

From: David Robinson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reply to Commission on Religious Liberty report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:04:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

As a citizen of a free America, I have read the report of the Commission on Religious Liberty and I disagree with their conclusion that there is no separation of church and state involved in the constitution of the United States. The constitution includes the Amendments and in them the first amendment guarantees the freedom of religion. It is as much a part of the constitution as the right to bear arms, vote and the right to have a fair trial. It is not tied solely to Thomas Jefferson. It is when any state begins to enforce religious dogma that we lose our religious freedom. You cannot force the conscience to love God or go to church, it is our inalienable right. Please do not pass this legislation and endanger our freedom to serve God as our conscience dictates. Sincerely, David Robinson

From: Mary Artis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:06:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public comment on Separation of Church and State Bridge.

I support the historical separation of Church and State as outlined in our Constitution. The Dark Ages are a grim reminder of the consequences of mixing church power and political power. The results can be read in "Foxes Book of Martyr's", where citizens were killed "thinking they were doing God a favor". God endowed His creation with a mind to choose Him or reject Him. He desires our love freely given without coercion as a consequence of our recognition of His Goodness, Mercy, and Just nature. The church was given the commission to spread God's love by reflection of His image in their lives. God gave the State a different mission. It was to uphold justice, especially for the weak as seen on our "Statute of Liberty". Different roles, both essential, yet separate. May God protect us from re experiencing the past persecutions where men made judgement of a man's conscience instead of leaving that judgement where it belongs in Heavenly Courts above where Divine impartial righteous justice dwells. Thank you for allowing my comment, and may it contribute to the freedom we all hold so dear. May God continue to bless the USA!!!

From: Marjorie Pryor <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on religious liberty report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:07:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments. Please consider what he says!

America will do best to forever maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

The Pryor/Barber Family

From: Steve Currey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: Public Comment — Every Union of Church and State Has Ended in Persecution

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:08:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Every Union of Church and State Has Ended in Persecution

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

History offers one unbroken lesson on the union of religion and civil power: it ends in the persecution of those the majority calls heretics.

In 1891, Alonzo T. Jones published *The Two Republics*, a nine-hundred-page study comparing Rome and the United States. His conclusion is stated in its preface: "The principle of Rome in all its phases is that religion and government are inseparable. The principle of the government of the United States is that religion is essentially distinct and totally separate from civil government, and entirely exempt from its cognizance. The principle of Rome is the abject slavery of the mind; the principle of the United States of America is the absolute freedom of the mind."

The record supports him. In the fourth century, the church courted the Roman Empire and obtained the first civil Sunday law under Constantine in A.D. 321. Within generations, that alliance produced ecclesiastical supremacy, the persecution of dissenters, and centuries of religious tyranny. In colonial America, wherever churches were established by law, Baptists were whipped, Quakers were hanged, and dissenting ministers were imprisoned. And in the 1880s and 1890s, Seventh-day Adventists were fined, jailed, and sentenced to chain gangs in Tennessee and Arkansas under Sunday laws — American citizens persecuted on American soil in the name of Christian morality.

The lesson is not that any particular church is dangerous. It is that the union itself is dangerous, whatever the creed. Power entrusted to enforce religion will always be used against someone's conscience — and the persecuted are always the minorities of their day.

The draft report proposes to reinterpret the Establishment Clause, to litigate for mandatory religious displays in public schools, and to expand state-sponsored religious instruction. These are the first steps down a road whose end history has mapped in detail.

I urge the Commission to withdraw these recommendations and to affirm church-state separation as the proven safeguard of religious liberty for all.

Respectfully, Steven and Paula Currey

Rose Hill, Ks

From: Linda Daum <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State-Andrew and Linda Daum

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:11:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

We are writing to you to let you know that we strongly disagree with your plans to tear down the wall of separation between church and state. Our forefathers were blessed by God with wisdom to know how to draft our constitution to preserve the freedom of religion for all. If you were to remove the wall that separates the church and state you would be plunging the United States back into the darkness and tyranny that has plagued Europe for centuries. We are christians who believe in freedom for all faiths or no faith at all. We would never like to see liberty for anyone taken from them, and forced to believe what is forced upon them. This is the inevitable result of the steps you are taking. Everyone should be free to choose as their conscience directs them, guided by God.

And we would please ask that you NOT repeal the Johnson amendment. Politics and religion should be kept separate. We have been educating ourselves on the history of our mighty nation, and we owe our prosperity and greatness to the blessing of God. His government is founded on freedom, freedom of conscience to worship or not to worship at the dictates of one's own conscience. This is the foundation of religious liberty. To deny this liberty to the citizens of the United States is to imperil the stability of the nation.

We pray that you will reconsider your plans and that God will guide you in seeing the truth of history and what He would have you recommend.

Sincerely,

Andrew and Linda Daum
Lamberton, Minnesota

From: YetJapan1 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] denial.... No!

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:11:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Reject.... No!

From: aleko yialelis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with pillar of freedoms comments please implement them.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:12:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:12:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I believe in the separation of church and state, and I would like you to do everything you can to allow all Americans to be able to experience that right.

Len Doughty

From: Jim Barber <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Draft report on religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:13:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments. Please seriously consider them and implement them.

Sincerely,

Jim Barber

From: Teresa Spray <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:13:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I would like to ask each of you to stand for our constitution and the separation of church and state that was setup by our founding fathers.

Our government should not make any laws mandating the first four of the ten commandments as these commandments directly refer to our relationship with God and each person is responsible to God alone and should be allowed to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.

Thomas Jefferson wrote:

"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."

Please continue to uphold the principles that have made our nation the greatest nation in this world—the freedoms that make our nation great—and especially the freedom of religion.

May God bless you each as you seek to make our nation great by upholding our constitution and freedoms!

Thank you!

Sincerely,

From: RENEE M <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Recommendations

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:13:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am not in favor of these recommendations. I think we currently have in EEOC discrimination laws the tools to combat religious discrimination. This proposal seems like a slippery slope toward the establishment of the Christian religion as a federal government religion. As any educated person understands, especially anyone who has read the Federalist Papers, the Founding Fathers supported religion and thought it beneficial, but they were NOT what we would call solid, Bible-believing Christians and were primarily focused on the secular advantages of religion as a guide for the morals of the populace. I am always reminded that Thomas Jefferson found many sections of the Bible unbelievable and offensive, so he created his own version without the virgin birth and other elements he considered mythical. They were deists mostly, and their beliefs were wide and not confined to the 10 commandments or a Judeo-Christian focus.

For religious liberty to exist, it has to stay free from government interference. The government has no obligation to maintain Christianity in the public psyche any more than any other religion. Christianity would be better served if more Christians personally followed Jesus' teachings, as some do; the focus should be internal rather than forcing beliefs on others.

I have heard some politicians wrongly state that the "wall" between churches is a hoax. At the University of Chicago, my senior paper, which was later published, allowed me to study this issue deeply. The wall is really necessary and correct.

It does not need to be reversed and torn down or be a "Berlin Wall." The recommendation regarding the Johnson Amendment is a blatant political maneuver to remove restrictions and allow the world to proselytize the church. I will end this comment with a quote from Roger Williams for whatever it is worth, because I am sensing my words will not be listened to and will fall on deaf ears: "Forced worship stinks in God's nostrils". As a former, active minister for over 25 years, I know that forcing people to believe never lasts and turns people eventually away from God which I think is the opposite goal of the commission.

Regards,
R.Milton

From: YetJapan1 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Church and state separate

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:15:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Keep church and State Separate!

From: Caleen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Caleen Burke

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:16:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

It has come to my attention that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." As a person of faith, I find the idea alarming. As you know, this separation was built by believers to keep the church free. Believers like Roger Williams. Quoting from wikipedia "His ideas on religious tolerance and civil government directly influenced the principles later enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution." A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for the government to restrict our religious liberty. There are Biblical and modern day examples of the combinatiin of church and state and persecution is sure to follow.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church.

Sincerely,

Caleen Burke

From: Brad & Carla Cook <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Bradley C. Cook

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:19:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

We are writing as two citizens to urge you to reject the parts of your report that would blur the line between church and state—particularly proposals to channel public funds into religious activities and to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

When churches accept public funds or involve themselves in party politics, political corruption follows them in. They can become rivals for government support and beholden to elected officials rather than accountable to God - harming both the church and the nation. Separation of church and state is not a secular attack on faith; it was championed by believers to safeguard religion, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here.

Please keep church and state distinct. That's how we safeguard the freedom of both.

Sincerely,
Bradley & Carla Cook

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Carla M. Cook

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:20:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

We are writing as two citizens to urge you to reject the parts of your report that would blur the line between church and state—particularly proposals to channel public funds into religious activities and to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

When churches accept public funds or involve themselves in party politics, political corruption follows them in. They can become rivals for government support and beholden to elected officials rather than accountable to God - harming both the church and the nation. Separation of church and state is not a secular attack on faith; it was championed by believers to safeguard religion, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here.

Please keep church and state distinct. That's how we safeguard the freedom of both.

Sincerely,
Bradley & Carla Cook

From: Lissette Hernandez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Lissette Hernandez

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:25:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Sincerely,
Lissette Hernandez
Iron City, Tennessee

From: Branka Vukshich <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:26:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Branka Vukshich, Attorney

[REDACTED] PII

July 11, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

RE: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Sirs:

Many of the 12 recommendations are helpful such as education surrounding religious rights however, a number of the recommendations in the Executive Summary seem to be coming from one viewpoint only. I, for one, think it is imperative that a robust wall of separation between church and state remains. I cannot agree with repealing the Johnson Amendment. In this country where votes are real power, repealing the Johnson Amendment would not create a benign bridge between church and state but a major 6-lane highway with ungodly influences traveling both ways between politicians and a group of people following Someone whose "kingdom is not of this world". I don't understand how the church would not be compromised in this scenario.

Additionally, education is supported by the public at large not just the dollars of parents. I don't want to see tax money taken from people with sincerely held religious beliefs used to support religious teachings that may be anathema to the beliefs of the taxpayer. The Commission should re-read Madison's *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*. The same can be said for faith-based institutions getting taxpayer money that is then used to support a religious agenda antagonistic to that of the hapless taxpayer. That is tantamount to spiritual banditry.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report.

Sincerely,

Branka Vukshich

Branka Vukshich, Attorney

PII [REDACTED]

From: gary mack <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:27:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am deeply encouraged by this report. The government is acting responsibly by addressing this problem that has been manifesting during the past few years. The American people made this protection as part of the law governing this nation, by ratifying the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. I believe this is a fundamental right of every citizen, to express his or her religious beliefs in their own way. The only safeguard there needs to be is that it does not impede or prevent any other person's right to their expression of their own religious beliefs, or their personal safety and/or well-being. I fully believe in, and fully support, absolute separation of church and state. Thank you.

From: ViviantAllen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -Separation of Church and State - Vivian Allen

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:31:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly backwards and as a person of faith, I find that the idea alarming.

That wall wasn't built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for government money and political favors to march right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of to God. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constraints it.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vivian Allen
Las Vegas, NV

From: Jean Elizabeth Terry <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:33:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I understand you are a commission set up by the president to look at separation of church and state. I am concerned that there is a commission like this. We already have a country where church and state are separate, so I do not see the need for this commission unless it is to consider combining the two.

It is so important that church and state are kept separate. We know what happened during the Catholic Inquisition. Millions were murdered for not following the church or having different religious views.

We as human beings are very flawed. If we are given a little power, we tend to abuse it.

Please recommend to the president that church and state should remain separate. It really frightens me to think that they could be combined.

Thank you for giving attention to this e-mail. I appreciate

Respectfully

Jean Terry
Salem, Oregon

From: Roger Rush <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:36:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a God fearing American citizen that enjoys the freedoms this great nation was founded ont, I truly believe that our government should uphold the separation of church and state as our founding fathers did for the same reasons they did. America has been a symbol and manifestation of freedoms since its founding. Please keep our freedom of religion off the table for any reformation, altermation, negotiation or consideration. We the people do not want any bridge that connects our government nor any other entity to our religious freedoms. This new proposal by the RLC should be rejected in its entirety. Please keep America the land of the free by allowing the wall between church and state to remain solid as it should be.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to freely voice my opinion in this matter.

God Bless the USA and all those that fight to keep it free.

From: Tim Lofink <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns about our religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:37:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a Christian man, who is greatly concerned about the reports that I have heard stating that our government would even consider legislating morality and worship.

The history of our country illustrates clearly the reason=s to not do this. In the history of the world everytime that church and state have been combined it led to persecution. The early Catholic Church instituted the inquisition wherein millions of people were persecuted and killed. The Anglican church in England combined church and state leading to the persecution of the Puritans who in fleeing this persecution fled through Europe and to Holland from whence they set out on ships as pilgrims to the new world..

Current endeavors to accomplish this merger of church and state are already pointing to the common good, but who establishes the common good? In Christ's own words no man is good, not one! Man in his best intentions are prone to error. In the words of Jeremiah the prophet, "the heart is deceitfully wicked, who can know it?"

There is much drive today for a fixed day of worship. The world needs this day to refresh itself and unify the family. The call is to make Sunday this feast day, but there are many Christians today who adhere to the fourth commandment, honor the Sabbath Day, for in six days the Lord created the world and rested on the Seventh Day. The Lord sanctified the seventh day and made it holy. I certainly know the history of Sunday worship and recognize that the Pope changed the solemnity of the Seventh day to the first day. There was never any place in the Bible where it was indicated that the pope was given the authority to override the commandments of God. Christ, Himself, stated that not one jot or tittle of the law would be changed.

Our great nation was founded on two principles: religious freedom and civil freedom. The pilgrim people sought freedom from the king and freedom from religious persecution. Any mingling of church and state violates the principles on which this nation was founded.

Please consider carefully the impact of your decision on this matter. You are making what will ultimately be one of the biggest decisions of your life.

Sincerely:
Tim Lofink

From: William Thimsen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:40:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

We can't keep playing around with our forefathers' documents that have given us freedom for 250 years!

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Jo Hartung Slavik <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] No to bill

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:43:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Kaaren Bellamy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State (Kaaren C. Bellamy)

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:43:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Your efforts in considering how to maintain one of this country's hallmark characteristics, Religious Liberty, is much appreciated!

I'm writing as a very concerned native born citizen regarding your June 26, 2026 recommendations to President Trump, which essentially as I understand them, weaken the separation of church and state. If I read your recommendations correctly, they include the use of government fiscal resources to fund religious activities and repeal the Johnson Amendment, passed in 1954 to ensure the non-partisan status of taxpayer-subsidized/tax-exempt organizations remained so.

As a Bible believing person of faith, I have always understood The Holy Scriptures to emphasize the importance of freedom of conscious (not with this verbiage) but as a principal of God's government which is based on love and FREEDOM OF CHOICE (i.e. Deuteronomy 30:15, John 14:15).

As I understand history, societies that forced religion and removed freedom of conscious, ultimately marched head long into persecution resulting in millions of lives lost (i.e. The French Revolution)

When churches accept government money or support partisan politics, this brings in its train corruption and vice, not to mention disingenuous religious observance; certainly this situation is detrimental to both the country/government and the church. We MUST, in order to retain Religious Freedom, retain a separation of Church and state!

Thank you for your work in this critical area. I pray and trust that you will revise your recommendations accordingly.

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Blessings,
KC Bellamy

From: Wendell La Touche <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:43:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The desire to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." is deeply concerning. History has shown persecution is the result of uniting church and state - creating a "bridge" opens the door for the removal of religious liberty. Respectfully, it is the opposite of providing religious liberty.

The wall was built by men of faith as they escaped the persecutions of church and state from the old world to come to the new world so the atrocities experienced would not occur here in America.

Wendell La Touche

From: ljsmith <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Topic

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:46:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Have we learned nothing from history? Church and State must be separate! If Church and State are not separate, then persecution returns.

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Glenda Francis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:47:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully submit this public comment to express my deep concern regarding the future of religious liberty in the United States. I urge the Commission to reject any recommendations to the Department of Justice or other government branches that would weaken the constitutional principle of institutional separation between religion and government.

America's core contribution to religious liberty is the protection of every individual's right to worship according to their conscience without state interference. As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I represent a religious minority whose history illustrates the dangers of government aligning with a religious majority. Historically, groups such as Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and Sabbath keepers faced state-sanctioned persecution—realities that led the Founders to adopt the First Amendment.

