



Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Fifth Transcript Hearing Transcript

February 9, 2026

Museum of the Bible

Washington, D.C.

Ashleigh Bondoc (00:00:01):

Good morning and welcome to the fifth hearing of the White House's Religious Liberty Commission. My name is Ashleigh Bondoc and I am the designated federal official for today's proceedings. I'm delighted to announce the official beginning of today's hearing and now turn it over to our commission's chairman, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick of Texas.

Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick (00:00:21):

Thank you very much. Good morning everyone. Meeting comes to order. We love to start on time, but we're a little late this morning, so forgive us. Rabbi Soloveitchik, you have the opening prayer for today. Would you bless us?

Rabbi Soloveichik (00:00:47):

Please join me in prayer. *Ribono Shel Olam* Almighty God, your servant David sang in his psalms he named *Ravah haTovah ve-haRatzah l'achayim lehitchabru b'echad*. Behold how pleasant and goodly it is when brethren dwell together in unity. We thank you oh God, for the privilege of gathering together, representing faith, difference in unity, thanking you for America and for the blessing of religious freedom that is bestowed upon all of us. We thank you as well for the privilege and the obligation of gathering together, charged by the presence of the United States to protect faith and to protect the vulnerable and the minority religious communities in our society. Help us as brethren to be successful in this quest so that the words with which David concluded his psalm

in Jerusalem so many years ago will be applied to us as well, *Lə-achar Elohim hikriv ha-shalomah kə-mishlah chaiyim olam*: For their God has placed his blessing a source of life everlasting. Amen.

Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick (00:02:09):

Alright, thank you

We have been blessed with great speakers throughout our hearings and once again today we have a person of great faith, a friend of mine for I guess now 20 years. He served in the Texas House. He's now our secretary of HUD, a person that we all look up to who has been guided by God and has lived in a country that allows him to express his religious beliefs and that's what this committee is about, representing all faiths. We have two more hearings scheduled, one in March and one in April before presenting a report to the President of the United States, as it is under our charter, and our focus on this committee, for those of you joining us for the first time, is clearly on individual liberty and the last several years, many people of all faiths in this country have had their liberty denied and we've had powerful testimony, powerful testimony at times bringing tears to our eyes. And today we will have another committee. We will continue as our schedule without a lunch break all the way until this afternoon. And before we begin with our first witness, it's my honor to bring out the Secretary of HUD, my friend, you might call him Reverend sometimes, Scott Turner. Scott.

Scott Turner (00:03:49):

Well good morning. Thank you Governor Patrick, Dr. Carson and commissioners' so great to be with all of you here this morning. Freedom of religion is enshrined in the First Amendment as America's first freedom. It is not an afterthought, but it was a declaration of priority. It's the foundation on which all other freedoms depend on. And governor, pastor, you spoke of this in your remarks in Davos, the liberty to worship God is grounded in our freedom to assemble as a deeply personal and inherent right, A government that tramples such vital rights will treat nothing as sacred. President Ronald Reagan once declared that freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We have witnessed firsthand the onslaught of what just four years of the Biden regime could accomplish and the enemies of faith have no intent to stop with their systematic dismantling of our constitution and the freedom of our forefathers that they fought for.

That's why President Trump has made the protection of America's foundational freedom a clear and unapologetic priority. And I thank him. Today marks exactly one year and three days that the President signed the eradicate, an anti-Christian bias executive order which reverses the Biden administration's hostility towards believers. No longer will we turn a blind eye. At HUD, our center of faith has been integral to carrying out this executive order. To eradicate literally means to pull up by the roots. Eradicate means to pull up by the roots, and that's exactly what we've done in anti-Christian bias at HUD. Through this work, we've invited faith-based organizations back to the table. Many years faith-based organizations were not allowed to come to the table. After the Biden administration shut them out, for many years they were stiff armed, but no longer. We'll welcome them back to the table. I have personally witnessed and seen our faith-based groups and organizations care for our homeless neighbors around the country.

I've seen them help Americans recover from addiction. I've seen them provide food and shelter to the most vulnerable people in our country. The Trump administration is restoring the founders' intent to permit the free exercise of faith, the free exercise of faith. The growing threat across America is the intimidation and the threatening of those who seek to assemble freely to live freely. And that's exactly what is being done and targeting of our Jewish neighbors and the Jewish faith. The October 7th massacre in Israel, it was a wakeup call not only for our Jewish brothers and sisters, but for all people around the world That hate is still alive and well. The shooting in Bondi Beach Australia was a reminder that if we leave this hatred unchecked, the next antisemitic massacre could very well take place in our homeland. We will no longer leave it unchecked. Accountability is on the rise. A recent report found in more than three and four American Jews felt less safe in our country.

Following October, the seventh and almost half of Jewish college students feel threatened on their campus or they felt pressured to hide their Jewish identity to avoid harassment. Jewish students, all students should feel safe and secure on college campuses. Hate is learned and college campuses across the country are fomenting it. It's an incubator. They're instigating the spirit of hate. We've all watched the antisemitic rioters turn America campuses into battlefields, viscously attacking Jewish students, vandalizing historic monuments and buildings, invading classes, ruining in graduation ceremonies and harassing innocent students who just want to go about their day. No longer will we turn a blind eye to these activities. President Trump acted swiftly upon his return to the White House to combat this wave of antisemitism. He signed an executive order to restore order and make clear that the glorification of terrorists and brutality against Jewish Americans will no longer be tolerated.

The task force to combat antisemitism, which the DOJ has played a central part, has been crucial in fighting this battle. And I want to thank everyone who is part of this fight. It's about what President Trump will continue to wage for Jewish Americans, for Christians, and for all Americans of all faith who the First Amendment freedoms are under attack. It's fitting that we're here at the Museum of the Bible. The Word of God is powerful. Amen. And it's a powerful reminder of the importance of the First Amendment. For centuries, believers have been imprisoned, persecuted, and killed for simply reading the Bible or sharing God's word. Friends, let us never take for granted the freedom that we enjoy in our beautiful country. Let us never take that for granted. Look where we are. We're in Washington DC at the Museum of the Bible, freely assembled together. Let us never take these freedoms for granted. I'm grateful to the President and to this entire administration who embraced this responsibility and are committed to protecting American's freedom of religion. God bless you. Thank you for your time and I'm praying for you daily. Have a great day. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Lt. Gov Patrick (00:10:25):

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I told you he had a little bit of preaching in him. Before we bring out our first witness, and I believe we're going to make a change out from the podium to the tables so I can put in the record here because this record will be memorialized. Our great leader, Mary Margaret. Mary Margaret Bush, who has been our right-hand person running our committee and doing so much work, had a baby last week and little baby Grace, Sienna Grace Bush. So Mary, I

know that you're watching and so we wish you well. We look forward to having you come back after you get some sleep because you're not going to get much sleep from here on out. Little Sienna Grace Bush.

If our witnesses will come out for the first panel. Itsy Frankel, Shabbos Kestenbaum, Coach Bruce Pearl from Auburn University, great basketball team, and Rabbi Ari Berman. Good morning gentlemen. Yitzchok, you are first up to give your testimony. Welcome.

Yitzchok Frankel (00:12:53):

Thank you, chair Patrick, Dr. Carson, members of the White House religious Liberty Commission for inviting me to speak today. My name is Yitzchok Frankel. I'm a father of four adorable children, eight and under, a recent graduate of UCLA law school, and unfortunately a firsthand witness to the erosion of religious freedom on American college campuses. As an orthodox Jew and descendant of Holocaust survivors, my faith isn't just a part of my life, it's the core of who I am. I wear kippah, keep kosher, observe shabbat, and pray daily. These practices sustained me through law school and it is my faith that made me a target when antisemitism surged at UCLA after October 7th, 2023. In the wake of Hamas' brutal attacks, UCLA's campus became a breeding ground for hatred. Activists chanted, genocidal slogans like "from the river to the sea" and "Antifada revolution." Jews at UCLA classmates smashing a pinata of Prime Minister Netanyahu while yelling "beat that f-ing Jew."

But the worst came in spring 2024 when activists set up an encampment on Royce Quad, the heart of campus and created a Jew exclusion zone. Masked enforcers set up checkpoints, barricades, and required wristbands for entry. Jewish students like me were stopped harassed and physically blocked unless we disavowed Israel's right to exist and hid our religious symbols like our Star of David necklaces and kippahs. To illustrate how chilling this was, I brought something with me today. This is a copy of my grandfather's Nazi-issued work permit Complete with a swastika. This was the only paper that allowed my grandfather to pass safely, has a non-Jewish identification. My grandfather, Solomon Frankel, had to hide his Jewish identity and go by a non-Jewish name, Yvonne Bondrovski.

It is the greatest pride in my life and a rebuke to Hitler and the Nazis that 80 years after the Holocaust, I had the honor to name my son after my grandfather. He now proudly carries the name Solomon Frankel. The same 80 years later on an American college campus, I was shocked that I was expected to wear an activist approved wristband and disavow my Jewish faith just to access public spaces. This is not the first time someone in my family has needed the correct identification to pass safely, we must ensure it is the last. 80 years after the Holocaust, many of my Jewish classmates lived in fear on an American college campus. The way I was treated as a Jew on UCLA's campus violated my rights to freely exercise my religion in public. Turning UCLA into a place of contempt rather than learning. This wasn't just mob rule, this was enabled by institutional failure.

UCLA's administration didn't just stand by, they actively aided the exclusion. It was UCLA itself that provided the barricades used to create the Jew exclusion zone, the station security to enforce checkpoints. And despite their public admissions that they knew Jews were being blocked, they

instructed campus police to stand down, seeding public property to violent antisemites, even UCLA's own task force to combat antisemitism condemned all of this as structural antisemitism and a violation of the first amendment. The Justice Department agreed, finding in 2025 that UCLA acted with deliberate indifference creating a hostile environment under the Equal Protection Clause and Title Six. My experience, my experience mirrors a national crisis. Similar discrimination and harassment happened at Columbia, Harvard, Northwestern and beyond, where antisemitism masquerades as political protest but targets religious identity. Post October 7th, Jewish students nationwide have faced isolation threats and chilled expression of faith. Wearing a kippah or attending a Shabbat service has become a risk.

That's why with the help of brilliant attorneys at the Beckett Fund for Religious Liberty, Clemente Murphy and Davis Polk, I sued UCLA alongside two other students and a professor. We brought numerous claims including under the First Amendment free exercise clause and the KKK act. We argued that UCLA illegally excluded Jews from their own campus by kowtowing to the activists and their anti-Semitic acts. In August, 2024, judge Mark Scarsi issued an injunction. He faulted UCLA for continuing to open its campus to other students, even as the university well knew that Jews like myself were being illegally blocked. He rightly called their mistreatment of Jews on UCLA's campus unimaginable and abhorrent.

Unbelievably, UCLA initially appealed this ruling. They eventually dropped their appeal and still they fought for a year and finally surrendered in July, 2025. The settlement included a federal court order barring exclusion of Jewish students and faculty plus \$6.13 million symbolizing the 613 commandments in the Torah. That sum included donations to worthy Jewish organizations like Chabad at UCLA, the Jewish graduate Organization and the Orthodox Union Jewish Learning Initiative on campus. This outcome wasn't just a personal victory. It exposed lessons for the nation. Litigation can hold failing institutions accountable, but it cannot be the only tool. UCLA's penalties including frozen grants and proposed fines show that accountability matters. Yet some critics even from Jewish organizations, call these punitive. I disagree. Without consequences, universities will continue facilitating antisemitic hate. My case proves that swift enforcement protects religious liberty, but gaps remain looking forward. I urge this commission to recommend policies that safeguard religious minorities like Jewish students.

The administration must strengthen Title VI enforcement by the DOJ and Department of Education mandate investigations within set timelines and tie federal funding to compliance. I'll close with this. Several days after October 7th when UCLA's chancellor issued a weak statement that failed to unequivocally support Jewish students or condemn the celebrations of Jewish death sweeping campuses, I wrote to him directly, I quoted the book of Esther. In it, Mordecai gives Queen Esther a dire warning. Do not imagine that you of all Jews will escape if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter. And who knows, perhaps you have attained this royal position for just such a crisis. Leadership hesitated then as it has too often since. But in three weeks, we'll celebrate Purim the story of how silence nearly doomed to people. Yet courage and providence brought deliverance. I take more Mordecai's words to heart. This is why I stood up to UCLA and I'm not afraid to call them and others out. This commission and the policies it recommends, can be our modern Mordecai and Esther, a call to action before it's too late. Let us ensure that no Jewish student or any believer must ever again hide their faith to access

education, public spaces or safety in America. Relief and deliverance must come from here now through bold protection of religious liberty for all. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Lt. Gov. Patrick (00:21:16):

Thank you, members. As we have done before, we will wait until all four testify then we will take any questions. Shabbos Kestenbaum, Is that right? Close enough. Alright, close enough. Thank you. I appreciate it. Thank you

Shabbos Kestenbaum (00:21:33):

For sure. Well, let me start off firstly by saying that in Jewish theology when we wake up, we say a prayer that is called *Modeh Ani*, which is literally translated as “thankful am I.” And the rabbinic commentators are always puzzled by that phraseology because it should not be *Modeh Ani*, “thankful am I.” But *Ani Modeh*, “I am thankful.” And the lesson we learn is before we can say anything, before we go about our day, the very first thing is we must show appreciation. So before I even get to the testimony, I just want to say what a remarkable breath of fresh air this commission and this hearing is. As an individual who registered to vote as a Democrat the day, I turned 18, nobody’s perfect. We could not get help from the Biden-Harris administration. They did not lift a finger as American students were being denied access to education on their college campuses.

And I remember on the campaign trail when President Trump said that religious liberties would be a priority when he gets into office. And this is a testament to the fact that the promises made on the campaign trail have in fact become promises kept. All of you on this commission are a testament to that. Many of the individuals in this room, like Martin Marks, like Jennifer Korn, like Leo Terrell, like Harvey Dylan, like Dr. Sebastian Gorka, you have been fighting the fight that I wish the previous administration would’ve cared to fight as well. So first and foremost, thank you for doing this. The second point I want to say is that in 1790, President George Washington writes a letter to the largest Jewish community in the United States numbering 25 families in Newport, Rhode Island. And he says here in the United States, we want you as descendants of Abraham to come to our country and practice your faith because in his own words, “bigotry will be granted, no sanction and persecution, no assistance,” and how shocked and how embarrassed and how appalled would President Washington and President Adams and President Jefferson and our founding fathers be today.

To know that in the 21st century, American students and American citizens were denied access to education because of their religious identity and the people denying them that access were those who were allegedly in the upper echelons of our society, the most elite, the most progressive, the most well-educated. Why do we care about Harvard and UCLA and Columbia and Penn and all these other morally bankrupt institutions? It’s because these are institutions that purport to train the next generation of American leaders and by and large, they’re not wrong. Statistically speaking, it’s not an exaggeration at all to state. I probably sat in a room at Harvard with a future congressman, a future senator, even a future President of the United States. And if these are America’s future policymakers, if these are America’s future judges and jurors, if these are America’s future authors of the books your kids and grandkids will read who are taught to hate western civilization, to hate the founding of our country and to hate other people based on their religious identity, then this is no longer simply a Jew-y issue or an antisemitism issue.

But this is an issue that cuts at the core of our American democracy, our liberal values, and our western civilization. And I have to say, even though of course this hearing is focused on antisemitism, and I will get to that, I promise I started a timer, but I do want to say that when chants at Oklahoma State of “F the Mormons” are being sprung out, that is an attack against the Jewish community. It’s obviously an attack against the Mormon community, but it’s also an attack on every single American when we have in Long Beach, California, just a week ago, a Catholic school being vandalized to the point whereby they can’t even renovate the school anymore. That is not merely an attack on the Catholic community, but it’s an attack on the Jewish community and it’s an attack on every single American and that unfortunately brings me to Harvard University.

I will in the interest of time, skip to October 7th, which was not only the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, but it was also a massacre in which 45 American citizens were butchered by the rapist Islamic regime of Hamas. And I just want to quote what was happening on the night of October 7th amongst the most educated, the most elite and the most progressive of our society. Quote: “two days after Hamas’ deadly attack on Israel last year, senior administrators at Harvard University wrestled with how to respond, drafting a public statement.” They edited out the word violent to describe the attack. When a dean complained that it sounded like “signing blame.” They debated whether to explicitly disown a declaration by some Harvard student groups that Israel was responsible for the violence, but ultimately, they decided not to. And when they did eventually come out with their statement, it did not in fact include the word violent.

The largest demonstration I saw at Harvard University was a few days after October 7th where a masked student gets up in front of a thousand students and professors and he says, Hamas, which is the only time Hamas was mentioned, is not a terrorist group. We will look upon them as freedom fighters. Who are we to condemn the resistance and note, the immediate reaction is of the a thousand students and professors, thunderous applause not one thinks is to challenge, to condemn, to walk out of that statement. It is no coincidence. Therefore that two weeks after that statement, a Jewish Israeli student was physically assaulted on Harvard Business School. You can watch the footage, it’s free on YouTube. The assailants of that attack, one of them was awarded a \$65,000 fellowship by Harvard Law School to intern at the Council on American Islamic relations, which has noted eyes to Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood and the other assailant was given the honor of being class Marshall at Harvard’s graduation.

It’s no coincidence that three weeks after that an Israeli student at Harvard was told by her professor to leave the classroom because her nationality made other students uncomfortable. It’s no coincidence that a month after that a Jewish American citizen at Harvard was spat on for wearing a Yamaka. It is no coincidence that three weeks after that, a Harvard employee vandalized all of our hostage posters writing on Kfir Bibas a nine-month-old baby who was kidnapped, “His head is still on, where is the evidence?” who then wrote on Noah Argamani another kidnapped Jewish victim that “Jews are best friends with Jeffrey Epstein,” who then challenged me to debate him in a secluded underpass as to whether Jews orchestrated 9/11 and then posted a video of him waving a machete with a picture of my face saying he wants to fight. He’s coming after more than blood and he’s coming after the Zionist Mafia.

And perhaps the icing on the cake is of the dozens of phone calls and emails we sent to Harvard University simply inquiring about his employment status. To this day they have not once responded to us. It is inconceivable that any other minority group would be treated with the disdain, the disregard and the contempt that Harvard has historically routinely and consistently treated its Jewish student population. But to me, I can forgive and forget there is one thing I will not forgive and I will not forget, and that was the encampments. Forget about the fact that these students chanted for a globalized Antifa at all hours of the day. Forget about the fact that they violated all time, place and manner restrictions. Forget about the fact that some American Jewish students were actually living on Airbnb's off campus because they didn't want to be confronted each day.

Every single time I went to class, I cut through my own campus. Every time I did that masked students who decided to name themselves safety marshals. When they would see me and other visibly Jewish students approaching, they would take out their phones and they would start following us on our way to class and they would start recording us and we would ask them to stop, but they would never respond. And we told the President of the university and the President of the United States, but again his mental acuity was questionable at the time, we told him that American students were being followed on their way to class as a result of their religious identity. And not only did the President of the university, Alan Garber, who is still the President of the university today, not only did he never respond to our concerns, he actually told the encampment leaders, if you agree to pack up your tents, we will allow you to meet with the Harvard Management Corporation with overseas Harvard's \$59 billion endowment to discuss divestment from Israel.

If you agree to pack up your tents, we will allow you to meet with senior Harvard faculty to discuss the establishment of a Palestinian study center. And of the hundreds of students who took part in the encampments who violated internal Harvard policy and followed American students on their way to class zero were expelled, zero were suspended, or zero were disciplined in any measurable way. The message that Alan Garber told American students was if you call for an Antifada loud enough and if you follow American Jewish students long enough and if you vandalize enough private property, at one point the encampment students at Harvard University tried using bolt cutters to try to break open the locks on Harvard's Gates, says President Alan Garber, if you do all of those things, we will grant you a seat at the table, which is why we filed a civil rights lawsuit against the university.

We are the first lawsuit of its kind pertaining to the civil rights violations of Jewish students, students on a college campus to be allowed to go to trial. I'm very proud of the fact that there are currently seven lawsuits brought by Jewish students across this country that have cited *Kestenbaum v Harvard* as legal precedent and as it pertains to recommendations, because I know I'm out of time, any institution of higher learning that violates the civil rights of any group based on gender, based on religion, based on ethnicity, it does not entitle itself to American taxpayer funding. If you truly want to help, and I know all of you do, especially our President, you would continue to do what you currently are doing, which is ensuring that Harvard University does not receive a penny of American taxpayer money in perpetuity ever, ever again. You would ensure that any institution

that violates the rights of Christians or Jews, any religious group does not afford themselves the right to American taxpayer money.

It is that simple. We would ensure that students who come to this country who are not American citizens who do not believe in the values of the West, who like Mahmud Khalil call for the eradication of Western civilization are not allowed within 50 feet of this country. They are not Americans. They do not stand by American ideals and we have no obligation to bring them into our country. And I will end by how I opened, which is an attack on one Christian is an attack on one Jew and what attack on one Jew is an attack on one Christian. We are in this together and post-Charlie Kirk, who is a remarkable role model, not just for me but for millions of young men and women across this country. There has been a dearth of role models of people who tell young people the value, the importance, the meaningful-ness of having religion in their lives.

And I would encourage as well that this commission seriously look into the ways that we can encourage Gen Z men in particular to be better as it pertains to their religious affiliation. America was founded predominantly by Christians, by a shared, Hebraic tradition and Judeo-Christian values. And I know as an orthodox Jew, America would be a much stronger and better country if more young Christian men went to church. If more young Christian men studied and learned the New Testament and the Old Testament, and if young Christian men believed and learn the values and teachings of Jesus. So I want to thank all of you for doing what the previous administration did not do and recognizing the fundamental importance of religious liberties in our country. Thank you.

Lt. Gov Patrick (00:31:56):

Our next witness, coach Bruce Pearl from Auburn. And I must confess my brother and sister-in-law live in Auburn and they're big fans and never miss a game and you finally convinced them to watch a committee on religious liberty, so thank you. You are the founder of the Jewish Coaches Association. Coach, you're up.

Coach Bruce Pearl (00:32:19):

Well, thank you for inviting me to speak today and thank you all very much for your work. What in the world did you think a college basketball coach could do here today? Can you play? It doesn't feel like you necessarily belong here, but I'm honored to be here. I've been outspoken about the dangers of the rise of antisemitism as a dad, as a former college coach and as a current basketball analyst for Turner and CBS sports. I grew up as an athlete. I grew up Jewish and in Boston. I was a minority and early on I recognized that there were obstacles, but I did not look at them as roadblocks. And as a result, I have lived the American dream. Since October 7th. It has become increasingly clear that we're facing a real moment of danger, not only for the Jewish people, but for the principles of religious freedom and human dignity that are central to this great country.

I have spent decades building and leading teams made up of people from every background, race, ethnicity, and religion. I know firsthand that when people judge each other by anything other than the content of their character, their work ethic and what they contribute, then the entire team suffers. That truth extends beyond sports. History teaches us that when a society begins to

scapegoat, exclude or target a group based on their identity, the decay rarely stops with that group. Unfortunately, we're seeing those warning signs right here in the United States of America. The poison is coming from across the political spectrum. On the far right, we see conspiracy theories about Jewish power and hidden Israel influence. We see Holocaust denial and efforts to demonize Jews as enemies of Christianity. On the far left, the Jewish people's basic rights and sense of belonging are being attacked under the guise of anti-Zionism. From Islamist extremists including terrorist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and their sponsor, the Iranian regime, we face openly genocidal threats. This Muslim brotherhood, literally wants me dead as I sit here and speak to you today. Why? Because I am Jewish or I support the state of Israel or I am a Zionist.

While many different aspects of the Jewish religion, the ethnic identity are being attacked, it's important. It's vital to recognize the specific role that Israel and Zionism plays in our faith. According to Pew, the vast majority of Jews believe that caring about Israel is essential, an important part of what it means to be Jewish. Similarly, polls show that the vast majority of Jewish people consider denying Israel's right to exist and chants "from the river to the sea" to be anti-Semitic. This has nothing to do with criticizing the Israeli government, which Israelis and Jews do all the time. It reflects the fact that Zionism is central to Jewish religious ethnic identity and is rooted in thousands of years of history. Language, culture, faith, geography, Jewish prayer, scripture and ritual are filled with references to Zion. Jews have prayed towards Jerusalem from millennia. Our holidays end with the words "next year in Jerusalem."

