 million members within the mainstream and progressive Protestant communities of faith. We are deeply committed to interfaith work, especially with respect to our brothers and sisters in the Abrahamic traditions. We uphold those powerful ties even in disagreements on political matters as well as upholding our US Constitutional rights to protest, regardless of the substance.

We are pained that AB 2844, in an effort to protect a valuable and beloved ally, the state of Israel, has taken what we see as a highly illegal and dubious approach to that protection. Denying contracts to companies that engage in boycotts based on principled opposition to any nation's actions, is horrifying. It is massive over-reach and has grave, probably unintended consequences.

The amended bill now bars *exactly what worked* in our fight against apartheid in South Africa. Had the faith and secular communities not succeeded in getting U.S. firms to boycott that pernicious action, it likely would still exist.

Many of us are discussing boycotts of nations that have adopted “death to gays” legislation. If this tool is removed from our capacity for moral persuasion, such laws will progress unimpeded. Any nation that remains recognized by our federal government yet operates in pernicious ways to its own people, ethnic minorities, or any other population should be reasonable targets for both our federal diplomacy *and* our individual and organizational right to persuade companies to stop doing business with them.

Your bill does great violence to our religious values, our private conscience, and to our non-violent political actions. No member takes raising a boycott lightly or impetuously. It comes out of a desire to stop harm by exerting economic pressure that calls a nation back to the table to resume finding humane and effective diplomatic solutions. By punishing companies acting at our behest upon our conscience, you harm them and us equally. We must oppose your bill.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of Public Policy