The experience of Seventh-day Adventists in the late nineteenth century serves as a specific warning. Many were fined or imprisoned under Sunday laws for honoring the biblical Sabbath right here in Georgia. This history demonstrates that when civil authority enforces religious practice, freedom of conscience is endangered, and minorities are the first to suffer.

Whether through the medieval Inquisition, state-backed religious extremism, or the suppression of faith under atheistic communist regimes, history shows that the concentration of civil power over matters of conscience leads to oppression. The strength of the American system lies in avoiding these extremes. The state's mission is to preserve order and protect rights, while the church's mission is to call people to voluntary faith through persuasion. These institutions remain uncorrupted only when they stay within their proper spheres.

I urge the Commission to recommend policies that reinforce the constitutional barriers between ecclesiastical authority and civil government. Religious liberty is best preserved when the government remains neutral, neither advancing nor inhibiting religion. We must ensure the United States remains a nation where every citizen is free to worship, or not to worship, without governmental pressure.

Respectfully submitted,

Gee Gee Francis
Georgia

From: Merawit B <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >, MerawittB
<[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Merawit Biadghlign

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:48:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Religious liberty is a cornerstone of American history, allowing faith communities to thrive. This freedom is strengthened by the separation of church and state. I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve that separation.

Sincerely,

Merawit

Arlington, Virginia

From: David Kelley <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The freedom of conscience and of religion

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:50:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good day to everyone who is reading this, I am just an average citizen but I have acquired many many pages that reveals the truth about the founding fathers and many more who had established this country as an experiment that would progress and understanding what it truly meant to have the freedom of conscience, and the freedom to dictate in one's own mind who is God. In the following passages, you will find there is no doubt that the intentions of this United States was to keep the church completely separate from civil government. I now present the evidence of the truth to this bold claim that I am making:

In an address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on September 12, 1960 John F. Kennedy eloquently stated:

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the President -- should he be Catholic -- how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; (unfortunately, this is where we are today) where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference, and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him, or the people who might elect him. I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish; where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source; where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials, and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all."

Keith Fournier, who was President of the American Center for Law and Justice, the legal arm of Pat Robertson's organization once said:

"Yet there is a wall which has been mistakenly erected in our own beloved country. Its impact on religious freedom has perhaps had an even more devastating effect [than the Berlin Wall], it is the so called wall of separation of church and state."

Pat Robertson himself wrote:

"They [liberals and secular humanists] have kept us in submission because they have talked about separation of church and state. There is no such thing in the Constitution. It's a lie of the left, and we're not going to take it anymore."

(Anti-Defamation League, The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America, p. 4)

Jerry Falwell, long time senior pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia once stated:

"Separation of Church and State has long been the battle cry of civil libertarians wishing to purge our glorious Christian heritage from our nation's history. Of course, the term never once appears in our Constitution and is a modern fabrication of discrimination."

Quoted in Church and State, June 2006, p. 14

The late D. James Kennedy creator of Evangelism Explosion and longtime senior pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian church spoke of the wall of separation as diabolical:

"If we are committed and involved in taking back the nation for Christian values . . . there is no doubt we can witness the dismantling of not just the Berlin wall but the even more diabolical 'wall of separation' that has led to secularization, immorality, and corruption in our country." (Quoted in "They Said It! Religious Right Leaders in Their Own Words.")

W. A. Criswell, who for years was the senior pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas and is also the former president of the National Baptist Convention once boldly affirmed:

"I believe that this notion of the separation of church and state was the figment of some infidel's imagination." The Saving of America p. 59

Former Arizona state senator John B. Conlan several years ago argued, as do many Protestants and Catholics that:

“The separation of church and state is a false issue. It is a slogan created by the secular humanists that sounds legal but in fact is a sham. It does not appear anywhere in the constitution, and it is not a concept that our Founding Fathers believed . . . ‘Separation of church and state’ . . . is simply a line of propaganda created by modern humanists to intimidate Christians and make us believe that we are second-class citizens.”

The Saving of America, p. 59 Keith Fournier

on September 10-12, 1992 in Washington, D. C. at the Second Annual Road to Victory Briefing Conference of the Christian Coalition stated:

“The wall of separation between church and state that was erected by secular humanists and other enemies of religious freedom has to come down. That wall is more of a threat to society than the Berlin Wall ever was. Those opposing our views are the new Fascists.”

David S. Nelson who was the director of Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition in Colorado stated:

“The separation of church and state is (1) not a teaching of the founding fathers; (2) not an historical teaching; (3) not a teaching of law (except in recent years);(4) not a Biblical teaching. In summary, there should be absolutely no ‘separation of church and state in America.’ Undated flyer in 1992

So is this modern belief that is spoken by both modern politicians and religious leadership actually true? Do the founding Fathers have anything to say in favor of the merging of church and the state?

Jefferson once wrote:

“The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. It does me no injury for my neighbor to say that there are twenty gods, or no gods. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”

(Thomas Jefferson, Writings, p. 285)

Jefferson wrote in 1782:

“It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself.” (Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 1782; from George Seldes, ed., The Great Quotations, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 363)

Jefferson warned against the clergy using the power of the state to enforce religion: “The clergy, by getting themselves established by law and ingrafted into the machine of government, have been a very formidable engine against the civil and religious rights of man.” (Letter to J. Moor, 1800)

“History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government.” (Letter to von Humboldt, 1813)

“In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own.” (Letter to H. Spafford, 1814)

In a letter addressed to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802, Thomas Jefferson expressed his understanding of the first two clauses of the first amendment by using the metaphor of the wall which he most likely borrowed from Roger Williams:

“Believing with you [the Danbury Baptists] that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.”

James Madison, who is called the ‘Father of the Constitution,’ expressed his views on the relationship between religion and the government:

“There is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it [religion] would be a most flagrant usurpation. I can appeal to my uniform conduct on this subject that I have warmly supported religious freedom.”

Madison affirmed in 1822 that the United States was teaching the world two most important truths:

“We are teaching the world the great truth that Governments do better without Kings and Nobles than with them [republicanism]. The merit will be doubled by the other lesson that Religion flourishes in greater purity, without than with the aid of Government [Protestantism].” [James Madison, Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822 The Writings of James Madison, Gaillard Hunt].

On June 10, 1797, president John Adams signed into law the Treaty of Tripoli that unambiguously stated: "The Government of the United States is not in any sense founded upon the Christian religion."

Frequently Christian activists will also say that separation of church and state appears nowhere in the Constitution. This is true if we mean that the actual expression: "separation of church and state" is not in the Constitution. Although the specific expression is not found in the Constitution, the concept is clearly and explicitly contained in the First Amendment to the Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion [clause #1], or prohibiting the free exercise thereof [clause #2]; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances [clause #3]."

George Washington, the first president of the United States and the chair of the Convention that ratified the Constitution in 1787 wrote to the Baptist Delegation in 1789:

"If I could have entertained the slightest apprehension that the Constitution framed by the convention where I had the honor to preside might possibly endanger the religious rights of any ecclesiastical society, certainly I would never have placed my signature on it; and if I could now conceive that the general government might ever be so administered as to render the liberty of conscience insecure, I beg you will be persuaded that no one would be more zealous than myself to establish effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny and every species of religious persecution. For, you doubtless remember, I have often expressed my sentiments that any man, conducting himself as a good citizen and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshiping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."

(George Washington to the Baptist Delegation, August 8, 1789.)

Benjamin Franklin "When religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it, so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil powers, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of it being a bad one." (Quoted in Clifford Goldstein, *Day of the Dragon*, p. 77)

Etched on the white marble of the monument are the memorable words:

"Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishment or burdens . . . are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion . . . No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship or ministry or shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion. I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively."

--the Jefferson Memorial in Washington D. C.

Jefferson knew full well about the mechanism of the Inquisition:

"Is uniformity [in matters of religion] attainable? Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity [of belief and practice]. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth" (Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, 1782; from George Seldes, editor., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 363)

Jefferson stated that people should be willing to die as martyrs if necessary in order to preserve civil and religious liberty:

"To preserve the freedom of the human mind then and freedom of the press, every spirit should be ready to devote itself to martyrdom; for as long as we may think as we will, and speak as we think, the condition of man will proceed in improvement." (Thomas Jefferson, letter to William Green Mumford, June 18, 1799. From Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society*, New York: George Braziller, 1965, p. 341)

Thomas Jefferson:

"It behooves every man who values liberty of conscience for himself, to resist invasions of it in the case of others; or their case may, by change of circumstances, become his own." (Thomas Jefferson, letter to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803. From Daniel B. Baker, ed., *Political Quotations*, Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1990, p. 189.)

Jefferson warned against the clergy using the power of the state to enforce religion:

"The clergy, by getting themselves established by law and engrafted into the machine of government, have been a very formidable engine against the civil and religious rights of man." (Letter to J. Moor, 1800) "History, I

believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes (Letter to von Humboldt, 1813). “In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own.” (Letter to H. Spafford, 1814)

“To suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy which at once destroys all religious liberty, because he being of course judge of that tendency will make his opinions the rule of judgment and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own” (Statute for Religious Freedom, 1779).

“Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error. Give a loose to them they will support the true religion by bringing every false one to their tribunal, to the test of their investigation. They are the natural enemies of error, and of error only.”

(Notes on Virginia, 1785)

Several years after the drawing up and ratification of the founding documents of the nation, Jefferson could look back with pride at how the experiment had proved a success:

“We have solved by fair experiment the great and interesting question whether freedom of religion is compatible with order in government and obedience to the laws. And we have experienced the quiet as well as the comfort which results from leaving everyone to profess freely and openly those principles of religion which are the inductions of his own reason and the serious convictions of his own inquiries.”

(Letter to the Virginia Baptists, 1808).

“... our fellow citizens, after half a century of experience and prosperity, continue to approve the choice we made. May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day [Fourth of July] forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them....” (Thomas Jefferson, letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826 [Jefferson's last letter, dated ten days before he died]; from Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society*, New York: George Braziller, 1965, p. 372)

“I consider the government of the United States as interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling in religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercises. This results not only from the provision that no law shall be made respecting the establishment or free exercise of religion [the First Amendment], but from that also which reserves to the states the powers not delegated to the United States. Certainly, no power to prescribe any religious exercise or to assume authority in religious discipline has been delegated to the General Government. It must rest with the States, as far as it can be in any human authority.” (Letter to Samuel Miller, Jan. 23, 1808)

Notably, President Adams sent this treaty to the Senate in May of 1797 where it was read aloud to all of the senators who were present and printed copies were also given to each Senator. The vote to ratify the treaty was unanimous! Notably, the treaty was printed in full in several newspapers in Philadelphia and New York City and there was not even a whimper of protest from the general public. None of the Senators paid a heavy price for signing the treaty.

The views of John Adams on religious liberty are broad and clear:

“We think ourselves possessed, or, at least, we boast that we are so, of liberty of conscience on all subjects, and of the right of free inquiry and private judgment in all cases, and yet how far are we from these exalted privileges in fact! There exists, I believe, throughout the whole Christian world, a law which makes it blasphemy to deny or doubt the divine inspiration of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelations. In most countries of Europe it is punished by fire at the stake, or the rack, or the wheel. In England itself boring through the tongue with a red-hot poker punishes it. In America it is not better; even in our own Massachusetts,

which I believe, upon the whole, is as temperate and moderate in religious zeal as most of the States, a law was made in the latter end of the last century, repealing the cruel punishments of the former laws, but substituting fine and imprisonment upon all those blasphemers upon any book of the Old Testament or New. Now, what free inquiry, when a writer must surely encounter the risk of fine or imprisonment for adducing any argument for investigating into the divine authority of those books? Who would run the risk of translating Dupuis? But I cannot enlarge upon this subject, though I have it much at heart. I think such laws a great embarrassment, great obstructions to the improvement of the human mind. Books that cannot bear examination certainly ought not to be established as divine inspiration by penal laws. It is true, few persons appear desirous to put such laws in execution, and it is also true that some few persons are hardy enough to venture to depart from them. But as long as they continue in force as laws, the human mind must make an awkward and clumsy progress in its investigations. I wish they were repealed. The substance and essence of Christianity, as I understand it, is eternal and unchangeable, and will bear examination forever, but it has been mixed with extraneous ingredients, which I think will not bear examination, and they ought to be separated. Adieu.” (John Adams, letter to Thomas Jefferson, January 23, 1825. Adams was 90, Jefferson 81 at the time; both died on July 4th of the following year, on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. From Adrienne Koch, ed., *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society*, New York: George Braziller, 1965, p. 234.)

Thomas Paine :

“Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but it is always the strongly-marked feature of all law-religions, or religions established by law. Take away the law establishment, and every religion re-assumes its original benignity.” (Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 1791-1792. From Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, eds., *The Harper Book of American Quotations*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, pp. 499-500.)

Isaac Backus:

“Religious matters are to be separated from the jurisdiction of the state not because they are beneath the interests of the state, but, quite to the contrary, because they are too high and holy and thus are beyond the competence of the state.” (Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty*, 1773, as quoted by Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 7.)

Patrick Henry:

“That religion, or the duty we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.” (Patrick Henry [1736-1799], American patriot and statesman, Virginia Bill of Rights, June 12, 1776. From Daniel B. Baker, ed., *Political Quotations*, Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1990, p. 189)

Samuel West:

“For the civil authority to pretend to establish particular modes of faith and forms of worship, and to punish all that deviate from the standards which our superiors have set up, is attended with the most pernicious consequences to society. It cramps all free and rational inquiry, fills the world with hypocrites and superstitious bigots--nay, with infidels and skeptics; it exposes men of religion and conscience to the rage and malice of fiery, blind zealots, and dissolves every tender tie of human nature. And I cannot but look upon it as a peculiar blessing of Heaven that we live in a land where everyone can freely deliver his sentiments upon religious subjects, and have the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience, without any molestation or disturbance--a privilege which I hope we shall ever keep up and strenuously maintain.” (Samuel West, Dartmouth, MA, Election Sermon, 1776, as quoted by Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 103.)

John Leland:

“Is conformity of sentiments in matters of religion essential to the happiness of civil government? Not at all. Government has no more to do with the religious opinions of men than it has with the principles of the mathematics. Let every man speak freely without fear- maintain the principles that he believes--worship according to his own faith, either one God, three Gods, no God, or twenty Gods; and let government protect him in so doing, i.e., see that he meets with no personal abuse or loss of property for his religious opinions. Instead of discouraging him with proscriptions, fines, confiscation or death, let him be encouraged, as a free man, to bring forth his arguments and maintain his points with all boldness; then if his doctrine is false it will be confuted, and if it is true (though ever so novel) let others credit it. When every man has this liberty what can he wish for more? A liberal man asks for nothing more of government.”

(John Leland, "The Rights of Conscience Inalienable, and Therefore Religious Opinions not Cognizable by Law" [a pamphlet], New London, Connecticut, 1791. Reprinted in Mortimer Adler, ed., 1784-1796, *Organizing the New Nation: The Annals of America*, Vol. 3, Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968, pp. 447-448. Leland was a Baptist minister who refused to support the Constitution until Madison persuaded him that the Constitution would not undermine religious liberty)

"The liberty I contend for is more than toleration. The very idea of toleration is despicable; it supposes that some have a pre-eminence above the rest to grant indulgence whereas all should be equally free, Jews, Turks [Muslims], Pagans and Christians. Test oaths and established creeds should be avoided as the worst of evils."

(Baptist minister John Leland, 1820, as quoted by Samuel Rabinove, "Church and State Must Remain Separate," in Julie S. Bach, ed., *Civil Liberties: Opposing Viewpoints*, St. Paul: Greenhaven Press, 1988, p. 53)

Henry Clay, 1818:

"All religions united with government are more or less inimical to liberty. All separated from government, are compatible with liberty." (Henry Clay, 1777-1852, Speech in the House of Representatives, March 24, 1818. From Daniel B. Baker, ed., *Political Quotations*, Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1990, p. 190)

Abraham Lincoln, 1855:

"When the Know-Nothings get control, it [the Declaration of Independence] will read: 'All men are created equal except negroes, foreigners and Catholics.' When it comes to this I should prefer immigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty--to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy." (Abraham Lincoln, 16th U. S. President [1860-1865], letter to Joshua F. Speed, August 24, 1855, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, pp. 59-60.)

Millard Fillmore, 1856:

"I am tolerant of all creeds. Yet if any sect suffered itself to be used for political objects I would meet it by political opposition. In my view church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled." (Millard Fillmore, 13th U. S. President [1850-1853], in an address during the 1856 Presidential election, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 35.)