Half of the world's Jews live in Israel today creating an unbroken connection between the Jewish people and our ancestral homeland Israel. Bad faith actors will twist these facts and use them to claim that Jews are disloyal to this country. But the truth is we're like countless other groups that have immigrated here. We're proud of our unique heritage and we're also proud Americans who have helped make our country great. As I said, I grew up in Boston, a town with great ethnic neighborhoods, which sometimes led to a lack of integration, which sometimes led to some mistrust and tension. But the Italians of the North end, the Irish of South Boston, the African-Americans of Roxbury or the Jews of Dorchester, Mattapan weren't any less American because they love their ethnic backgrounds or their culture or their history. Because many people don't fully understand who Jews are, they also can't recognize a lot of the bigotry.

We experience today. So let's be clear. When someone dehumanizes Israelis or promotes discrimination against the world's only Jewish state or denies its right to exist, those are not simply controversial political opinions. They are forms of hate that have real world consequences right here in America for me and for my family, much of the hostility spreads in ways that are not easy to see. And in too many university classrooms, the notion that Israel is a settler colonial state is a taken it's given even though it's a lie that erases 3000 years of Jewish history and connection to the Jewish homeland. Some students are so poisoned by such lies that they vandalize property or tear down posters with faces of Israeli children and mothers and hostages being held in Gaza. Organizations such as students of justice of Palestine or CARE try hard to intimidate Jewish peers on their campuses.

Just last month, a young athlete burned down the historic Beth Israel synagogue in Mississippi and later told police that it was the synagogue of Satan. That phrase has recently become popular again because far right podcasters are spreading it to millions of millions of people online seeking to turn our Christian brothers against their Jewish neighbors. This return to religious intolerance builds on years of some Americans just blaming the Jews for every problem in their lives. Replacement theology takes the Old Testament and Jesus' life on this earth as a Jew out and it replaces it with the church only with America only and without and with white only. This can be a powerful attraction to many young white Christians experiencing a delay in trying to live the American dream. The end result of all the disinformation radicalization is deadly violence. Last year, a far-left terrorist murdered a young couple Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgram outside the Capitol Jewish Museum just a few blocks away. I was in DC that morning speaking to members of Congress in the Capitol. We were celebrating Jewish heritage month with a combating antisemitism movement that could have easily been me and with the entire life in front of your own and Sarah, if given the option, I wish it was me. I will leave here today with my head on a swivel.

I recognize that I'm a target. You think I'm exaggerating. In Boulder, Colorado, when Islamist terrorist hurled Molotov cocktails at participants who are part of a weekly solidarity walk just calling for the release of hostages, many of them Americans, the terrorists ended up murdering 82-year-old Karen Diamond, a Holocaust survivor who came to this country for a better life and was murdered by the same hate that fueled Nazi Germany. In 2018 and 19, white supremacist terrorists, targeted synagogues in Pittsburgh and Poway murdering 12 Jewish worshipers. This is not who we are, but it is who we will become if we don't take dramatic and urgent actions to fight antisemitism. Now this commission and our federal government and American jury have an essential role to play in that fight right here and right now. First civil rights laws must be fully enforced and apply consistently and even handily for the protection of all groups, including Jewish Americans.

Second, institutions including our own Congress should be encouraged to adopt and use a clear widely accepted working definition of antisemitism. The IHRA definition of a nine binding tool. The clarity of this definition help protects the civil rights while fully respecting First Amendment freedoms. And third, choose in America must do more than report antisemitic incidents. The Jewish community is wrong in assuming that antisemitism comes from ignorance and that if we document it and shave it loudly enough, it'll just stop. American Jew-ery needs to build a stronger Jewish identity and stop apologizing for it. Our success is an example of the American dream, our thriving, our educating, our contributing has and will continue to make America great. We need Jews to participate in Jewish life, to support day schools and camps, synagogues and temples, visit Israel and support the state of Israel and stop apologizing for it.

Reporting on to antisemitism is not the same thing as fighting antisemitism. And we do need our institutions to impose consequences on those who enable or excuse hatred. And finally, education is crucial. Academic and civil institutions must teach what antisemitism looks like today and all its contemporary forms. Universities want to be institutionally neutral. They don't want to take sides for fear of protests or stirring the pot. Look, we first teach the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and lies and propaganda. The truth is that Israel has been surrounded

by Islamic neighbors who rule their people and who simply don't want to live next door or side by side. They want the Jews gone from the land. That's the truth. The truth is that if the Jews had lost any of the wars that we were thrust into 48, 67, 73 or October 7th, 2023, Jerusalem would not be the free sea that it is today that would protect all faith from visiting there.

Live and worship. Yes, somehow we are afraid to teach our kids those truths on our college campuses today, I love the United States of America. This country saved my family from the Holocaust and from pilgrims. Jewish Americans should be our greatest patriots, should be the most grateful citizens in this country because of its promise of liberty. My family was able to build a life here. But we all know that freedom must be protected. It does not preserve itself. And today that responsibility is more urgent than ever. The Jewish people are running out of places to live. Where else are we supposed to go? Some say go back to Israel and some say that Israel is not ours to go back to. So do you see the problem? We have a choice. We could hope that this moment passes or we can stand up and say clearly this is not who we are. In 2025, the Auburn basketball team won the SEC championship. We got to our second final four. And publicly and proudly we call God and we thank God for the blessing. Last year there were three Jewish coaches that participated in the final four, three out of four teams. Don't tell me this isn't the greatest country in the world and this is an opportunity for everybody. Thank you for allowing me to participate today and thank you for your commitment to defending religious freedom for all Americans. God bless America. [inaudible]. Thank you.

Lt. Gov. Patrick (00:44:22):

Coach. Thank you Bruce. Rabbi Ari Berman, you're our next witness.

Rabbi Ari Berman (00:44:29):

Thank you so much, chairman Patrick. And thank you for the invitation to be here. The next time we speak, perhaps do not put me after Coach Pearl. This has really been a great honor to be here with you, to be with Dr. Carson. My dear friend, Rabbi Soloveitchik, Reverend Graham who I last was with in Washington at the President's inauguration, Dr. Phil, everyone here in this commission and these incredible witnesses, it's so important that we're here today for the issue of antisemitism and higher education is not simply a Jewish concern, it's an urgent national one because antisemitism is not the fundamental problem. It's a symptom of a disease. The disease is the moral erosion and cultural amnesia afflicting some of our most historic institutions of higher education. I am the President of Yeshiva University, our nation's premier Jewish university. And what I will share with you today is from the perspective of a university president for after October 7th, I was in communication with presidents from across the country.

And what I saw was profoundly disappointing and, in some cases, inspiring and I think you need to hear both to best diagnose and treat this disease. On October 7th itself, I was in Jerusalem and witness firsthand what it means to be attacked by a terrorist army. The missiles in the air, the sirens urging us into the safe rooms. The day that I sent my son a senior in college and combat reservist in the IDF off to war, while my son risked his life defending the Jewish state, I was across the Atlantic working to defend the United States. When I returned to America a few days later, I was horrified by the weak response of many of my colleagues this assault on innocent civilians. I drafted a statement condemning the rape beheading of children and taking of hostages, affirming

our support for Israel, for the Palestinian people who suffer under the cruel rule of Hamas and with all people of moral conscience.

And then I devoted the following weeks to enlisting support from other universities to create a coalition of universities united against terrorism. From these calls, two conclusions became clear. First we have partners in this fight and we need to rally the angels. One of the first calls that I made was to Rochelle Ford, president of Dillard University, a historically black college and university. She said, Ari, the Jewish people prevail when Moses holds his hands up, referencing the biblical story. But who holds Moses' hands? It is Aaron and Hur. Let us be your Aaron and Hur. You can lean on us.

My next call was to Shirley Hoogstra, president of the Council for Christian College and Universities. And her office said to me, Ari, I will sign whatever you write. You don't even need to show it to me. We stand with you. One by one, Presidents for major public and private universities. HBCUs and faith-based universities joined us more than a hundred universities signed on, culminating in a full page Wall Street Journal ad that declared that moral clarity actually can exist in higher education in America. That was my first conclusion, that we need to rally the angels. But secondly, I saw the depth of the crisis. Many presidents privately acknowledged Hamas as the villain, but they were too afraid of campus backlash to speak publicly. Fear had replaced leadership.

Now it was no coincidence that institutions unable to speak with moral clarity after October 7th often stood by while Jewish students' rights like Shabbas and Yitzchok were violated because that same loss of purpose was at work. And this is the crux of the story. Historically, admissions to a university meant entry into an intergenerational moral and intellectual community. Students did not attend college to merely acquire credentials. They joined the conversation of cortex and values stretching from antiquity into the future. In the late 20th century, however, universities embraced a moral and cultural relativism abandoning their roles as custodians of inherited wisdom. Liberal arts fractured into narrow specializations. Students graduated without a shared foundation without the tools to distinguish truth from falsehood, justice from cruelty or courage from convenience. Into this vacuum stepped ideological extremism, dividing the world not by values but by power. The oppressor and oppressed. The colonizer and colonized. Vast sums of unreported foreign money fueled its spread.

Dissent was punished through cancel culture and Jews. Among history's most persecuted people were starting cast as oppressors. While Hamas among the world's most brutal terrorists were perversely recast as the oppressed. Most students on college campuses know little about Israel or Jewish history. They follow cues from peers, professors, and institutions that reward conformity rather than understanding. Now, this context matters for the commission's work. For this is not only a battle for Jewish students' safety, it's a battle for the future of the soul of our nation. America is called to greatness, to be a beacon of light and a mover of history. And what makes America great is our foundational story of freedom and our foundational biblical values, moral responsibility, civic virtue, human dignity, and the pursuit of truth. If we fail to propagate these

values in education, we fail all of our children. To be clear, I'm not calling for a return to some imagined golden age.

Ours as a nation conceived and promised not perfection. But that promise advances only when we stand on the values that made it possible and carry them forward with clarity and courage for since the failure is cultural amnesia, the solution is not censorship, but memory, recovering the values we hold here. And here's the good news. Across the country, students are signaling that they want grounding context and moral seriousness. This helps explain one of the most significant and under-discussed developments in American higher education, the rise of faith-based colleges and universities. FBCUs, which now educate roughly 10% of undergraduates and consistently outpaced national and [inaudible] growth. My own university, Yeshiva University has recently doubled in size and my colleagues report similar skyrocketing growth. In the moral intellectual vacuums left by many elite institutions, these universities demonstrate that rigorous scholarship and moral formation are mutually reinforcing. Their growth reflects a renewed hunger for education that connects intellect to meaning and parents' progress with purpose.

And this is our moment of opportunity. As I mentioned during my benediction at the President's inauguration, Americans are searching for meaning. We need to rise to meet this moment, we need to build a coalition of angels. In addition to governing the universities that are failing to protect their Jewish students' civil liberties, we must also gather and strengthen those that successfully transmit America's story and American values. A government initiative to fund faith-based colleges and universities, especially for research. Engaging questions of faith would be one way to support this effort. In summary, antisemitism on campus will not be defeated by defensive policies alone. It will be defeated when universities understand themselves as moral actors shaping judgment, character and civic conscience. When institutions recover the courage to speak clearly about right and wrong truth and falsehood, dignity and hatred than Jewish students and all students will flourish Outside my office door hangs a letter from Thomas Jefferson to Mordecai Noah addressing antisemitism. Jefferson wrote that our laws have applied the only antidote to this vice protecting our religious as they do our civil rights by putting all on an equal footing. And then he added six words that summon us today, "but more remains to be done." That unfinished work is now ours to ensure universities renew America's moral inheritance. To see that freedom is not emptied of meaning nor equality, stripped of conscience to fulfill America's promise not only by loss, but by the values we teach, the courage we model and the future we choose to form.

Lt Gov. Patrick (00:55:29):

Thank you, Rabbi. Members, welcome up for questions. Kelly, your light's on.

Kelly Shackelford (00:55:36):

First, thank you for your testimony. It was really powerful. Every one of you, and I just hate what you had to describe, it should not be happening in our country. And I'm amazed because I've been doing religious liberty work for 37 years and I saw this start to get worse. We have synagogue cases all over the country. They just want to build a synagogue. They just want to have their synagogue and the attacks are just unbelievable. But I've seen more, it started before October 7th, so this was building before that as well. But I just want to thank you for coming and giving testimony. And Coach Pearl, I also want to say something. There was an incident at Auburn. There

was a large, at night after work hours, a large event at one of the auditoriums led by the students and a few of the coaches were attacked.

Coach Freeze and Coach Pearl by the Freedom from Religion Foundation saying that they shouldn't allow that. It's like people can go to whatever religious service they want to at night, but I just want to thank you because when you first called me when Coach Freeze first called me for legal help and making sure there was no problem, the first thing you both said is, I'm not going to back down from my faith no matter what I'm told, no matter what the consequences. I thank you for that stance. That's what we need to keep religious freedom. I just want to thank you for your example, your leadership and standing for, I think that was a big Christian gathering and you stood with all those people in that gathering. And then the last thing I'll say, just if anybody has any ideas, I've been trying to write down any recommendations. I know there's a mention of enforcing civil rights. If there's any new particular policy law that is not already covered that you have to mind, let us know about that. Anybody on the panel as well. Thank you

Lt. Gov Patrick (00:57:51):

Bruce Pearl.

Coach Bruce Pearl (00:57:55):

It was an honor to have my foundation and my family help sponsor about 9,000 kids worship in an auditorium, hear testimony and witness. And about 250 of 'em jumped in the water, got baptized that night. I got criticized from some in the Jewish community for proselytizing. I'm a basketball coach. Most of my kids are Christian. I've got a few Jewish kids on my team, but I have always had a team pastor and I want my kids to get closer to the Lord. There was a revival going on in this country and I think it's actually going to save our country and it's a wonderful, wonderful thing. But my message and I've so it was amazing that event's called Unite and Tanya and Chad Pruitt have taken that event all throughout the country and it's, it's wonderful. This may be uncomfortable to hear, but again, my job is to bring people together, players together from different side.

Abraham is the father of all. And for me being in a Christian world, I'm always talking to my Jew, my Christian friends. I'll say, so who are you having over for Passover this year? And they'll say, coach, we're not Jewish. I said, you're always telling me you want to be more like Jesus all the time. You want to be more like Jesus. Jesus celebrated Passover every year of his life, right? He held the door open for Elijah. Why aren't you celebrating Passover? And again, it's a way of obviously connecting us. I tell people all the time, do you know the two most popular Jews in Alabama are me and Jesus? That's good. These things connect us. They connect us. I believe that we should embrace them. I think it just brings us closer together. And I do remind people that 12 Jewish men died horrific deaths bringing Christianity to the world. Those are facts. Read your Bible. Again, these are things that should night us. And you're right guys, we have allies, we have friends. But for such a time as this, this commission and this country has got work to do,

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:00:14):

Can I quickly add to policy?

Coach Bruce Pearl (01:00:16):

Sure, go ahead.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:00:16):

Yeah. So the answer is kind of yes and no as it pertains to policies that already exist and the new policies. So the laws on their books are actually pretty good. The problem was, especially with the last administration, they were just objectively never enforced. So in the Department of Education, the Department of Justice, the Civil Rights Offices refused to enforce the laws. Then it's irrelevant how strong the laws are if they're not being enforced. So, for example, president Eisenhower, after *Brown v. Board of Education* told racist schools in the South, if you do not integrate your schools, we will cut off all federal funding to those schools. And interestingly enough, the segregationists used the argument that Harvard University is using now, which is that is going to affect innocent white students who did nothing wrong. And President Eisenhower response was, that's too damn bad. Make sure you have black kids in your class on Monday.

And lo and behold, that's exactly what they did. And they did not get a single penny in federal funds being cut. President Obama and then Vice President Joe Biden did the exact same thing with college campuses. They said in 2014 that one in three women would experience some form of sexual harassment on campuses. Therefore, they had a whole college tour. And they told these colleges, if you do not eradicate the systemic and pervasive nature of sexual harassment, we will cut off all federal funding. And lo and behold, all of the colleges reported plans to the federal government as to what they would do to combat sexual harassment. President Trump has done the exact same thing, but for whatever reason, he's wrong to do it now, even though they're strong president of American presidents doing that thing. The expenditure of federal dollars is also a manifestation of our values.

We value religious liberties. We value religious freedom. So much so that we are not going to fund institutions if they violate those things. So in terms of the policies on the books, I think a lot of them are pretty good. The things that can be improved as we have great Secretary of Education, hopefully she'll be the last Secretary of Education for the Department of Education. That's a conversation for another time. And under section one 17 of the Higher Education Act, she has produced and streamlined the amount of foreign funding coming in from foreign actors. The problem is we don't know what we don't know. So, for example, Yale University was under reporting how much they were receiving from Qatar by \$25 million alone. Qatar is the largest state sponsor of American institutions of higher learning. There should be a blanket ban on foreign adversaries funding our campuses.

So, for example, there are so many Chinese communists at Harvard University, and this is true, there's a Wall Street Journal on this, that the Chinese Communist Party literally refers to the Harvard Kennedy School, which is their school of public policy and government as quote, "the party school." Chinese communists or individuals who work against American interests should not be allowed on American campuses for any reason. They should not be allowed to donate money to American campuses for any reason. So that would be one example of new policies that we should be looking into. Why is it that the Chinese communists or Islamic nations know that the

secret to undermine the United States is to sort of politically indoctrinate young people? We have to recognize that as well and get those who do not believe in American values off our campuses and out of our country as fast as possible.

Yitzchok Frankel (01:03:02):

Okay, I'll just quickly add, no one threatened me with a sword and maybe we'll get fencing Shabbos lessons. But at the encampment, there was a student who came out of the encampment, stood behind Jews, including me with the inverted red triangle, is on camera throwing punches at Zionists, has given interviews where she says it's cool to punch Zionists. UCLA says, we can't discipline these students because they're masked. A real mask ban, an enforced mask ban would clear up a lot of problems.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:03:33):

Yes sir. Rabbi. Go ahead

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:03:37):

That when we talk about new policies, and it's important to do with the stick, but we also have to have the carrot. It's important to focus on everything that the universities should not be doing. But actually, coming around with the coalition of universities that are transmitting American story and American values, right, matters. And I've said this to the Secretary and Department of Education directly, even when it comes to international students, international students coming to universities aren't good or bad. It depends what universities they go to. If they go into universities that teach 'em to hate America, then that's bad. But when they go to universities that teach 'em to love America, that's actually good. And we have thousands of foreign students that just had a group of South Korean students. They came to Yeshiva University and they wrote me a note. They said, dear President Berman, we love Yeshiva. We stand with Israel. Now, we never told them to stand with Israel. We told them to love America. And they know when you love America, you naturally will stand with Israel. And this is part of our education and we need to gather, coalesce, and reward those universities that are actually transmitting the American story and American values. That is essential for policy that this group, and this hasn't been done yet, that this group can uniquely recommend and further to help strengthen America.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:05:14):

Dealing with the question or the issue of finance. I can tell you, as the president of the Senate in Texas who oversees 180 billion budget, if I want to get the presidents and the chancellors to Austin immediately on their jets, all I have to do is say, your funding is going to be cut. They respond to that more than anything else, whether it's federal or state funding. Ryan, you're up next. And then Rabbi.

Ryan T Anderson (01:05:44):

Yeah, thank you. And thank you to all four of the witnesses. That was just very compelling testimony that I doubt I'll ever forget. And as I was listening, two thoughts went through my head, that's evil but probably not illegal. And that's evil and probably illegal in terms of what you were describing as what you experienced on campus. And then of course the stuff that was evil and illegal. You didn't have anybody either campus leadership or in the Biden administration that would actually enforce the law. And I guess my question, and it's for anyone who wants to answer it, how should we, as a commission and how should, ultimately, we're offering advice to the Trump administration, how should we think about where that line is between evil but legal. Sorry, evil but legal versus evil but illegal. And the reason I asked the question is you had helpfully said that an attack on Mormons is attack on Jews is an attack on Christians.

Religious liberty needs to also extend to people whose theology we disagree with, including their theology about the Jews or their theology about Israel. We may disagree with that theology. The religious liberty Commission still has to defend their liberty to hold it. Likewise, what came to my mind when you described an attack on a Jew as an attack on a Christian as an attack on an LDS, also the First amendment hangs or falls together religious liberty and freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. And it's obvious to me that some of the stuff that went on at UCLA and Harvard is just clearly illegal, but other of the stuff, look stupid people get to exercise their free speech rights too. But as you mentioned, there are time, place and manner restrictions. There're fighting words, there's incitement to violence, there's harassment. Help us think through what's on what side of the line.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:07:36):

Okay, this is actually my favorite question. I really like talking about this is like Christmas morning for me. Okay. There are two ways, sorry. Hanukah morning for me is totally confused there for just a moment. Sorry. Don't tell my rabbi I said that.

There are two ways of answering the question. I want to first focus on Harvard University and then broadly apply that to the American legal system. So, I find it really remarkable that the attacks on American Jews, myself and Yitzchok in particular have been that we're trying to silence free speech. I find that remarkable because on our college campuses, the only people who have ever silenced our classrooms who've disrupted our learning were those calling for an Antifada. I cannot point to a single Jewish student on a single American campus who drew swastikas at the Muslim Student Association who threw rocks through dorm buildings who pitched encampments in the middle of the quad and disrupted lectures.

I can't point to a single one, unfortunately, I could point to almost every single anti-Israel group on a college campus. The second point as it pertains to Harvard University is there was a study done by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expressions. Four years ago, FIRE ranked 248 American universities as to how well they committed themselves to free speech In the First Amendment out of 248 American universities, Harvard was ranked 248th. They were ranked dead last. This is an institution that when you enroll as a freshman, you have mandatory training where you are told that fat phobia, that sizeism and that ableism are grounds for discipline. You are told that words are violent and in fact the former president of Harvard University, Claudine Gay, was

instrumental in demoting an African-American professor for coming out against Black Lives Matter. They fired another professor from fulfilling his legal obligations and representing an objectionable client.

They disinvited a controversial speaker who was deemed transphobic. They unenrolled 12 admitted students who had posted a sexist meme on a private WhatsApp group, which is really remarkable because Harvard has zero track record or history of protecting or even trying to pretend to promote free speech. The only time they suddenly had an interest was when clogging gay randomly said that she wished she could protect American Jewish students, but she has this newfound commitment to free speech in the First Amendment, which is objectively not true when you look at the history of Harvard University. Having said that though, and I want to be absolutely clear because I get attacked for things that I have not said. You have a right to say things that are hateful. There is no legal distinction between free speech and hate speech. Hate speech is absolutely free speech and students should be allowed to call for Antifada.

Students should be allowed to call for the freeing of Palestine “from the river to the sea”. They should be allowed to do those things. The problem is the double standard. So Harvard University will tell students from day one there are certain things you can’t say, so you cannot engage in sizeism, whatever that is. You cannot engage in ableism, you cannot engage in fat phobia, but the only exception they make is antisemitism. So all we are asking for is a standard that is applied equally. If you want to say that all speeches fine, then great, I would be in favor of that. Students should be allowed to call for an Antifada, but if you want to make the distinction that we will unenroll you if you are a sexist, but we will promote you if you are an antisemite, what we are calling out is not the speech.

