

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION



UNITED  
SIKHS

*Recognize the Human Race as One*

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## Did You Know?

The term **religious accommodation** is commonly associated with employment rights that flow from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Under Title VII, the term “**religion**” includes “**all aspects of religious observance and practice**, as well as belief.”

Policies that accommodate religious beliefs and practices are however also implemented in public and private places of business outside of the employer/employee framework. **The necessity for policies that accommodate Sikh religious beliefs and practices is evident** not only in the workplace but in schools, testing centers, training facilities, government offices, holding cells, prisons, military training programs, and other private and public places of business.

**Religious Accommodation policies are one of the keys to achieving equality and inclusivity for minority religious communities** within our larger societal fabric. After the tragic events of 9/11, the national climate with respect to minorities with external religious identities became quite virulent as fear, hate and a practice of “othering” became commonplace. **The Sikh community has felt the pressure of this discrimination** not only in the workplace, but at immigration ports, schools, prisons, testing centers, and government agencies.



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- **UNITED SIKHS has been advocating for religious accommodations policies on behalf of several individuals. Some examples of where religious accommodations policies are needed are:**
    - The Air Force Jr. ROTC Program: Sikhs do not currently have an exemption for the turban or kesh (uncut hair).
    - Holding Cells: UNITED SIKHS received a request for assistance from a Sikh gentleman who was put in a holding cell because he was mistaken for someone else and stripped of his articles of faith.
    - Governmental Buildings: An elderly Sikh man was forcibly removed from a Social Security Administration Office for wearing a kirpan.
    - Universities: A freshman student at a large California university was told not to return to campus with his kirpan.
    - Courthouses: A Sikh man seeking to address a traffic ticket he received was denied entry into the courthouse by security agents because of his kirpan.
  - Each year, **UNITED SIKHS receives numerous complaints from individuals whose religious practice and belief has been substantially burdened** due to policies that do not accommodate the Sikh religion. UNITED SIKHS' legal team works with businesses, both public and private, to craft accommodations policies that protect a Sikh's right to practice his/her religion freely without sacrificing his/her engagement in society at large. **These accommodation policies are vital to the free exercise of minority religions, and need to be more widely adopted.**
  - **What can you do?** Find out how you can get involved with and donate to this campaign! Contact [law-usa@unitedsikhs.org](mailto:law-usa@unitedsikhs.org) or 1-646-688-3525 for more information, or visit us on the web at [www.unitedsikhs.org](http://www.unitedsikhs.org).