

2016 Media Recap: The Stories We Watched This Year

For many, the close of 2016 - an especially tumultuous year - was a relief. Some are uneasy about, even afraid of, what 2017 will bring. Others eagerly await the changes of a new administration. As we wait to see what the new year will bring, we take a moment now to reflect on some of the biggest stories from 2016 that likely affected your workplace, work force, or marketplace.

Survey: Religious objections law cost Indiana as much as \$60 million

A big story from 2015, the passage of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, continued to have repercussions into 2016. Conventions that pulled out of Indiana because of the controversial bill made a significant economic impact on the state. This trend is important to note as [other states passed similar Religious Freedom Restoration Acts](#) and faced [similar backlash from the business community](#).

Colorado court: Ruling stands that baker can't cite religion

This particular case began in 2012 when a baker refused to make a cake for a same-sex wedding. It is one in a line of many cases at the state level where religious freedom and LGBT rights came head to head, and continue to play out in the wake of marriage equality.

More Muslim Workers Allege Bias Tied to Prayer Breaks

Throughout 2016, a number of employers across the United States found themselves struggling to balance business operations and religious accommodations. In this case, Somali-American Muslim employees fought for breaks to complete their required daily prayers. This balancing act will become even more crucial for employers to navigate as global and national religious demographics continue to shift.

Trends in Global Restrictions on Religion

Many of the stories we followed in 2016 were focused in the U.S., but of course religion (in the workplace and in society at large) is important across the globe. Pew reported new data on government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion, and found that 74% of the world's population lives in countries with "high or very high restrictions or hostilities." These restrictions may have business implications for our Corporate Members who operate in some of these countries, especially since there is [a correlation between freedom of religion and belief and business outcomes](#).

After Nice, Newt Gingrich wants to ‘test’ every Muslim in the U.S. and deport sharia believers

There were many tragic terror attacks committed in the name of Islam (and subsequently denounced by Muslim leaders) in 2016, prompting controversial statements about American Muslims from several politicians. Whether or not any of the many policy suggestions, such as deporting Muslims who believe in sharia law, will come to pass remains to be seen.

FBI: Hate crimes spike, most sharply against Muslims

The 2015 FBI report revealed an overall increase in hate crimes, specifically against Muslims (who experienced the highest percentage increase) and Jews (who were the most frequent victims).

Amazon TV ad features imam and vicar exchanging gifts

Gearing up for Black Friday and the holiday shopping season, Amazon released a heartwarming ad in which an imam and a priest exchange gifts. Despite the sensitivity of the subject matter, the retailer saw value in promoting interfaith friendship as it marketed to diverse audiences during the holidays.

Tech workers vow not to build Trump Muslim registry

In 2015, we saw companies take a stand for LGBT rights. In 2016, we saw the beginnings of another kind of advocacy—workers standing up for Muslim rights. Over 2843 [tech employees](#) have vowed not to help create a Muslim registry, which was proposed during the presidential campaign.