What we are calling out is the hypocrisy. You have a right in America to hate Jews. I don’t recommend it, but you can do it. You should be able to exercise that. Right. And this goes into a broader theological problem that I think our country is facing, which is if young people in particular which coach he brought this up, if they truly believe that I will never get ahead in life, I will never have a successful relationship, I’ll never get a good paying job or find a wife because something the Jews then they will tap out of society. They will give up their role in building a better life for themselves and for their community. That’s why I care so much about antisemitism, not because it’s mean words to me. I mean I don’t like the death threats, but it’s more so because I recognize that this is fundamentally a cancer for Gen Z and Gen Z men in particular. If they truly believe that there is a cabal of Jews who control their lives, then it is no wonder they have higher rates of depression, higher rates of anxiety and engage, whether it’s in the far left or in the far right, in actual violence. That’s why it’s so problematic. It’s not merely a Jewish problem. It is a profoundly and uniquely American problem as well.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:11:34):

Let me go to some more questions. I try, we started late. I want to try to keep us on time but we have more questions but go ahead please. Yitzchok we’ll just shorten our answers

Yitzchok Frankel (01:11:44):

A little bit. Sure. Really quickly. Not a judicial scholar. The only way Oliver make a bench is if Coach Pearl puts me on the team, but when deciding between my free rights to cross campus and their free rights to call for Antifada and block me UCLA, turned off the sprinklers.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:12:02):

Let's go to Rabbi, did you still have your light on? And then I'm going to come to you Dr. Phil and then Dr. Carson.

Rabbi Meir Soloveitchik (01:12:09):

First, I want to express my gratitude to all the witnesses and I want to thank the chair for his leadership. As we prepare to do our duty, which is to advise the President and the administration. It struck me, especially as Ari Berman was speaking that at a part and parcel of addressing the endangerment of religious liberty in America when it comes to Jews in America or when it comes to all sorts of faith communities in America, part and parcel that is addressing education in America and while an essential aspect of the way the administration has to address this is focusing on what happens and what are the penalties that are applied to university when the civil rights of any group within the student body is violated. We also have to think as Ari Berman said, and this is really at the heart of all of your testimony, how do we nurture a teaching and a love of the heritage of the West in general and of the United States in particular, and thereby help foster the future leadership of this country.

And so it seems to me you do see this at the state level. States are thinking about this. How are we educating and how are state universities educating when it comes to American history and again within the limits of the First Amendment as Ryan described, how can the government support civic education at the highest level, love of America, celebration of America? I know that President Trump's chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities has done wonderful work on this and it seems to me, and it's just struck me for the first time sitting here, that recommendations in that regard, the positive along with the punitive might be part and parcel of the recommendations that we make as to how to foster the future of religious freedom in America. And I'd love for reflections from any of you. Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:14:17):

Any reflections if they are short? But, go ahead Rabbi.

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:14:23):

I couldn't agree. I couldn't agree more. And this is essential for the future of our country and if we don't think about what's positive and how to gather universities who are doing it right, we are missing this opportunity because students are looking for it. And I just want to say, and it touches on Ryan's point and also Rabbi Soloveitchik in terms of the rights. It's not just about the rights, it's also about the purpose. And I tell presidents of universities all the time, there is no conflict between institutional neutrality and moral clarity. It is okay for a president to be able to say I'm institutionally neutral, but raping women and beheading children is morally wrong. And if they're not willing to say that, what does that tell you about the education that they're giving over to the

students to the purpose of their education? And that's why to rally the universities that see as part of their responsibility is civic and moral ethics as part of what they're doing, which is so essential in the formative times of their lives. That is who we need to promote and to support and the government playing a role in that is essential today to move this story forward.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:15:43):

Dr. Phil and then Reverend, I'll come to you next and Carrie and then Dr. Ben.

Dr. Phil (01:15:50):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure given our schedule that I have adequate time to say what I want to say here.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:16:02):

Take all the time.

Dr. Phil (01:16:04):

We're preparing a report for the President of the United States about religious liberty and I think you have to follow the money. If we want to do this as an academic exercise, then we can talk about it until the cows come home. If we want to actually make a difference, then it's probably going to come down to funding. I'm not Jewish, but I've really invested in this cause and what these gentlemen are saying is not being hypersensitive. It's true. I've seen it. I was on UCLA campus the day and night they took that encampment down. I was with Jewish students on that campus that day as they stood and looked at these activists, these demonstrators saying "We want you dead." It's just that simple. We want you dead. This is not a private university. This is a public, we pay for this university, our tax dollars.

I understand free speech. I understand they can say I suppose that "we want you dead," but they can't push them around physically. They can't impede their ability to get into the library, they can't intimidate them to the point that they don't feel safe going to class. And I saw all of those things happen. I heard their lives threatened. I actually stood with them in the Halil as they called campus police for assistance, and as soon as they said what they wanted, they heard a dial tone. They just hung up. They didn't say, Hey, can't help you call. They just hung up.

If you look at the ratio of left liberal to conservatives on college campuses at the administrative level, it's 25 to one. If you look at it at the professional level, it's anywhere from 60% to 11 to 26% conservative. And at Harvard it's 80%. For example, who by the way have had \$385 million from foreign countries in the last five or six years. And listen, if you listen long enough, people will tell you what they believe. We heard from the presidents of Harvard, MIT and U Penn testifying on Capitol Hill with sickening smugness, condescension, arrogance, and dismissiveness. When asked the question, the simple question, does calling for genocide of Jews violate your policy against bullying and harassment? To really understand the gravity of that question, you just have to take out the word genocide and just put in a dictionary definition of genocide, which is the

deliberate killing of a large number of Jews with the aim of destroying the Jewish ethnic group and the nation of Israel.

Does that violate your policy against bullying and harassment? Well, the answer was it depends on context. It depends on context. If calling for the deliberate killing of a large number of Jews with the aim of destroying the Jewish ethnic group and the nation of Israel, does that violate your policy for bullying and harassment? Well, I'll give you some context. While you were intellectually selling out, I was in Israel talking to hostage families, visiting the kibbutz, going to the site of the Nova concert, interviewing the Prime Minister, looking at the damage that was done, viewing footage that others haven't seen. This is all real. This is all real. If we want to make an actual change here, we need to be prepared to make a recommendation that they may have the right to this speech, but we have the right to not pay 'em to do it.

We have the right to not use public funds to pay people to single out a group and intimidate and harass them and call for their murder. We have intellectual rot at our elite universities in the absence of critical thinking, and if we're willing to sit by and allow Jews to be singled out and continue to pay for that infrastructure, that ideology, and we have impressionable kids going for an education instead getting indoctrination from these ideologues, then we get what we ask for and you deserve better. As a commission, we need to be very clear about that and the leverage we have, I suppose, is funding of these universities. Harvard has a \$56.9 billion endowment, so maybe they don't feel like they need the money, but that's a bluff I would call that and a whole lot of other universities that are replacing critical thinking and education with intellectual rot and indoctrination.

And I think we need to be very bold about that when we have administrators endorsing students demonstrating for known terrorist groups, which by the way have killed 48 Americans. It seems to me we need to take a strong stand and be very bold in our report about this and thank all of you for having the courage to be here. You live it every day. I talk about it a lot and I just know the death threats I get are insignificant to what I'm sure you must endure. Thank you for your courage in speaking out here today. Thank everyone.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:23:20):

Thank you, Dr. Phil and members, since we did start late and powerful testimony, great questions. We have more witnesses. We're going to extend our time. We're going to end at 1PM. We'll go to 1:30 or 1:40, so if anyone has a flight they need to change, you're can change that. Or if you had to leave at Wanda, I sure respect that Reverend Franklin.

Reverend Franklin Graham (01:23:41):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got just a simple question. Where in the last 20 years has antisemitism come from? Who's behind it?

Lt Gov Patrick (01:24:09):

It may go unanswered.

Yitzchok Frankel (01:24:13):

I think the general hatred for western culture and religious values is where it comes from. It's all in bed together. I spoke at a Christian high school on Friday, shout out to Mans Academy and they had me in orthodox religious Jews speaking to them and I said, you need to stand for your religious values and the western values and when we let that slide, when we let communists take over the country through Qatar and Iranian funding, this is the result.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:24:45):

Yeah, I would agree with that. I would add just two things quickly. One is it comes from the absence of something else. So antisemitism or the hatred of the Jew to me is a indicative of a much greater societal ill, which is people looking for meaning or purpose or answers in their lives. And because they have abdicated religious institutions, then antisemitism is sort of seen as a scapegoat or rationale for why their lives have not ended up the way they wanted it to be. That's sort of my thinking on this, but as it pertains to college campuses specifically, the best example I can come up with is Luigi Mangione. So Luigi of course shot and killed Brian Thompson, the United Healthcare CEO, in broad daylight in Manhattan. Every single age demographic in the United States condemned that assassination because it was in fact an assassination with one glaring exception.

That's 18- to 24-year-olds, 18- to 24-year-olds. My generation overwhelmingly support what Luigi Mangione did because we on our college campuses have been fed a diet of political indoctrination whereby all peoples can be classified into two groups, the oppressors or the oppressed, and if you are on or if you score high enough on the victim hood Olympics, if you are oppressed enough, then you have carte blanche freedom to do whatever it is. You need to rid yourself of that oppression, which is why you can show my classmates at Harvard the most horrific images and videos of October 7th. And in fact, we were the first university in the world to show the October 7th footage, and ironically enough, Claudine Gay, the president of Harvard University refused to go because she was busy preparing for her congressional testimony the next day which went swimmingly. And you can show my classmates those images, it will not move them in any measurable way because as they will tell you, as they told me, resistance is justified when people are occupied. So whether they raped or killed or beheaded, it doesn't really matter because that's what they had to do and they had a permission structure to do that thing. That's how I view antisemitism is the moral abdication or perhaps the permission structure to blame others for your lack of personal fulfillment in life.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:26:43):

Dr. Phil, you want to make a follow up? Reverend Franklin, were you finished? Did you want to make a follow up? Reverend Franklin,

Reverend Franklin Graham (01:26:53):

In the last 25 years there has been a seed of antisemitism that has taken root, and my question is who's behind that? Maybe the coach knows.

Coach Pearl (01:27:16):

I just want to go on record that I'm answering Reverend Graham, if there's a question about faith or religion, this is really,

Lt. Gov Patrick (01:27:26):

We all feel the same way, coach, so you're just fine.

Coach Pearl (01:27:30):

Reverend I, and I know you've been to Jerusalem many, many times and some people are afraid to go there for whatever reason. I just think it brings us all together. I am just amazed by seeing all the faiths there at the same time, free to worship. And Reverend, I think that faith can be a choice. In this sense religion has divided us in many ways instead of uniting us, and I think that's part of the foundational problem with antisemitism. I just choose to look at our faith and our father God the same way you do

Lt Gov Patrick (01:28:16):

Dr. Phil. Do you have a follow-up outcome to you? Carrie?

Dr. Phil (01:28:19):

I just wanted to share last week I had the honor to sit and interview the Israeli ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Leiter, and I asked him that very question. I said, where does this come from? I think of late; it is the oppressed-oppressor sort of dichotomy. And he said he is by the way, his son, a medical student was killed in this conflict and a wonderful young man. But he said after much study that he does believe that there is this conspiracy theory that is bandied about that the Jews are in control of all the financial markets. They're in control of everything that's going on that dominates economy and society and that they're manipulating that and it gives people someone to blame someone that they can push off their woes onto. And he also said that he really believes that it is fear of the unknown, that there's a difference, that the Jews have different practices, that they sometimes look different, and it's that fear of the unknown and difference that it's easy to hate what you don't understand and that those two things that he believes has driven this for centuries and he still sees it and hears it today in Israel and around the world.

He said, you even see it in the United Nations in talking with people. So he thinks that it is this conspiracy that Jews control the world economic markets and that they fear what they don't understand.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:30:16):

Carrie,

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:30:20):

Thank you, Mr. Frankel. This is for you. You described very painful experiences at UCLA and I take that very serious. At the same time, many of the students who I've spoken to personally created who created those encampments say that they were protesting the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and their university's financial ties to that war. So I need to ask you, in a country built on religious liberty in the First Amendment, do you believe someone can stand firmly against antisemitism including what you experienced and at the same time condemn the mass killing of Palestinians in Gaza or reject political Zionism or not support the political state of Israel? Or do you believe that speaking out about what many Americans view as genocide in Gaza should be treated as anti-Semitic? Because in my view, the United States cannot and must not make loyalty to a particular theology about Israel, a litmus test for protected speech or moral legitimacy.

Yitzchok Frankel (01:31:20):

Charlie Kirk said that Jew hate is brain rot. Some people don't have brains I don't need. I'm not going to assist them in setting a double standard for the Israeli government and the Jewish people as they fight to defend themselves. These were students calling for ADA within days after October 7th, before Israel had even entered Gaza. So it's not about them and their using Palestinian civilian death, which is horrendous and horrible. They're using it as a prop and it doesn't matter. My religious beliefs are violated. You don't get to block me because I'm Zionist and a Jew. You want to protest Israel? Great 100%. Go ahead and do it. But the university let them wear masks even though there's a mask ban. They violated all time and time, place and manner restrictions, amplified sounds. It went on for years. They kept doing this time after time again, and that's what the judge saw and said, that's not okay. They can protest. They can't block Jews and you can't assist them in doing it.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:32:22):

I'm really grateful that we're having this discussion because I think this is a topic that is really affecting so many Americans. Rabbi Shapiro, he's based in New York. I invited him here today, but he's not here today. He says, and I would love your opinion on this, American Jews are increasingly treated as less fully American. Our loyalty question, our belonging made conditional because Zionist ideology falsely claims Israel is the nation state of Jews everywhere and that every Jew is nationally tied to it. He says this framing is antisemitic at its core. It strips us of our identity as Americans recasts us as foreigners in our own country and arms antisemites with accusations of divided loyalties and collective guilt for actions we neither chose nor control. No other foreign country does this. No sovereign state claims to politically represent an entire worldwide group defined by religion or heritage and bind its members to its deeds. Yet Jews alone bear this unique unjust burden, that dangerous lie must be rejected openly and firmly. The remedy is clear civic education that teaches unconditional American belonging through citizenship alone, not ethnicity, heritage or any fabricated foreign tie. We are Americans full stop and we reject any doctrine that treats us otherwise. Would you say that statement is antisemitic?

Yitzchok Frankel (01:33:43):

What I'll say is that Natan Sharansky says there's three things that you shouldn't do with Israel. You shouldn't delegitimize it, you shouldn't demonize it, and you shouldn't apply a double standard. You can abide by those three things. You're not antisemitic.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:33:56):

So, by not being a Zionist, does that make you an antisemite?

Yitzchok Frankel (01:34:01):

I don't think you need to be a Zionist to support a country that defends itself and is free and religious in a hostile neighborhood.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:34:08):

Is anti-Zionism antisemitism?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:34:11):

Yes,

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:34:11):

It is. It is?

Yitzchok Frankel (01:34:13):

Yes,

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:34:15):

To take that point for a second.

Lt. Gov Patrick (01:34:17):

Let me back up. I didn't want to step over that answer. I didn't know you were still, both of you still talking. Just

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:34:22):

To be clear, is anti-Zionism antisemitism? Yes,

Yitzchok Frankel (01:34:25):

It is

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:34:25):

Under IHRA?

Lt. Gov Patrick (01:34:29):

Rabbi, you're up next. You're not sure that definition. So, what is the definition?

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:34:31):

I would love to speak to that. Undoubtedly anti-Zionism is antisemitism and undoubtedly, and one does not have to support the specific policies of the government of Israel, but to not support the right of Israel to exist, which is what anti-Zionists do. While not taking that same stand to the 28 Muslim countries and 13 Christian countries in this world is a double standard, is hypocrisy and is absolutely antisemitism.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:35:08):

I think it's also important that we not make Islamophobic remarks while we're here today. I would appreciate that.

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:35:18):

I just want to say,

God forbid was anything like that said. But if the Jewish people are the only people that you deny the right to have its own state, that is absolutely a double standard hypocrisy and antisemitism.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:35:36):

Well, as you know, I'm a Catholic. I'm a Catholic, and Catholics do not embrace Zionism, just so you know. So are all Catholics Antisemites, according to you,

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:35:46):

As I said, anti-Zionism by denying the right of the Jews to have their own state while not saying the same for any other people's, that is a double standard hypocrisy and antisemitism.

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:36:00):

So just to be clear, are Catholics antisemites?

Lt Gov Patrick (01:36:03):

Carrie? Excuse me, I'm going to interrupt the discussion. Our committee is focused on religious liberty taken from all people, whether it be Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, we've had all those witnesses here. This is not a commission on defining religions or calling out any theology or this is not the commission for that, right?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:36:25):

But we're talking about a foreign nation. So I want to be clear on what the definition of antisemitism is. If I don't support the political state of Israel, am I an antisemite? Yes or no?

Lt Gov Patrick (01:36:36):

They already answered, asked and answered.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:36:38):

Yes, according to you on the record, yes, I don't support the political state of Israel.

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:36:44):

I don't personally label people, but what I'm saying is if somebody states, if somebody says they're an anti-Zionist, they are saying about themselves that they have a double standard and hypocrisy and they're taking anti-Semitic positions.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:37:04):

Okay, Carrie, you feel like you have your questions in.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:37:08):

I don't agree with that because as a Catholic, I don't agree that the new modern state of Israel has any biblical prophecy meaning at all. So that's my stance and I'm Catholic.

Audience member:

Catholic support the Muslims.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:37:24):

Dr. Ben,

Dr. Ben Carson (01:37:27):

First of all, I want to thank you all for your passionate stance and bringing some clarity to this issue. I've known a lot of Jewish people, worked with a lot of Jewish people, some of the finest people that I know sitting in the front row here. Dr. Henry Brim, 25 years, the chairman of neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins is one of the kindest fairest people I've ever worked with. And I wonder why do people really think that Jews are separate entity in the United States of America? Jews have been here since the very beginning. They too were interested in a place where they could practice their religion freely. When George Washington's army was about out of cash, it was him, Solomon a Jew, very rich Jew who gave up virtually all of his money and encouraged other people to give, which saved the union. I don't know that we would've ever become a country without the input of Jews. So that's something we need to remember. We need to remember that during the civil rights movement who was standing right there with the rest of us who were interested in freedom for everybody in our society, it was the Jews. Many of them died for the cause of civil rights. And I just want to make that point that they are not a separate entity from Americans. They're very important part. And how do we get people to recognize that and not think of Jews as something separate?

And by the way, as a Yale-y, I should be happy to hear all this about Harvard.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:39:30):

Okay, any other members have any other questions? How about Allison?

Allison Ho (01:39:35):

First of all, thank you to all of you, not just for being here today, but for your courage in standing up because we know that when attacks come, it's not just against the person. You're being attacked to send a message to others. And so thank you so much for your courage in standing up. Before I went to law school, I had the great privilege of teaching at a Christian liberal arts college, and I remember having a discussion with a former Colleen graduate school. I said, well, don't you feel restricted? Don't you feel limited? And I said, I have more freedom as an intellectual, as an academic at my Christian liberal arts school than I would have on any other campus, certainly not on an elite campus. And I just want to underscore what Dr. Phil said. When the college presidents were asked, they weren't asked, does this view violate the first amendment?

They were asked, does this violate your rules, your own rules on bullying? And couldn't answer that question. It is the hypocrisy. It is the hypocrisy to wave around the free speech banner for this when most college and university campuses, if anything, have been free speech zones. So I think as the commission, as we gather to try to focus on religious liberty, on increasing religious liberty in ways that we can suggest and recommend to the President to increase it, I think it is vitally important to acknowledge that for years college campuses around the country have been the furthest thing from places where free speech has been allowed to flourish. So we should be horrified, but we should not be surprised at what we see happening on particularly elite college campuses across the country. But thank you again for being here. We're very grateful for your testimony and your presence and your courage.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:41:58):

Carrie, do you have a follow up? Your light was on?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:42:01):

Yeah, I just want to confirm because you didn't really answer my question about the Rabbi. Were his statements antisemitic?

Rabbi Ari Berman (01:42:08):

If, he's applying the double standard, then yes.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:42:10):

Can I answer the question?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:42:11):

Yeah, please. Thank you.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:42:12):

Are you referring to Rabbi Shapiro of the empty wagon?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:42:15):

Yako Shapiro?

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:42:15):

Yeah, so he's an incredibly discredited Rabbi. I think he lives in Lakewood. He wrote this book called The Empty Wagon, where he deliberately mis-translated works from rabbinic sage is like Ahan and Wasserman for example. That's why he doesn't have a community of his own synagogue because, I encourage everyone learn Hebrew, he deliberately mistranslate the text, whether it's antisemitic or not. I mean who really cares? That's kind of the point we were discussing earlier. You can hate Jews or not hate Jews. I don't really mind. What I do mind is when people violate the law, and that's why this commission is so important. So hate Jews think they control the banks think they have horns. I mean go for it. I don't mean you, but one can go for it. But what matters is when they're violating the law, and that's what the purpose of this commission is, whether they're violating the law against Jewish students or Muslim students or Christian students, that is when it becomes a federal issue.

So, as it pertains to foreign countries, look in Saudi Arabia, it's literally illegal to practice Christianity. But interestingly that was not asked. So if we want to apply the same standard against all foreign countries, then absolutely any country that discriminates against people based on their religion should probably not be considered an American ally. But I find the fixation on Israel exclusively when that is the only country in the Middle East that guarantees free access to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. I encourage all of you, next time you're in Israel, go to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, go where Jesus was baptized, go to Capernaum, go to Nazareth, go to Galilee. Those are really good places to go to and thankfully it is under democratic control. I unfortunately can't say the same thing about Jewish sites that are under Muslim control in the Middle East. So for example, as a Jew, I'm literally not allowed to enter the Jewish holy sites that are controlled by predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East, which is a big problem and I'm happy to discuss that more. But I would imagine for the relevancy of this commission, we care about American students, we care about American citizens and any American citizen who's being attacked, Jew, Christian, Muslim, that should be an issue of concern for this commission and for President Trump.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:00):

Thank you. Yeah, just a follow up, just a follow up. One last follow up. Since we've mentioned Israel total of 17 times, are you willing to condemn what Israel has done in Gaza?

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:44:13):

No, because I unilaterally,

I unilaterally reject that it's not a genocide. The only genocide ever carried out was on October 7th when Hamas tried killing every man, woman, and child. They could possibly find

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:21):

70,000. Hang on, 70,000 innocent civilians killed? Lemme respond.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:44:30):

As chair of the committee,

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:32):

She's already, I think it's important we have this discussion.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:44:34):

I agree. I'm happy to answer. And Carrie, it is important.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:36):

I think we'd be great friends. Yeah,

Lt Gov Patrick (01:44:38):

Happy to answer. Carrie, we have had the discussion. Good questions, good answers. This is a commission of religious liberty. If there's another commission,

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:46):

This issue in America, I don't know why we're talking about a foreign country.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:44:49):

To be fair, you brought it up

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:51):

You did.

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:44:52):

At no point in my testimony did I mention Israel, I was very clear about American jury. Oh, you did. Again, I did not mention Israel. But that's technically not true. I did not mention Israel.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:45:01):

This can be another discussion on another day and you two can have coffee. Let's go to Rabbi to close this up and then we'll wrap this panel

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:45:09):

On. Thank you Chairman. I thought I conclude this session with just two comments. The first is just building off the double standard that to which our witnesses referred, I am in a unique situation because I sit on two separate religious liberty commissions. I'm on the President's domestic Liberty Commission and I'm also a member of the US Commission for International Religious Freedom. And of course, everything I'm saying now is not representing any of my fellow commissioners on either commission, it's just me. But what's so striking to me, especially as the past year and the bid has gone on, is that if you're on the US Commission, national Religious Freedom, you are constantly seeing reports of genuine persecution and massacres around the world of religious groups. And you see by and large in the world and certainly in the University quad, total silence. You see what's been described by the State Department as a genuine genocide by China of the Muslim Uyghurs and not a single mention in contrast to libelous descriptions of a situation in Gaza where as described by the World Health Organization today or yesterday, the

number of child vaccinations in Gaza and the number of therefore children in Gaza has actually gone up since October 7th, 2023.

Thereby reflecting how titles, how terms such as genocide applied to that conflict is utilized to describe what has occurred in Gaza is either ignorant or pernicious and often both. My second comment is that one of the great privileges I've had is to travel around this country and to speak to different religious communities and religious institutions. Before October 7th and after October 7th, I've spoken at Catholic universities. I've spoken at Latter Day St. Universities. I've spoken to evangelical Christians in gatherings in Dallas and Little Rock in North Carolina. This is an incredibly diverse country and the one thing we should be careful about is speaking on behalf of all members of a religious community, even if one is a member of that, a religious community. I certainly wouldn't claim to speak for all Jews on all subjects. We're not known for agreeing on everything, and that certainly should be said for speaking about Catholics in America by whose friendship I've been blessed.