Ulysses S. Grant, 1875:

"Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar of money shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school. Resolve that neither the state nor nation, or both combined, shall support institutions of learning other than those sufficient to afford every child growing up in the land the opportunity of a good common school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan, or atheistical tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private schools, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separated." (Ulysses S. Grant, 18th U.S. President [1869-1877], speech before the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, 1875; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 288)

Jeremiah S. Black, 1885:

"[The] manifest object of the men who framed the institution of this country, was to have a State without religion and a Church without politics--that is to say, they meant that one should never be used as an engine for the purposes of the other . . . For that they built up a wall of complete partition between the two." (Jeremiah S. Black, noted constitutional advocate, *Essays and Speeches*, D. Appleton and Co., 1885. As quoted by Leo Pfeffer, "The Establishment Clause: The Never-Ending Conflict," in Ronald C. White and Albright G. Zimmerman, *An Unsettled Arena: Religion and the Bill of Rights*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, p. 72)

Theodore Roosevelt, 1908:

"If there is one thing for which we stand in this country, it is for complete religious freedom, and it is an emphatic negation of this right to cross-examine a man on his religion before being willing to support him for public office." (Theodore Roosevelt, 26th U. S. President [1901-1909], letter to J. C. Martin, November 9, 1908, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 83.)

Alfred E. Smith, 1927:

"I believe in absolute freedom of conscience for all men and equality of all churches, all sects, and all beliefs before the law as a matter of right and not as a matter of favor. I believe in the absolute separation of church and state and in the strict enforcement of the Constitution that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. I believe that no tribunal of any church has any power to make any decree of any force in the law of the land, other than to establish the status of its own communicants within its own church." (Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York and Democratic candidate for President in 1928; in *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1927, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 89.)

John F. Kennedy, 1959:

"It is my firm belief that there should be separation of church and state in the United States--that is, that both church and state should be free to operate, without interference from each other in their respective areas of jurisdiction. We live in a liberal, democratic society which embraces wide varieties of belief and disbelief. There is no doubt in my mind that the pluralism which has developed under our Constitution, providing as it does a framework within which diverse opinions can exist side by side and by their interaction enrich the whole, is the most ideal system yet devised by man. I cannot conceive of a set of circumstances which would lead me to a different conclusion." (John F. Kennedy, 35th U.S. President [1961-1963]; letter to Glenn L. Archer, February 23, 1959, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 54.)

Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964:

"I believe in the American tradition of separation of church and state which is expressed in the First Amendment to the Constitution. By my office--and by my personal conviction--I am sworn to uphold that tradition." (Lyndon B. Johnson, 36th U.S. President [1963-1969]; interview, *Baptist Standard*, October, 1964, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 50.)

Carl N. Degler, 1970:

"In the eighteenth century the American principle of separation of Church and State was indeed an audacious experiment. Never before had a national state been prepared to dispense with an official religion as a prop to its authority and never before had a church been set adrift without the support of the state. Throughout most of American history the doctrine has provided freedom for religious development while keeping politics free of religion. And that, apparently, had been the intention of the Founding Fathers." (Carl N. Degler, *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America* [Revised ed.], New York: Harper & Row, 1970, p. 96)

Gerald R. Ford, 1976:

"I believe that prayer in public schools should be voluntary. It is difficult for me to see how religious exercises can be a requirement in public schools, given our Constitutional requirement of separation of church and state. I feel that the highly desirable goal of religious education must be principally the responsibility of church and home. I do not believe that public education should show any hostility toward religion, and neither should it inhibit voluntary participation, if it does not interfere with the educational process." (Gerald R. Ford, 38th President [1974-1977], in an interview with *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, October 9, 1976 [p. A-8], according to Alan F. Pater and Jason R. Pater, compilers and editors, *What They Said in 1976: The Yearbook of Spoken Opinion*, Beverly Hills, CA: Monitor Book Co., 1977, p. 522.)

Sam J. Ervin, Jr. 1983: "Many sincere persons charge that the school-prayer cases show the Supreme Court to be hostile to religion. This charge is untrue and unjust. In these cases the Supreme Court was faithful to its judicial duty. It enforced the First Amendment, which commands government to maintain strict neutrality respecting religion, neither aiding nor opposing it." (Sam J. Ervin, Jr., 1896-1985, U.S. Senator from North Carolina, in *Free Inquiry*, Summer 1983; as quoted by Leo Pfeffer, "Prayer in Public Schools: The Court's Decisions," in the "Church and State" issue of *National Forum: The Phi Kappa Phi Journal*, Winter, 1988, p. 26.)

"Government is contemptuous of true religion when it confiscates the taxes of Caesar to finance the things of God."

(Sam J. Ervin, Jr., 1896-1985, U.S. Senator from North Carolina, in an "Open Letter to President Reagan," *Congressional Record*, April 29, 1982, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 33.)

"If religious freedom is to endure in America, the responsibility for teaching religion to public school children must be left to the homes and churches of our land, where this responsibility rightfully belongs. It must not be assumed by the government through the agency of the public school system."

(Sam J. Ervin, Jr., 1896-1985, U.S. Senator from North Carolina, in *Preserving the Constitution*, Michie, 1984, according to Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, compilers, *The Great Quotations on Religious Liberty*, Long Beach, CA: Centerline Press, 1991, p. 33.)

Leonard W. Levy, 1986: "The wall of separation ensures the government's freedom from religion and the individual's freedom of religion. The second probably cannot flourish without the first." (Leonard W. Levy, *The Establishment Clause: Religion and the First Amendment*, 1986. From Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, eds. *The Harper Book of American Quotations*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, p. 499.)

John M. Swomley, 1987: "Voluntary, individual, silent prayer has never been banned or discouraged in the public schools. The Supreme Court has banned state-sponsored religious services. Those who advocate prayer services in the public schools do not want voluntary prayer. They want the government to be officially involved in promoting and sponsoring prayer services so as to put pressure on children to engage in public prayer. They apparently do not care whether parents want their children to engage in public prayer or be indoctrinated with sectarian religious ideas. The object is to provide a captive classroom audience that will be exposed to the prayers of those with a religious message, which they deliver in the form of a prayer."

(John M. Swomley, *Religious Liberty and the Secular State: The Constitutional Context*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987, p. 128)

Leo Pfeffer, 1990: "Recognizing the evils of man acting like God or of man's using government to help God out in managing the world, the traditional religionists, such as disciples of Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, and John Leland, joined with the deists in fashioning a system in which neither belief nor disbelief in God was to be a matter within the jurisdiction of human government. Both groups sought to secure a government that neither aided nor injured religion, and for this both the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment were adopted." (Leo Pfeffer, "The Establishment Clause: The Never Ending Conflict," in Ronald C. White and Albright G. Zimmerman, *An Unsettled Arena: Religion and the Bill of Rights*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, p. 73 [footnote])

Sincerely with all respect:

David M Kelley

From: Dennis Einerson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Church and State Separate

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:51:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Dennis Einerson

From: D'Quincey Hjernevik <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:51:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dears Sirs/Madames,

I am concerned that what the goverment funds it will control. Once funded, depending on those funds makes churches controlable by the threat on pulling the funding. This could lead to the state religion feared and directly mentioned in the First Amendment.

Thank you for your attention.

D'Quincey Hjernevik

[REDACTED] PII

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: joseph hussey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:54:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern.

Please don't trample on the 1st amendment. If church and state combine we will go back into the dark ages. Jesus says in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock" please don't kick the door open.

Have a blessed day, may the LORD bless you and keep you.

Joseph J Hussey 3

Sent from my iPhone

From: Jimmy Lee Tillman II <[REDACTED]> PII

To: rlc@usdoj.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM – NOMINATION OF DR. JIMMY LEE TILLMAN II

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:54:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Tillman_ReligiousFreedom_Nomination_Package_Submitted_7.11.26.pdf

Dear Chairman Patrick and Vice Chairman Dr. Carson:

On behalf of the Martin Luther King Republicans, I respectfully submit the enclosed nomination of Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II of Chicago, Illinois for consideration for the Presidential Medal of Religious Freedom.

The attached nomination packet includes a cover letter, executive summary, biography, timeline of advocacy, and a Primary Sources & Evidence Index containing links to the contemporaneous news coverage and video referenced throughout the submission.

Thank you for your time and for the Commission's consideration of this nomination.

Respectfully,

Ebony Tillman

On behalf of the Martin Luther King Republicans

Chicago, Illinois

MARTIN LUTHER KING REPUBLICANS

Chicago, Illinois | Founded 2008

FORMAL NOMINATION FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

DR. JIMMY LEE TILLMAN II

Ph.D. in History

Founder & President, Martin Luther King Republicans
Owner, Tillman Family Press

Submitted by the Martin Luther King Republicans
Religious Liberty Commission
c/o U.S. Department of Justice | PII
July 2026

COVER LETTER

VIA EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENT - PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
- DR. JIMMY LEE TILLMAN II

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Associate Attorney General

ATTN: Religious Liberty Commission

950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 5706, Washington, DC 20530

Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, Chairman

Dr. Ben Carson, Vice Chairman

Religious Liberty Commission

Re: Nomination of Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II for the Presidential Medal of Religious Freedom

Dear Chairman Patrick and Vice Chairman Dr. Carson:

I write on behalf of the Martin Luther King Republicans to respectfully nominate Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II of Chicago, Illinois for consideration for the Presidential Medal of Religious Freedom.

The Martin Luther King Republicans are founded upon Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of principled, nonviolent leadership. As you will see throughout this nomination, Dr. Tillman's public conduct during the Illinois church reopening controversy reflected those same ideals from beginning to end.

Your Commission's draft report recommends creation of the Presidential Medal of Religious Freedom to recognize Americans who have demonstrated extraordinary courage in defending religious liberty. Dr. Tillman's public advocacy during Illinois' COVID restrictions exemplifies the constitutional principles this proposed medal is intended to honor.

In the spring of 2020, when Governor J.B. Pritzker restricted religious gatherings across Illinois to 10 people or fewer — while liquor stores and big-box retailers remained open without comparable limits — Dr. Tillman became a prominent public advocate in Illinois calling for the restoration of the free exercise of religion. He spoke publicly. He stood on principle. He went on the record.

His words, captured by ABC7 Chicago during the controversy, speak for themselves:

"I'm not going to let the government tell me how I can worship, when I can worship and where I can worship."

"I feel that if we're able to go to Walmart or Walgreens, we should be able to go to church."

"As weeks go on and on, you feel a need to be with your assembly and sometimes the best person to be with at times of fear is your minister who can give you a word to calm you down."

These statements were made publicly, on the record, during the controversy — not in retrospect. Tillman is a Black Republican in Chicago, Illinois — the son of a respected former Alderman — who broke from Chicago's political, civic, and church establishment that largely supported the shutdowns to defend a constitutional principle he believed mattered more than political alignment. His advocacy was grounded in constitutional principle rather than political advantage.

Dr. Tillman is a historian with a Ph.D. in History, the founder and president of the Martin Luther King Republicans, and the owner of Tillman Family Press. He comes from a family of distinction — his father, Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman, is a world-renowned musician and educator; his mother, Dorothy Wright Tillman, is a former Chicago Alderman who marched with Rev. Dr. King and helped elect Chicago's first Black mayor.

Rev. Dr. King's Sixth Principle of Nonviolence holds that nonviolence believes the universe is on the side of justice. Tillman lived that principle throughout the controversy — he spoke publicly, participated peacefully, and remained steadfast in defending constitutional liberty, all while treating those who disagreed with him with dignity and respect, standing for constitutional principle when it was costly, in a city that did not applaud him for it.

This packet includes an executive summary, biography, timeline of advocacy, and an evidence index drawn entirely from contemporaneous news coverage, documented

public statements, and primary-source evidence. The Martin Luther King Republicans have intentionally grounded this nomination in the historical record. We respectfully ask that this nomination be entered into the record before the July 13, 2026 deadline.

Respectfully submitted,

Ebony Tillman

On behalf of the Martin Luther King Republicans

Chicago, Illinois

DR. JIMMY LEE TILLMAN II

Historian • Author • Founder & President
Martin Luther King Republicans



Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II

Historian, Author, Educator, and Founder of the Martin Luther King Republicans



Public Advocacy for Religious Liberty

Dr. Tillman during the Illinois church reopening movement, Spring 2020

"I'm not going to let the government tell me how I can worship, when I can worship and where I can worship."

— Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II, ABC7 Chicago, May 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOMINEE: DR. JIMMY LEE TILLMAN II

Presidential Medal of Religious Freedom

Who He Is

Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II is a Ph.D. historian, author, and the founder and president of the Martin Luther King Republicans, founded in 2008. He is the owner of Tillman Family Press and a graduate of Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio — a historic HBCU. He has been an active member of Wilberforce Lodge #21, Lincoln Chapter for 34 years. He is a lifelong Chicagoan, a father, grandfather, and community leader.

What He Did

In the spring of 2020, when the Pritzker Administration restricted Illinois religious gatherings to 10 people or fewer — while comparable secular activities continued without equivalent limits — Dr. Tillman was a prominent public advocate in Illinois calling for the restoration of the free exercise of religion. He spoke out publicly. He appeared on ABC7 Chicago and was quoted by name. He attended the Reopen Illinois church rally and made clear — on the record and in real time — that the government's treatment of houses of worship raised serious constitutional concerns. His advocacy formed part of the broader public and legal effort that preceded Illinois' decision to withdraw the mandatory ten-person limitation on religious worship.

Why It Qualifies

- His advocacy was public, documented, and contemporaneous — not retrospective
- His statements were captured by ABC7 Chicago during the controversy itself
- He represented Black American churchgoers on Chicago's South Side whose spiritual community was being shut down
- He participated in the Reopen Illinois rally — video documentation available
- He broke from Chicago's political, civic, and church establishment at real personal and professional cost
- He advocated constitutional principles subsequently affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo* (2020) and *Tandon v. Newsom* (2021)

The Larger Context

Dr. Tillman's advocacy took place in Chicago — a Democratic stronghold where the Black political, civic, and church establishment largely supported the shutdown orders. As the son of a respected former Alderman, he put his family name and standing on the line to defend the constitutional right to worship. He drew support across the political spectrum in one of America's most challenging environments for that argument.

His position was neither politically convenient nor widely embraced within the circles in which he had been raised. It reflected conviction rather than consensus.

WHY THIS NOMINATION MATTERS

Every nomination before the Commission tells a story. This nomination tells the documented story of a citizen whose public defense of religious liberty preceded constitutional principles later affirmed by the United States Supreme Court.

The COVID-era religious liberty movement produced many heroes. Many of them came from communities where defending religious freedom was culturally expected, politically supported, or institutionally backed. Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II's story is different.

A Black Republican in the Heart of a Democratic Stronghold

Dr. Tillman is a Black Republican in Chicago, Illinois — a city where the Democratic Party has held uninterrupted political control for nearly a century and where Black political leadership has been almost universally aligned with that party. Being a Black conservative in Chicago is not a comfortable position. It invites suspicion, isolation, and active political opposition. Dr. Tillman has carried that position publicly and without apology since founding the Martin Luther King Republicans in 2008.

He Put His Family Name on the Line

Dr. Tillman's mother, Dorothy Wright Tillman, is a former Chicago Alderman — widely known and deeply respected — who marched with Rev. Dr. King on the Edmund Pettus Bridge and was instrumental in electing Harold Washington as Chicago's first Black mayor. She remains a respected figure within Chicago's political and civic establishment.

When Governor Pritzker's administration shut down houses of worship during COVID, Chicago's political, civic, and church establishment — the same establishment his mother helped build and lead — largely supported the shutdowns. Dr. Tillman broke from that establishment publicly, at real risk to his family's standing within it, because he believed the constitutional right to worship mattered more than political alignment.

Support Across the Political Spectrum

Despite the difficulty of his position, Dr. Tillman's advocacy drew support from voices across the political spectrum — faith leaders, independent community figures, and

others of varying political affiliations who recognized that the right to worship transcended partisan lines. His ability to build that coalition, in a city where Black conservative voices are routinely dismissed, speaks to the credibility of his advocacy and the universality of the principle he was defending.

He went on camera. He put his name on the record. He attended the rally. He said plainly that if going to Walmart was permitted, going to church should be too — and that no government order would tell him how, when, or where he could worship.

