



The United States Department of Justice Religious Liberty Commission
Minutes of the September 29, 2025 Hearing
Religious Liberty in Education: Teachers, Coaches, and Faith-Based Schools

The third hearing explored religious liberty foundations, threats, and opportunities in education, particularly from the perspective of teachers, coaches, and faith leaders.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) held a meeting on September 29, 2025, at the museum of the Bible in Washington, DC.

RLC Chairman, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, led the meeting in furtherance of and alignment with the RLC's charter and mission.¹

All Commission Members attended except Bishop Robert Barron and Cardinal Timothy Dolan and ex-Officio Commission Members Attorney General Pamela J. Bondi, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Scott Turner, who were unable to attend due to travel conflicts.

This synopsis includes key highlights from the meeting.

OPENING AND WELCOMING REMARKS

Mrs. Mary Margaret Bush, the RLC Director and Designated Federal Official (DFO) opened the meeting, as required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Chairman Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick began the meeting and introduced the Commission.

¹ Additional information regarding RLC can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/establishment-of-the-religious-liberty-commission/>.

Chairman Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick welcomed the audience and provided an introduction and an overview of the origins of the Commission.

He provided a summary of the day's agenda as well as a preview of future topics to be covered by the Commission.

The program opened with brief clips from the late Mr. Charlie Kirk, speaking on religious liberty in education. The Commission honored Mr. Kirk's work and witness of faith.

PRESENTATION TOPIC: Violence Against People of Faith

- **Dr. Hutz Hertzberg**
- **Pastor Jentezen Franklin**
- **Eric Metaxas**

Dr. Hutz Hertzberg spoke about his work in religious freedom and education, explaining his understanding that education is the foundation of the future and the cornerstone of freedom. Dr. Hertzberg noted the impact of Mr. Kirk's leadership on Dr. Hertzberg's work, and he observed that Mr. Kirk's faith commitment was a source of targeting throughout his life and ultimately contributing to his assassination.

Pastor Jentezen Franklin echoed Dr. Hertzberg's comments honoring Mr. Kirk and calling for courage in communities of faith. He noted the rise of physical violence against houses of worship, describing a recent attempted attack at his own church, which resulted in two perpetrators going to prison after disrupting and threatening a worship service.

Mr. Metaxas concluded the remarks by reflecting on his own relationship with Mr. Kirk and the responsibilities of people of faith to carry on his legacy. Mr. Metaxas noted that physical violence against people and communities of faith is already illegal; it is being engaged in nonetheless. Mr. Metaxas concluded that religious leaders must do more to teach morality and theology so that citizens have the character to refrain from physical violence to silence those with whom they disagree.

PRESENTATION TOPIC: Religious Liberty in Public Education – Teacher and Coach Perspectives

Chairman Patrick introduced the first afternoon panel:

- **Coach Joe Kennedy**
- **Monica Gill**
- **Marisol Arroyo-Castro**
- **Expert Attorney: Keisha Russell**

Coach Joe Kennedy opened by recounting his experience being targeted by his school district after taking a moment for personal prayer after a football game.

Mrs. Monica Gill recounted the targeting and harassment directed toward her by both students and school administrators after she sought a religious accommodation from a school policy which would require her to denounce her sincerely-held religious beliefs about human sexuality.

Mrs. Marisol Arroyo-Castro described being approached by school administrators and told that she could not display a cross in a personal area of her classroom, despite other content, such as Yankees memorabilia, being permitted.

Ms. Keisha Russel concluded by speaking from her own experience as a teacher and civil rights attorney.

Question and answer among the Commissioners and witnesses ensued.

PRESENTATION TOPIC Religious Liberty in Education: Protecting the Religious Identity and Autonomy of Faith-Based Schools

Chairman Patrick introduced the second afternoon panel:

Panelists:

- **Rabbi David Zwiebel**
- **Fr. Robert Sirico**
- **Dr. Todd J. Williams, Cairn University**
- **Expert Attorney: John Bursch**

Rabbi David Zwiebel opened by describing state attempts to regulate the operation of Yeshiva schools to such an extensive degree that the schools' own survival was at risk.

Rev. Robert Sirico explained how a Michigan law challenged his Catholic school's ability to hire teachers who agree with, support, and witness to the school's Catholic faith.

Dr. Todd Williams described how accreditation requirements forced his university to choose between operating a social work program and denouncing their religious beliefs.

Mr. John Bursch provided a legal overview of the protections to which these religious organizations are entitled under the Constitution and laws of the United States.

Question and answer among the Commissioners and witnesses ensued.

PRESENTATION TOPIC Religious Liberty in Education: Religious Liberty in Education: Partnerships between State and Faith

- **Carroll Conley**
- **Nicholas Reaves, on behalf of Chaya and Yoni Loffman**
- **Jason Bedrick**
- **Prof. Nicole Stelle Garnett**

Mr. Carroll Conley, former headmaster of Bangor Christian School, described the hardship experienced by school families due to Maine's refusal to permit participation in a school choice program because of the school's religious identity.

Mr. Nicholas Reaves described how a Jewish family was forced to choose between educating their daughter with special needs in their faith tradition or taking advantage of state funding for students with special needs.

Mr. Jason Bedrick outlined how school choice is necessary to preserve religious and educational freedom in the United States, emphasizing the critical role of education simultaneously with the critical need to avoid indoctrinating children through the education system.

Prof. Nicole Stelle Garnett described her team's research on religious liberty and the vast number of laws and regulations which continue to discriminate against faith-based institutions.

PRESENTATION TOPIC Religious Freedom in Education: Our Heritage and Our Future

- **Dr. Francis Beckwith**
- **Hannah Ruth Earl**, Faith Director, Department of Education

Dr. Beckwith provided comments related the day's testimony to the principles of religious liberty and education set forth by the Founders. Ms. Hannah Ruth Earl provided an update on the Department of Education's initiatives to further religious liberty in education through school choice programs, funding, and other efforts.

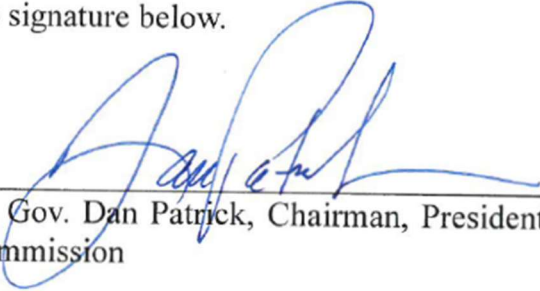
Chairman's Closing Remarks

Chairman Patrick closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their time, efforts, and devotion. He noted that the next meeting will be held in November 2025 in Dallas, with more details to follow soon.

Chairman Patrick adjourned the meeting – approx. 1:49 p.m., ET

Certification of Minutes

As required by the Federal Advisory Commissions Act, Commission Chairman Dan Patrick certifies these minutes by his signature below.



Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, Chairman, Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

February 25, 2026

Date