And so I thought maybe I'll just close our session by just citing the words of our incredible Secretary of State who also happens to be a very devout Catholic. Marco Rubio who said the following, he was speaking in Israel, but he was reflecting on the larger state of the Jewish people and the persecution had suffered throughout the centuries. Michael Rubio has said standing in the what is called the pilgrimage road near the Temple Mount, and he said as follows, "to stand here today on the very road where not 2000 years ago, so many from everywhere venture to fulfill that desire to be closer to the creator is a humbling and honoring experience as you go through the layers of history." This is Secretary Rubio, "You realize that all the civilizations that conquered the city, all the ones who tore it down and built on top are all gone. The Roman empires no more nor any of the others that sought to conquer and rule this land, but one people remain, they have returned for God's promise is eternal and it is perfect and his word is always true." That's the secretary. Thanks very much.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:49:10):

Members, we've had a little different question and answering here, but I think it's been healthy. You wanted to bring up several points. Carrie, I hope you feel you've had that opportunity and other members, I want to thank the witnesses. One closing comment here about education. So, Texas, because of President Trump helped us get the largest school choice program across the line last year for a hundred thousand students, a billion dollars. In the first three days, over 60,000 families signed up and most of the schools that they're going to are different schools of faith. So I believe there is this hunger, not just by I lose track of the generation. Is it ZXY? but of the latest generation? What am I on Shabu? I mean, you messed up Christmas so I can mess up what my alphabet here

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:50:05):

We're Gen Z. I think you guys are boomers, no offense

Lt Gov Patrick (01:50:08):

Alright,

Shabbos Kestenbaum (01:50:11):

But you all look very young,

Lt Gov Patrick (01:50:13):

Dr. Phil. We didn't have letters for us, did we? We're just getting older, but I do think there's that hunger. I see it everywhere that young people are looking for relevance and obviously for the parents because we are going to surpass our a hundred thousand applicants for private schools pretty quickly in probably just a few weeks, and I think that's a very positive sign, a very positive sign. I want to thank all the witnesses, all the commission members, thank you for all of your questions and now we'll go onto the next panel. Thank you very much.

Dr. Ben Carson (01:52:23):

We are going to be moving on with a second panel in just a couple of minutes, so please make yourselves comfortable.

Well because we have a time issue and all the panelists are here and half the panelists are here on this side. We have with us today for this panel about antisemitism in our communities where we live and work. Liat Cohen-Reeis, it's pretty good. And Pastor JC Cooper, Dr. Moshe Glick, and Jonathan Gross. We are delighted that you all are with us. We know you have some dynamic testimony and we'll start with Ms. Reeis,

Liat Cohen-Reeis (01:54:11):

Members of the commission. Thank you for this opportunity. I'm the founder and director of the Christian and Jewish Alliance in San Diego, California. Last year I became the director of the antisemitism task force at Stand With Us, an international organization devoted to combating antisemitism and misinformation on Israel through education and outreach. I'm here to share about the hostility we have faced from antisemitic agitators who continuously disrupt our worship services. With the help of First Liberty Institute, we have filed a lawsuit seeking federal protection so that we can worship in peace. As a devout Jew, I believe that Hashem, God created an everlasting covenant with Abraham described in the Torah. My religious beliefs call on me to support and pray for Israel as a safe homeland for the Jewish people. The term commonly used by Jews worldwide to describe our connection to the Jewish ancestral homeland of Israel.

An integral part of my religious, ethnic, and cultural identity is Zionism. The massacre on October 7th, 2023 in Israel was the largest slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust. During that time, many of us in the San Diego Jewish community felt isolated, yet I refused to believe that we were actually alone. I reached out to local Christian leaders, including the Mission Church, and we formed the Christian and Jewish Alliance based on our shared religious beliefs about Israel. At first, we regularly hosted events bringing Christians and Jews together from intimate Shabbat dinners at local churches to large worship events. But hostile agitators have consistently targeted our public events, attacking us every time we've come together. Our first event was an outdoor worship service in October of 2024 at a Jewish community center, a group of individuals tried to drown out our message with sirens and bullhorns because we were in a gated area within a large field, they had to stay at a distance. But the agitators, along with code pink San Diego posted on social media saying, we need to disturb their peace. Little did we know how these harassers would make

their threats a terrifying reality in the year ahead. Their campaign of disruption and harassment at our worship services in 2025 has made me feel even more alone than when I founded the Alliance. One of the ultimate goals of antisemitism is isolating Jews by attacking anyone who dares to support them. That's why Christians who support us have experienced antisemitism too. Pastor JC Cooper will share about that. Next.

Pastor JC Cooper (01:57:09):

Thank you very much. Check, check,

Perfect. Thank you. Thank you very much, members of the commission, and it is such a joy to be here today for this opportunity to share with each of you the truth of what is happening on the West coast between Jews and Christians as we seek to unite under the banner of religious freedom. I serve as the assistant pastor at the Mission Church alongside our lead pastor David Menard in the beautiful beach city of Carlsbad, California. But I also not only speak to you as a pastor, but also as a husband and as a father to four children in which both my wife and children have been subject to hate and discrimination in our own house of worship. After the October 7th massacre, our church answered the biblical conviction to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish people in their time of need. We are deeply honored and blessed to partner with Liat and the Christian Jewish Alliance.

Our interfaith worship service on March 19th was a part of this mission. Inside our sanctuary, we prayed, we worshiped, and we listened to an educational talk from Dr. Einat Wilf, who is an Israeli citizen, a former member of the Israeli Knesset and an expert on the current conflict in Israel. The sanctuary was packed with more than 450 people, Jews and Christians linked arms and held hands during worship in unity. It was a beautiful testimony of unity, the very unity that our nation needs today. But the atmosphere completely changed When a hostile agitator stood up inside the sanctuary and began screaming hateful language about Jews and accusing both Jews and Christians of genocide, that first agitator resisted members of our church-led safety team to escort him out. But soon after Dr. Wilf began speaking again, a second, agitator began screaming and resisting removal, stalling the service yet again and frightening worshipers.

This systematically occurred seven different times from agitators who pretended to be guests strategically placed themselves in our sanctuary and timed their hostile rants to be as disruptive as possible. Each new agitator shouted in hate and the terror and distraction became palpable in a room full of Christians and Jewish adults and children, including my own. One, agitator screamed to free Palestine from “the river to the sea,” calling for the elimination of the Jewish homeland. Inside our church, they screamed epithets at and in front of my children, including “ef you” over and over again. When we began to guide this particular agitator out of the sanctuary, she forcefully resisted, slammed her body into me and others, and we almost fell down our balcony stairs. While the tension grew inside our sanctuary, a mob was amassing outside of our front entrance doors. They screamed through bullhorns blaring, sirens right outside the church, shouting chants like Mission Church, you can't hide.

We charge you with genocide. They falsely accused our members and our Jewish guests of being Nazis. You imagine calling Jewish people Nazis. My peaceable invitation to speak with these agitators was met with violent rhetoric and hostile body language. One man even charged the entrance of our front doors, our worship service and our opportunity to learn about antisemitism was shattered through the hostile anger and hate of these agitators. Instead, we experienced antisemitism firsthand, our congregation, our Jewish guests, my wife, my children, and I literally feared for our safety. As the agitators dominated the narrow sidewalk out in front of our church doors, they block the exit with their bodies, signs, flags, carts, and blaring bullhorns. The mob completely blocked our path from exiting the church and as several hundred worshipers attempted to leave, we were literally cornered, shielding women and children. Although we had coordinated with the police as a proactive measure, they were hesitant to help because the disruptors were on a public sidewalk and they were afraid to show favoritism to one group over the other.

When violence became inevitable, the police alongside of our church led safety team, finally cleared a narrow path. Nevertheless, the mob screamed anti-Semitic slurs and hateful rhetoric. Terrified families begged me to be personally escorted to their vehicles due to safety reasons. I have never experienced anything like that mob. Nobody should have to pay that kind of price to worship in their own church or synagogue, and to learn about how to stand with our Jewish community against antisemitism, but to our shock and horror. These same agitators returned on Easter Sunday to our church, the holiest day of the Christian calendar to harass members and guests and.

[SECOND VIDEO BEGINS HERE]

Pastor JC Cooper (00:00:00):

Photos of bloody and dismembered children. Once again, the noise and hostility and the visual elements of these agitators was inescapable both outside and inside of our sanctuary. Easter is supposed to be the most joyous occasion for Christians. We had planned children's activities outside in our parking lot, which include a bouncy obstacle course, animal petting zoo Easter crafts stories about Jesus, but we had to bring these children inside for their physical and emotional safety. As a matter of fact, hundreds of children were impacted literally to the point of frantic crying because of the hostile noise and the aggression of these agitators even inside their Sunday school classrooms. There was a no escape from the blaring, sirens and deafening chants many first-time guests drove away. Instead of being able to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed at our Easter services, our religious liberty to proclaim Jesus as Lord was hindered and obstructed by these agitators. After we peacefully invited amicable discussion, the agitators threatened to come back on Mother's Day and then again and then again prompting us to retain First Liberty Council and send a warning letter. Yet again, the same agitators return to disrupt our next service with the Christian and Jewish Alliance On September 7th.

Lait Cohen-Reeis (00:01:40):

On September 7th, we planned an interfaith worship service bringing multiple synagogues and churches together. We met at the Legacy International Center, a Christian venue that regularly host

worship services and is also supportive of Israel. I thought it would be a safe space for Jews and Christians to worship there. Together we invited rabbis and pastors to pray and speak and we sang in both Hebrew and English. We did not advertise the event publicly, but invited only our distribution list. Over 480 guests registered, but right before the doors opened, the center staff came to me to say they're here. I looked up and saw angry disruptors dressed in black wearing face masks, waving the Palestinian flag on the sidewalk right outside of the event space. They laid down dolls along the driveway so that guests had to drive over the dolls as the agitators screamed baby killers at them through their megaphones.

My friends, Ruth, Stephanie and Marca, all our devout Jews whose worship experience that day was ruined and I'd like to share their stories. As Ruth and her husband was driving into the event in their small car, agitators blocked the entrance blaring sirens and shouting angry chants through bullhorns. Several disruptors were swarming back and forth across the driveway, holding signs with swastikas and blocking cars with her bodies. When Ruth pulled up a pink haired woman wearing a full black face mask jumped onto the hood of her car screaming and banging on her windshield. When my friend Marca tried to drive in the agitators blocked her car too on foot, she tried to ask the agitators to get off the private property and four or five of them then surrounded her, shoving their bullhorn into her face and aggressively filming her on their phones. She only escaped because our friend Rodney put himself in harm's way to protect her. The police did nothing to stop the harassers.

When my friend Stephanie pulled up in her car, she was blocked and her car was sworn by agitators. One disruptor announced over a bullhorn. "Next, we have the House of Israel President." She's super racist and super hateful. Another agitator screamed at her to get out of the car and fight while the third smacked her car window and tried to shove a sign inside of it. The disruptors were so aggressive that many guests drove away altogether. Over 100 guests who registered did not attend. Once the worship service started, the disruptors bang drums and siren and blared sirens the entire time the sirens were so loud that they almost drowned out. Our speakers impeding on our rights to free speech. Many guests had ringing in their ears for days after the event. After the event, two of the speakers and I were followed by a parked car that was obviously waiting for us for safety. We had to run into the lobby as the car sped off scared. We needed a security guard to walk us to our car. All we wanted was to gather safely, pray and worship together.

This is what antisemitism looks like today. This is happening not just in San Diego but all over the country. In 2019, president Trump signed an executive order adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition, also known as IHRA, which states antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and or their property towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. That is exactly what we are experiencing. The agitators expressed hate towards us at our worship services, intimidating, obstructing and interfering with our free exercise. They targeted our Christian friends and allies trying to isolate us by punishing anyone who dares to support us. When people of different faiths

come together in worship and unity, this helps to diffuse conflict and overcome hatred. Our efforts should be celebrated and not vilified. Because we refuse to be scared into silence,

We are planning our next event together and it will be beautiful, but we need protection to ensure everyone's safety. In closing, I have three recommendations for the commission to consider. First school boards need to adopt IHRA to teach accurate definitions of antisemitism and to ensure that school staff and the younger generation understand how it manifests today. Similarly, IHRA needs to be adopted in city governments so that local police forces receive proper training on how to recognize antisemitism and how to enforce existing laws so that ministries like ours can receive meaningful protection. Finally, I suggest that the local police forces receive training on how to address protests that cross the line into harassment, aggression, and violence. Thank you for considering these important issues and for this opportunity to share our stories.

Dr. Carson (00:07:37):

Well, thank you. It's

Pastor JC Cooper (00:07:39):

I have one more go with Dr. Carson if that's okay.

Dr. Carson (00:07:43):

Absolutely.

Pastor JC Cooper (00:07:43):

I didn't ever think I'd be asking Dr. Carson for permission to keep speaking. I would echo Liat's recommendations and add two more. We need consistent enforcement of existing laws. They are there for a reason, but we also need additional laws to protect public places of worship. For example, the FACE Act's provision protecting places of religious worship should be codified separately into federal law. You see, the disruptions have deeply impacted our church, which has taken major safety precautions. Our members literally face this difficult choice to suppress their voices, to support Israel or to risk their own safety. To stand for biblical truth. God's word calls Jesus's church to support Israel and her people. Our conviction comes from both the Old Testament and the New Testament, but specifically Genesis and Deuteronomy. When God makes an everlasting and unconditional covenant with Abraham and the nation of Israel to be as light to the nations, setting his love upon his chosen people, the Bible teaches that God loves when his people are protected by others even at their own expense when they stand with Israel.

The mission church takes God's words to Abraham seriously, "I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you." I would encourage my brothers and sisters in the evangelical Protestant world. If your current theology has somehow taught you not to stand with Israel, read your Bible, rethink your position. Bruce Pearl said it well. Replacement theology is dangerous because it puts the Jews on the outside of what God's promise clearly said, and God is not a man that can lie. He's faithful to his covenant forever and everlasting. To translate these beliefs into application, we as shepherds of the Mission church faithfully teach our members the whole council of the Bible and we provide opportunities for our congregation to help them understand the

modern-day problems that are facing Jews both domestically and abroad. As difficult as the safety concerns are, the deepest harm comes in the form of fear and oppression.

Behind the agitators and their volatile chaos is a pointed message. Real is the real enemy, and if you stand with them, we will silence you and shame you. Even in the sacred spaces where you worship, the agitators have directly attacked our Christian faith. This harmful ideology has seeped even into our own church, especially among young people. The most concerning element is not whether our church members are willing to stand for truth in the face of opposition. It's when truth is manipulated by fear of violence associated in standing with our Jewish neighbors against antisemitism, which is why antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem. Antisemitism is everyone's problem because it is an assault on religious liberty. We cannot let the agitators, the influencers, or even antisemitic rhetoric disguised as academic rhetoric scare us into silence. God clearly calls the church to support the Jewish community and it should be our honor to faithfully do so for the Jew first and then for the Gentile.

God's church cannot be silent while Jews are facing anti-Semitic attacks. That's why we retain First Liberty Institute in Jones Day and together with the Alliance and our friend Ruth Mastron, we filed a federal lawsuit in November of 2025. The FACE Act should protect every place of worship in America from interference by agitators seeking to disrupt our free exercise of religion. In closing, we are so thankful for this commission's courageous commitment to protecting religious freedom. We're thankful for the Attorney General and Assistant Attorney General and the many others who are defending people of faith in Minnesota, in New Jersey, in California, and across this great nation. We are hopeful that the United States government will stand with us too so that our right to worship will be protected and existing laws will be enforced not only at a federal level, but at the state and the local levels where people like us on the West coast struggle. The freedom to worship without fear of persecution is sacred, especially at a time when Jews and Christians undeniably are under attack. Thank you for listening to our story. May the light shine brighter in the dark than the darkness as we stand together against antisemitism and commission. May God bless you with all his wisdom and boldness. Thank you.

Dr. Carson (00:13:21):

We appreciate the courage that you two have exhibited in light of so much opposition. Now we'd like to hear from Dr. Glick.

Dr. Moshe Glick (00:13:34):

Thank you, chairman Lieutenant Governor Patrick and vice Chair Dr. Carson and esteemed members of the Religious Liberties Commission. Good morning. My name is Moshe Glick. I'm a father of three grandfather of four dentists from West Orange, New Jersey, and I'm likely the only panelist here who has been arrested charged with four felonies that could have meant over 10 years in prison. You can't really call yourself a civil rights activist until you've felt the cold steal of handcuffs close around your wrists stood defiantly for the mugshot and been fingerprinted like a common criminal. My crime defending a 64-year-old man from a violent assault during an unauthorized protest that blocked an intimidated worshipers at congregation Ohr Torah in West Orange, New Jersey. On November 13th, 2024, pro Hamas agitators disrupted a peaceful Jewish

Christian gathering, praying for peace in Israel, the safe return of the hostages from Gaza, reciting Psalms and biblical verses and exploring purchasing a home in Israel.

One protestor Altaf Sharif ignored police orders charged past officers, seized an individual who turned out to be 64-year-old David Silberberg in a life-threatening chokehold body, slammed him to the ground, all captured on video, then provided false verbal and written statements to the police. Mr. Sharif faced no charges. The police didn't even investigate. When my attorney pressed the Essex County prosecutor's office in New Jersey, the response was chilling. No one else was investigated because no one else committed a crime. Only your client. This despite clear video evidence of a violent hate crime being submitted to the prosecutor's office and the assault being fully reported and documented in the official West Orange Police Department incident report. Video evidence initially suppressed by West Orange Police clearly showed the assault, deception and targeted disruption of Jewish religious life. This is the hallmark of a weaponized justice system, one that buries evidence to serve an agenda.

In stark contrast, I, the one who stepped in to stop a brutal assault was the only one arrested. I repeatedly pleaded for the police to help, but they did nothing. As a doctor and volunteer EMT I recognized late signs of a constricted airway. His legs buckling, a critical indicator of impending loss of consciousness. Only then after all other attempts fail, did I use the small six-inch flashlight I was carrying to illuminate the dark area that night to intervene and free him by aiming to tap Mr. Sharif on the back, rogue local prosecutors selectively targeted me the Jewish event organizer while letting the video recorded aggressor walk free. I faced four felony charges including Second Degree Bias Intimidation, Third Degree Aggravated Assault, and two weapons offenses related to the flashlight. I was indicted twice. The first indictment was so procedurally flawed, the prosecutors abandoned it.

A law-abiding citizen volunteer EMT, nonprofit, nonprofit co-founder and philanthropist was zero criminal record suddenly stared into an abyss. Years in prison, the potential loss of my dental license, the separation from my wife, children, and grandchildren, my faith in America's justice system was utterly shattered. I rejected a diversionary program, pretrial intervention because that would mean a tacit admission that I had done something wrong for defending an individual from a vicious assault. I fought for truth for justice for the principle that defending others from hatred must never be criminalized. This battle came at a great cost financially, mentally and spiritually and had a heavy impact on my family. We all paid a huge price. Just over two weeks ago on his final day in office, January 20th, 2026, New Jersey governor Phil Murphy granted me a full pardon. I was never convicted of a crime and I'm profoundly thankful to Governor Murphy.

Heartfelt thanks to US attorney General, Harmeet Dhillon, Jonathan Gross and Orlando Sonza at the Department of Justice for their landmark FACE Act complaint that exposed this injustice. Special recognition to Jonathan Gross, the DOJ attorney under Assistant Attorney General Dhillon whose foresight and fortitude brought the very first face act case to protect houses of worship. He is the true hero and without his courage, none of this would've been possible and deep gratitude to Weil, Gotshal & Manges led by partner [inaudible] for stepping up pro bono in October, 2025 when others hesitated Due to the taint of my criminal charges. If the Essex County New Jersey

prosecutor can weaponize the government against honest, hardworking citizens like me, shielding aggressors while targeting defenders, we are all in great peril. I therefore ask Attorney General Pam Bondi, assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon, and the heroes working at the Department of Justice to investigate this matter fully.

I am all into help providing evidence, testimony or whatever is needed to ensure accountability and prevent such malicious prosecution and selective enforcement from happening to any other American. If police and prosecutors shield aggressors and criminalized defenders in these circumstances, what will happen to communities of faith all over this great nation? Jews have long been the canary in the coal mine. Whenever antisemitism rises, it's a sign that democratic values, religious tolerance and civil liberties are in decline. I urge this commission to confront these egregious actions inverting justice risk, normalizing antisemitism within law enforcement and turning the canaries silence into a dire warning for freedoms far beyond our community. History's warnings rings clear across the centuries. Societies that fail to protect their Jews or worse turn against them often hasten their own decline. When antisemitism becomes policy or norm, it signals deeper erosion of democratic values, tolerance and liberty.

Ancient Egypt enslaved the Jews oppressed them harshly and defied their cries for freedom only to be broken by devastating plagues that struck at the heart of its power. The once mighty empire pinnacle of ancient civilization was forever diminished, never regained its former glory. Babylon raised Jerusalem, exiled its people and soon vanished from history's stage. Mighty Rome crushed the Jewish quest for self-rule, destroyed the temple only to fade into the history books. Nazi Germany boasted a thousand-year Reich rooted in hatred of the Jews. Yet that hatred devoured it collapsing in just 12 years, by 1945. All four of my wife's grandparents survived the Shoah, two endured Auschwitz, a testament that unchecked hatred devours its hosts. These are not coincidences. They form solemn recurring patterns. Societies that oppress the Jewish people sow the seeds of their own erosion. History's timeless caution, defend the vulnerable or risk.

Joining the shadows of fallen empires, the pattern is unmistakable, yet deeper truth rooted in our shared heritage offers real hope. In Genesis 12:3 God declares, "I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse. And all people on earth will be blessed through you." This is no mere verse. It is a divine law of history. Nations that bless the Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham prosper, those that curse them invite ruin. America's extraordinary success flows from its historic embrace of Judeo-Christian values and fierce protection of religious freedoms for all who seek to worship God. We cannot allow violent protestors and radicalization to threaten that divine blessing. I did not come here to beg for protection. I came to call for action. Divine deliverance for the Jewish people will come as it always has over our 3,500-year history, but America faces a profound choice at this pivotal moment, our founding fathers built this nation on the bedrock of the Hebrew Bible drawing timeless principles of liberty, justice, and moral law from scripture to shape the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the soul of American self-government.

They saw in ancient Israel a divine model of equality under God, ideas that ignited the American experiment and invited almighty God's favor. True patriots must stand united now to defend

religious freedom for every American and every faith community, the sacred God-given right to pray and worship without fear or favor by upholding these biblical principles of liberty, freedom to worship God and moral truth, we secure God's continued blessing on this nation, fortify its moral code and ensure lasting prosperity for generations to come. I am no great rabbi or scholar. Some might say I'm not even a real doctor, but we Jews believe (it was a Seinfeld reference) but we Jews, but we Jews believe that heavens, that sincere words from the heart carry weight and summons heaven's grace, so I leave you with the ancient priestly blessing from Numbers 6:24, [unintelligible].

"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May this blessing guide your work, steal your resolve and protect all who stand against hatred." We cannot allow this to merely be a good meeting, one that ends with nice words, polite handshakes, and a handful of tweets that fade away. We stand at a pivotal moment in history, one that calls us to rise together. By addressing Jew hatred, anti-religious extremism and all forces attacking those who worship God with courage and clarity, we can safeguard the values that define our republic and secure a stronger, more unified future for all of America. I offer my assistance to this commission and the White House, recommendations, implementation, whatever is needed, this is the hill I am willing to die on. God bless President Trump. God bless this great nation. Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:24:58):

Thank you. I can assure you this is not going to be a commission that just finishes a report and no one ever reads it. The President will see it and we intend to give him action points that we have learned from this, whether it's an executive order or action from Congress. So we are in this. We were in this all the way. We didn't come this far to only come this far. Jonathan, you'll be our last witness here and then we'll open up for questions.

