



The United States Department of Justice Religious Liberty Commission
Minutes of the February 9, 2026 Hearing
Anti-Semitism and Religious Liberty; Religious Liberty in the Private Sector

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) held a meeting on February 09, 2026, at the museum of the Bible in Washington, DC.

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

All Commission Members attended except Bishop Robert Barron, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, and ex-Officio Commission Member Attorney General Pamela J. Bondi, who were unable to attend due to travel conflicts.

This synopsis includes key highlights from the meeting.

OPENING AND WELCOMING REMARKS

Ms. Ashleigh Bondoc, the Designated Federal Official (DFO), opened the meeting, as required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

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

Chairman Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick welcomed the audience and introduced ex-officio Commission Member Secretary Scott Turner.

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

Secretary Turner opened the meeting with remarks regarding the importance of religious liberty in the United States and critical concerns related to the rise in anti-Semitism.

PRESENTATION TOPIC: Anti-Semitism in Higher Education

- **Yitzchok Frankl**
- **Shabbos Kestenbaum**
- **Coach Bruce Pearl**
- **Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman**

Mr. Yitzchok Frankl described anti-Semitic harassment based on his religious identity during his time as a student at UCLA Law School, including being required to obtain wristbands to show his “permission” to be present in public areas of campus. Mr. Shabbos Kestenbaum described similar experiences of discrimination based on his religious identity during his time as a student at Harvard Divinity School. Coach Bruce Pearl provided insights on the importance of unity and mutual respect, based on his decades of coaching diverse teams, as well as his personal experience of being a person of a minority religion in the field of college sports. Rabbi Dr. Berman provided his perspective as the spiritual leader of a Jewish university, highlighting the contributions a faith-based perspective can provide.

Question and answer among the Commissioners and witnesses followed.

A Commissioner was later removed for directing the discussion toward their own personal and political agenda.

PRESENTATION TOPIC: Community Anti-Semitism

- **Dr. Moshe Glick**
- **Liat Cohen-Reiss**
- **Pastor JC Cooper**
- **John Mertens**

Ms. Liat Cohen-Reiss and Pastor JC Cooper described violent protests at interfaith events hosted by their communities in San Diego. Dr. Moshe Glick described a protest at his synagogue which turned violent. He explained his efforts to assist an elderly event attendee who was being held in a chokehold and exhibited late signs of a constricted airway. Dr. Glick was arrested for his efforts to deescalate. Question and answer among the Commissioners and witnesses ensued. John Mertens of the Justice Department Civil Rights Division closed the comments by noting the administration’s commitment to religious liberty in policy and in practice.

Question and answer among the Commissioners and witnesses followed.

A Commissioner was later removed for directing the question and answer discussion toward their own personal and political agenda.

PRESENTATION TOPIC: Anti-Semitism in History

- **Leo Terrell**
- **Dr. Elizabeth Spalding**
- **Rev. Thomas Ferguson**
- **Seth Dillon**

Mr. Terrell opened by highlighting the connection between all civil rights movements and noting the historic interdependence between targeted groups and their allies. Specifically, he connected Jewish support of the 1960s movement for racial equality with the importance of returning that support in the present day. Dr. Spalding provided an overview of the ideologies which lead to anti-Semitism and other intolerant worldviews. Rev. Ferguson offered a theological framework through which a Catholic perspective on anti-Semitism can be understood. Mr. Dillon reviewed the cultural forces, including the roles of technology and social media, behind anti-Semitism, particularly in younger generations.

Question and answer among the Commissioners and witnesses followed. A Commissioner was later removed for directing the discussion toward their own personal and political agenda.

PRESENTATION TOPIC: Religious Liberty in the Private Sector

Chairman Patrick introduced the first afternoon panel:

- **Amb. Sam Brownback**
- **Hermione Susana**
- **Lacey Smith**

Amb. Sam Brownback recounted the experience of the National Committee for Religious Freedom of being debanked at Chase. He highlighted that the experience was not unique to National Committee for Religious Freedom and that other organizations are also being de-platformed and debanked. Ms. Lacey Smith then provided testimony about being let go from her role at Alaska Airlines, following the company's extensive questioning related to her religious beliefs. Ms. Hermione Susana similarly provided testimony on being let go from her hospitality roles at event venues in New York because of her religious beliefs related to the COVID-19 vaccine. Question and answer among the Commissioners and witnesses followed.

Chairman's Closing Remarks

Chairman Patrick closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their time, attention, and patience.

Chairman Patrick adjourned the meeting – approx. 2:00 p.m., ET

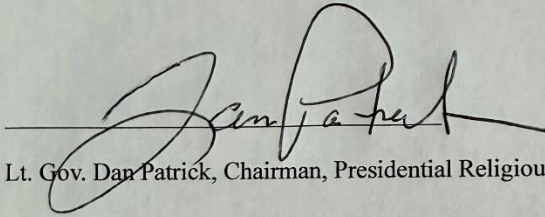
February Public Comment

Public comment submitted for the meeting included submissions from:

1. Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro
2. Ms. Aviva Klompas
3. Mr. Matthew Goddard
4. Rabbi Eli Estrin
5. Ms. Rachel Stryer
6. Ms. Dena Sher
7. Ms. Cheryl Uzamere

Certification of Minutes

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Patrick", is written over a horizontal line.

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

04/26/2026

Date