

What to do if you are wrongfully terminated because of your religious beliefs

This area of the law is very complicated so we recommend that you consult with an attorney. But if you are not able to do so, here are the basic things you need to know:

1. Do not quit your job – make your employer fire you or put you on unpaid leave. Do not sign any documents saying you quit or voluntarily resigned. Do not tell your employer verbally that you quit or voluntarily resigned. If you quit, you do not have a wrongful termination claim. If you are put on unpaid leave, this is the same as being fired so you should file your civil rights complaint immediately.
2. Consider hiring an attorney to write a “cease and desist” letter to your employer. This could include a demand that they stop discriminating against you based on your religious beliefs and telling them that they did not offer reasonable accommodations. This letter may not work but it could be worth a try to see if your employer will reconsider.
3. Even though every state has its own laws on religious discrimination, the federal law (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act) also applies nationwide in every state.
4. You have to file a civil rights violation complaint BEFORE you can sue your employer for wrongful termination. If the appropriate governmental civil rights office is not going to help you, they will eventually send you a “right to sue letter.”
5. There are **VERY SHORT DEADLINES** by which you have to file a complaint with your state’s civil rights office complaining of a violation of your religious rights. Therefore, you should IMMEDIATELY file a civil rights complaint once you are fired or put on unpaid leave. Do not wait! Look up your state’s civil rights website and follow the instructions there. Here is the link to the EEOC’s portal for filing a complaint:
<https://www.eeoc.gov/how-file-charge-employment-discrimination>
6. Beware: the EEOC website says you have 180 days to file. But if your company has too few employees to be subject to the federal act, the filing deadline may be much shorter, such as only 30 to 90 days (or possibly less). In this event you may be required to file the complaint with your state’s civil rights office. **Therefore, to be SAFE you should ALWAYS file your complaint with BOTH the state civil rights office and the EEOC. It does not matter if you file in both places even if one does not have jurisdiction. And again, file it immediately after you are fired or put on unpaid leave from your job.**
7. There is no time limit during which the EEOC may consider a complaint; therefore, after 180 days has passed from when you filed your complaint, you may demand a right to

sue letter from the EEOC. Warning: you as an employee only have 90 days after receiving a right to sue letter to file a lawsuit in federal court. The EEOC will issue a right to sue letter if the EEOC either dismisses your claim or does not take any action on the claim within 180 days of its filing. If you mess up and the case is dismissed, you have to correctly re-file your lawsuit within the original 90 days or you lose your right to sue.

8. Once you get your right to sue letter from the state or federal civil rights office you should figure out and then calendar the deadline to file your lawsuit. **DO NOT MISS THE DEADLINE.** You should consult an attorney immediately upon receiving the right to sue letter. If you are suing on your own behalf, you should still consult with an attorney to make sure you are doing it right. Most attorneys will meet with you and provide “unbundled legal services” which means they help you to do it yourself. You pay them hourly on an as needed basis. If your case is strong, you should be able to hire an attorney who will take your case on a contingent fee, which means you do not pay hourly but your attorney will be compensated a percentage of what they win for you (usually 1/3) - but they only get paid if they win money for you.