John Mertens (00:25:26):

Good morning and thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Vice Chairman and the esteemed panelists, here today. One thing that is very clear from looking at me is that I am not Harmeet Dhillon. She appreciated the invitation and asked Jonathan Gross to take her place. Unfortunately, he was not able to take her place, so I am John Mertens, but I am also part of the Civil Rights Division here at the Department of Justice and I'm personally very delighted to be here. Last year, I was a private attorney in the state of Utah and the outgoing president of our synagogue, the largest conservative and reformed synagogue in the state of Utah. I will tell you that Utah is a great place to be Jewish. There is lots of community support from the state and the broader community, the citizens of Utah, and I want to thank them very much for making it such a great place to be Jewish.

I also want to thank this administration which has made antisemitism a priority and the civil rights division of which I'm a part will of course carry out the administration's priorities. We do have a number of open investigations into topics like the topics that we've been hearing about this morning and I was personally inspired to join the department because of these priorities. They've allowed me to serve the Jewish community and the United States as a fighter and an advocate against antisemitism and for the spread of civil rights, one of the greatest triumphs of our country. With the support of this commission, with the support of the administration, the Civil Rights

Division will continue the fight for religious liberty and I will add that if you are listening to this and would like a job that's as fun as my job, please look at usajobs.gov because we need more fighters. With that, I was a last-minute addition to this panel, so I do not have further remarks, but I'm very happy to listen to and respond to questions from this panel. Thank you so much.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:27:38):

Thank you for being the substitute. For the substitute. Any question members for anyone? Kelly

Kelly Shackelford (00:27:48):

First. Thank you, Ms. Cohen-Reeis and Pastor Cooper for continuing to stand. I think most people in the country had no idea there was an invasion of a church before what they saw in Minnesota, so this is a disturbing trend. This is kind of a new approach and I know you've got a civil suit. I'm hoping the Justice Department will, because FACE freedom, access to clinic entrances, protects our houses of worship both on the criminal side and the civil side and it would be up to the government. I guess You haven't heard anything yet as to whether the Department of Justice is going to bring a case? Well, I hope they will, but thank you for standing for fighting because the precedent you set in your case, it's going to help churches and synagogues and houses of worship all over the country, so thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:28:45):

Anyone else? Carrie?

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:28:47):

Yeah, I was just curious, who was the speaker that you had at your congregation? Pastor?

Pastor Cooper (00:28:52):

It was Dr. Einat Wilf.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:28:54):

Okay. Is she a Christian?

Pastor Cooper (00:28:55):

She's not a Christian.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:28:57):

Okay. What religion is she?

Pastor Cooper (00:28:58):

She is born Jewish, but she is an atheist on her own.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:29:03):

Okay, thank you.

Pastor Cooper (00:29:04):

You're welcome. May I ask you a question?

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:29:07):

Sure.

Pastor Cooper (00:29:08):

In the last panel you mentioned that as a Catholic there was bible prophecy or a lack of Bible prophecy that referred to the support of the Jewish nation. Can you reference where that is in the Catholic scriptures?

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:29:24):

Oh, well you do that as an evangelical Christian Zionist. You support the political state of Israel because you believe that is biblical prophecy and we as Catholics do not.

Pastor Cooper (00:29:35):

Can you tell me where that is in the Catholic Bible because...

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:29:39):

We want to have a theological discussion. This is a Religious liberty hearing, so I don't know why we're talking about theology

Pastor Cooper:

Because you brought it up in the... I'm just asking.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:29:48):

Yeah, so are we going to have a theological discussion right now?

Pastor Cooper (00:29:53):

I'll leave that up to Lieutenant Governor.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:29:55):

You may answer the question if you'd like. This is not the purpose of the committee, but I want to be sure you have your rights to ask the questions and give your opinions. I'll stop it at some point.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:30:07):

Yeah, thank you. Thank you. Yeah, so what is the definition? I think that's important that we define what is antisemitism to you?

Pastor Cooper (00:30:15):

Antisemitism would be the prejudice and or the oppression of the Jewish people at any level, which includes their extermination or singling them out simply because they're born Jewish.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:30:27):

Okay, so as a pastor, are you worried or concerned at all that certain parts of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, would be considered antisemitic specifically to referring the killing and crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Pastor Cooper (00:30:40):

Why would that be anti-Semitic? That is simply a fact... when Jesus was crucified, it was most definitely at the hand of the Jews and of the Romans

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:30:57):

That would be considered antisemitism under IHRA. Are you aware of that?

Pastor Cooper (00:31:03):

If we're talking about 2000 years ago, this is biblical history.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:31:06):

Yeah, that's under the definition of antisemitism.

Pastor Cooper (00:31:09):

This is the beauty of God's faithfulness is he made a covenant with Abraham and God is not a man that he would lie, and so when he blesses a people, that blessing continues eternally.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:31:20):

Well, that's your theological perspective. That's not for 2000 years the belief of the Catholic church. I think you should remain quiet and respect this hearing.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:31:32):

No, cries from the audience please. Carrie. Thank you. I think we've had this discussion.

Pastor Cooper (00:31:39):

I did invite it. It's my fault. I apologize.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:31:41):

No, I'm glad you did. Thank you. I appreciate and I'm actually, I'm from San Diego, I live there.

Pastor Cooper (00:31:46):

Should get coffee.

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:31:47):

I would like that. Yeah.

Pastor Cooper (00:31:48):

Do you surf?

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:31:49):

No, I don't.

Pastor Cooper (00:31:50):

Okay, well I'll take you surfing

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:31:52):

Okay,

Lt Gov Patrick (00:31:53):

Thank you. Just for the record, the Holy Sea established formal diplomatic relations with Israel in 1993. Agreements between the two explicitly recognized each other's legitimate roles as state and church authorities. For example, the Holy Sea and Israel jointly affirmed each other's rights to operate and protect their communities and institutions. Just for the record panel, thank you, thank you very much

Carrie Prejean Boller (00:32:17):

And they also condemn the genocide and Gaza

Lt Gov Patrick (00:32:20):

Thank you, panel. Thank you very much.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:34:17):

Thank you for coming. As we have done all four of you'll speak, and Seth, we expect something humorous today from you. I just want to let you know so the pressure's on for you and we'll start with someone I've been on Fox with many times, but we've actually never met in person, so Leo Terrell.

Leo Terrell (00:34:39):

Thank you, Chairman Lieutenant Governor Patrick, and yes, we have been on Fox numerous times. It's a privilege to meet you in person. And thank you commission. I've had the privilege to listen to all the panels today and the questions. I think it's very important that you have solutions and let me tell you right now, the solution is what we do at 30,000 feet. It's a local issue. The issue of antisemitism is local. Every example you have heard today is at a school is in a city, is in a district. That's the problem and the federal government comes in, but we come in after the event. We're talking about issues that involves school districts, school superintendent, when it comes to curriculum, it involves the local prosecutors at UCLA that does not prosecute. It involves a mayor who doesn't send a message, so you have an unbelievable task.

You're asking, you're required to provide a report to the greatest President in my lifetime on what we can do to fight antisemitism and the problem is on the streets in every city, in every county, in every state, and they have initial jurisdiction, and I wanted to bring that to you as my recommendation before I get into my speech, because I listened to everything you said, I listened to all the questions and when we talk about antisemitism, we talk about an issue that involves discriminatory treatment. Let me go back to another fact by just listening to you. We are here because of a unicorn, a president who cares about fighting for religious freedom and we are tasked with trying to set up guardrails for the next administration, the next administration. President Trump is unique. That's why we're here. That's why we care. How do you put in place people, after this commission, after this presidency? Who cares just as much, who will follow through just as much we care. I care you care. That's the tough task that we have because the laws are on the book. Oh, there's great federal law, tremendous federal law. It's the execution, it's the commitment to follow through. That is the million-dollar question because we will not be in this position, chairman and coach, vice chairman forever, but we have a three-year window and I am committed by being head of the task force to combat antisemitism.

It is a commitment that I take with tremendous pride. I think Pastor Paul knows that 35 years as a civil rights attorney, a commitment to treat everyone fairly under state and federal law, understanding the commitment of the Jewish community in this country. I've heard all the testimony. I was a history teacher, chairman, before I became a lawyer and I know the commitment of the Jewish community to make sure everyone's rights are given on equal basis and their commitment to helping others. For example, my history lessons tells me that the Jewish community helped create the NAACP in 1909 helping black Americans get their rights. My teaching as a history teacher taught me that Jewish Americans walked side by side with black Americans in the sixties to fight for their civil rights and may I hark back to a unfortunate tragedy. Mississippi June, 1964, 2 Jewish activists, Warner and Goodman lost their life with a black activist named Cheney fighting for their civil rights. This is a no-brainer. This is an issue of right versus wrong and it's wrong to have antisemitism in this country.

We talk about the unfairness, the right of Jewish Americans all they want or the same rights that we have the right to worship at their synagogue to go to school. Well, you know, being head of the task force to combat antisemitism, my phone rings every day, every day and one of the things that they bring up is the Jewish tax. What's the Jewish tax? Well, the Jewish tax is the exorbitant fee the Jewish community has to pay for security and protection to have a meeting at their synagogue or to walk the streets. It's the Jewish tax. It costs tens of thousands of dollars because they're not protected and that is a problem that they have, a major problem. Oh, I've written letters to various mayors and guess what? Guess I mean responses. I've gotten zero. See, that's that local issue. That's that issue that is there that you have to work on. How do we get used the power of this great administration down to the local level?

I heard all the discussion about universities and colleges, wrong target and here's the target you should work on. I had a great meeting with the labor department and it's not just Title Six and taking the funds away. How about a great law called Title VII? For what? Unions at the local school district level are anti-Semitic, hijacking the unions, hijacking the curriculum, hijacking the lesson plans for K-12. That's our next agenda. The college and universities, I got some bad news,

they've already been taken away. The next target is K-12. Our young people, the lesson plans, chairman, the objectives of those plans. They're teaching hate in K, first, second, third, fourth grade right now as we speak. That's what my phone says every day when I get to my office every day, the hate that is being taught to our young people. You're not born to hate, you're taught to hate, and this is going on my job here as head of the task force to fight antisemitism, and may I say thank you President Trump for giving me this job.

Thank you, Pam Bondi, for giving me this job and it's a commitment that I have that goes well beyond the term of this administration. This is a lifetime commitment. As a civil rights attorney, this is a lifetime commitment. You'll see me chairman if I leave and go back to Fox talking about this after because my freedom is contingent upon everyone in this great country to share in their right to have their own religious freedom. A few other notes and I'll pass it to my partner to the left. People say, why do I care? And I say to you, I am proud to be a black Baptist. No, I'm not Jewish. This is not a Jewish issue.

It's an American issue. It's a western civilization issue. We are all obligated. I just came back from Israel last week and I spoke to a great person who is also non-Jewish. His name is Ambassador Mike Huckabee. Love Mike Huckabee. You see, we have to expand this fight because our freedom is at stake, and so we have an obligation. I'm talking to the choir to expand this base and when people say to me, Hey, Leo, you're doing a great job as head of the task force, I said, if you know me, I said, no, I can do a lot more. There's a lot more we could do. I want to go back to that labor issue, that union issue. You can use Title VII against teachers' unions who are discriminating against Jewish teachers. Title VII. I learned that from sitting in a meeting with the labor department. There is so much we can do, so much, but it's not being utilized, and I will leave you with this that people say, Hey Leo, you're going to lose a lot. You're out there, you're fighting for Jews to have their rights like you and it's going to cost you a lot of opportunities.

I'm willing to pay the price. It's a no-brainer because I'm not going to shut up. Antisemitism is wrong and you have an obligation and we all have an obligation to do something about it. God bless America, God bless President Trump and God bless you. Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:45:07):

Leo, tell us what you really think here.

Leo Terrell (00:45:12):

When you and I go back on Fox, I will.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:45:15):

Okay. You are the right man for the job. Thank you. You are the right man for the job. Thank you and we're all committed long beyond this committee. We're all committed. And all American should be committed. Our next witness, please introduce yourself.

Dr. Elizabeth Spalding (00:45:34):

I'd like to echo everything that Leo Terrell just said and also thank the commission. It's an honor to be here. I'm an academic so I had a specific purpose that I was invited here for and that's to help the American audience understand the ideologies or parts thereof of antisemitism that negatively affect US Politics and sorry, higher education, but there's a trickle-down effect, and undermine our freedoms including religious liberty. I say all of this in the context of that the long history of antisemitism should be over and in the past, but it is not. My task first requires defining an often-misunderstood term. Ideology is not just an idea or a set of ideas. It is not religious faith. It is not a political, economic or social point of view. It is not a political party or movement although either can be or become the vehicle of an ideology.

What then is ideology? It is a fixed political worldview that holds within it a plan for fundamental societal change. Ideology is characterized by the belief that man's nature and thus society are malleable and can be remade and restructured repeatedly if necessary. Ideology is based in truth as defined and therefore relativized by itself rather than permanent truth discovered through the harmony of reason and revelation. For example, as expressed in the American founding. Born during the reign of terror of the French Revolution, ideology fully formed in the modern era. The 20th century is the most destructive in human history in terms of war, tyranny and injustice. Much of that due to ideology. Not every -ism is an ideology and not all ideologies are totalitarian, but all ideologies are extreme in their agenda. For fundamental societal change, whether or not they employ violence while not technically needed, it can be helpful to place the modifier radical before the worst cases of ideology.

My task next requires explaining antisemitic ideologies that have made their way, at least in part to the United States, influencing almost a century of higher education and politics. Communism and nazim have exerted the most impact. For these ideologies, think extremist in terms of intent and effect rather than far left or far right by way of either Karl Marx and his heirs or Adolf Hitler and his adherence. These ideologies reject the God of revelation and are antisemitic, historical or what we might call conventional prejudices against Jews on religious, racial or other grounds may be still present. If so, these prejudices are exacerbated by ideology, so this is a problem on top of another problem, in many cases. In US higher education, critical theory and its various offspring from the 1930s to the present benefited from following progressivism. Then through a highly adaptable cultural Marxism, they have entrenched themselves in the humanities, law and social sciences.

In this environment, increased polarization in contemporary America has manifested on campuses in viewpoint discrimination, political, religious and or philosophical, woke-ism, whatever you want to call it, and other extremism. As an inflection point, October 7th exposed antisemitism preexisting and new intellectual as well as activist, especially at elite universities. This academic antisemitic ideology deriving from communism is also present in elements of our body politic. Intellectual and activist agendas are sometimes mutually reinforcing. Since the 1960s, a porousness between higher education and politics has spread the effects and effectiveness of antisemitic ideology. Intellectually, cultural Marxism has co-opted identity, a word with concrete meaning for Jews. In activism, cultural Marxist ideology serves as justification for and its tools are used in antisemitic demonstrations and attacks.

Nazim's effects on US politics and higher education are much less intellectual and more scattered. They reach smaller populations, with young disaffected white men on everyone's minds these days, such groups view Jews and other minorities as the impediment to their standing, if not supremacy. For visceral more than academic reasons, young white supremacists have absorbed the identity distortion of cultural Marxism and joined it with prejudice, discontent, insecurity and loneliness to prove their superiority. While the world is not their stage, they have microphones and mouthpieces and megaphones on social media. How should Americans respond to reduce and prevent antisemitic ideologies in politics and higher education? One, correct information and non-ideological education are needed at all levels. K-12 through graduate school. Thank you. It's really important. It's all education. Nazi is some internalized and ideolog antisemitism. Communism is atheistic and antisemitic. We must undo ideologizing.

In tandem, we need a renaissance in hard news. Just the facts. Two, a robust defense of religious liberty and respect for faith traditions are necessary. All of us here are involved in this endeavor, including you. Commissioners. Three, freedom of speech and civil discourse are essential in and of themselves and as supports of religious liberty. America250 provides opportunities galore for all of these. Ending on a personal note, I am perhaps like you a 3-F American faith, family freedom. I'm also a native Washingtonian and Catholic coming of age under John Paul II and Reagan. In this area, at that time, Holocaust survivors visited all schools and witnessed. Today I'm chairman of the victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. At VOC, our witness project tells the stories of victims who have survived communism. Too many, including Soviet Refuseniks and other Jews were twice victimized by communism. At this time, we need witnesses in schools, on campuses and throughout the public square as part of the solution to combat antisemitic ideologies in the United States. Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:54:09):

Thank you. Dr. S Spalding. I'm proud that this last session, well last year's session, that we passed legislation in Texas to teach communism and the horrors of communism in our schools. I think we may be the leader in that.

Dr Elizabeth Spalding (00:54:26):

Florida, Arizona.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:54:27):

Yep. There you go.

Dr Elizabeth Spalding (00:54:27):

Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:54:28):

That's 47 states behind us.

Dr. Elizabeth Spalding (00:54:30):

I know.

Lt Gov Patrick (00:54:30):

Get on board.

Dr. Elizabeth Spalding (00:54:31):

That's right

Lt Gov Patrick (00:54:32):

Father Tom,

Father Tom Ferguson (00:54:35):

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the commission. My name is Father Tom Ferguson. I'm the pastor of Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Alexandria, Virginia and I'm very grateful today to be here to offer these brief remarks, as a statement of the Catholic church's teaching regarding antisemitism. This past year 2025, the Catholic Church celebrated the 60th anniversary of the conclusion of the second Vatican Council, which is very commonly known as Vatican Two. Between 1961 and 1965, all the Catholic bishops from around the world met in Rome at the Vatican to address issues relevant to the church's teaching and practice as regards both its internal life and its mission in the world. For most Catholics, the most significant and lasting impact of the council was its provision for the celebration of mass and other acts of worship in vernacular languages. For those who are not Catholic, one of the greatest accomplishments of the council was to renew the church's commitment to ecumenism, to fostering a greater unity among Christians in prayer, study, dialogue and service to those in need.

There are also two documents of Vatican, two that are of tremendous significance to the work of this commission and they are its Declaration on Religious Liberty and the Declaration on The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. The Declaration on Religious Liberty affirmed as Catholic teaching the idea that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all people are to be immune from coercion and such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to their own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others. The council further declared that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person, as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. In the Declaration on The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, the bishops said Vatican Two reminded all Christians that according to God's saving design, the beginnings of our faith and our election are found already among the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. And since the great spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is so great, the council wishes to foster and recommend mutual understanding and respect, which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies as well as a fraternal dialogue, and most importantly for our purposes today, the church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews, decries, hatred, persecutions, and all displays of antisemitism directed at Jews at any time by anyone.

35 years after the second Vatican Council, this teaching on antisemitism prompted St. John Paul II in the jubilee year 2000 to seek forgiveness on behalf of Christians of every time and place who might have ever in any way contributed to acts or spirit of antisemitism. Speaking of the Jewish people, Pope John Paul II prayed to God, “we are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood.” In a recent collaboration with the American Jewish Committee, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, echoing the words of Pope Francis stated, clearly “a true Christian cannot be antisemitic.” Before I conclude these remarks, may I offer one brief personal example of how Catholics not only condemn antisemitism, but also reflect a willingness to engage in fraternal collaboration that flows from the common spiritual patrimony of Christians and Jews.

From 2004 to 2008, I was the pastor of St. Thomas Beckett Catholic Church in Reston, Virginia. That church has the distinction of sharing what is one of the most prized portions of a faith community’s patrimony. Its parking lot with a Jewish community. The Northern Virginia Hebrew congregation was established in 1967 with congregants but with no building of its own. The community eventually acquired a portion of the land owned by the Catholic church in Reston and conducted its worship in the same space used by the Catholic parish until its synagogue was built on the property where both communities have since shared not only the parking lot, but also semi-annual Catholic Jewish dialogues on various theological spiritual and moral and ethical issues while also collaborating to serve the material needs of those who are poor in the community. It’s a small example but it’s an apt to conclusion to this brief description of the Catholic church’s absolute condemnation of antisemitism and its commitment to respect and collaborate with the Jewish community to make a positive contribution to the common good in our religiously pluralistic American society. Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:00:49):

Thank you, father. For those who don’t follow the Babylon bee, it is the master of satire of our generation. I believe I’m a frequent reader. I’m glad I’ve never been a subject, but you have a lot to work with to be honest. You’ve been the subject.

Seth Dillon (01:01:17):

I will say though, if you want me to be funny, you should bring me on a better topic, a lighter topic. This is a heavy one. First, I just want to start by saying I’m thankful to the commission. I’m thankful this commission exists first of all, but I’m thankful to all of you for serving on it and for inviting me here to speak today. It’s an honor to be here. I am Seth Dillon, I’m the CEO of the Babylon Bee, the world’s most trusted, factually accurate news source. For those who aren’t familiar, we publish funny fake news like The Onion or CNN.

See? There you go. We got some laughs. We’ve actually gotten in trouble for CNN jokes before. The first joke we ever got fact-checked for on Facebook was a headline that read CNN purchases industrial size washing machine to spin the news before publication. And for whatever reason, I don’t know why that was fact-check and rated false as if anybody believed that that was true and Facebook threatened us with penalties and suspension if we continued to publish fake news, we’re like, that’s all we do is publish fake news. Oh man, there’s so many other examples I’d give, but

we can't get into all of that today. Our mission is not just to make you laugh, it's to make you think a little harder or differently, at least about things that matter. The use of satire to expose foolishness and mock absurdity is ancient, tracing all the way back to the Hebrew prophets.

To put it as succinctly as I can, our job is to ridicule bad ideas, not just because it's entertaining but because it's necessary. Bad ideas taken seriously have catastrophic consequences. It should go without saying that antisemitism ranks highly among his history's horrifying examples, but it's gaining popularity again today, particularly among younger generations on the right, and it's not always subtle. Transgressive agitators on social media are building massive cult-like followings declaring themselves to be on team Hitler. They proclaim without apology or fear of consequence that Hitler was right. The question is why, and what should or can be done about it. I'm a conservative, excuse me, and it's fair to say that a lot of the bad ideas we make fun of at the Babylon Bee are progressive ones. Recently, however, I've taken fire from fellow conservatives for pointing out what should be obvious. There are bad ideas on the right too never punch, right?

They say focus on the real enemy, the left. They're the ones promoting abortion on demand, gender transition for minors, open borders, censorship, DEI, all of these things and I've steadfastly opposed these ideas. As a conservative, I've spent years and millions of dollars fighting them in both the courts and the culture, but what if those aren't the only bad ideas? If bad ideas spread like cancer, shouldn't we check for them everywhere? I recently visited an imaging center for a diagnostic CT scan and I'm glad the technician wasn't only interested in scanning the left side of my body. What I've observed on the right is an equal but opposite reaction to the woke worldview that captured our culture and institutions. Instead of rejecting the woke framework, the radical right has embraced and emulated it. We're all familiar with how the woke left, divides the world into oppressors and oppressed, the powerful and the marginalized.

It's a grievance-based collectivist framework that says all of society's greatest problems are due to hidden power structures designed to prop up the patriarchy and maintain white supremacy. One has to wake up or become woke to see it. Critical Race Theory, DEI and Radical Gender Ideology were all aimed at equity rather than equality to correct the alleged power imbalance and topple that system and many are now forcefully rejecting this warped worldview, but the radical right or woke right as some have called it, has adopted this framework for itself. They've just swapped out the villain where the left sees hidden white supremacy, the so-called J-pilled right sees hidden Jewish power. The structure is identical, the same conspiratorial lens, the same collectivism, revisionism and scapegoating, the same claim to special knowledge of realities the masses are too cowardly or complicit to accept. Waking up to these hidden realities means seeing Jews rather than white men as the oppressors who scheme and manipulate and subjugate.

It means treating Jews as enemies, but why is this corrupt framework becoming popular with young people on the right in particular, and I think the short answer to that is that they were primed for it and then exploited. Young white men in particular have been told their whole lives that they are the problem. Masculinity is toxic. Western civilization is oppressive. Whiteness carries guilt. That created hunger for any counter narrative that said, you're not the villain. In fact, you're the victim and someone more powerful than you is doing this to you, and there's some truth to that. Of course, they were villainized, but that was the injustice of it. To turn around and do the same to someone

else should be out of the question. At the same time, institutional trust was collapsing as so-called experts and authoritative voices were caught in one lie after another.