In recognizing defenders of religious liberty, the Commission has an opportunity to reflect the full breadth of Americans who have defended this constitutional right. Dr. Tillman's nomination fills a gap in that record. Religious liberty is not a partisan issue, not a regional one, and not one that belongs only to those with institutional power to back them up.

It belongs to everyone. Dr. Tillman said so — publicly, in 2020, against Chicago's political and civic establishment, when it was not easy to say. That is why this nomination matters.

BIOGRAPHY OF DR. JIMMY LEE TILLMAN II

Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II is a historian, author, educator, and community leader whose public life has been dedicated to preserving American history, defending constitutional liberty, and educating citizens about the principles that have sustained the American Republic. As founder and president of the Martin Luther King Republicans, established in 2008, he has spent nearly two decades advancing Rev. Dr. King's principles of nonviolence, faith, personal responsibility, and constitutional self-government within one of the nation's most politically challenging environments for Black conservatives.

A lifelong Chicagoan, Dr. Tillman earned a Ph.D. in History after graduating from Central State University, one of America's historic Historically Black Colleges and Universities. His scholarship has focused on documenting overlooked chapters of American history, particularly the contributions of Black Americans to the nation's founding, military service, and civic life. Through Tillman Family Press, he has dedicated his work to preserving these stories for future generations and ensuring that Americans have access to a more complete understanding of their shared history.

Dr. Tillman comes from a family whose legacy of public service spans generations. His father, Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman, is an internationally respected musician, educator, and composer whose influence has reached audiences around the world. His mother, Dorothy Wright Tillman, is a former Chicago Alderman, nationally recognized civil rights leader, and former field staff member of Rev. Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965 and played a significant role in the election of Harold Washington as Chicago's first Black mayor. Their example instilled in Dr. Tillman a lifelong commitment to scholarship, service, faith, and principled leadership.

From his youth, Dr. Tillman was immersed in the sermons and teachings of Rev. Dr. King, learning to understand nonviolence not as passive acceptance, but as disciplined Christian courage rooted in faith, truth, and constitutional principle. Raised in a family deeply influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, he came to understand that courage is measured not by anger or confrontation, but by the willingness to stand firmly for truth, constitutional principle, and religious conviction while treating others with dignity and respect. Those lessons became the foundation of his scholarship, his public leadership, and his understanding of citizenship.

Dr. Tillman's Christian faith has been the defining influence of his life since his youth. As his faith matured, so too did his conviction that religious liberty is among America's most fundamental constitutional freedoms. Throughout his life's journey, that faith has shaped

his scholarship, his public service, and his civic engagement, grounding his work in the belief that every individual must remain free to worship God according to the dictates of conscience without government interference. He has often viewed the study of history and the practice of faith as inseparable, believing that America's enduring commitment to religious liberty has been one of the defining pillars of the Republic since its founding.

That lifelong commitment made his public stand during the COVID-19 church closures especially significant. Illinois' Black political leadership, much of the Black ministerial community, and much of Chicago's civic establishment generally supported Governor J.B. Pritzker's restrictions on houses of worship. As a Black Republican—and as the son of one of Chicago's most respected public servants—Dr. Tillman chose a different course. He publicly defended the constitutional right to worship, appeared in contemporaneous news coverage, participated in the ReOpen Illinois movement, and argued that churches deserved the same constitutional consideration afforded comparable secular activities. His position was neither politically convenient nor widely embraced within the circles in which he had been raised. It reflected conviction rather than consensus and required him to stand apart from much of the political and religious establishment in his own community.

Beyond his work as a historian, Dr. Tillman is a Heritage Academy Fellow, a Heritage Action Sentinel, and a longtime member of Wilberforce Lodge No. 21. Through these and other civic organizations, he has combined scholarship with grassroots leadership, believing that informed citizens are essential to preserving constitutional self-government and the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution.

Dr. Tillman is also the owner of Tillman Family Press, through which he publishes works dedicated to preserving American history and documenting the contributions of Black American patriots. His research, writing, lectures, and public speaking have consistently emphasized the enduring relationship between faith, freedom, personal responsibility, and the Constitution.

Dr. Tillman's defense of religious liberty during the COVID-19 pandemic was not an isolated act. It was the natural expression of a lifetime shaped by Christian faith, historical scholarship, and the enduring principles of Rev. Dr. King's philosophy of nonviolence. He understood that standing on principle would not always be popular and that doing so could carry personal, professional, and social consequences. Nevertheless, he chose principled public leadership over silence, conviction over convenience, and constitutional fidelity over political acceptance. His willingness to bear those consequences without abandoning either his faith or his respect for others distinguishes both his advocacy and his character.

TIMELINE: DR. TILLMAN'S ADVOCACY FOR ILLINOIS CHURCH REOPENING

The following timeline documents Dr. Tillman's public advocacy during the Illinois church reopening fight in 2020. His role was as a public voice and community advocate — one of a broad coalition of faith leaders, religious liberty organizations, churches, and citizens who together preceded Illinois' decision to restore the right to worship.

March–April 2020: Illinois Churches Shut Down

Governor Pritzker issues a statewide stay-at-home order classifying religious gatherings as non-essential. Illinois becomes one of only 10 states to effectively ban religious services, while liquor stores and other businesses remain open.

Early May 2020: Pritzker Limits Churches to 10 People

Pritzker amends his order to permit religious services but caps attendance at 10 people — a limit that for most congregations constitutes a functional closure. Criticism from pastors, faith leaders, and community members follows immediately.

May 14–16, 2020: Dr. Tillman Speaks Out on ABC7 Chicago

Dr. Tillman becomes one of the public voices calling for Illinois churches to reopen. He is quoted by name in ABC7 Chicago coverage — in real time, during the controversy:

"I'm not going to let the government tell me how I can worship, when I can worship and where I can worship."

"I feel that if we're able to go to Walmart or Walgreens, we should be able to go to church."

"As weeks go on and on, you feel a need to be with your assembly and sometimes the best person to be with at times of fear is your minister who can give you a word to calm you down."

May 2020: Reopen Illinois Church Rally

Dr. Tillman attends the Reopen Illinois church rally, joining other community leaders in direct public advocacy for the right to worship. Video documentation of Dr. Tillman's participation is included in the Primary Sources & Evidence Index through the linked YouTube recording.

May 2020: Legal Challenges Filed

Multiple Illinois churches file federal lawsuits against Governor Pritzker, represented by the Thomas More Society, Liberty Counsel, and other religious liberty organizations. Dr. Tillman was not a party to the litigation — his role was as a public advocate keeping the community informed and maintaining public pressure alongside the legal coalition.

May 28–29, 2020: Illinois Churches Reopen

Facing a U.S. Supreme Court deadline and sustained public pressure from a broad coalition, Governor Pritzker does not renew the 10-person limit. Illinois churches are permitted to reopen. Religious liberty organizations described the outcome as a significant victory for people of faith in Illinois.

PRIMARY SOURCES & EVIDENCE INDEX

The following contemporaneous news coverage, publicly available records, and multimedia sources are referenced throughout this nomination and are provided for the Commission's convenience.

ABC7 Chicago

May 15, 2020

"Reopening Chicago: Willie Wilson voices support for 100 churches to reopen Sunday in defiance of stay-at-home order."

<https://abc7chicago.com/willie-wilson-reopening-chicago-illinois-churches/6181687/>

ABC7 Chicago

May 16, 2020

"Coronavirus Chicago: Mayor Lori Lightfoot warns churches, worshipers who plan to defy Illinois' stay-at-home order."

<https://abc7chicago.com/coronavirus-chicago-illinois-reopening-stay-at-home/6186498/>

ABC7 Chicago

May 17, 2020

"Churches reopen for Sunday service in defiance of Illinois' stay-at-home order."

<https://abc7chicago.com/coronavirus-chicago-illinois-reopening-stay-at-home/6190541/>

NBC Chicago

May 28, 2020

"Churches Claim Success as Pritzker Announces New Worship Guidelines."

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/churches-claim-success-as-pritzker-announces-new-worship-guidelines/2279676/>

Block Club Chicago

May 29, 2020

"Illinois Churches, Places of Worship Allowed to Resume Services After Pritzker Backs Down."

<https://blockclubchicago.org/2020/05/29/illinois-churches-places-of-worship-allowed-to-resume-services-after-pritzker-backs-down/>

Video Evidence

ReOpen Illinois Church Rally featuring Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II

YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/BLVgyKCwBlo>

Official Photograph

Professional portrait of Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II

Photography courtesy of Jogay Tillman Photography

Religious liberty endures because ordinary Americans are willing to defend it when doing so is unpopular.

Dr. Jimmy Lee Tillman II was one of those Americans.

Respectfully Submitted,
Martin Luther King Republicans

Chicago, Illinois | July 2026

From: Larry Brooks <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII, "Office of U.S. Senator Marsha Blackburn"
<[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My concerns in regards to the religious liberty commissions report.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:57:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

My name is Larry Brooks,

I have taken for granted the liberties I've been granted to worship as my conscious leads. The generosity in God allowing me to worship Him on The Sabbath He has created and not changed without fear of persecution by government institutions until a time of trouble such as we face with this. I was wrong for taking it for granted the times I have.

I believe everyone should have the right to choose God or not without persuasion from a man made government, even if many of it's tenants and legislation was inspired by Biblical principles.

When Nebuchadnezzar discovered the true and living God, he made a proclamation that everyone had to worship Him. Yet this legislation did not yield the transformation the king had hoped for. Making laws to force what is a God given choice in regards to something as sacred and intimate as worship should always be left to the individual and not the corporate collective by law.

Israel's theocracy was something God led when bringing them out of Egypt, but the corruption came in when men were put in places that only God was meant to be. When power was allowed to shift from God having the final say to a king, some of Israel's darkest days began to transpire.

Then during the dark ages when the Catholic church was given power over Europe for the most part. The corruption and atrocities to the common people and those in power left such an impression on those fleeing religious persecution that the founding fathers of this country did all they could to ensure it would never be repeated again.

Yet here we stand again with a similar sentiment to those powers which came before to mix sacred with common. History will repeat itself when we trod down this road in the hopes to return to a better time for people. But this is a delusive deception. Nostalgia would attempt to make one believe time were better than they were and fail to include the sufferings that accompanied the moments of reprieve.

We are a country built on the promise of freedom and opportunity for all to succeed and do well, despite the decades of cultural polarized oppression for multiple nationalities and belief systems, there was still opportunity on paper for them to practice their beliefs. That was because their state was not pointing them in a direction to worship, but giving them ample opportunity to learn of the Truth.

So I'm for religious liberty, but not as the cost of opening the door to allow man with sinful natures to control or dictate conscious of their brother through incentives, legislation, or other schemes.

Thank you for your consideration,
Larry Brooks

From: Nancy Cotton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State- Nancy Cotton

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:57:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Some historical facts:

When the Constitution was written our founding fathers were fresh out of personal experience of European persecutions where king and pope clasped hands.

Pope Pius IX Encyclical Letter

August 15th, 1854: "The absurd erroneous doctrines or ravings in defense of liberty of conscience are a most pestilential error -

A pest of all others, most to be dreaded in a state."

The same pope in Encyclical Letter

December 8, 1864, anathematized

"those who assert the liberty of conscience and of religious worship," also "all such as maintain that the church may not employ force."

Rome claims infallibility and asserts that

"the church never erred, nor will it."

Bishop O'Connor says, "Religious liberty is merely endured until the opposite can be carried into effect without peril to the Catholic world."

And how is it just now on the 250th anniversary of her birth that the United States from the National Constitution Center honors Pope Leo XIV with the 2026 Liberty medal?

If you tear down the wall between church and state there will be a revival of papal persecutions as was in the past
win for over a millennium innocent blood was splattered
and bodies scattered across continents.

I wish to share with you a poem I wrote, expressing the thoughts from my heart.

LAND OF PROMISE

America - Pristine Paradise in her prime;
Divinely favored, faith-filled, fertile and sublime.
A wide wilderness of wonder and beauty:
An asylum from oppression was her duty.
This Promised Land
Was providentially planned
For a purpose grand!

Her heritage of liberty took deep root;
Princely principles of Bible bore fair fruit.
Declaration of Independence document
With Constitution carved majestic monument.
These writings of old
Were brilliant and bold;
A nation to ennoble and mold.

Our forefathers were farsighted and inspired;

Wisdom out of this world they desired and acquired;
Granting freedom to all In their legislation;
The secret to successful unification.
Freedom's fight was laborious;
Knowing no defeat, 'twas victorious;
Her goodwill glows so glorious!

Revelation 13 portrays a lamb-like beast;
'Tis our nation in her youth as she increased.
Her horns possess powers as never before:
Civil and religious liberties are what they stand for.
She rises with healing in her wings;
Liberty's bell she loudly rings;
Bright hope and promise to all she brings!

A republic with Protestant precepts bears sway,
Allowing each the right to choose and have his say.
By law governors are ordained, crime to restrain;
But man's conscience is solely God's domain.
Of religion - no respecter;
Of equal rights - a protector;
Letting God direct her.

The world marveled at a country without a king,
And worship with out pope and priest oppressing.
Triumphant twin liberties laid the foundation
For peace, prosperity, and a powerful nation.
A freedom beat
That's soul sweet;
Making happiness complete!

In the Decalogue delivered to Moses on high,
Written with the finger of God on Mount Sinai,
Two stones separated God's commandments and plan
Of man's duty to God, from man's duty to man.
So, also the beast has two horns.
"Keep separate," they warn,
"The two-fold liberties heaven-born."

Cling not blindly to her stars and stripes, Patriot;
Prophecy predicts this beast's drastic change and plot.
Gentle lamb will metamorphose to a DRAGON.
High treason to our country by government and men!
Every principal pure
That she did procure,
America will ere-long abjure!

Church and state b'come monster mates, and freedoms freeze;
Enforcing religious dogmas and death decrees.
Freedom fiercely fought for with sweat of brow and tears;
For which colonists gladly gave their lives and years.
Lamb-like horns they'll overturn;
Liberties for which hearts did burn;
Their very spirit soon they'll spurn.

Those loyal to these lofty laws will be cursed as the worst;
Bad will be called good, and the good will be reversed.
U.S. probation will end in condemnation;
Ruin will result, for "righteousness exalts a nation."
She forgot what she once taught.
Truths fought-for and blood-bought
Will all seem for naught!

Let each individual stand up for and stay true
To the duel documents writ in red, white, and blue.
The Lord has a people scattered over the earth
Who will be faithful to what America gave birth.
The battle is not o'er;
We must continually wage war
For what our country once stood for.

The true Promised Land, God has planned for the New Earth;
As kindest King reigns, each citizen feels of worth.
Tow'ring Trees of Life, Liberty, and Love, nourish;
Heartfelt brotherhood, and all that is good, flourish.

Sincerely,
Nancy Cotton
Hereford, Arizona

From: Anna Xavier <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -Separation of Church and State- Anna Xavier

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:57:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a Christian citizen of America, I believe it is the governments duty to enforce only civil obedience, and never moral obedience. The separation of church and state is what allows the God-given free moral agency among our citizens. Separation of church and state is not a secular nor a leftist idea as you claim. Our founding fathers recognized that when one set of beliefs are favored by the government, persecution of those with beliefs that differ can easily occur. Please reconsider the "bridge" you aim to create and think of the freedoms it may cost us.

Sincerely,

Anna Xavier

Newport, Washington

From: Melissa Allemand <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -Seperation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:58:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen and person of faith, I find it very disturbing to hear of the Commission's intentions of tearing down the wall of separation between church and state that our forefathers have so wisely put into place. Building a "bridge" between these two entities is going backwards into a time period where religious persecution was tolerated. This wall of separation is one of the reasons our country and its many churches are free to this day. It is not a secular idea to keep government out of our churches but is exactly what we must retain to keep our country and its churches free. History is clear of what happens when church and state unite. I urge you that we do not build this bridge but leave the wall that protects more than it constrains..

Sincerely,
Melissa Allemand
Chattanooga, TN

From: smile again <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Perservation of religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:02:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

The persavation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the proper boundaries between civil authorities and matter of conscious.

That principal is faithful to constitution. Consistent with the scriptures.

Many of the earlier settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled government that enforced religious conformity.

We must abide by Article VI of the constitution.

What you are trying to do sounds like a repudiation of our nation's history, the principals upon it was founded, and the religious freedom protected by the first amendment.

Stop it please!

