

Councilors Postpone Human Rights Protections Vote, Address Malicious Misinformation Campaign

By Tulsa City Councilors Laura Bellis, District 4 and Lori Decter Wright, District 7

For nearly 50 years, Tulsans have been asking for something simple: consistency in our city's civil rights protections. The City of Tulsa's Human Rights Commission has studied this issue since the 1970s. Over the years, Tulsa's municipal leaders have acted—whether by extending housing protections in 2015, safeguarding City employees in 2019, or unanimously passing a Welcoming Resolution in 2023.

Support for this ordinance is broad and clear. Business leaders and residents from all districts have voiced support. Dozens of speakers have testified. Data has been collected and presented. Letters of endorsement fill the public record. Twice, the Human Rights Commission has voted unanimously in favor, urging the City Council to act.

Despite widespread community support, it has become clear to us that individuals within the highest levels of the current federal administration are actively spreading misinformation about the ordinance, our city, and our residents in an attempt to cause this effort to fail and spread fear.

The ordinance now before us is reasonable and pragmatic: making protections consistent across city ordinances, adding veteran status as a protected class, expanding accessibility for filing complaints, and ensuring representation for all Tulsans. It does not override state or federal law. It does not alter employment standards. It does not interfere with religious freedom. It simply makes certain that every Tulsan—regardless of race, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status—has equal protection under our local laws.

The malicious misinformation campaign undermines the hard work of many in our community who simply want to make certain Tulsa is a city that welcomes, supports, and protects everyone who calls it home, works here, or comes to visit.

Because of these alarming efforts by divisive influencers to sow discord, we are pausing advancement of the ordinance. Additional time allows us to correct the record and educate councilors and the public. Tulsans value our right to local control and we must arm the public with facts. This pause is not surrender, it's strategic. Tulsa belongs to its people—not to partisan agendas in Washington, D.C. or at the state capitol.

To our constituents: we know this is beyond frustrating. We share that frustration. Equal protection for every resident is not controversial. People's freedoms are not a bargaining chip. We will not rest until liberty and justice is secured for all Tulsans.