Ironically, while they claimed to be fighting misinformation, it was beyond parody, but when you realize, you've been lied to, you become dangerously vulnerable to a false inference that the opposite of whatever the history books or institutions say must be true or that anyone who rejects those institutions in their lies must be offering the truth themselves. That's fertile ground for radical conspiracism. The anti-Semitic agitators exploited both vulnerabilities at the same time. They told young men who to blame and they told a generation that had lost faith in every institution that here at last was the great hidden truth. Most people have a moral intuition that genocide, and I mean actual genocide, is evil. The Holocaust is one of the clearest cases of moral, evil and modern memory, and as long as we see that clearly, no one could possibly bring themselves to say Hitler was right, but that's why the revisionist project exists to take the clarity away, to raise questions about what really happened and why.

So that alternative answers seem not just plausible, but palatable. Historical revisionism, it turns out is the sugar that makes poison taste good. When talking about solutions to this problem, I often hear calls for censorship. We need hate speech laws, I'm told, that would criminalize antisemitism, but that is not the answer. It's never the answer. In a free society, people have a right to be wrong. The First Amendment guarantees it. The answer isn't to suppress bad ideas, but to challenge them to ridicule and refute them. Suppression only makes them more appealing to transgressive youth and it validates their belief that power is being abused at their expense. But let me highlight what I think is a problem almost as great as the hatred itself, and that's the cowardice that allows the hatred to spread. There's been an effort to mainstream antisemitism. Radical voices are not just finding a platform, they're finding friendly platforms.

This is disgraceful and so is the silence of every prominent person who fails to call it out. Platforming is not the issue. Promotion is, and we shouldn't be afraid to say it. I should note briefly that there are some theological issues at play here. I can't get into all of them of course, but people are being drawn to a distorted version of the Christian faith, not because they found Christ, but because they found what they think is a religious sanction for their hatred of Jews. They cherry pick from scripture to secure a theological license to hate. They declare "Christ is King, you dirty Jew," in the comment section. This should offend every Christian. It certainly offends Jesus, our Jewish savior. The apostle Paul, a Jew, said he would be cut off from Christ if it would save his people. That is the posture of scripture, anguish, irrevocable love and the conviction that God's promises to the Jewish people have not been revoked.

The posture of the radical right is its precise opposite. If your Christianity gives you permission to despise the people through whom God revealed himself to the world, who gave you the scriptures, the prophets, the moral law, and the Messiah, then you are not practicing Christianity. You're practicing a perversion of it. You are attacking the very root into which you've been grafted. There's a temptation to counter antisemitism by citing the contributions, the wonderful and remarkable and numerous contributions of the Jewish people to civilization, to law, to science, to philosophy, to the concept of human rights. These contributions are extraordinary and the debt

western civilization owes the Jewish moral and intellectual tradition is incalculable, but building the case on that foundation I think is a mistake because it concedes the antisemites premise that dignity is conditional then it must be earned. Human beings are made in the image of God.

That's where our dignity comes from. That is in fact the very foundation of religious liberty. The principle that every person by virtue of bearing God's image possesses inherent worth that no government, no mob and no ideology can revoke. CS Lewis said that good philosophy must exist if for no other reason than because bad philosophy needs to be answered. The antidote to antisemitism is not to ignore it or to outlaw it, but to confront it with courage and conviction. And that means not just calling out the antisemites, but the cowards who can't bring themselves to join us. Thank you,

Lt Gov Patrick (01:10:57):

Seth. I think you will have spoiled your image for your readers that there's a brilliant mind behind all of that humor. Members questions? For our and all these witnesses, all four of you as the panels before us have just been brilliant today and courageous today and honest today and in a variety of ways, in a variety of ways. It's really been a great three panels. Dr. Phil, did you have a light? Did I see a light or no? Okay. Any hang on this side, we're going to let you off Scott free. I can't believe that. Oh,

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:11:39):

If nobody else wants to participate. I guess I will. Seth, I know you're big on free speech. Babylon Bee wouldn't exist if you didn't have freedom of speech and I'm full supportive of that. You said platforms are an issue, which I assume you're referring to X. Are you saying that Elon and heads of platforms need to censor speech that they determine as antisemitic, and if so, by what definition do they censor? Would that definition censor this verse from the Bible? "The Jews who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and drove us out and don't please God and are contrary to all men." 1 Thessalonians 2:14,

(01:12:22)

[Referencing disruptive audience member] I think he should be removed. You should be removed. I think he should be removed.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:12:26):

Excuse me. Excuse me. We will not have outbursts from the audience. If there's a further outburst, I will ask you to leave.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:12:32):

Thank you, chairman.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:12:33):

All right, you're out. Please escort this gentleman. We will not be interrupted.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:12:37):

Thank you. We're having a discussion. It's very important.

Seth Dillon (01:12:41):

I think you may have misheard what I said about platforms. I said platforms are not the problem, promotion is the problem. So, what I advocate for, I actually personally advocated for Nick Fuentes to be reinstated on X when Elon took it over. Not because I like what he has to say, but because I love that he has the right to say it. So even these ideas that I steadfastly oppose, I think the solution to them is to push back on them. Better speech, more speech, good speech in response to bad speech. So, you may have just misunderstood what I was saying there about the platforms.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:13:15):

Yeah, I understand. Thank you. And then Leo, thank you so much for being here. What anti-Semitic actions have taken place? I've heard a lot of examples of harmful words and protests, but aren't we free in this nation to have the right to protest, protected by the First Amendment? As I said, Seth, you love free speech as do I. So, words are protected. What I'm concerned about is what further legislation do we need around free speech?

Leo Terrel (01:13:46):

Well, first of all, let me be very clear. I've been a civil rights attorney 35 years. I am a strong, strong believer in free speech. You'll not have me challenge anyone's right to speak. I support Seth on that. But when you match speech with conduct, criminal conduct, such as blocking access to someone's right to go to school along with the speech, then you cross a line where there may be a criminal activity where the affirmative defense of free speech no longer exists. We had a lot of discussion about a school that I'm embarrassed that I went to, UCLA law school. We heard what was going on. I was sitting there cringing because it was true. And we have people who were block access. Speech? I'm all good for that. Going back to what I originally said, all those charges in which the line was crossed, where it went from speech to conduct, believe it or not, the local prosecutor dismissed all those charges, the criminal charges. So that's why I'm saying this problem is really on a local level, but I will support anyone's right on speech. It's when they match it with conduct that might cross the line and would be considered criminal in and of itself.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:15:01):

But aren't there already laws to protect that?

Leo Terrell (01:15:03):

Well, you never heard me say it, my presentation. There are existing laws that should be utilized. I'm not talking about creating new laws.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:15:11):

So as the chairman of whatever your

Leo Terrell (01:15:14):

The task force.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:15:15):

The task force, yes. Thank you. What do you recommend as far as further laws?

Leo Terrell (01:15:20):

I mentioned it today. Well first of all, title VI is a funding law that should be used. Title VII is very critical. Civil Rights Act 1964, 65, which allows employees who are facing discriminatory misconduct to seek action. Even union organizations can be used for Title VII. Those were the two that I was referring to. And what is a great weapon, which I have learned, is that Jewish faculty members in public unions are being denied right to participate. That's a Title VII action. So, what I'm saying is under the rubric of what is currently in existence, civil rights laws, I think rights of Jewish Americans can be defended, can be executed properly. And if I was making any recommendation, there should be litigation under those two sections, Title VI and Title VII.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:16:14):

Thank you. And then one last question for Seth. I know you were at the Hamptons with Charlie Kirk. I know he was labeled an antisemite at the very end. Would you like to condemn him being labeled an antisemite?

Seth Dillon (01:16:24):

Charlie was not an antisemite. Charlie loved the Jewish people dearly. And so, I think that's very silly. Charlie was invited and was open to having debates about anything, including whether or not we should be supporting Israel, for example, in the current war. He's open to having those conversations and he was very strongly irritated by people making those accusations at him by simply saying that we should be willing to have these conversations because he didn't view that as crossing line into antisemitism. Neither do I. Up to a point. There are people who try to conceal their antisemitism under the guise of merely criticizing Israel. And you can see they're not merely criticizing Israel. But Charlie wasn't an antisemite. Not even close, the opposite.

Eric Metaxas (01:17:18):

Thank you. I spoke to Charlie about this stuff and he was trying to have a substantive conversation and he was clearly not an antisemite, but he wasn't anti-dentite. That's a Seinfeld joke. If you don't get that joke, look it up. My relationship with Charlie was based on our love of Seinfeld. So, I just want to clarify that first of all. Regarding what Dr. Spalding was saying about ideology, it's interesting to me. I've always felt that all of our problems, it's ultimately about the culture. The law can only do so much. You can make laws and make laws. We heard earlier you can have a law and if the cops aren't doing something, who cares what the law is. So ultimately, we have to educate young people, in particular, but older people as well. Our founding, I just finished writing a 600-page book on the American Revolution and when I started writing it, I was 10 years old.

No, when I started writing it, I honestly didn't understand how clearly Christian, I would even go so far as to say Reformation Puritan Christian, the Founders were. Now I say that just because it's dramatically true and it is not taught in our schools and we have been dealing with, the reason we're in this mess right now in the culture is because for decades, we've not been teaching civics and the basics of who we are as a people. You cannot get America; you cannot get a love of

religious liberty and a love of liberty unless you understand where that comes from and what it means. And I would say speaking as a Christian, I don't agree with certain theologies as a Christian. But as a Christian, I would die defending the right of people to have those theologies. And that is a Christian value. That's not an Islamic value.

And we have to have that conversation in America about what does it mean to be an American? What are the limits of religious liberty, obviously. But we can't pretend we've fallen into relativism where we're no longer able to have intelligent conversations. You cannot sustain liberty or religious liberty unless you have an understanding of the founding and of the mind of the Founders. And if you begin to pretend that, oh, it's about the enlightenment, it's Enlightenment, it's not Enlightenment Rationalism, ladies and gentlemen, and people didn't come here from Europe so they could pursue enlightenment, rationalism. It came out of their Christian convictions. But I say this because ultimately what we're talking about here, it's a hatred of the west. It's a hatred of the God of the West. It's a hatred of the God of the Bible that's at the heart of this. And so, in this 250th year, which President Trump on the stage declared it's officially the super centennial in case he didn't get that memo, 250th, which we don't have a term like bicentennial.

So, he's calling it the super centennial. But the point is this is the year that we in America have to talk publicly about what does it mean to be an American who we are as an Americans. This isn't some Enlightenment, Rationalist NeoCon project. This is fundamentally a biblical project. It's an extension of the Sinai Covenant. All of the founders understood this. And so, as I hear us talking about this, you cannot sustain America and you cannot sustain a love of religious liberty and a respect for people with whom you disagree unless you understand this. And it comes out of the Bible. And we have to say that publicly, and I don't know how we say that in K-12, but we did for 200 years say that in public schools in America. We taught it simply because it was our history and something has happened.

It kind of came into the culture in 1968. We were talking earlier about the lack of courage of academic leaders standing up to the Marxist lunacy that was breaking the campuses at that time. And I think that if we do not understand these things and teach these things, we can make all the laws we want and we need to make laws. But the first thing that I would recommend the President of the United States to do is to absolutely defund practically every penny that taxpayers are giving to higher education because higher education has become a breeding ground for every wicked ideology. And I was at Yale in the early eighties and it was so strong in the early eighties when I was there, that was astonished. I'd never encountered it. And so, I think we need to the extent that we have the power of the purse to defund almost all higher education because it's not even close to what they're doing, the harm they're doing goes way beyond what we saw following October 7th. And so, I just felt that I needed to say that, that it's about the culture. But I would love any of you to respond, particularly Seth Dillon and Dr. Spalding since you work in the cultural space.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:23:09):

We went from no lights to lots of lights. Did you want to make a comment Dr. Spalding? Then we'll get to our,

Dr. Spalding (01:23:15):

I'm happy to just say at this point, that was part of the reason I mentioned America250 because I do think it's an opportunity to educate at all levels and we have to bring the positive over and over again. We have to bring the factual over and over again. And then I'd like to hear what some more people have to say before we might continue the conversation.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:23:33):

I'm not sure which order, but Reverend Franklin did I see your light there for a minute?

Reverend Franklin Graham (01:23:40):

Yeah, it comes on and off.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:23:43):

That's why I wanted to get to you. I don't want to miss what you have to say.

Reverend Franklin Graham (01:23:47):

Just to be clear, the accusations that the Jews killed Jesus, they didn't kill him. He's alive. He's not dead. His tomb is empty. But I would like to, after 9/11, Mr. Chairman, the hijackers were mostly Saudis and they flew their airplanes into the Pentagon in the World Trade Center and in the name of Islam. So, after 9/11 Saudi Arabia to improve its image started funding on university campuses centers for Islamic understanding or studies. And that funding has created an issue now for our country after 20 some years because those centers now have grown and they get money from other Gulf states that pour huge amounts of money into our universities and that has a very negative impact on our education. And I think its very antisemitic. And so, I think maybe we need a task force to follow the money and what is that produced. But I would just dare to say that there needs to be a study as to who's been influencing our universities to turn our universities and our students to be anti-Semitic.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:25:40):

Every now and then I hear that inner voice, God told me to call on you. He just need that to be said. So a great comment.

Seth Dillon (01:25:47):

Can I make a quick comment?

One of the first things you said, Jews didn't kill Jesus. He's alive. Agree with that? Yes. He lives, there were Jewish leaders who were calling for Jesus crucifixion. There were also Jewish followers of Jesus, his disciples were Jewish. The authors of the New Testament, with the exception maybe of Luke, Acts were Jewish. So, there's two sides of that. And what does it have to do with Jews

today? What guilt do they share in that? So those are I think, important points to make. One other quick comment too, if I could on in your initial question to me, you mentioned the Hamptons retreat. I think it is important for me to say something about this because nobody would've even known about this was a private retreat. The only reason that anybody knows about it is because a very prominent and loud antisemite wanted to make a big deal out of it to try to suggest that Jews were at this retreat, Zionists, maybe she would use that terminology.

Sometimes she switches back and forth. But Candace Owens was claiming that people there blackmailed Charlie to try to keep him in support of Israel, offered him a ton of money. My name was mentioned, Bill Ackman's name. People were dragged through the mud. I've received death threats, multiple death threats. One man out in Texas was arrested for threatening to kill me and my family as a result of these lies that were told about me. This is the price that you pay if you defend Israel, if you defend Jews, the people who hate them, the anti-Zionists, the anti-Semites will do everything that they can to smear and destroy you and intimidate you and try to get you to shut up and become quiet. And I would encourage other people even facing that cost, especially because there's that cost. We need to be courageous and speak out.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:27:35):

Head your light on for a bit.

Ryan T Anderson (01:27:36):

Yep. I guess it went off. I'm very aware of Rabbi Soloveitchik's comments about not claiming to speak for an entire religion. So, I'm going to ask Father to do so because I'm not a theologian, but he is. And this follows really, I guess providentially between what Pastor Graham and Seth have just said because it's at the second Vatican Council that the church father council fathers make that exact point that Pastor Graham and Seth just made. So, I just want to read a portion of that. It says this is from *Nostra Aetate* "the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ. Still, what happened in his passion cannot be charged against all the Jews without distinction then alive nor against the Jews of today. Although the church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or cursed by God as if this followed from the holy scriptures. Besides as the church has always held and holds, now, Christ underwent his passion and death freely because of the sins of men and out of infinite love in order that all may reach salvation."

And then after Pope Benedict retired, it's unusual for Pope to retire, but he wrote an academic article that was published in *Nova et Vetera* on some of these questions. And I just want to read one section of that. He says, "from this overview, one can say that the new view of Judaism that developed after the council can be summarized in two statements. One, the theory of substitution which has hitherto determined theological reflection on this question should be rejected. This view holds that after the rejection of Jesus Christ, Israel ceased to be the bearer of the promises of God, so that it could now be called the people who were once your chosen people. Two instead, it is more correct to speak of the never revoked covenant, a theme that was developed after the council in connection with Romans 9-11. Both of these that Israel is not replaced by the church and that the covenant was never revoked are basically correct, but in many ways imprecise and need to be given further critical consideration." And then the rest of his essay gives that greater precision and

theological consideration. So, I more or less open question help us better understand what is the Catholic teaching vis-a-vis the Jewish people? I know that's a big question and you probably only have 30 seconds, but

Kind of wanted to help clarify things and I thought you could do it.

Reverend Thomas Ferguson (01:29:58):

Thanks for that confidence. As you said, first of all, I don't speak for all Catholics. We have two bishops on this commission of a greater teaching authority than I do. But I would say to the first point that's brought up about the responsibility for the death of Jesus. Reverend Graham is absolutely right. He's not dead, he's alive, he's risen, and that's what we believe. But I also think that really the church's understanding is as you've really quoted it from the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions who is responsible for the death of Jesus, we would say all of us people who are sinners of every time and place, Jesus' death on the cross is not a crime that we seek to prosecute, to assign guilt to this person or that who put nails in his hands or his feet. We don't attribute his death either to the Jewish people or to Pontius Pilate.

We see Jesus's death as a sacrificial death, a death that he made in atonement as an offering for the forgiveness of the sins of every person, of every time and place. And that's how Catholics understand who is responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross. It's all of us. And I think you're absolutely right that Pope Benedict really has followed on in his own writings, not only as a pope but as a theologian to assist Catholic Christians, all Christians, to understand our relationship as Christians to the Jewish people. Personally, I really like the expression when we speak of our common spiritual patrimony, we come from the same father in faith and that actually is a title that Catholics use in our own Eucharistic prayer. We speak of Abraham, our father in faith, and so we really are one in a spiritual family, Christians and Jewish people.

And that's how we see ourselves, I believe as Catholics today, really seeing us sharing a great spiritual patrimony. If there's one thing, I think that's a really sign of hope or encouragement for me as a pastor on the very grassroots level, it's what we see in Catholicism today, a greater interest than ever before in learning the scriptures, understanding the Bible. I see it especially among college students in our church today. There's a tremendously flourishing ministry called FOCUS. The fellowship of Catholic University Students, Catholic students on university campuses really led primarily in the study of the Bible by young adults who are just out of college themselves. And if you are seeking to know God through understanding scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament, I think you will come to the conclusion that Pope Francis speaks very clearly, as I mentioned before, that you cannot be a Christian and be antisemitic because we do have the same Father and faith, our understanding of who Jesus is, is formed by the scriptures of the Torah, the prophets, the wisdom literature, the Psalms especially. So, I see that in a very positive way as a source of hope and encouragement as Catholics take seriously our responsibility to know God through knowing his word. The more we know the Word of God, the more we'll know our common patrimony in a spiritual way as members of the same family, Christians and Jews together created and saved by the same God

Lt Gov Patrick (01:33:46):

Members. We're going to have some very quotable comments from this the morning so far. We have one more panel after this, not on antisemitism, on debanking people of faith. So that a little change in direction. But you said something and Kelly said that may be the quote of the day when you said we're all responsible. And just for me personally, I used to thank God for dying on the cross for me, but I have just as you said that I always now pray, Lord, I'm sorry you had to die for me. Sometimes I don't feel worth it. I'm sorry you had to die for me. And so how you said that and laid that out was powerful. So, thank you for saying it and thank you for asking the question. Ryan, Rabbi, any other questions? Carrie? Rabbi, do you want to finish or do you want to close or do you want ready to speak now?

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:34:43):

I can speak after.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:34:44):

Go ahead. You've been on the hold for and we'll come to you care.

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:34:46):

I was going to say this during my later remarks, so if you'd like me to save that chairman, I'm happy to. But I did have one question.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:34:53):

Why don't you say it now? Because the next panel is a different direction,

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:34:58):

Meaning do you want me to give my remarks now or how long are those? I was asked to give 10-minute remarks.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:35:04):

We'll save that for the end because I don't want...

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:35:07):

That will be a rabbinic speech in 10 minutes will be a miracle, I assure you. Yes. Okay, so we

Yeah, I did have one question. The first I wanted to express gratitude to the witnesses all of you. I hope it's okay if I single out too. First to Leo Terrell, I just want to express just based on my own personal experience, I think you know how much gratitude to you and love for you there is among so many in the Jewish community. So, I want to thank you for all that you do. Thank you.

Leo Terrell (01:35:43):

Never in my life have I, never in my life, I'm just being honest, have I received so much love from the Jewish community here.

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:35:55):

It's genuine.

Leo Terrell (01:35:56):

I know it's real and its unity, it's religious, it's historical. And then I went to Israel and the love there was off the charts. It was even greater and it was that bond. I asked my chief of staff who's out there, Sarah Goldman, I said, it's unbelievable. I never experienced this. So, for you to say that I'm blessed, I'm humble, I'm honored, and I'm committed to the fight.

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:36:22):

Thank you. It's we who are grateful. Thank you. And to Seth Dillon, I want to thank you first for bringing me joy every day through your work. And second for being a courageous and fearless speaker of truth. It is strange times when some of the best truth tellers of those that run a parody news website, but that is where we are. And again, I'm profoundly grateful. And my question is for you, you refer to not only the pernicious actors that we see now in certain spheres that are on the right or right adjacent, but you also spoke about the fear that others have to call them out. Can you explain that phenomenon? Is it fear of genuine danger as you described? What happened to your family after the ratings of Candace Owens? Is it a fear of losing online influence, a quest for clicks? You work in the online world? I think you can safely say so please describe how do you understand that fear?

Seth Dillon (01:37:32):

It's a whole host of things. There are some excuses that are given for why certain people don't speak out. They'll say, for example, oh, well I have a personal relationship with this person. I'm friendship. Loyalty matters to me. I'm not going to call them out. And that doesn't sit very well with me just because it's not a private interpersonal matter. Usually in these cases, these are like two public figures who are friends and one of them is saying horrible things that have a negative impact on real people and our culture and our society. And so, there's a duty, I think that we have to address those things even if it comes from a friend. I think our loyalty needs to be to the truth first and foremost above everything else.

And that you're not being a good friend if you're not willing to confront them when they're going off the rails and do some dark stuff. So, friendship I think requires that honesty too. But yes, there's a real fear there. Think they try to make an example out of me by showing they spoke. I had Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens who go on for 10 minutes about what a traitor I am, what a terrible person I am. You get those personal attacks and those are really meant to bully and intimidate other people like, look what we did to Seth. You don't want to go through that. These people have way more reach and influence than I do. And so that can be very intimidating. So, I think that's one of the reasons. But yeah, then there's also the audience capture thing that's going on. People are trying to test where the wind is blowing and see what position they should be taking on these issues.

They're afraid to come out with a certain position that might alienate some people from their audience, and so they try to stay on the sidelines and ride it out. There's just a host of things at

play, but I think when we have the clarity to know really what's right and wrong and that evil is being done and said, we have a moral duty to speak out, even if that means that there's going to be some kind of a cost and whatever we're afraid of, we have to overcome that and be courageous and that courage will inspire other people. That's the thing about this kind of fear is it goes away once you see other people standing up and speaking. It's its strongest when we're all zipping our mouths shut. So, you can take that away by standing up and speaking, you can spread courage like a good infection.

Rabbi Soloveitchik (01:39:51):

Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:39:52):

Carrie?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:39:54):

Thank you. Dr. Scott Han, one of the most respected Catholic theologians. He's written over 50 books. He's a biblical scholar professor of church history. He said this, stop carelessly labeling people Antisemites, Catholic Christianity does not in any way require you to embrace Zionism as a fulfilled prophecy. So, what I've heard today is that if you don't support Zionism, you are an antisemite. Is that your testimony today, Seth?

Seth Dillon (01:40:38):

Now. I'm on the hot seat. Yeah, I don't think that someone failing to support. I guess it depends on what you mean by Zionism. There's been a conversation about that today. If Zionism is simply taken to mean the Jewish people's right to exist in their homeland, if you're actively promoting or seeking their eradication, then yes, I think that would definitely be antisemitic.