M. Iznaga
Child of God

From: duane thomsen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Government persecution of Religion

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:05:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Papacy persecuted all religion 1568 until 1798. Which, was prophesied in the in Danial's time. Everyone was fleeing to America since the founding of this country. If government tries to regulate religious conscience! It certainly will end in persecution of all religion other than the one controlled by the white, and black pope's of the papacy! The 4th commandment in the inspired Bible says the day of worship is the 7th day of the week. God's law does not change period! It has been the seventh day since the beginning of creation and does not ever change. If government regulates the religious conscience, persecution of religion will follow!

Sincerely,
Duane Thomsen

From: Angela Grounds <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - [Executive Summary] - [Angela Grounds]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:07:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Commission_Public_Comment_-_Executive_Summary_-_Angela_Grounds.docx; Religious_Liberty_Commission_Public_Comment_-_Executive_Summary_-_Angela_Grounds(1).docx

Thank you Indeed

PUBLIC COMMENT – [Executive Summary]

Mr. President and Distinguished Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I deeply value and appreciate your position regarding our people's Religious Liberty. I am grateful for your time and prayerful consideration of my response.

I am immersed in the Spirit and the Word of my LORD, as I delve into the Draft Report written at the hand of the Religious Liberty Commission. It is my whole desire to seek and to align my heart with the will of the LORD my God and in this accordance, I am led to respond.

The invitation to read, pray over and, respond to this report ahead of its submission to our President is an immense privilege. I am made fully aware that with great privilege comes greater responsibility.

As a U.S. American Citizen, a Christian and a mother this responsibility is one I do not dismiss but choose to treat with the utmost seriousness as truly nothing matters more than the freedom to Worship the LORD our God in Spirit and in Truth.

The U.S. American public has been extended opportunity to review, consider and respond to the 224-page Religious Liberty Commission's draft report in a matter of 15 days. Having spent a year drafting this opinion, the committee must be fully aware that the time allotted does not allow the Vetter to pray over and provide a discerned response to the document in the whole. My first request is that the U.S. American public be provided this necessary time.

Today is July 4, 2026, it is nearly midnight. Eight days from now my response is due. I have read the 2-page summary. I have read the first 40 pages of this draft. I have begun to pray over, to make note and comment on the Executive Summary; you will find those notes in this response.

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Thank you for your time Indeed.

PUBLIC COMMENT – [Executive Summary – Paragraph 1]

"The Commission's work began with acknowledging a simple but profound truth: religious liberty is essential because religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society."

Claim #1 "The Commission's work began with acknowledging a simple but profound truth."

- 1) Who is the Commission?
 - a. Those entrusted to deliver
 - b. Those who act under authority
- 2) To You: Under whose authority do you act?
 1. The President?
 2. The U.S. American Peoples?
 3. The Lord our God?
 4. The Constitution?
- 3) What does the Commission own or possess?
 - a. Their work:
 - i. Their action and motion
 - ii. That which they produce by influence
 - iii. Their fermentation
 - iv. Their agitation (the disturbance of peace and tranquility of the mind)
 - v. That which they mold, shape and manufacture
 - vi. Their embroidery (variegation of diversity – mentioned throughout this report)
 - vii. Their labors
 - viii. Their effects (consequences)
- 4) To You: Are you willing to OWN your Works in the Whole?
- 5) What does the commission do?
 - a. They acknowledge.
 - i. OWN, avow or admit to being true
 - ii. Make declaration of assent (they act in accord or agreement)
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 - iv. Act in a legal form and giving validity (legal strength and force)
- 6) What do they acknowledge?
 - a. A “simple but profound truth”
- 7) What is it to be simple?
 - a. To be single
 - b. To be ONE
 - c. To be undivided; united
 - d. To consist of ONE thing; uncompounded; unmingled; uncombined with anything else
 - e. To be artless; not given to design, stratagem or duplicity
 - i. Artless – to be free from guile (craft; cunning; artifice; deceit; disguise)
 - f. To be unadorned; without embellishment
 - g. To be without complication

- h. To be weak in intellect
- 8) To you: How can truth be simple when we speak of it in terms of perspective?
- 9) What is perspective?
 - a. The science of optics
 - i. Certain knowledge
 - ii. Comprehension and understanding
 - b. The glass/lens through which an object is viewed
 - c. Resemblances of truth
- 10) To you: How can truth be both simple and profound? We must clearly and WHOLLY (entirely, perfectly, completely and totally in all parts) understand the truths you ask us to uphold. In order to protect our future generations, the truth (intent) of this report must be clear and WHOLLY (entirely, perfectly, completely and totally in all parts) understood without question or room for new perspective or interpretation if it is to order the relationship of church and state.
- 11) What is it to be profound?
 - a. Humble; low; submissive
 - b. Hidden
 - c. Contrived
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 - e. Schemed
 - f. Extend far beneath the surface, possessing great intellectual depth
 - g. Intensely felt
 - h. The abyss; the deep
- 12) Can truth be profound (hidden, contrived, devised, schemed, submissive)? Can it be intensely felt or does it bring peace? The foundation of the gospel of peace.
- 13) What then is Truth?
 - a. Truth is conformity to the fact.
 - b. It is EXACT accordance with that which is, has been and shall be.
 - c. Truth constitutes (establishes, enacts, fixes, forms, composes, appoint and elects) the WHOLE.
 - d. Truth IS pure from falsehood, veracity.
 - e. Truth IS faithful (constant, unchanging). It is God.
 - f. Truth that conforms to reality (is made like, yields) the world, or through the word becomes moral truth.
 - i. Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a persistent one.”
 - 1. Ironically, the reality of the situation is that Albert Einstein actually said, “People like us, who believe in physics, know the

distinction between past, present and future is only an illusion, albeit a stubborn one.”

- a. The former quote is interpretation. How will this report be understood and upheld now and by future generations who will make law, and pass down judgment based upon its legal interpretation?
- ii. Romans 12:2 King James Version (KJV) says, “And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”
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- iii. But Romans 12:2 The Message Version (MSG) says, “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-informed maturity in you.”
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 1. Test and approve – evaluate and judge; endorse
- v. All three of these have good messages. All claim to be the same word written by the authority of the very same God. If God who is Spirit and Word, is True and truth is faithful, constant and unchanging how can each be authored by the same? And, if the Word of God has been re-authored and passed down by the authority of so many spirits and speaks in so many tongues and interpretations shouldn’t we consider this report will be as well? Especially, on the grounds that it will become law that upheld and enforced by legal interpretation of the U.S. judicial system.
- g. Truth is fidelity; it is constancy
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Rhetoric is the art of speaking with propriety, elegance or force. It is the power of persuasion or attraction. It is that which allures or charms (the appearance of a nation under God). It holds the power of persuasion, it is attractive, it allures and it charms. Ahh...the sweet silent rhetoric of persuading eyes.

Truth that is moral conforms to the rules of right, it is reasoning; relates to practice, manner and conduct. It is SOCIAL.

- 14) What is the simple but profound truth the Commission's work acknowledges?
- a. "Religious Liberty is essential because religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society."

Claim #2 "religious liberty is essential because religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society."

- 1) What is Religious Liberty?
- a. To define we must first define Religion and Liberty.
 - b. Religion is:
 - i. In its most comprehensive sense, it includes a belief in the being and perfections of God, in the revelation of His will to man, in man's obligations to obey His commands, in a state of reward and punishment, and in man's accountability to God
 - ii. Godliness and piety of life
 - iii. It is piety in practice
 - iv. It exists in the performance of duties we owe directly to God, a principal form of obedience to His will.
 - v. IT IS ALSO any system of faith and worship.
 - 1. In this sense religion comprehends the beliefs of Pagans, Satanist, Witches as well as Christianity and numerous others. God becomes the source of one's moral or chosen truth.
 - a. Religious Liberty then protects not simply my right to pray, to share my faith, to hang my religious symbols at home at work at school but those of ALL faiths and religions.
 - i. Do we then open the door to be arrested or have our children removed from our home for teaching

Christ to our children or denying their 'right' to worship Satan in our home?

- c. Liberty is:
 - i. By Hebrew definition, a free flow; a release
 - ii. By Greek definition, self-governed
 - iii. Per Webster's 1828:
 - 1. Free of restraint (body, will, mind)
 - 2. The power to act as one thinks WITHOUT RESTRAINT or control
 - a. This not only protects my right to believe and to practice as I chose but it protects the rights of others to persecute those beliefs. It invites unrest, chaos and confusion.
 - 3. It is a state of society so far only abridged and restrained as is necessary and expedient for the safety and interest of society, state or nation
 - 4. It is the power of an agent to do or to forbear any particular action according to determination or thought of the mind, by which either is preferred by the other.
 - 5. It is freedom of action or speech beyond the ordinary bounds of civility or decorum.
 - 6. It is released from restraint. Note: Religion comprehends the beliefs of Pagans, Satanist, Witches as well as Christianity and numerous others.
 - a. It is a space in which one is permitted to pass without restraints, beyond which he may not lawfully pass.
 - i. Hmm... there are then limits on liberty.
- 2) So, what then is 'Religious Liberty'? It is then Religion that is released from restraint.
- a. Per Webster's 1828, Religious Liberty is the free right of adopting and enjoying opinions on religious subjects and worshiping (BTW, worship is extravagant love and extreme submission) the supreme being (not the same for all) according to dictates of conscious without external control. (hmm...Do we then become a lawless society or one of legal extremes?)
 - b. A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) says, Religious Liberty is the fundamental right to hold, practice and express ANY kind of religious belief or no belief at all without government coercion or interference.
 - i. Thus, it protects ALL faiths including Christian, agnostic, atheist, and satanic to name a few.
 - ii. It protects conscience ensuring citizens are not forced to act against their own moral or spiritual convictions

1. One example: The ancient Mesoamerican tradition of human sacrifice most prominently practiced by Aztecs.
 - a. Per A.I., These ritual killings were performed to ensure continuation of the universe, appease their deities, and guarantee agricultural success
 - c. It is not absolute
 - i. Religious Liberty Guide page 5, 14: The strict scrutiny standard applicable to RFRA is exceptionally demanding. (Read the entirety)
- 3) To You: Tell me which of these are your intentions.
 - a. This report sets bounds and it tries to define my liberty, the liberty of the U.S. American peoples. It creates a space in which one is permitted to pass without restraint and beyond which he may not enter, a restrained freedom.
 - b. Galatians 5:13 KJV, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

Religion pertains to society’s sect, places and subjects. It teaches, contains subjects, doctrines, precepts, topics and books. Which do we allow? How then are we to be free of those teaching and images that bring offense.

Religious Liberty is strict, it is engaged by vows, order, fraternity or promise of performance to a sacred deity.

The Hebrew word for religion is DAT: (No wonder Religious Liberty is falls under the authority of the Department of Justice.)

- a. DAT - LAW or royal decree
 - a. It appears in the Book of Esther
- b. Mispat – justice or judgement; righting wrongs

Scripture provides a Biblical example of Religious Liberty in Galatians. The apostle Paul in Galatians 1:13-16 “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. And profited in the Jews’ (men of praise and confession) religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions (religions) of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me (gave me liberty) from my mother’s womb, and called me by grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; IMMEDIATELY I conferred not with flesh and blood.” This is the testament of religious liberty and the evidence of it in Paul’s life is that he was separated from religion and joined to the church of God.

- 4) The claim is made that religious liberty is essential so, what does it mean to be essential?
 - a. That which is necessary to the constitution (is it?) or existence of a thing
 - b. It is important to the highest degree; the chief point; sovereign
 - i. In Luke 1:35 the angel said to Mary “the power of the highest shall overshadow thee.”
 1. If religious liberty is then essential, then per definition is it of the highest degree.
 - a. Is then Religious Liberty, this report or the President’s resulting executive order of highest degree?
 - i. Is this then what overshadows (shelters, protects, covers, influences) Mary?
 1. Mary means both beloved and bitter
 - ii. Or is God (TRUTH) then made sovereign?
 - c. It is pure, rectified
 - d. The first constituent of principles
 - e. Does religious liberty then elevate our right to choose above the Sovereign God (Truth)? Will He then give our nation over to its own desires?
 - i. Romans 1:26 KJV “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections;”
- 5) Is Religious Liberty then essential as we claim? It becomes so in a society where thought of self is highest in degree of importance, a society that knows not Charity. (1 Corinthians 13)
 - a. One who does NOT love the Lord thy God/Truth with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (Or whose self has become its God)
 - i. God is highest
 - b. Who does not love its neighbor as itself
 - i. The neighbor (all men) is equal too in position
 - c. One who has become haughty and prideful and will surely fall
 - i. Proverbs 29:23 “A man’s (nation’s) pride WILL bring him low; but (there is hope) honor will uphold the humble in spirit.” (humble after the fall)
- 6) Why does this Commission claim Religious Liberty is essential?
 - a. Per the Religious Liberty Commission, “religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society.”
- 7) What is Religion “itself”?
 - a. Itself
 - i. It is reciprocal
 - ii. It is neutral
 - iii. It is a nation that does not engage or offer defense of any party

8) What is it then to be indispensable?

- a. That which is indispensable CANNOT be omitted, remitted (WOW) or spared.
 - i. To remit is to forgive, to surrender the right of punishing a crime; to pardon; to resign; to send back; to restore
 - 1. THIS SHOULD BE REASON FOR ALARM
 - a. This document is written in such a way that whatever it is that is being brought for and whatever its intent CANNOT be changed, nor can offense be forgiven
- b. The Greek definition of indispensable is that which we cannot do without; A BINDING DUTY or requisite element to one's life
 - i. The mark?
- c. The Hebrew definition is helper

9) What is it "indispensable" to?

- a. A flourishing society

10) What is a flourishing society

- a. One that is flourishing:
 - i. Thrives
 - ii. It increases
 - iii. It is prosperous
 - iv. It blooms
 - v. It grows
 - vi. It is fruitful
 - 1. What fruits does it, a flourishing society founded upon religious liberty, bare?
- b. A society is:
 - i. A Union
 - ii. Friendship
 - iii. A TEMPORARY ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS FOR PROFIT
 - iv. A neighborhood
 - v. A number of persons associated for a particular purpose, whether incorporated by law or united only by articles of agreement; a fraternity
- c. A.I. says a flourishing society is a community where individuals experience holistic well-being – not just surviving but actively realizing their potential through happiness, good health, purpose, character, and strong social bonds. It balances collective equity and sustainability with individual liberty providing economic and environmental conditions necessary to survive.
 - i. Happiness and satisfaction in day-to-day life

- ii. Holistic health (mental, physical) prioritizing well being over absence of disease
- iii. Meaning and purpose – clear life goals
- iv. Sense of community
- v. Your life has value
- vi. Character and virtue, a cultivation of empathy, resilience and ethical behavior
- vii. Social connection, supportive relationship
- viii. Enabling conditions – foundational needs, finance, material stability, civic rights, sustainable environment

These are, per A.I., the fruits of a flourishing society

In Psalm 92:14, King David says “Those planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.” They are full of life. 😊

11) The Fruits of the LORD’s Spirit (God) are identified in Galatians 5:22-23

- a. Love
- b. Joy
- c. Peace
- d. Longsuffering
- e. Gentleness
- f. Goodness
- g. Faith
- h. Meekness
- i. Temperance

NOTE: Per Galatians 5:23 “against such there is no law.” Against what? The fruits of this Spirit. Which is what? The Spirit of God, TRUTH. Truth not religion offers liberty.

John 8:32 “And you shall know the truth, and the TRUTH shall make you free.”

Religious Liberty offers freedom that is restrained. It is defined within limits. Truth sets us free of those bonds.

Truth is the WAY to LIFE. Jesus (whose name is deliverance, salvation) said in John 14:6 KJV “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.”

In John 6:63 KJV Jesus said, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, they are life.”

All of these things considered there is enough evidence in the very first sentence of the executive summary to ask that this report which with or without intent could destroy not only a nation but my people be destroyed and that this nation be free to serve the LORD our God in the WORD and SPIRIT of TRUTH, truth not in part by the whole.

Amen

PUBLIC COMMENT – [Executive Summary]

Mr. President and Distinguished Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I deeply value and appreciate your position regarding our people's Religious Liberty. I am grateful for your time and prayerful consideration of my response.

I am immersed in the Spirit and the Word of my LORD, as I delve into the Draft Report written at the hand of the Religious Liberty Commission. It is my whole desire to seek and to align my heart with the will of the LORD my God and in this accordance, I am led to respond.

The invitation to read, pray over and, respond to this report ahead of its submission to our President is an immense privilege. I am made fully aware that with great privilege comes greater responsibility.

