



Read the letter: Va. AG: Colleges can't protect gays

by Associated Press & WVEC.com

Posted on March 8, 2010 at 11:28 AM

Updated Monday, Mar 8 at 5:21 PM

Virginia's attorney general is advising the state's public colleges to rescind policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation

Kenneth Cuccinelli says in a letter to college presidents and other officials that only the General Assembly can determine which classes of people are protected by state government nondiscrimination policies. Legislators have repeatedly refused to ban discrimination against gays in state employment practices.

The Republican attorney general says in the letter, dated Thursday, that state institutions cannot adopt a policy position that has been rejected by the General Assembly.

Old Dominion University, Tidewater Community College and William and Mary all have policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"As a member of the Board of Visitors of ODU, I can assure you I'll fight to keep the policy in place," Sonny Stallings told WVEC.com. "First he didn't believe in global warming and now he thinks we should be free to discriminate against people's sexual orientation. It's embarrassing to this state."

The ACLU of Virginia sent letters to all public university presidents warning them against taking any action that would permit discrimination against gay and lesbian employees or students.

"Cuccinelli's letter is an affront to anyone who stands for the principle of equal protection under the law," said ACLU of Virginia Executive Director Kent Willis. "Regardless of state law or policy, not only should universities prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but they are required to do so under the U.S. Constitution."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.