But yeah, if you're thinking of the definition more of like, well, the Bible says, yeah...

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:41:05):

Theological

Seth Dillon (01:41:05):

That we have to have this faithful commitment to the Jews in the right

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:41:08):

Theological supremacy.

Seth Dillon (01:41:10):

You don't have to have that view. No, there can be a range of views on that.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:41:12):

Thank you. So, it wouldn't be antisemitic, just like Dr. Scott Han said?

Seth Dillon (01:41:16):

No, it can be a cover for antisemitism, but it isn't, I don't think inherently antisemitic. No, of course not.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:41:21):

Thank you for that. And then one last thing, two things for you. One, what was the purpose of the Hamptons meeting that you had, and then two, I would really appreciate it if you would stop calling Candace Owens an antisemite. She's not an antisemite. She just doesn't support Zionism, and that really has to stop.

Seth Dillon (01:41:40):

Okay.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:41:41):

Yeah. I don't know why you keep bringing her up in Tucker.

Seth Dillon (01:41:46):

Well, because the two most famous antisemites,

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:41:49):

There you go again. Everyone's an antisemite. Everyone's an antisemite, I guess. So, if you don't support Zionism, you just said you're not an antisemite yet Candace is an antisemite.

Seth Dillon (01:41:58):

I think she goes far beyond not merely supporting Zionism. She calls Jews the synagogue of Satan. She denigrates anyone who she often uses the word Zionist and the word Jew interchangeably. At one point she slipped up and used the word Jew and someone said, oh, you're not saying Zionist anymore. She's like, no, gloves are off.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:42:17):

So, do you think saying Christ is king, is anti-Semitic?

Seth Dillon (01:42:20):

No, Christ is king. Amen. Christ is my king. He's the king of the universe.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:42:25):

So that's what started the whole thing with her. Right.

Seth Dillon (01:42:28):

But oh, my thing with her, yeah. What I explained to her, and this is what she considered this deep betrayal, was simply that the phrase "Christ is King" has been admittedly by many co-opted for the purpose of identifying with a griper movement and putting the Jews in their proper place to

show them that they are other than, and they will use the phrase in very, very nasty context. Like I cited in my statement earlier, “Christ is king, you dirty Jew.” I’ve had that told to me dozens of times. Do you think that that’s antisemitic?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:43:06):

Of course.

No, not the “Christ is king” part, but the “you dirty Jew.” Of course, I say Christ is king all the time. I’m not an antisemite.

Seth Dillon (01:43:14):

Right. And I don’t think that that makes you an antisemite.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:43:17):

Thank you.

Seth Dillon (01:43:17):

Talking about how the phrase can be abused. So, there’s plenty of ways to use that phrase in a certain context or paired with other sentiments that make it clear that that person doesn’t actually believe Christ is king. You can’t say “Christ is king, you dirty Jew” and call yourself a Christian. Christians worship a Jew. It’s just absurd. But no, the phrase itself, and this is what I actually said in my comments, the phrase is not antisemitic. I declare it with humility and reverence myself. It’s the abuse of the phrase. Just like when someone takes the Lord’s name in vain, you should find that objectionable as a Christian. I hope that you do someone saying something like that in that context to a Jewish person for the purpose of treating them as other than or excluded, or to disparage them in some way that is using the Lord’s name in an abusive manner. It’s exploiting it for political reasons or just for the sacred of promoting hatred. And I find that repulsive.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:20):

So, antisemitism to you is merely mostly speech, correct?

Seth Dillon (01:44:28):

I didn’t say that. No, I don’t know where you got that.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:30):

But for someone to say “Christ is king” on their social media platform, would you label that an anti-Semitic? If you’re looking into the context of what they’re saying it or if they just say it, Christ is king like...

Seth Dillon (01:44:40):

It could be have...

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:41):

You have to look at the context.

Seth Dillon (01:44:43):

But I would say that's anti-Christian if you're analyzing why I am saying Christ is king,

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:44:47):

No saying the phrase, Jesus Christ is not taking the Lord's name in vain unless you're doing it in a certain context. Right. There's context matters.

So going back to Candace Owens when she worked for Daily Wire, your friend Ben fired her because she said, Christ is king.

Seth Dillon (01:45:04):

And I never said that. What she said was antisemitic.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:45:06):

Okay, but you're calling her an antisemite.

Seth Dillon (01:45:08):

Oh yes. Because she said way worse than that.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:45:10):

Okay. Let's move on because everyone seems to be obsessed with Candace. My last question, why were you at the Hamptons?

Seth Dillon (01:45:16):

Just real quick...

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:45:17):

Why were you at the Hamptons?

Seth Dillon (01:45:18):

Do you think that anything Candace has said is antisemitic?

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:45:21):

No, I don't.

Seth Dillon (01:45:22):

Nothing ever. That's interesting.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:45:27):

I mean, I listened to her daily.

Seth Dillon (01:45:28):

You should look up more of her statements

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:45:29):

I haven't heard one thing out of her mouth that I would say is antisemitic.

Seth Dillon (01:45:32):

Okay. If I may, could I answer the Hamptons question?

Lt Gov Patrick (01:45:38):

You may answer.

You may answer and I encourage you to answer, but this is not an interrogation, so you don't have to answer.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:45:46):

I'm not interrogating him. He's a comedian. He can handle it.

Seth Dillon (01:45:49):

Yeah, no, this is the best part of my day. The Hamptons meeting was a retreat called by Charlie. It was, I don't know if many of you're familiar with this, I'll give you a little context, but there was a claim that was made that an intervention was staged with Charlie, where people pulled him into a room in a very aggressive manner, pressured and blackmailed him because they felt like he was straying away from his support for Israel. That was the claim. The Hamptons retreat and the Hamptons retreat was characterized that way. It was not like that. There were about 30 people there handpicked and invited by Charlie personally. He brought us there. He stood at the front of the room with a microphone throughout the thing. The theme of it was Save the West. His primary focus was on the threat of Islam, the problem of Islam. There was heated and spirited debate about the issue of Israel in the room, but it was debate that Charlie himself initiated and he wanted to hear different perspectives on it. And so, we voiced a lot of our perspectives. One of the things that I disagreed with him on was he said that if you're not sufficiently supportive of Israel, it can be really ruinous for you in a position like his.

If you criticize Israel at all, they'll try to denigrate you and destroy you and call you names, call you anti-Semitic, et cetera, and it can ruin you. And I said, yeah, certainly that's true, but it can also be very costly to stand up to those people. And I gave the example of my own experience where I criticize the critics of Israel and they tried to destroy me. And so, we can all whine and cry about the consequences of what might happen if we say certain things, but everybody has a right to give their opinion and say what they think. So, there was back and forth like that, but there were many people that came out and made statements afterwards that it was completely

mischaracterized and that was really evil what she did to lie about a situation like that and try to portray it as though the Jews were trying to blackmail Charlie that resulted in death threats.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:48:02):

She never said that.

Seth Dillon (01:48:02):

She absolutely said that. She put my face on a movie poster for I Know What You Did Last Summer, suggesting that I had a role in his murder. I played a role in his murder. That's why someone tried to kill me in my family and got arrested in Texas.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:48:13):

What do you mean? Yeah, she has death threats too.

Seth Dillon (01:48:16):

This is all imaginary to you. It's all very real to me. I experienced it.

Carrie Prejean Boller (01:48:19):

You can't tell you that. Death threats too. I experienced experience 'em too.

Seth Dillon (01:48:22):

Well, thank you for your questions.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:48:26):

Yeah. But Charlie paid the price. It was more than a threat. Any other, oh, I think Allyson, do you have your light on? I'm sorry. It's hard for me to see you down there.

Allyson Ho (01:48:37):

Just real briefly, Seth. You're right. What we are about is deadly serious in terms of protecting religious liberty. It is not just; it is existential to America. And because it is existential to America, it is existential to the world because we are the light. And I just want to thank you. You may not have any idea just how much joy you bring to a lot of us out in the field getting hammered, getting criticized, especially when you poke fun at us because it's sort of, as a person of faith, you kind of feel like you're the only person that it's fair game for people to pick on and criticize. And so, to be able to read the Bee and see just a spot on a joke about getting the family in the van to get to church on time, I just really wanted you to know you are playing a really important role, number one in the war of ideas, but also in encouraging and bringing joy to the fighters. And so, I just really wanted to take this opportunity to thank you

Seth Dillon (01:50:14):

Thank you. And I want to take this opportunity to say, it's not all me. I can't take full credit for what we do. I have amazing team of people who are very talented that keep you laughing every day. So, I mostly just stand behind them, urging them to be funnier, and they do a pretty good job with that. But I appreciate it and I'll pass that feedback on to them because they'll be encouraged

by that too. We love bringing levity into the world and getting people to laugh. Well also dealing with some of these serious issues.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:50:45):

Paula?

Pastor Paula White (01:50:47):

Yes. First off, I want to thank you all so much, Leo, working with you on a daily basis and what we do at the White House, White House Faith office. I was going to hold all my comments and everything to the end and hearing everyone and thanking them for their witness, their testimony, their courage, everything else. Allyson, I have to echo what you were going to say because that's what I was going to say. Every single day I face stories of people for their faith being extremely persecuted here in America, in atrocious ways, sitting with students from Northwestern or UCLA or Harvard, which one of us would allow a 64-year-old to be put in a choke hold and just sit there and watch 'em die. Who would do that? Who would allow these people to go in and terrorize church services, worship services where people don't feel safe?

The work that we do on the religious commission is vitally important for all people of all faiths. And keeping it in that context is a responsibility for us to make sure that we protect people for religious liberty. I know that there are people in the audience on this panel. We've given up our life to make sure that people are protected, the President. And I just want to simply say thank you all for being such champions, Leo. You're right. It has to go to a local level. It has to go through our school. We have to enforce every single law that we have, and we must stay focused on the reality that people are being beaten, brutalized. It's not just free speech, ostracized, threatened, and it is our great honor to be picked for this commission to make a difference and make sure in America that our founders who made it our inalienable right in the Constitution, that every single person has the right to approach God, to worship him freely. And I thank you Dan and Ben as our co-chairs to make sure that we make that happen. Thank you,

Lt Gov Patrick (01:53:14):

Paula. Ryan, you want to follow up?

Ryan Anderson (01:53:17):

Yes. Just very briefly. There was something very important that went on between Carrie and Seth's exchange that needs to be highlighted. When she quoted Scott Hahn, he said that no Catholic is required to believe in Zionism as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. And Seth agreed with that. And so, as a Religious Liberty Commission, we don't think anyone needs to think that modern day Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. That is vastly different than saying that the modern nation state of Israel does not have a right to exist. And I think we need to highlight that distinction.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:53:52):

Dr. Ben, did you? I know you're...

Ben Carson (01:53:58):

It's not acting right.

Lt Gov Patrick (01:53:59):

You have to understand, I seldom look left in my life. I'm always looking right.

Dr. Carson (01:54:06):

Well, I want to thank you four. And several of the panelists today have mentioned that it's not just a plot against Jews, but against all of us. It's a bigger plot than that. And I'm just wondering, when you look at our society today and you see people trying to drive wedges between us on the basis of race, religion, gender, wealth, you name it, they're trying to drive wedges. Is this part of a bigger plot to divide and conquer? Jesus said it himself. A house divided against itself cannot stand, repeated by Abraham Lincoln. Is that what's going on?

Lt Gov Patrick (01:54:58):

You're all free to...

Rev. Ferguson (01:55:05):

I think two things I would say, and it's going back to our common biblical heritage. One of the things we need to address as a country more seriously is just the reality of evil and sin division is a fruit of the original sin. And it's right there in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. We are seeing more and more, it seems to me, on different levels of government, a disunity between the laws of our land and God's law. And as that gap gets ever wider, there's going to be a greater disunity. There's a growth or an allowance for more mischief by the spirit of evil, the evil one, the devil himself. And I think that's one thing as a country we need to do part of the work of this commission is not just to identify evils, but also, I think to identify where we as religious people of all different faiths can make a contribution.

And especially Christians and Jews, we have a lot to say where we have common ground in terms of what God's law requires of us when we talk about human dignity, respect for human life and how we ought to treat people with equality. And when we can go back to that origin, that's one of the first things I think where we're going to see not only the identification of evil, but the positive good that we all can bring to our society. And the second thing I think we also need to remember is that this conflict between people of faith, again, in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis, we see brother killing brother right after the sin of Adam and Eve. We see the fratricide, and that's what we're doing to one another in this day in different ways, but we're killing ourselves the more we allow these divisions to enter into our society, whether they be based on religion or race or any other distinction, our blindness to our common humanity.

That's a part of our spiritual patrimony as Christian Jews. To go back to the first chapter of the book of Genesis and the second that everything that God created is good and that he created all of us in his image and likeness with that fundamental inalienable human dignity. If we don't get back to that, we're just going to keep going down the path that we are going, which is greater disunity rather than unity. And we have a great opportunity, I think to reclaim that unity, that spirit in this 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, this country is founded its first document

in 1776, speaks of a shared belief in a common creator. That's what we have then in common. Why are we not emphasizing that Christians, Jews, other people of faith have a shared belief in a common creator who's created every single person with dignity, with inalienable rights.

And among these included our life, the right to life. We need to go back to that fundamental principle that every single human life is a gift from God because we are all created in God's image and likeness, life, liberty. That's what we're all about in the work of this commission, our first liberty being our religious liberty. So, all I'm saying is nothing that's rocket science or profound theology. I'm just saying let's go back and reread the first couple of chapters of the Bible, 1, 2, 3, and let's read the Declaration of Independence. And when we reclaim those values, we'll be on a much better path to achieving the common, a good society in our country.

Dr. Spalding (01:58:49):

And I don't want to be the downer after that. I agree with everything that Father just said, but I want to answer your question. So, take everything that Father Tom just said, add in what all of you have just said on the commission. And then remember, of course, God is omni everything. So, he knew that ideology would happen. It's not as if he couldn't foresee that too, but you have to understand that that makes the evil even worse if it's possible. And I go back to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's famous characterization of ideology where he said, it makes Iago look like he was a little lamb. And that you have something that is so total about how it wants to break down everything that you just testified to that is based in that beautiful harmony of faith and reason that we're built on in the United States. And so, we have to be aware of that.

And that's part of the reason I was tasked to talk specifically about ideologies. And they are a problem at all levels in our schools, in our curriculum. And it means it's on us. We have to educate ourselves. We have to educate our kids. We have to educate everybody in our communities about this and then fight, fight, fight. And then that we will get to this. I mean, it's all true, but if we just think it's like the old days, then we're not going to move forward. In fact, we're going to lose. We're going to lose. So now you have to say something really upbeat again, father,

Lt Gov Patrick (02:00:27):

Doctor, everybody good, I'll just, we were together in Amarillo Saturday night by coincidence, both speaking, I had the privilege to introduce you as the keynote speaker. By the way, Sam Houston also said a house divided against itself cannot stand. I just want to get a plugin for Sam Houston in Texas. This again, it's been a great discussion. We started on antisemitism, but we broadened the discussion, which I think has been very healthy. And I think we have gone, since you asked the question, I think we've gone beyond politics. I think the battle for America's darkness and light, and those of us who believe in the light have to understand that there are those who want to take over our country and every totalitarian government in the history of the world, the first thing you have to do is remove God and the seeds of chaos and to separate the family, to separate us as people where we can't even have Thanksgiving together with someone who supports another candidate.

They're working hard every day. And to take over a country, you get rid of God, you take over the education, you take over the messenger. Do we have any question about the messages we see every day? And so, it's darkness and light that we're battling. It's not even Republican and Democrat or some independent party. It's darkness and light. And we, as Seth said, if we're not willing to stand up for the light and call out the darkness and you said Dr. Spalding, then we lose. And Seth, everybody again, everybody's been threatened, people around here more than myself, but the fact that you put yourself really out there every day, you sacrifice everything you have as well as your life being on the line. We all do that from time to time, but you do it every day. So, I've such great respect. I've never met you before. I just thought you're a wisecracking guy behind the Babylon Bee, but your testimony has been excellent and the answers to your questions, I want to dismiss this panel. Thank you so much. Thank you so, so much.

Lt Gov Patrick (02:08:25):

We'd asked Rabbi if he wanted to conclude on this and we won't be taking questions or comments on what he says. It's just a conclusion here at the end of this panel as we transition to the debanking issue. And that will be our last panel, and we may be a little past 1:30, but we'll be close depending on how many questions we have for the final panel. Rabbi.

Rabbi Soloveitchik (02:08:49):

Thank you, chairman Patrick. And before I begin, I just want to note that I know personally how seriously you take the subject we met to discuss today. And I just want to say how much that means to me and thank you for your leadership. I've been asked by the commission to speak briefly about how the early history of the Jews in America relates to our own moment. It's a topic near and dear to my heart, a subject of my writings and which I draw today and personal to me because my own synagogue is the oldest Jewish congregation in the United States. We don't like to talk about that, except pretty much every day its members served in the revolution and experienced the warm embrace of the founders. But in speaking about the topic of Jews in America and early America, I want to begin by quoting a non-American, which is the late British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who described how as a young man, he first visited Washington DC and he was struck by the memorials, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, which as he saw contained not only images of these men, but also etched and stoned their words, the ideas with which they left us, The Declaration, Gettysburg Address.

And Sacks reflected that if you go to London, you don't see anything like this. They have a lot of memorials, but no words. The memorial for David Lloyd George has three words on it. David, Lloyd, and George. The statue of Churchill has only one word, Churchill. Now words were kind of important for Churchill. So why the difference? The reason Rabbi Sacks said, and I'm paraphrasing him, is that England was until recently a "class-based society." Those who belong know those who need to ask show thereby that they don't belong. American society is different. Rabbi Sacks reflected, because from the pilgrim fathers onwards, it was based on the concept of covenant and set on the Hebrew Bible, especially in Exodus and Deuteronomy. So, Rabbi Sacks said, and the point is that covenant is a political compact in Hebrew breach that is about more than self-interest. It's done in dedication to a creed, binding parties thereby and responsibility to one another.

But in the presence of God, America came to understand itself as a covenantal people bound to a creed united by God amidst their differences. Thus, in support of this declaration with a firm reliance on divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor. It's only with the covenantal nature of America in mind that we can appreciate simultaneously the unique role that faith played and plays in our country, and the unique way in which Jews were welcomed in the United States. Thus, on July 4th, 1788, a parade was held in Philadelphia to celebrate the state's ratification of the Constitution. One witness, the physician and signer of the declaration, the Christian devout Christian Benjamin Rush, described the prominent place that Christian clergy played in the procession and their presence, as he wrote, manifested by their attendance, their sense of the connection between religion and good government.

But he also added that pains were taken to connect ministers of the most dissimilar religious principles together. In other words, to highlight unity amidst religious difference. And then Rush tells us that one of the clergy in the parade wasn't Christian. These are his words. "The Rabbi of the Jews locked in the arms of two ministers of the gospel was a most delightful sight. There could not have been a more happy emblem contrived of that section of the new Constitution, which opens all its power and offices alike, not only to every sect of Christian, but to worthy men of every religion." Thus, the new constitutional order did not demand a public square scrub to faith. The clergy marched to arm in arm rabbi and minister in a parade unimaginable anywhere else on earth. In 1788 or in 1888, faith and freedom were civically celebrated together, each reinforcing each other, or if you will, a rabbi and a minister.

March in a parade is not the opening of a joke. It's not what it is. It is instead a description of an event that marked the advent of a wholly new approach to the role of religion and society, a covenantal people of religious difference, but united all the same in dedication to the American creed. Soon after this parade, Washington was inaugurated in 1789, leaders from various minority faith communities in America, each sent a letter of congratulations to the President. Catholics came together, all sent them one letter. Baptist came together and sent Washington one letter. Quakers came together and sent Washington one letter. The Jews in America could not really agree who would send the letter. So, they ended up sending him three letters. There's maybe a thousand Jews in America, three letters. And thank God, because Washington wrote a response to each one. He was a gentleman and they're splendid.

And I'll just briefly cite two of the three. The first was to the Jews of Savannah, which concluded with a biblical illusion. Washington wrote, "made the same wonder working deity who long since delivering the Hebrews from their Egyptian oppressors, planted them in the promised land, whose providential agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States as an independent nation, still continue to water them with the dues of heaven and to make the inhabitants of every denomination participate in the temporal and spiritual blessings of that people whose God is." And then Washington concluded with God's Hebrew name, which traditional Jews don't pronounce. So, what Washington tells the Jews is that he sees the tale of the Exodus and of America as parallel to each other. And he's expressing that the Jews were to be welcomed in America, yes, because the ideals of equality. But Washington is also making sure to emphasize the way in which the Jewish scriptural story inspired the exceptional covenantal nature of America itself.

Two months later, Washington visited Newport, Rhode Island and drawing on the letter he received from Newport, he responded with what has now become a famous passage Washington wrote, “It is no more that toleration is spoken of as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the government of the United States, which gives the bigotry no sanction to persecution, no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens.” So, if Jews in America never experienced the horrors that Jews encountered on the European continent, it was in part because this country’s founders embraced its Jews from the beginning and decried Jew hatred as un-American. Then in this letter, Washington again concluded with a biblical illusion, his favorite Bible verse from the book of Micah, he wrote, “may the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell on this land continue to merit and enjoy the goodwill of the other inhabitants while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and victory.

And there shall be none to make him afraid.” Needless to say, nothing like this had been written in Europe by a head of state. A friend of mine, Chris Scalia, son of the late Justice Scalia, told me that his father loved this letter, not because he was Jewish, because of course he wasn’t, but because it reflected for the late justice something larger about America. In fact, Justice Scalia quoted it a month after he became the first American of Italian descent to be elevated to the Supreme Court. And he quoted it in a speech to Italian Americans, not to Jews. And he was seeking to express to them how being American means embracing what America stands for. And you can come here from anywhere on earth and embrace what America stands for, whether you come from Jewish communities around the world to America, or you came from Italy and then Washington.

In other words, America is a covenantal nation. And then Scalia said, “if you do not believe that, you need look no further than the actions of the greatest American of them all. The father of our country, George Washington, during his first term in office as President Washington, wrote a letter that is a model of Americanism addressed to the Hebrew congregation of Newport, Rhode Island. This blue-blooded aristocratic Virginian assured that small community that his administration, his country, would brook no discrimination against that small and politically impotent community. And that the children of Abraham, as he put it, were welcome in this country to live in peace and never to have fear.” So, Scalia said, but the hard truth is that this has not been a couple of years in which the children of Abraham in America have lived in peace without fear. And the story I tell the point Scalia made about the way in which the Jews found a home in America actually illustrates the unique nature of America for all of us.

And this is important because the hatred that we are seeing is not really only about the Jews, the mobs and college quads blocking Jewish access to classes. They’re not patriotically holding up American flags as they do so, they hate America and the West in general. Further, the frenzied conspiratorial comments about Jews that we now find on parts of the right to which Seth Dylan referred also go hand in hand with utterly unfounded revisionism about American history. Just as we’ve been seeing that already in a different form on the woke left, thus we hear from the woke left the revolution that the American founding was itself evil. And we hear from other circles, few on the right saying that the American campaign in World War II was immoral. Each is an attempt

to take moments that America expanded liberty for the world and to denigrate it, the Jewish story in America is linked to the exceptional nature of America and that's precisely why it is hated.

What this means then is that Jewish hatred is not only about the Jews, it concerns all those who care about the uniqueness of this nation. David McCullen, his biography of Harry Truman describes how Harry Truman was presiding over the Senate and then went to I think his card game and he was suddenly summoned to the White House and he sees Eleanor Roosevelt sitting there and Eleanor Roosevelt says to him, Harry, the president is dead. And he didn't really realize in the moment I think what it meant for him. So, he said, is there anything I can do for you? And she said, is there anything we could do for you because you are the one who's in trouble. Now, past couple of years I've heard from religious leaders, from political leaders, people that have reached out to me from various faith communities in America, and what they have said is, is there anything we can do for you?