As a U.S. American Citizen, a Christian and a mother this responsibility is one I do not dismiss but choose to treat with the utmost seriousness as truly nothing matters more than the freedom to Worship the LORD our God in Spirit and in Truth.

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- 3) To You: Tell me which of these are your intentions.
 - a. This report sets bounds and it tries to define my liberty, the liberty of the U.S. American peoples. It creates a space in which one is permitted to pass without restraint and beyond which he may not enter, a restrained freedom.
 - b. Galatians 5:13 KJV, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

Religion pertains to society’s sect, places and subjects. It teaches, contains subjects, doctrines, precepts, topics and books. Which do we allow? How then are we to be free of those teaching and images that bring offense.

Religious Liberty is strict, it is engaged by vows, order, fraternity or promise of performance to a sacred deity.

The Hebrew word for religion is DAT: (No wonder Religious Liberty is falls under the authority of the Department of Justice.)

- a. DAT - LAW or royal decree
 - a. It appears in the Book of Esther
- b. Mispat – justice or judgement; righting wrongs

Scripture provides a Biblical example of Religious Liberty in Galatians. The apostle Paul in Galatians 1:13-16 “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. And profited in the Jews’ (men of praise and confession) religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions (religions) of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me (gave me liberty) from my mother’s womb, and called me by grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; IMMEDIATELY I conferred not with flesh and blood.” This is the testament of religious liberty and the evidence of it in Paul’s life is that he was separated from religion and joined to the church of God.

- 4) The claim is made that religious liberty is essential so, what does it mean to be essential?
 - a. That which is necessary to the constitution (is it?) or existence of a thing
 - b. It is important to the highest degree; the chief point; sovereign
 - i. In Luke 1:35 the angel said to Mary “the power of the highest shall overshadow thee.”
 1. If religious liberty is then essential, then per definition is it of the highest degree.
 - a. Is then Religious Liberty, this report or the President’s resulting executive order of highest degree?
 - i. Is this then what overshadows (shelters, protects, covers, influences) Mary?
 1. Mary means both beloved and bitter
 - ii. Or is God (TRUTH) then made sovereign?
 - c. It is pure, rectified
 - d. The first constituent of principles
 - e. Does religious liberty then elevate our right to choose above the Sovereign God (Truth)? Will He then give our nation over to its own desires?
 - i. Romans 1:26 KJV “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections;”
- 5) Is Religious Liberty then essential as we claim? It becomes so in a society where thought of self is highest in degree of importance, a society that knows not Charity. (1 Corinthians 13)
 - a. One who does NOT love the Lord thy God/Truth with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (Or whose self has become its God)
 - i. God is highest
 - b. Who does not love its neighbor as itself
 - i. The neighbor (all men) is equal too in position
 - c. One who has become haughty and prideful and will surely fall
 - i. Proverbs 29:23 “A man’s (nation’s) pride WILL bring him low; but (there is hope) honor will uphold the humble in spirit.” (humble after the fall)
- 6) Why does this Commission claim Religious Liberty is essential?
 - a. Per the Religious Liberty Commission, “religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society.”
- 7) What is Religion “itself”?
 - a. Itself
 - i. It is reciprocal
 - ii. It is neutral
 - iii. It is a nation that does not engage or offer defense of any party

- 8) What is it then to be indispensable?
 - a. That which is indispensable CANNOT be omitted, remitted (WOW) or spared.
 - i. To remit is to forgive, to surrender the right of punishing a crime; to pardon; to resign; to send back; to restore
 1. THIS SHOULD BE REASON FOR ALARM
 - a. This document is written in such a way that whatever it is that is being brought for and whatever its intent CANNOT be changed, nor can offense be forgiven
 - b. The Greek definition of indispensable is that which we cannot do without; A BINDING DUTY or requisite element to one's life
 - i. The mark?
 - c. The Hebrew definition is helper
- 9) What is it "indispensable" to?
 - a. A flourishing society
- 10) What is a flourishing society
 - a. One that is flourishing:
 - i. Thrives
 - ii. It increases
 - iii. It is prosperous
 - iv. It blooms
 - v. It grows
 - vi. It is fruitful
 1. What fruits does it, a flourishing society founded upon religious liberty, bare?
 - b. A society is:
 - i. A Union
 - ii. Friendship
 - iii. A TEMPORARY ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS FOR PROFIT
 - iv. A neighborhood
 - v. A number of persons associated for a particular purpose, whether incorporated by law or united only by articles of agreement; a fraternity
 - c. A.I. says a flourishing society is a community where individuals experience holistic well-being – not just surviving but actively realizing their potential through happiness, good health, purpose, character, and strong social bonds. It balances collective equity and sustainability with individual liberty providing economic and environmental conditions necessary to survive.
 - i. Happiness and satisfaction in day-to-day life

- ii. Holistic health (mental, physical) prioritizing well being over absence of disease
- iii. Meaning and purpose – clear life goals
- iv. Sense of community
- v. Your life has value
- vi. Character and virtue, a cultivation of empathy, resilience and ethical behavior
- vii. Social connection, supportive relationship
- viii. Enabling conditions – foundational needs, finance, material stability, civic rights, sustainable environment

These are, per A.I., the fruits of a flourishing society

In Psalm 92:14, King David says “Those planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.” They are full of life. 😊

11) The Fruits of the LORD’s Spirit (God) are identified in Galatians 5:22-23

- a. Love
- b. Joy
- c. Peace
- d. Longsuffering
- e. Gentleness
- f. Goodness
- g. Faith
- h. Meekness
- i. Temperance

NOTE: Per Galatians 5:23 “against such there is no law.” Against what? The fruits of this Spirit. Which is what? The Spirit of God, TRUTH. Truth not religion offers liberty.

John 8:32 “And you shall know the truth, and the TRUTH shall make you free.”

Religious Liberty offers freedom that is restrained. It is defined within limits. Truth sets us free of those bonds.

Truth is the WAY to LIFE. Jesus (whose name is deliverance, salvation) said in John 14:6 KJV “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.”

In John 6:63 KJV Jesus said, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, they are life.”

All of these things considered there is enough evidence in the very first sentence of the executive summary to ask that this report which with or without intent could destroy not only a nation but my people be destroyed and that this nation be free to serve the LORD our God in the WORD and SPIRIT of TRUTH, truth not in part by the whole.

Amen

From: Micah Clay <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:13:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello. As a God fearing, naturally born citizen of the United States of America, I strongly oppose the unification of church and state. This country has been established as a safe haven for those seeking refuge from persecution and religious liberty. This country was founded on freedom. Is it really one nation indivisible under God, with liberty and justice for all if one religion is favored over another on the state level? If one form of worship is exalted over all others by our U.S government? I know where this leads. And it is unjust to those who hope to honor a different day of rest. The true sabbath. The true seventh day of the week. Where God rested from creation. This is one nation under God. And God allows you to make a choice. He created free will. If we really want to honor God, then we should be referring to his way of justice and order. Not enforcing an unbiblical day of rest through our government on all those who seek liberty under the banner of the United States of America. The founding fathers would be rolling in their graves, sorely displeased if they saw this tragedy taking place today.

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of religion and separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:19:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Edna Cornforth

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Edna Cornforth
Bakersfield, California

From: " [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" < [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty for all

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:20:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this public comment out of deep concern for the future of religious liberty in the United States. I urge the Commission to reject any recommendation directed at the Department of Justice or any other branch of government that would weaken the historic constitutional principle of keeping religion and government institutionally separate, as well as any proposal that encourages greater unity between the two.

America's greatest contribution to the cause of religious liberty has not been the state's endorsement of religion, but the protection of every person's God-given right to worship according to conscience without government interference. This principle has allowed religious communities of every tradition to flourish in freedom while preserving civil peace.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I write from the perspective of a religious minority whose spiritual ancestors experienced firsthand the dangers that arise when government aligns itself with the religious majority. During America's colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and many other religious minorities endured discrimination, imprisonment, fines, and civil persecution because certain established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These injustices were among the very reasons the Founders rejected religious establishments and adopted the First Amendment.

The experience of Seventh-day Adventists provides another historical warning. During the late nineteenth century, Adventists who faithfully observed God's seventh-day Sabbath were prosecuted under Sunday laws that were imposed, once again, by the religious Christian majority. Some of our fellow believers were fined, imprisoned, and even forced into chain gangs because they chose to honor Saturday as the biblical Sabbath rather than conform to popular Blue Law Sunday observances. Their only offense was obeying the dictates of conscience and remaining faithful to their religious convictions. Their experience stands as a warning that whenever civil authority is used to enforce religious beliefs or practices, freedom of conscience is inevitably endangered, and religious minorities are often the first to endure discrimination and persecution.

The medieval Inquisition demonstrated how religious institutions armed with civil authority suppressed dissent through torture, punishment, and even death. Various forms of religious extremism, including movements that have justified violence in the name of Islam, have shown how state-backed religious ideology can deny liberty of conscience. Likewise, communist regimes that officially embraced atheism illustrate the opposite side of the same error: when government suppresses religion altogether, believers are again persecuted. Though these different oppressive systems differed in ideology, they shared one common characteristic—the concentration of civil power over matters of conscience.

The strength of the American constitutional system is that it avoids these extremes. Government was never commissioned to direct the spiritual lives of the people. The mission of the state is to preserve order, protect individual rights, and secure equal treatment under the law. The mission of the church is altogether different: to preach the gospel, emphasize truth and love through persuasion, not coercion, and call people to a voluntary faith, as Jesus did. These two institutions are strongest and remain uncorrupted when each remains within its proper sphere.

Our nation has become home to a diverse group of churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious communities because government has generally refrained from controlling or establishing religion. This constitutional heritage has protected both the majority and the minority alike. I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to recommend policies that reinforce—not diminish—the constitutional barriers separating ecclesiastical authority from civil government. Religious liberty is best preserved when government neither advances nor inhibits religion but instead protects the equal rights of all people to

follow their own conscience.

The United States must remain a nation where every church is free to proclaim its beliefs without governmental control and where every citizen is free to worship—or not to worship—without governmental pressure. History has already taught us the consequences of abandoning this principle. We should not repeat mistakes that countless generations have paid dearly to overcome. For if we do, we would once again be fanning the flames of intolerance, religious bigotry, and injustice.

Thank you so much for considering this request.

Respectfully submitted ,

Barbara Thomas

Sent from my iPhone

From: "Erich Koehler" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Erich Koehler]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:21:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by extremist Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of those with minority beliefs, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

Based on the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be dangerously undermining it. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs.

From: "Lyn & Janet Lamberton" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:23:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am for separation of church and state and for freedom of worship for all Americans.

From: Jennifer Gomez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My comment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:23:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I do not agree with church and State Uniting. We have seen in history and many instances in the Bible, where church and State Uniting takes away true religious freedom. I do not want to see our country go down the same path that has caused much bloodshed in the past. God gives us humans free will to choose whether or not we want to serve him, so for our country to force people to do something that they have not been convicted to do is against Gods character. Stand for truth or go against God!

From: arthur white <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] what is really happening and nothing can stop this from happening.....

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:25:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

The following are statements found in the Catholic church, church writings. I found these on the internet.

"The Pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth...by divine right the Pope has supreme and full power in faith, in morals over each and every pastor and his flock. ...the **universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth."** *Quoted in the New York Catechism.*

"The Pope is not simply the representative of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, **he is Jesus Christ Himself**, under the veil of the flesh, and who by means of a being common to humanity continues His ministry amongst men ... Does the Pope speak? **It is Jesus Christ Who is speaking.** Does he teach? **It is Jesus Christ Who teaches.** Does he confer grace or pronounce an anathema? **It is Jesus Christ Himself ...no matter how august the person may be** — whether he wear a crown or be invested with the purple, or be clothed in the sacred vestments: **all must be subject to Him Who has had all things put under Him."** *-Evangelical Christendom, January 1, 1895, pg. 15*, published in London by J. S. Phillips.

"And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man;

Now for the **OFFICE OF POPE** and their NAMES...

LATIN:

NOTE: *This is actually Roman Numerals. The Romans used this for their alphabet and their number system.*

-Latin:

DVX CLERI . translated means Captain of the Clergy

DVXαCLERI
(Captain of the Clergy)

D	500
V	5
X	10
C	100
L	50
E	0
R	0

I	1
Total	6 6 6

-Latin:

LVDOVICVS translated means Vicar of the Court

LVDOVICVS
(Vicar of the Court)

L	50
V	5
D	500
O	0
V	5
I	1
C	100
V	5
S	0
Total	6 6 6

-Greek

The ancient Greek for "Italian Church" is **ITALIKA EKKLESIA**.
(**EKKLESIA** is Strong's # G1577)

ITALIKA EKKLESIA
(Italian Church)

I	10
T	300
A	1
L	30
I	10
K	20
A	1
E	5
K	20
K	20
L	30
E	8
S	200
I	10
A	1

Total	6 6 6
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-Greek

And in Greek the word **APOSTATES**

APOSTATES

A	1
P	80
O	70
ST	6
A	1
T	300
E	8
S	200
Total	6 6 6

There are more titles that add up to 666.

-Latin:

REX LATINVS SACERDOS
(King of the Roman priests)

R	0
E	0
X	10
L	50
A	0
T	0
I	1
N	0
V	5
S	0
S	0
A	0
C	100
E	0
R	0
D	500
O	0
S	0

Total	6 6 6
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Please do not get offended, but if this was not shared to you and yours, you might hold it against me.....

http://www.666WhatIsTheMark.com_

From: Alvin Shepherdt <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:27:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Freedom of conscious being a core principle of these United States was put in place because the founding fathers understood and remembered why the Mayflower and its passengers came to these great shores. When they say peace and safety, sudden destruction soon follows. 1Thessalonians 5:3

Alvin Shepherd

From: " [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Draft Religious Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:29:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have read excerpts from the above draft. According to Romans 13, the government is supposed to take care of civil responsibilities, and God is supposed to take care of His business. Neither should cross over. The government should not be the conscience for the people. So I am against your take on "religious liberty.." Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.

V Hvizdak
Sent from my iPhone

From: AMALIA MARIN <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Objection to the marriage of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:30:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

We respectfully wish to convey our strong objection to the position of this body, that would destroy the historical separation of church & state. These are opposite sides of the same coin, wherein both play a role in the preservation of liberty of conscience and religious freedom. Americans must not be deceived into thinking that morality can be legislated or coerced. Just look at Iran!! Please keep all people of faith safe from the tyranny of state-endorsed/enforced religion. Please reject all attempts to establish any religion under the color of law. Render unto the government what pertains to the government and unto God what pertains to God.

For religious liberty and the continued separation of church and state,

Alberto & Amalia Marin

**Ezequiel 20:20*

From: Tim & Kristen Erich <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concern regarding the new stance of the WHRLC

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:31:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this public comment out of deep concern for the future of religious liberty in the United States. I urge the Commission to reject any recommendation directed at the Department of Justice or any other branch of government that would weaken the historic constitutional principle of keeping religion and government institutionally separate, as well as any proposal that encourages greater unity between the two.

America's greatest contribution to the cause of religious liberty has not been the state's endorsement of religion, but the protection of every person's God-given right to worship according to conscience without government interference. This principle has allowed religious communities of every tradition to flourish in freedom while preserving civil peace.

Government was never commissioned to direct the spiritual lives of the people. The mission of the state is to preserve order, protect individual rights, and secure equal treatment under the law. The mission of the church is altogether different: to preach the gospel, emphasize truth and love through persuasion, not coercion, and call people to a voluntary faith, as Jesus did. These two institutions are strongest and remain uncorrupted when each remains within its proper sphere.

Our nation has become home to a diverse group of churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious communities because government has generally refrained from controlling or establishing religion. This constitutional heritage has protected both the majority and the minority alike. I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to recommend policies that reinforce—not diminish—the constitutional barriers separating ecclesiastical authority from civil government. Religious liberty is best preserved when government neither advances nor inhibits religion but instead protects the equal rights of all people to follow their own conscience.

The United States must remain a nation where every church is free to proclaim its beliefs without governmental control and where every citizen is free to worship—or not to worship—without governmental pressure. History has already taught us the consequences of abandoning this principle. We should not repeat mistakes that countless generations have paid dearly to overcome. For if we do, we would once again be fanning the flames of intolerance, religious bigotry, and injustice. (The above was copied from another citizen with whom I agree.)

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen Erich from Michigan

From: Peggy Uffindell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:35:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not take away the separation of church and state!

