



## *New EEOC Guidelines: Garb and Grooming in the Workplace, HL CONVERGE*

*By Katherine Catlos and Sheila Pham  
(April 14, 2014)*

*The EEOC recently issued two new publications outlining employer prohibitions and responsibilities with respect to religious clothing worn by employees as well as religious “grooming” protections. The new guidelines are derived from current federal law, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (“Title VII”). Title VII prohibits an employer from discriminating, denying reasonable accommodations, or engaging in workplace segregation based on customer preferences or the employer’s image or marketing strategy. Title VII does not consider these issues when determining what constitutes an “undue hardship,” thereby allowing the employer to engage in otherwise prohibited activity. Examples of prohibited activity relating to customer preference or image include: refusing to hire an applicant knowing he or she will request religious accommodations for religious garb or grooming that conflicts with image or customer preference or segregating an employee to a non-customer contact position based on actual or assumed customer preference. NOTE: An employer may accommodate an employee’s religious dress or grooming practice by offering to have the employee cover the religious attire or item while at work if this would not violate the employee’s religious beliefs.*