It is so, so appreciated. As I expressed to Leo Terrell, it is so appreciated. But what I also want to say is that we, all of us, all Americans are the ones who are in trouble if this is allowed to fester because at its core is a hatred of America and American exceptionalism, which is why it's so meaningful that we meet today to seek to preserve the exceptional nature of America, an exceptional nature, which was herald in a parade over two centuries ago. A parade featuring ministers of the gospel and a rabbi walking arm in arm, celebrating the precious meaning of the newborn United States. A wonder that we shall celebrate on its 250th birthday this year and whose exceptional covenant will please God, be defended, protected, and preserved for many years to come? Thank you for having me.

Lt Gov Patrick (02:20:14):

Thank you, Rabbi. Our last panel on debanking. Ambassador Sam Brownback, Lacey Smith and Hermione Susanna. I believe it's Hermione Susanna. I did the best I could. That's

Is that the way I say it? Like Hermione Gingold who used to be in, Yes, that's what she got the name. Yes. I don't know what she did, but I know once upon a time she was on TCM in some movie and there we go. Ambassador. Great to have you. Thank you. We talked when we were forming this commission. Do you remember?

Ambassador Brownback (02:20:59):

I do remember that.

Lt Gov Patrick (02:21:01):

Well, that was almost a year ago. I reached out to you because you've been involved in a similar exercise and wanted your guidance. You're our lead witness.

Ambassador Brownback (02:21:13):

Thank you very much and it's a pleasure to join you and I want to thank everybody that's serving on this panel. This is, I just think critically important because what you're seeing take place, it's really this effort to suffocate people of faith in the public square. And we'll talk specifically about debanking here, but I think just as a context to set it, it's really an effort to try to take people

generally associated with traditional values and just make it hard for them to operate in the Body Politic America, you've got a great lawyer here. We're winning all these law cases when they go up to the Supreme Court and keep running. We need more of 'em to get up there, but you got to bring it back down into the culture and you got to get into the legislative process. In my estimation, for these to be a reality for the everyday person to happen. I remember at one point in time having a conversation with one of the Supreme Court justices and I was just talking with them and I was interested in religious freedom and I asked him, I said, are we going to have religious freedom in America? And he said, yes you will in the law. I'm not sure you'll have it in the culture.

I thought that's accurate. What this effort is, I think really is to try to get it broader to the culture, to the people. I think that's critically important. Our case is a really pretty straightforward one. I'd worked on international religious freedom cases for a long time both in the Senate and as ambassador for international religious freedom. And then I started seeing more and more. We were seeing the same sort of things happening internationally creeping into here with these really attacks on people of faith. You weren't being thrown in jail as much. You weren't being communal violence, but you were being suffocated. You were being debanked, deplatformed, de insurance, these sort of things is what was regularly happening. So, we formed the National Committee for Religious Freedom, bipartisan to advocate for religious freedom for all Americans all the time. Pretty simple, right? Opened our business, opened the checking account, and here was my first big mistake. We did it on April 15th, 2022, just should never do anything on April 15th.

Then I go in to put some funds in the account because I'm starting it and I'm putting in some funds to get this started on May 19th in a local branch in Kansas. We opened it here in DC. We wanted a national bank to be able to work with, and I go to the counter there in the suburban Kansas City and the lady looks at this computer screen and she says, I'm sorry that account has been closed. The note here on the screen says it's been done at the corporate office. It was explained the decision was final and non-revocable and they weren't supposed to say anything more to me. That was in Kansas that I get. What did we do? What happened here? So, this is 34 days after we had opened the account here in Washington DC. Well, as God would have it, our executive director had previously worked for Chase Bank before he came to us.

And so he knew kind of how to get into the system and ask what's going on here? So, we made a bunch of requests, they weren't answering it and then finally on June 8th, we got ahold of somebody there. They said, well, okay, we will reconsider provided you disclose all your donors, provide a list of intended fund recipients and full details of how the NCRF will select pro-religious freedom candidates to support. And I haven't practiced law in a long time, but I'm going, you can't do this. Ask those sorts of things of us, of which she later said that was patently false. But we had transcribed, we had recorded the conversation so we have a transcript of this conversation we can provide to you. I then was reached out to by a former staff member of mine that was now working for Chase Bank here. I'd been in the Senate and this staff member had transitioned, I presume he was doing very well financially and he's now working for Chase Bank and he said, Hey, it was just bad customer service. Everything's going to be all right and I'm going, what's not all right?

But he did put us in touch with somebody on up the stream and then they started saying, well, we were concerned that something you said when you opened the account triggered us thinking that there might be some money laundering or domestic terrorism issues involved here and I've had top secret clearance for 20 years. I don't think that's probably the right answer. That's true. And then they said, well, you didn't fill our forms out. And I said, well, you're supposed to give us a standard of 60 days to provide all the information you want. And you gave us 34. Multiple occasions, we asked be responsible person at Chase. We got an email from the CCO Patricia Wexler on November 9th, and we were asking for a phone call with them that we could record and they said they wanted to avoid a phone call that we could record.

Alright. Then they said on November 9th that the account was closed because of a heightened consumer risk profile triggered by my involvement because I was, they had designated me as a politically exposed person. Now, okay, I'm politically exposed. I confess this, I've been in Congress, the Senate, Governor, I'm politically exposed, but that is actually a legal term of art that applies only to foreign elected officials and not to domestic elected officials. So that one didn't work either. We'd put a shareholder resolution up to the JP Morgan Chase annual shareholders, to which the CEO, Jamie Diamond said, no apologies are necessary. No corrective action is necessary. A point he later in February 13th, 2025 in meeting with Republican members of the Senate Banking Committee said, well, we don't debank people because of political religious affiliation, but there are a lot of things that can be fixed. We should fix them.

The rules and requirements are so onerous and it does cause people to be debanked. In my opinion, we should not be debanked. So, we're back and forth a little bit there as well. You've had a long day. I want to, this still isn't resolved. I've had five different reasons. I still don't know why. I think Chase really ought to go internally and figure out why did this happen and prevent this from happening in the future. They have made some changes in their process of what they've put on forward. My suggestions to you though are that this is something that has been fairly rampant. When we went public with ours, I got contacted by somewhere between 10 to 20 other groups that had been debanked deplatformed, but most of 'em were debanked. They were generally religiously affiliated or groups that this had happened to, and they said they had not gone public because they went and found another bank and we did too.

We went out and found Bank of America, took us, we've not had any problem with Bank of America, but they didn't want to go public because they thought it would hurt their fundraising. It would make it more difficult. It was another barrier they were going to have to break through. I was going, this is the very reason we formed the NCRF, so you wouldn't have these sort of barriers to break through in the first place. Why should somebody, because they have values that may not be in the cultural mainstream at the present time, have any barriers? We are enriched as a society because we have people like that. We have Amish in our state that I think God bless 'em, they're absolutely wonderful people. I don't operate as an Amish person. The Orthodox Jewish community I think is an absolute fabulous addition to the American society, an important piece of it. I'm not orthodox Jewish, but we are enriched because we have it. We should make it easy and accommodate their working in the society, not make it harder. So, my recommendation, just real briefly, Tennessee has passed a bill on a transparency law that on major banks that they would have to provide transparent rules as to why they debank somebody. It applies to banks of over a

hundred billion in size. Also, Idaho and Florida has done something similar in this. I think you should try to codify President Trump's executive order.

14331, the Guaranteed Fair Banking for All Americans. It's one thing to do an executive order. It's very important, it's key to do that. But if it's just an executive order, we all know that doesn't necessarily last in the next administration. That should be tried to be codified. And if nothing else at this point in time, I would try to get it an appropriations bill to where it's an annual issue, but still, you could get it through getting over that 60-vote threshold in the Senate. It's just really tough to be able to do. But you could get it in appropriation bills, particularly with this Speaker of the House who is a religious freedom lawyer. Brilliant, wonderful man, and ask him and said, we would like some of these put in appropriations bills to move this forward. And then finally, this isn't debanking, but I run a monthly meeting of the National Council for Religious Freedom and we get religious freedom activist on that call each month and anybody in the audience wants to join it, get ahold of me or you can get ahold of it.

We are seeing people, de-insuranced, deplatformed, can't get accreditation for colleges. They'll comment on this, can't use multi-listing as a real estate agent because they were an outspoken person of faith. Put something forward. Can't get funds from community foundations because they're affiliated with a pro-life group. We've had those specific items all brought up on this call by various individuals, and it's more than debanking. It's a cultural issue, needs to be gone out broadly, but you can get at this debanking and I think particularly through the transparency route. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (02:32:09):

Thank you, ambassador, Senator, Governor, and if I was just listening here thinking if that can happen to you, think about the average person on the street that has no chance. No chance. No chance. Hermione, who's next? Lacey. Lacey, go ahead. I'm sorry. I didn't look at my list. I couldn't see the name card.

Lacey Smith (02:32:33):

That's all right. Well, good afternoon. It's an honor to be here. Thank you for everything. It's definitely going to be a story that passes on to my great grandchildren and beyond. So, I used to be a flight attendant for Alaska Airlines. It was a job that I absolutely loved as a flight attendant. I was able to share life with so many from her and loss to celebrations and wins. I once worked a flight where we were simultaneously taking a grieving family who was transporting their recently deceased mother to her home and final resting place alongside a fraternity on their right to spring break in Cabo. So as a Christian, I was able to use those brief moments on the plane to serve and love others the best that I could. I enjoyed the diversity I encountered daily from the people on the plane to the circumstances to my coworkers, and I particularly loved Alaska Airlines because for years it had encouraged a culture of open communication.

But unfortunately, all that has changed. In February of 2021, Alaska posted an article on their internal message board, which was titled Alaska Supports the Equality Act. So, the Equality Act was proposed legislation about sexual orientation, gender identity, and religious freedom that did

not pass. But after reading the article, which is private to employees and not visible to customers or the public, there was a button that invited us as employees to be able to submit a comment. So being a conservative Christian, I had concerns about what Alaska's support for the act meant for me and as an employee. So, I asked the question as a company, do you think it's possible to regulate morality? And that one simple question got me fired. So shortly after posting the question, Alaska took me off all of my scheduled trips and called me in for an investigative meeting. They were very elusive about the details surrounding the meeting and informed me that I was to speak to no one about it.

It was incredibly isolating and intimidating in the initial meeting and throughout the entirety of the termination process, which took about two months of my life. I repeatedly explained that I'm opposed to discrimination, but there were things that I disagreed with about the Equality Act. However, Alaska fired me explaining in my notice of discharge that "defining gender identity or sexual orientation as a moral issue is a discriminatory statement." So, this confirmed to me that I was being targeted because of my religious beliefs about morality. I later learned that another flight attendant named Marley Brown was terminated at the same time. She also had posted concerns about how the Equality Act would impact people of faith and about the safety and privacy of women in girls in women's spaces. Alaska called both of our comments hateful, discriminatory, and offensive. They said that it was discriminatory to use the term opposite sex because that implied that there were only two sexes.

Both Marley and I had great relationships with all of our coworkers regardless of their beliefs and background. But that didn't matter. I knew that what had happened to me wasn't right. Companies can't fire religious employees simply for asking questions stemming from their religious beliefs. That's why I'm so very thankful that God led me to First Liberty Institute who agreed to represent both me and my former coworker, Marley. It's with this lawsuit that I found even more detail about the extent of the religious discrimination and the hostility towards people of faith displayed both by Alaska Airlines and then also my union, the Association of Flight Attendants. So, the union who was supposed to protect me in cases of discrimination with Alaska had been in contact with the airlines from the very beginning, encouraging and expressing support from my termination. The union president reported our comments complaining to the airline about our religious beliefs not being inclusive and in those communications between the company and the union, the union president said that he hated me. And another union representative quoted, "can we please get somebody to shut down comments or put Marley and Lacey in a burlap bag and drop them in a well?"

Alaska Airlines was also hostile towards our religious beliefs. One of Alaska Airlines lawyers wrote, "we should stay away from everyone has the right to have their own beliefs in this case, because the belief is actually discrimination, employees actually do not have the right to believe that L-G-B-T-Q rights are immoral." When my supervisor was asked where employees would be allowed to mention moral beliefs supposed to the LGBTQ plus activity, she responded "at home without any other employees being there to hear it. That would be okay." Alaska's Airlines hostility towards my religious beliefs was particularly surprising because of its old reputation as a faith-friendly airline. For over 30 years, Alaska Airlines included a prayer card with a verse from Psalms with each meal card, we've got examples. Here it reads, "I will praise God's name and

song and glorify him with Thanksgiving.” Psalm 69:30. The airlines stopped that practice in 2012 right before I started there in 2014, but it was the openness to faith as one of the first things that drew me to Alaska. So, as you can imagine, I was fired. My life was entirely upended. I was uncertain of the future and doubting myself. I wondered if speaking up on behalf of my own moral conscience had even been worth it. I’d only lost my income and my health insurance. I lost a job I loved.

I’m just really hydrated. It just comes at all places.

I lost my security and I lost my future. One reason,

Get it together. One reason I took the job as a flight attendant was that I have siblings who live overseas. So, losing my job meant that I also lost the ability to stay as connected with them. My husband and I had dreams of traveling, sorry, once we had kids, but we lost that dream too. I felt bullied and hated by a company that told me that they value diversity. And yet when I expressed even a whisper of my own religious beliefs, I was fired. And then because of the uncertainty of our financial situation, my husband and I felt compelled to move across country to a more fiscally affordable area, leaving friends and family behind and having to start all over in a new area. So, I’m hoping that as people hear my story, they understand the need and importance of protecting the rights of employees to respectfully share their religious and moral opinions in the workplace. Otherwise, religious employees

And even respectful conversation about religion in the workplace might go the way that Alaska’s prayer cards did and just simply disappeared. Fortunately, we do have Title vii, which was brought up of the Civil Rights Act, which protects us against religious discrimination in the workplace. However, many do not know their rights and are bullied into silencing their moral conscious in an attempt to hold to their jobs and security. But I go back to what founding father Benjamin Franklin said. “Those who give up essential liberty in an attempt to secure safety will surely result in the loss of both.” So, thank you for the time to hear my story. I hope it sheds light on both understanding our religious protections in the workplace and also in reinforcing the importance of protecting those rights of employees to respectfully share their religious and moral opinions in the workplace. I’ll end with a favorite quote by another founding father, John Jay. “By knowing their rights, they will sooner perceive when they’re violated and be the better prepared to defend and assert them.” Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (02:39:58):

Thank you, Lacey. Their loss, its Alaskans airline, their loss. I know you suffered, but they’re the big loser because they lost you. Hermione. Now

Hermione Susana (02:40:15):

Good afternoon. I love this woman here, my true warrior. God put us together. I thank the commission for this opportunity to speak and share my story of religious discrimination in the

private sector. I still remember the joy of serving fans at Madison Square Garden, chatting with families, sharing laughs over game nights, feeling part of something bigger that joy turned to heartbreak when my deeply held religious convictions about the sanctity of life as a Catholic made me unable to comply with the vaccine mandate. In March, 2020, during the COVID-19 outbreak, I was a seasonal hospitality server at three New York City venues. All three shut down for guests and most staff for nearly a year. For in February, 2021, venues reopened with strict restrictions. I was among the few who quickly returned and during daily COVID-19 testing and guidelines to help reopen at 10% capacity initially building up to a hundred percent by spring.

As a tip employee, I often made less than I would have if I stayed home and collected unemployment plus stimulus checks. But I was eager to work. In May, 2021 Madison Square Garden announced a vaccine mandate be vaccinated by July or request a religious or medical accommodation. I submitted a detailed religious accommodation request on time as a union member would unite here local 100, but it was denied. My religious accommodation clearly stated my Catholic's beliefs with supporting information and references on the church's clear teaching on the sanctity of life and how the three vaccines violated my beliefs.

My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and I could not in good conscience inject something I believe violated thy sacred trust. A conviction rooted in prayer and scripture that I hold sincerely. The union afforded me that every religious accommodation request to Madison Square Garden was rejected, but a templated response. The company then stated that unvaccinated employees were resigning and removed our ability to work. I quickly responded that I was not resigning, but my response was ignored. The company never formally terminated me or others like me, but locked us out of the scheduling system and no longer responded. The union promised to file grievances but did not. This was my first religious freedom violation.

Worst came in August, 2021 when New York City's Key to NYC mandate required vaccination for private sector employees at indoor venues by September 13. Because of this, I was unable to work at the Barclay Center. That mandate was especially discriminatory. It exempted non-resident performers, athletes, and their staff people in the same buildings where I worked. Yet, employees like me with sincere religious objections were barred while unvaccinated athletes and artists and their entourages were allowed in. I watched as unvaccinated professional athletes and performers entered the same arena where I was barred. Madison Square Garden even advocated for those exemptions after rejecting hours. My last venue was Yankee Stadium where an outdoor area allowed me to continue working briefly. The onslaught of discrimination and persecution at this point only increased because of an emergency executive order that was issued by New York City officials in December, 2021 with even tighter restrictions. Subsequently, I lost my job at Yankee Stadium. My employer did not offer us a religious accommodation.

As a resident in New York City, I faced consumer discrimination from the vaccine restrictions. From September, 2021, unvaccinated people could not enter indoor restaurants, theaters, or venues. No religious exemption applied there. For my Jewish brethren, this invoked painful historical echoes of exclusion based on not having papers. Officials ignored religious sensitivities for months while exemptions for performers and athletes continued. By January, 2022, I had lost

all three jobs where I had worked for over a decade, my apartment and stability. I had no choice but to leave the state moving to Georgia to live with my dad. In March, 2022, New York City officials lifted vaccine requirements for patrons and gave exemptions to resident athletes and performers where I worked, but did not give those exemptions for workers like me. We were demonized and ostracized for upholding constitutional religious freedom. I continue fighting with emails and letters to union and employers. I also filed charges with the NLRB. I found out after the deadline that the EEOC could have represented me. It was impossible for me and other private sector employees to fight a very long, expensive legal battle.

For example, to this day, cases that unvaccinated public sector New York City workers won years ago are still held and tied up in appellate courts. The city dropped its private sector mandates on November 1st, 2022. I returned to the Barclay Center that same month. It took over a year to return to Yankee Stadium. Unfortunately, Madison Square Garden never brought us back. I still endure the financial burdens for my decision. For example, I do not have health insurance and I'm unable to obtain affordable housing due to the permanent loss of income from losing my third job when the mandates were in place. I did not want to give into the temptation of obtaining false vaccination documentation to work because as an American, I have the right to my religious accommodation. Under the law, our laws protect our religious freedom and it should be fought for despite the cost I and other workers in New York City like me have permanently lost jobs, homes, full pensions, scholarships, medical benefits, and more. Our 401ks savings and other assets have been depleted and debt skyrocketed with little to no justice in pursuit of our religious freedom. Despite the pain, my faith sustains me and it still does.

I share this not just for myself, but for every believer facing similar choices today and tomorrow. Religious liberty must never cost a person's livelihood, home or dignity in America. Thank you, thank you,

Lt Gov Patrick (02:48:29):

Thank you. Questions from the panel? Questions from the panel for our witnesses? Carrie?

Carrie Prejean Boller (02:48:36):

Oh, go ahead, Kelly. No,

Kelly Shackelford (02:48:36):

No, go ahead. Go first.

Carrie Prejean Boller (02:48:38):

Okay. Wow, your story is really sad. This should never happen in America. Next month we're going to have a hearing on this issue, religious liberty and healthcare. And I'm sure we're going to hear from people like you who were denied religious exemptions. There's children that are denied religious exemptions to attend school. Discrimination is rampant. Just because you don't receive an injection, it's wrong. An its un-American, and so I will say that publicly. What can we recommend to the president? The damage has already been done, but what can we do? Your story is so sad, it's heartbreaking. It should never have happened to you. Hearing you say that you've

lost your home, you've lost your jobs, your life was in shambles, I'm sure because of this. And for so many people, they just want us to move on. I promise you; we're not going to move on from this. Thank you so much. Yeah,

Hermione Susana (02:49:42):

Thank you so much. I think that that's the sentiment. Just move on. One is that first of all, people like myself, we don't have any legal means because one of the things I kind of noted was the EEOC. So, since I'm a union employee, and this is in all fairness to them, I'm supposed to go to my union and get my legal battles fought. They didn't even file a grievance. Contractually, they're supposed to negotiate on my behalf. They never did that. So Local 100 represents me in all three jobs. So that was never done. And for others, I mean, my case is hard, but there are even people in New York City, which is harder. But a good example is that we have a lot of cases, especially with the city workers, that the sanitation workers won in 2022, still held up in appellate courts in New York City.

So, I mean, we do have some great cases that are being won nationwide, but in New York City, it's like we are forgotten. We really don't know who to go to and who to turn to. So, I'm so grateful you do not understand to be on this commission, not only for myself, but for all of us in New York City because we don't have a place to turn. Even the reinstatements that they promised our city workers in December of 2025, it's still being held up. There's a difference of it being rehired in a reinstatement because your pension is associated with it. So, it's a great evil that we still continue to this day. We are going through this. So, I just want to just say that if

Ambassador Brownback (02:51:33):

I could quickly respond to that; I think one of the keys here would be to create private causes of action. The left has done this brilliantly for years where you create the private causes of action so that people can pursue things in their own, not just the government. And we should really look at this area of law to create private causes of action so that people like you, Susanna, can pursue that and have lawyers there to advocate for 'em.

Kelly Shackelford (02:52:06):

Yeah, the Title VII actually covers this. So, you can, and every lawsuit we filed for a refusal of religious exemption, we've won all over the country. So, it just shouldn't happen. And it happened to so many people and so many people didn't know that they had the ability to do anything about it, and they just had such damage. I thank you for telling your story. And Lacey, thank you for standing up. I think your case is going to affect a lot of people who work in this country. When the company says internally, we want your feedback, and then you give Christian feedback and they fire you, you can't do that in this country. So, thank you. And then Ambassador Brownback, do you know what? Is the law not able to get through on debanking in the federal? Is it the 60-vote margin? There are not enough support. So, if we put a recommendation in here to pass the law to stop debanking based upon discrimination against religion or those type of things, is there not enough votes in Congress now? Have you had experience as you're looking at this issue?

Ambassador Brownback (02:53:24):

Yeah, I don't know how you'd get it through right now in that 60-vote threshold in the Senate, other than tailored in narrow and put it in an appropriations bill so you could get an annual bill that's got a pass and make it a key negotiating thing. A number in the pro-life movement. Earlier, the bills, the early bills we got were annual riders on an appropriations bill, and then you got a vehicle that you can get it through with. But I had narrow focus and you got a speaker of the house that would be, I think very favorably disposed towards doing something like that. Thank you.

Lt Gov Patrick (02:54:09):

I thank you ambassador. And I didn't look to my left.

Dr. Carson (02:54:15):

It wasn't your fault. This thing goes off after five minutes. First of all, ambassador, Senator, Congressman, governor Brownback, thank you for the many years that you've dedicated to those who are affected by things like this. And for you two ladies, what you've gone through, I just want to make you aware that there are some private sector remedies for debanking. For instance, the O' Glory Bank was established exactly for that reason is growing very rapidly. And full disclosure, I was one of the founders of that bank, but there was a reason that we get involved in these things. And that's really going to be the answer I think to all of these things, is we all have spheres of influence. And if we fight, I think we will win

Lt Gov Patrick (02:55:14):

To Lacey and Hermione. We've had a lot of testimony similar to yours. Fact had a Navy Seal on our last hearing because of the vaccination for religious reasons, he was basically dismissed and lost his pension and his healthcare. But if someone said it was for a medical reason, they were allowed to continue. It's the money loss is hard. But I think what's hard is we always hear how much people love their job. And when you take away somebody's love of what they do, I can tell Hermione, you loved to walk through those stands. You love to interact with the fans. I can just tell. And you loved your passengers. You helped that one. You loved your passengers. That's even more cruel than taking away your money. So, thank you for having your courage and thank you for coming today. You are dismissed. Thank you, members. This wraps up our hearing. Our next hearing is March 16th, back here at the museum, and this has been an incredible day. Thank you for your patience and all the time you put in today and listening closely and great questions. And I appreciate y'all. We are dismissed until March 16th. Thank you. Thank you all for coming.