From: Dave <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Stop the bridge between Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:37:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am opposed to Church and State unification. We must have freedom of liberty and freedom of religion without political interference.

Thank you, Dave

Sent from my iPhone Dave Cooley

From: Reed Heckly <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTS - Religious Liberty Commission Report - Key Recommendations 1 & 9

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:38:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I have reviewed the Commission's religious liberty report and recommendations and applaud the intent of the work. I indeed recognize that faith-based organizations provide moral value to the fabric of society, and the government should be limited in its involvement with religious faith and practice. I have two comments regarding the report's recommendations.

1. I support the concept of a judicial "wall" that supports the intent of the First Amendment's freedoms related to the exercise of religion. I recognize that the "wall" concept has been interpreted with too much restriction so as to enable government meddling in religious contexts, but the concept should not be reinterpreted too liberally in the opposite direction so as to enable government promotion of one religious flavor or another.
2. The recommendations expressed in the document should be implemented with cautious restraint, except for the recommendation to abolish the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment stands as a worthwhile boundary between faith and political activism. That is a good piece of legislation that in reality does not hinder the beliefs and activities of a person's personal political choices. Keep the Johnson Amendment.

Overall, I am reminded of and firmly believe in the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin in this famous quote: **"When a religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support it, so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."**

Respectfully,

~~~~~  
Reed Heckly  
Republic, WA  
~~~~~

From: Debbie <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keeping church and state seperate.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:42:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am sending this email as I have been watching unfold an attack on religious liberty. History has proven that when state and religion join hands, there will be eventual mandates on how to worship, what day to worship and in time penalties progressing to consequences for not doing what the govt with joined religion (eventually there will be a main one, it is prophetic) consider "doing good for all mankind." There should be no dictate of anyone's conscience, that is for the Holy Spirit to convict. Each person must work out their salvation with the Lord, coming to know Him thru his Word (Bible), prayer and talking with Him. The Govt should not be getting involved in telling someone how to worship or who to worship or what is wrong or right. That is the job of the Holy Spirit only. Please honor the 1st amendment in regards to religious freedom. Thank you

From: Rae Seath <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:48:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar Of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.
Rae Seath

From: J B <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Opposition to Religious Liberty Commission Report – Jason B

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:52:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to express strong opposition to the Religious Liberty Commission's proposal to replace the constitutional "wall of separation" with a "bridge" between church and state. This wall was erected by people of faith—beginning with Roger Williams in 1644—to protect religion, not suppress it. The Commission's recommendations to increase government funding of religious activities and repeal the Johnson Amendment would corrupt both institutions, forcing churches to compete for state favor and inviting wealthy interests to influence religious leadership through political patronage.

The Commission conflates the constitutional wall between church and state with a barrier between personal faith and public life. True separation prevents government from deciding religious questions—which Ten Commandments to display, which doctrines schools may teach, or which beliefs disqualify organizations from funding. Government funding of religious philanthropy and education inevitably brings government control, compelling churches to modify beliefs to maintain support while dragging the state into theological disputes it has no competence to adjudicate, such as accreditation standards or curriculum decisions.

Regarding the Johnson Amendment, I urge the Commission to reverse its recommendation to repeal this vital safeguard and instead advocate for its full enforcement. Repeal would transform churches into vehicles for partisan political activity, allowing wealthy interests to pressure pastors to deliver congregational votes in exchange for financial support. Combined with government funding recommendations, this creates a dangerous patronage system where congregations compromise their integrity for financial gain. The Amendment already faces erosion through non-enforcement; active enforcement is necessary to prevent the corruption of both church and state.

History demonstrates that church-state union breeds tyranny, not freedom. John Adams warned that any group with unchecked power would persecute others; Lyman Beecher observed that Connecticut's churches gained influence only after losing state support in 1818. As Tocqueville documented, American religion flourished precisely because of separation. While the Commission correctly identifies aggressive secularism as a threat, dismantling constitutional protections would create the totalitarian potential it fears—concentrating power that inevitably corrupts both institutions.

The Commission overlooks that America was settled by Christians—Puritans, Baptists, Quakers, and other dissenters—who fled England specifically to escape religious persecution and state-controlled churches. These founders sought the freedom to worship according to conscience, not to replicate the European model of government-sanctioned religion. Their experience of persecution informed the conviction that religious liberty requires government neutrality among competing faiths—a lesson the Commission would have us unlearn.

All who reside in the United States should be free to worship according to their conscience, just as those who hold no belief should be free from compulsion. This aligns with Christian teaching—Christ rejected earthly

political power (John 18:36) and taught that the wheat and tares should "let both grow together" until the harvest rather than uproot dissent by force (Matthew 13:30), demonstrating that faith must be voluntary, not compelled. Roger Williams understood this principle when he cited **1 Kings 5:10**, noting that in building the Temple 'no sound of Iron was heard,' signifying that 'Christ will have in his Church a free and a willing People, not compelled and constrained by Lawes and Statutes' (*The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution*, 1644; Online Library of Liberty). When government favors any religious view, it infringes upon the rights of others and betrays the voluntary nature of faith that our nation's founders sought to protect.

Finally, while I hold deep respect for the Jewish people and the State of Israel, I maintain that the government must remain strictly neutral among all religious groups and entities, favoring none and extending no special privilege to any particular faith.

I urge rejection of these recommendations and renewed commitment to the separation that has preserved American religious liberty for generations.

Sincerely,

Jason B

From: Jane Littmann <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- RLC Report harms religious freedom - Jane Littmann, Columbia, SC

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:58:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

I oppose the Religious Liberty Commission's report for more reasons than time allows me to enumerate.

Rather than protect the rights and religious freedom of all of us, as our country's founders intended, this commission advocates allowing individuals to use their public positions to proselytize, influence, and coerce others, while claiming that they are being victimized if not allowed to do so. That violates the rights of others, particularly minorities, to feel safe and secure in the practice of their religion, or choice not to practice any religion.

It seems ironic for the Commission to advocate that parents should be contacted if a child is taught anything that might violate that child's religious views, as if a teacher should know each child's religious views, but the Commission favors allowing people in positions of authority to use their positions to trumpet a favored personal message. Our country's founders had the wisdom to structure a society that avoided the coercive forces that dominant religious groups historically exercise over everyone else.

Please reject this highly biased report that seeks to favor a particular religious group over all others.

Thank you.

From: Howard Munson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 23:59:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

There has always been separation of church and state in the United States

The principle protects all of us from a state controlled religion and protects and allows everyone to practice their religion in peace and security. Please respect our freedom the way our founding fathers intended.

From: Kay Masters <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State, Kay Masters

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:01:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I would like to comment on the recent draft report from this commission recommending a bridge rather than a wall between church and state.

It would be well to remember in times past when the states became subject to church influences; the result was corruption in both states and the church. The ones that suffered were the people being subject to overreach by both entities. In the dark ages, millions died under such circumstances.

A recent example is the country of Iran. We see a country where the political bodies are ruled by the church and the result is they shoot their own by the thousands.

In 1888, the Blair Amendment was introduced to impose a Sunday keeping law upon all citizens. This was defeated for obvious reasons. One religion cannot be favored over others in this free country that protects all faiths.

While every thinking loyal citizen of the USA would like to see a moral improvement in this country, it would best be served, by the churches strengthening the families. In addition, let's get the immorality out of the public schools. But every family must remain free of political influence in their respective churches.

To allow government funding to corrupt the churches or the churches to be unduly influenced by lobbyists for their vote would be a corruption not only of government but of the free expression of individual faith.

Please don't open the door or break down the wall. Let each stand separately and free.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

Kay Masters
Tiller, Oregon

From: Keith Wellman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:02:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Even Though "separation" of church and state may not be written into the constitution, America was founded on separation. Our founding fathers came to America seeking freedom of religion- to worship as they saw fit and not as dictated by ruler or government. Anytime the church takes over the government - there will be persecution or rules to support the majority. Remember the dark ages in Europe when the Catholic Church felt they must control the world? Even kings were subject to their control and death was their answer if you did not submit to their rules. The Bible should be our rule, not the church or the government. But when the church controls the government, nothing good will come out of it except for those in control forcing worship.

Forced worship is not worship. It is just that forced. It does not change hearts-it is of the Devil. Please honor my freedom to choose how and when I will worship. Revelation speaks of Babylon making all nations drink of the wine of Babylon. This is false religion. God is not a God who forces us to worship Him, but allows us to choose even if we choose the wrong god.

--

Sincerely,

Keith Wellman

Dayton, TN

From: Celeste Mercy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to recent report given to the president

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:06:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the recommendation that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment be reinterpreted to diminish the historic separation of church and state. Such a recommendation is inconsistent with the text of the Constitution, the intent of its principal architects, and the biblical principle that matters of conscience belong to God rather than civil government.

The First Amendment declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These two protections were designed to work together. The Establishment Clause prevents government from exercising authority over religion, while the Free Exercise Clause protects every citizen's right to worship—or not worship—according to conscience. Together, they have made the United States one of the greatest examples of religious liberty in human history.

Thomas Jefferson famously described this constitutional principle as "a wall of separation between Church & State." Contrary to modern claims that this phrase has no constitutional significance, Jefferson was not inventing a new doctrine. He was describing a principle already embedded within the First Amendment: that government possesses no rightful authority to establish, direct, or compel religious observance.

No Founder articulated this principle more clearly than James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution." In his 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, Madison declared that "Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." Religion, he argued, must remain beyond the jurisdiction of civil government because the duty owed to God precedes the authority of the state itself.

Decades later, Madison reaffirmed this conviction, writing in 1822, "Religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together." This was not hostility toward religion. It was the recognition that both faith and government are corrupted when either assumes the authority of the other.

Benjamin Franklin expressed the same principle in remarkably practical terms: "When a Religion is good... it will support itself... and when its Professors are oblig'd to call for the help of the Civil Power... 'tis a Sign... of its being a bad one." True religion persuades by truth and love, not by legislation or coercion.

These principles are not merely constitutional—they are biblical.

When questioned about civil authority, Jesus Christ declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." In those few words, Christ established a distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience. Government possesses legitimate authority over civil order and the protection of equal rights, but worship, doctrine, and the relationship between an individual and God remain beyond its lawful reach.

History repeatedly confirms the wisdom of this distinction. Whenever church and state have been joined, both have suffered. Religious institutions have too often sought the power of the sword, while governments have attempted to regulate the conscience. The result has not been greater faith, but persecution, division, and the suppression of religious liberty.

Americans understood this lesson well. Many of the earliest settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled governments that enforced religious conformity. The Founders sought to break from that centuries-old pattern by denying the federal government any authority over religion. Article VI prohibits religious tests for public office, and the First Amendment forbids laws respecting an establishment of religion. These provisions were not accidental. They were deliberate safeguards designed to preserve liberty of conscience for every citizen.

The dangers of abandoning these principles are not merely theoretical. During the late nineteenth century, proposals such as the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill sought to use civil law to enforce what many considered a religious duty. At that same time, members of my own faith were imprisoned in Tennessee and sentenced to chain gangs simply for working on Sunday while observing the seventh-day Sabbath according to their convictions. Their experience serves as a reminder that sincere religious majorities, when empowered by civil authority, can unintentionally deny the very liberty they seek to preserve.

This is why contemporary calls to weaken the separation of church and state are deeply concerning. A government that possesses the authority to favor one religious tradition necessarily possesses the authority to disfavor another. The same power that today may benefit one denomination could tomorrow be turned against it. Religious liberty cannot be secure if it depends upon which faith happens to hold political influence at a given moment.

The genius of the American experiment is that it protects the conscience of every person equally. Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and every other citizen enjoys the same protection because government is forbidden from deciding questions of religious truth. That neutrality has not weakened religion in America—it has allowed it to flourish through conviction rather than compulsion.

Government is at its best when it protects the free exercise of religion, not when it defines, directs, or advances it. Likewise, religion is at its strongest when it relies upon persuasion rather than political power. The preservation of both depends upon maintaining the distinction the Founders carefully established.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any interpretation of the Constitution that diminishes the historic separation of church and state. The preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the proper boundaries between civil authority and matters of conscience. That principle is faithful to the Constitution, consistent with the teachings of Scripture, affirmed by the architects of our Republic, and essential to preserving liberty for future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

Celeste Mercy
Henderson, NV

When we are having a hard time, let us consider how much our salvation cost the God of the universe. E.t.G.
White

J.B. Phillips said, “If God were small enough for me to figure out, He wouldn’t be big enough for me to worship.”

‘Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You
Jeremiah 32:17

Sent from my iPad

From: Christian Nelson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My Response to the S.O.C.S Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:07:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello and g'day to you members of the Religious Liberty Commission (RLC).

My name is Christian Nelson and I would like to share with you my voice and concern over the issue and statement of "Separation of Church and State."

As a lover and student of history, I would like to mention some key circumstances in history that brought America to adopt the very core principle of separation of church and state in its development and establishment as a independent sovereign nation.

1. To begin, we have the history of the dark age on the European continent, where the dominant religious system for over 1000 years, used the civil authorities of the European empires, to suppress, torture, kill and force all those who did not practice their form of worship or uphold their particular doctrine of faith.

The inquisition was a bloody and violent, and completely un-Christian, movement that the civil governments used to enforce their religion, which was the universal Catholic faith.

The Reformation happened because of that abuse by those civil/religious unions.

2. The Church of England ended up following the same footsteps of history of violent abusive enforcement of its faith and doctrine on those who differed in their worship and doctrine of faith that they held from their own personal Bible based convictions of faith, and so killed and murdered thousands of lives based on that civil endorsement. Which led to the Puritan Pilgrims who sailed west to the new country where they would have the opportunity to worship and believe according to the dictates of their conscience.

3. As the Puritans and Colonists began developing these new independent states, they too began to use the civil authority to enforce their own ideas of worship and faith upon those who differed from them, or from those who did not worship as they did, or those who "appeared" to not worship at all; and would burn women and kill and torture many in order to enforce their creed.

Then Roger Williams, who fled his home country of England due to the violent enforcement of that civil/religious union, came to this "land of freedom", began teaching and preaching and declaring that all men and women have the free right to worship and believe according to the dictates of their own personal conviction, soon found himself being persecuted and fleeing for his life as he did when he was in England. If it wasn't for the native Indians who sheltered and protected him, he would've been killed and murdered for teaching against the use of using a civil power to maintain and enforce a one doctrine or belief of a one religious system.

It was his working and maintaining and history of that freedom of worship in that wonderful state of Rhode Island, that so influenced the early founding fathers of the United States to keep God and religion out of the constitution, and to establish the first amendment to state such that "**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof**

"A bill to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship..."

At the time in nearly all of the states, anyone found working on Sunday, the first day of the week, and even going so far in some places, were not worshipping God on Sunday, were thrown in jail and fined; she if they

were unable to pay those fines, their property was confiscated by local authorities in order to pay for those fines.

Through the voice of "religious liberty", that Bill failed to pass in 1888.

To conclude, my dear respected members of the RLC, history is very dark when religion (not just Christianity; but all religions; Islam, Hindu, Buddhist, and even "Pagan") has used civil authority to maintain and enforce its own version of worship and belief.

I urge you to reconsider the conclusion of your draft, that, although the term "Separation of Church and State" (SOCS) does not exist in the early governmental documents, the foundational principle of that separation is very much there in the language "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof".

Government is meant for law and order, not for the establishing of religion, or for the establishing and identifying of religious practices as respected moreso than others.

Thank you, and may God bless you and give you wisdom as you consider this very important draft.

Blessed regards,

Your fellow citizen and servantt,

Christian Nelson

Christian Nelson

PII

From: Jennifer Keaton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:08:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly disagree with joining Church and state. I believe history has shown what happens when we go there..
May God be the leader in spiritual matters...

From: Chuck Austin <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] public hearing - separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:12:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and its obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain. Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the ear croppings, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was

a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to take into account the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." [7]

James Madison wrote, "It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it." [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord's words that we "render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God's." [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that "The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State." [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, "In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments."

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

We remain, Yours truly,

Chuck Austin

- [1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>
- [2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].
- [3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>
- [4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>;
- [5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPIfx-UA>
- [6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>
- [7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.
- [8] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments
- [9] Matthew 22:21
- [10] James Madison, Letter to Robert Walsh, March 2, 1819.
- [11] John Adams, Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765. <https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>



From: Jack Odell<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTt- [chapter 14] – [Jack Odell].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:14:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

What a wonderful document. I agree with everything just as it is written.

From: gilbert nyandoto <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Objection to the commission recommendation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:19:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

I prefer that I have freedom of worship according to the dictates of my conscience without interference by the state or any organ of the government

GN

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED] PII

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Importance of Maintaining Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:19:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 11, 2026

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I understand that you are very busy people, and I appreciate the opportunity to voice my concern to this committee. Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this story; as an example of why I am concerned about the proposal to change or to reinterpret our Constitution:

Quoted from the book: The Great Controversy

“Eleven years after the planting of the first colony, Roger Williams came to the New World. Like the early Pilgrims he came to enjoy religious freedom; but, unlike them, he saw—what so few in his time had yet seen—that this freedom was the inalienable right of all, whatever might be their creed. He was an earnest seeker for truth, with Robinson holding it impossible that all the light from God’s word had yet been received. Williams “was the first person in modern Christendom to establish civil government on the doctrine of the liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law.”—Bancroft, pt. 1, ch. 15, par. 16.

“He declared it to be the duty of the magistrate to restrain crime, but never to control the conscience. The public or the magistrates may decide,” he said, “what is due from man to man; but when they attempt to prescribe a man’s duties to God, they are out of place, and there can be no safety; for it is clear that if the magistrate has the power, he may decree one set of opinions or beliefs today and another tomorrow; as has been done in England by different kings and queens, and by different popes and councils in the Roman Church; so that belief would become a heap of confusion.”—Martyn, vol. 5, p. 340. { GC 293.1 }

Attendance at the services of the established church was required under a penalty of fine or imprisonment. “Williams reprobated the law; the worst statute in the English code was that which did but enforce attendance upon the parish church. To compel men to unite with those of a different creed, he regarded as an open violation of their natural rights; to drag to public worship the irreligious and the unwilling, seemed only like requiring hypocrisy.... ‘No one should be bound to worship, or,’ he added, ‘to maintain a worship, against his own consent.’ ‘What!’ exclaimed his antagonists, amazed at his tenets, ‘is not the laborer worthy of his hire?’ ‘Yes,’ replied he, ‘from them that hire him.’”—Bancroft, pt. 1, ch. 15, par. 2. { GC 294.1 }

Roger Williams was respected and beloved as a faithful minister, a man of rare gifts, of unbending integrity and true benevolence; yet his steadfast denial of the right of civil magistrates to authority over the church, and his demand for religious liberty, could not be could not be tolerated. The application of this new doctrine, it was urged, would “subvert the fundamental state and government of the country.”—Ibid., pt. 1, ch. 15, par. 10.

He was sentenced to banishment from the colonies, and, finally, to avoid arrest, he was forced to flee, amid the cold and storms of winter, into the unbroken forest. { GC 294.2 }

“For fourteen weeks,” he says, “I was sorely tossed in a bitter season, not knowing what bread or bed did mean.” But “the ravens fed me in the wilderness,” and a hollow tree often served him for a shelter.—Martyn, vol. 5, pp. 349, 350. Thus he continued his painful flight through the snow and the trackless forest, until he found refuge with an Indian tribe whose confidence and affection he had won while endeavoring to teach them the truths of the gospel. { GC 294.3 }

Making his way at last, after months of change and wandering, to the shores of Narragansett Bay, he there laid the foundation of the first state of modern times that in the fullest sense recognized the right of religious freedom. The fundamental principle of Roger Williams’s colony was “that every man should have liberty to worship God according to the light of his own conscience.”—Ibid., vol. 5, p. 354.

His little state, Rhode Island, became the asylum of the oppressed, and it increased and prospered until its foundation principles—civil and religious liberty—became the cornerstones of the American Republic. { GC 295.1 }

In that grand old document which our forefathers set forth as their bill of rights—the Declaration of Independence—they declared: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And the Constitution guarantees, in the most explicit terms, the inviolability of conscience: “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.” “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” { GC 295.2 }

“The framers of the Constitution recognized the eternal principle that man’s relation with his God is above human legislation, and his rights of conscience inalienable. Reasoning was not necessary to establish this truth; we are conscious of it in our own bosoms. It is this consciousness which, in defiance of human laws, has sustained so many martyrs in tortures and flames. They felt that their duty to God was superior to human enactments, and that man could exercise no authority over their consciences. It is an inborn principle which nothing can eradicate.”—Congressional documents (U.S.A.), serial No. 200, document No. 271. { GC 295.3 }

An American citizen; that loves God and prays for our country and it’s Leaders.

From: Marline Harrison <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:20:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

"SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE"

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and it's obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain.

Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand ear cropping, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a

union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

I respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee consider the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

I am concerned that the Committee neglected to consider the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned about the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." [7]

James Madison wrote, “It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

Lastly, I object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord’s words that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that “The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people has been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State.” [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, “In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.”

I respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

Yours truly,

[THE UNDERSIGNED]

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

[3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>

[4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>;

[5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPIfx-UA>

[6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.

[8] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments

[9] Matthew 22:21

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[11] John Adams, Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765.

<https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>

From: Jady Stroupp <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State Issue

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:21:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I am writing to inform you of the importance of maintaining separation of church and state. It is important to note that religious liberty and allowing freedom to choose whom citizens worship. Removing this separation would, in turn, remove this freedom. Please reconsider these decisions and please allow us the freedom to engage in religious activities as we believe is best.

Thank you for your time!

Jady

From: Cedric Bergherm <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on RLC Report Draft

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:25:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chari Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission, I would like to comment on the Draft Report released by the RLC, and to disagree with the recommendation that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment be reinterpreted to diminish the historic separation of church and state. This recommendation is inconsistent with how the relationship between Church and State has been treated throughout the United States' history, and it moves towards a future not unlike the dark past.

The struggle between church and state powers goes back to Rome under Constantine's rule. Under he, Licinius, and Theodosius, Christianity became legal, the promoted religion, and later the official state religion.

Throughout Roman Catholic history, we have seen powers go between kingdoms and the Church, and all throughout there were severe and murderous acts. Any group deemed "heathen" (e.g., the Waldenses) were burned, tortured, or executed by the Church for their beliefs. Any time the Church was knocked down, such as by the King of France or the Reformation, the Catholic Church used its state power to do even worse things. The Crusades, the inquisitions, and the Thirty Years War. Each of these are a result of the Church's thirst for power and cruelty.

Protestants are not innocent either. Martin Luther slaughtered thousands of peasants through his state power, and Zwingli and Calvin tried making Geneva into a perfect society, drowning anyone who was "damned." The Thirty Years War is the Protestants' fault just as much as it is the Catholics'. Under these powers were the Anabaptists, who had a different theology and were severely persecuted by the two. These Anabaptists, while trying to survive, recognized the Bible's true message about civil and religious powers. Jesus said that each man should render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (Matt. 22:21). The State has control over man's civil duty to one another, while God only has power over man's moral responsibility. The Papacy has claimed in times past that the Church has the keys to heaven and hell, and this grave mistake in theology is a product of church and state powers combining.

After the constant shift between Protestant and Catholic monarchs in England, several Puritans came to the New World seeking religious freedoms. Now, they sought religious freedom primarily for themselves, but as Methodists and Baptists came to the New World, the growing opinion was freedom of religion and liberty of conscience for all, totally separate from a secular government. Isaac Backus was a Baptist minister who heavily influenced this opinion throughout the American colonies. He wanted a Christian America, but that required genuine faith through personal conviction and not by coercion. Thomas Jefferson echoes this exact sentiment, and James Madison and Benjamin Franklin had similar takes.

When history arrives to 1776, we find a group of colonies who know the history of religious struggles and the strife brought by state and church powers combined, exemplified by the Thirty Years War. Protestants and Catholics in America want their own state religion, but see that religious liberty is the only way for peace. Deists (such as the founding fathers), preferred a secular government providing liberty of conscience for practical reasons. And certain protestants such as Baptists and Methodists seek freedom of religion for their own expressive liberty. Thus we find in the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment of the United States of America, that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the exercise thereof..." Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin interpret this as a clear wall between state and religion. In the establishment of the United States of America, this great experiment pioneered the very idea of freedom of religion and liberty of conscience, bringing the foreign idea to the world stage for the very first time.

Throughout American history, there has still been the struggle between the church's powers over the state and vice versa. Religious practices in schools, expression in the public square, bills based on religious principles. There are many examples of this evolution, though one example is the Blair Sunday Rest Bill in 1888, which proposed to prohibit most work and commercial activity on Sundays on a federal level. This never became law, but many states enforced Blue Laws with the same idea. Even now, mail deliveries take Sundays off and many counties prohibit the selling of alcohol on Sundays. My own denomination suffered under Blue Laws, as we

observe the Seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) and many of us were arrested and put into chain gangs (such as in Tennessee). These are the very things that make me cautious and apprehensive toward any fusion between church and state, especially in the United States.

I will close by saying that I voted for Donald Trump and do not fully regret that. I do see that society has been poisoned and destroyed by atheistic thought, such as the sexual revolution, communism, and LGBT insanity. I do believe that the media is heavily corrupt and anti-christian and anti-conservative. However, given the history of state and religion, I cannot endorse any movement toward minimizing the separation between church and state.

My final recommendation is for the RLC to recognize the importance of a secular government to treat all religions (Christian, Atheist, Muslim, Jew, etc.) equally and without promotion, and to stay consistent with the ideals pushed for by the founding fathers who wrote the Constitution.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Cedric Bergherm

From: tucat<[REDACTED] PII>

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:25:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Room 5706

Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was concerned to learn that the Commission intends to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With all due respect, this approach is fundamentally misguided— and as someone of faith, I find this notion troubling.

That wall was not constructed by secularists to suppress religion; rather, it was established by believers to ensure the church's independence. A bridge does not fortify the church; it paves the way for government funding and political influence to infiltrate, leading to a scenario where churches compete for grants and answer to politicians instead of God. History clearly illustrates the consequences when church and state collaborate, and the outcomes are rarely beneficial for either side.

Please refrain from building that bridge. Preserve the wall, as it safeguards the church far more than it restricts it.

Sincerely,

Irma Acevedo

From: Sherri Klein <[REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: True Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:29:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

PII

Religious Liberty Commission
US Dept of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington, DC 20530-0001

Bilal A Essayli, First Asst US Attorney
Central District of California

PII

July 11, 2026

Hello Religious Liberty Commission,

Please consider my objection to President Trump's latest attack on the separation of church and state that our framers felt was so important to allow religious freedom in the United States where many immigrants came to escape religious persecution.

I see this veiled attempt in his recent statement of bringing back religion in our country quickly and strongly as he has stated. The question begs, whose religion is he now choosing for Americans, the religion that they must observe? Pray tell, what religion is this promoted by a president who not only doesn't know how to quote the Bible, nor apparently does he even read it?

Feeling as strongly as I do, I will also tell everyone I know to do the same and object to the president hiding of his agendas to gain votes from a public with disdain for him.

Bottom line: The Johnson Amendment must remain and Trump must not be able to repeal it for votes, because it will undermine our entire voting process to allow funding from churches and other nonprofits to political campaigns without identifying the donors, and a way to verify those contributions.

Sincerely,

Sherri C Bartosiewski Klein BSN, PHN, RN

Cc: Bilal A Essayli, First Asst US Attorney

From: John Harrison <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: PUBLIC COMMENT: PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:29:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

"SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE"

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and it's obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

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Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand ear cropping, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a

union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee consider the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to consider the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned about the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." [7]

James Madison wrote, “It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord’s words that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that “The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people has been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State.” [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, “In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.”

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

Yours truly,

[THE UNDERSIGNED]

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

[3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>

[4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>;

[5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPIfx-UA>

[6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.

[8] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments

[9] Matthew 22:21

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[11] John Adams, Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765.

<https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>

From: Nicole Heidelberg <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - HEALTHCARE/CONSCIENCE – Nicole Heidelberg

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:30:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 11th, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission

Office of the Associate Attorney General

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 5706

Washington, DC 20530

Email: [REDACTED] PII

RE: Public Comment on Draft Report — Unaddressed Gap in Healthcare Religious Liberty: Patient Rights Over Biological Samples and Genetic Material

Dear Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a person of faith and a deeply concerned American citizen to submit this public comment on the Commission's draft report. I want to begin by genuinely commending this administration and the Commission for its commitment to protecting religious freedom as a foundational American right. The work you are doing matters, and I am grateful that a formal body now exists to examine threats to religious liberty across the many areas of American life. It is in that same spirit of genuine collaboration that I urge the Commission to address a critical and overlooked gap in its healthcare recommendations — one that, if left unaddressed, represents a **significant and ongoing violation of the religious freedom of millions of Americans.**

The Issue: Biological Sovereignty and the Unconsented Use of Human Samples

Under current U.S. law and healthcare practice, biological material collected during a medical visit — including blood, tissue, and other samples — may be anonymized and used for research, commercial, or other secondary purposes without the patient's explicit consent or even their knowledge. This is a widely accepted but deeply troubling practice. The justification offered is that anonymization removes personal identification. However, anonymization does not remove what makes this material spiritually and morally significant: a person's unique, God-given DNA. Every cell of the human body carries the complete genetic imprint with which an individual was created. No process of anonymization changes what that material is (even in fragmented and broken down states) or where it came from. For people of faith who believe the human body is sacred — created by God, set apart, and not to be used as a resource, especially without the individual's knowledge, consent or agreement — this practice constitutes a serious violation of religious conscience, practice, and freedom's. Many faith traditions hold that the body and everything that comes from it belongs first to God and then to the individual bearing it. The idea that a person's biological material can be obtained, repurposed, and used for ends they were never explicitly informed about and never (in full knowledge and awareness) agreed to, runs directly against this deeply held belief. Importantly, this is not a fringe concern: it is grounded in the same theological principles — human dignity, the sanctity of the body, and the God-given rights of the individual — that form the very foundation of the religious liberty movement this Commission was created to advance.

A Potential Gap in the Commission's Work

The Commission's healthcare hearings have done important work in protecting the religious freedom of healthcare providers — those who object to performing certain procedures that conflict with their faith. This is right and necessary. However, the draft report does not appear to extend that same conscience protection to patients on the receiving end of the healthcare system. A nurse or doctor may invoke religious conscience to decline a procedure; a patient currently has no comparable recognized right to invoke religious conscience over what happens to their biological material after a visit. This asymmetry is not consistent with a comprehensive vision of religious liberty. If we protect the religious freedom of those who deliver care, we must equally protect the religious freedom of those who receive it. I respectfully submit that the Commission's final report should specifically address and recommend the following: that individuals be granted a meaningful, accessible right to opt out of the secondary use of their biological material — including anonymized samples — on the basis of religious belief or conscience. This opt-out right should be clearly communicated at the point of care, simple to exercise, and protected from institutional retaliation or denial of service. It should apply to research use, commercial use, and any other secondary purpose beyond the direct treatment of the individual. An administration that champions religious liberty and bodily conscience rights in so many other areas of healthcare cannot, in good conscience, leave this door closed. If, as the Commission expressly stated, a primary goal of the Commission's work is to ensure the state/government no longer dismisses or allows the overriding of the convictions of people of faith, then government-funded institutions potentially benefiting from fully or partially unconsented use of what many people of faith, including myself, deem sacred biological material, is exactly the kind of gap that principle should correct.

A Call for Consistency

The administration has rightly described religious freedom as a God-given right, not a government-granted one. If that principle is true — and I believe it is — then it should apply to every dimension of a person's God given and ordained relationship to their own body and the sacred and sovereign material that comes from it. The current framework, which allows biological material to be taken and used without complete and expressed consent under the practice of anonymization, treats the body as a resource rather than something God given, sovereign, and sacred. Closing this gap would be entirely consistent with everything this Commission stands for, and it would demonstrate that this administration's commitment to religious freedom extends to all Americans, and in all circumstances.

I am grateful for the opportunity to submit this comment during the public comment window, and I respectfully request the Commission to include this issue in its final recommendations. Thank you for your courage in doing God's work and your commitment to doing what is honest and good.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Heidelberg
Indiana

From: Irina Gonzalez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response from Concerned Citizen - Johnson Amendment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:30:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and its obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state.[2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis.[3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain. Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews,

and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the ear croppings, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to take into account the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the “proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state” if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, & thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.’ [7]

James Madison wrote, “It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord’s words that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that “The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from

the State. [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, "In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

Sincerely,

Milo and Irina Gonzalez

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

[3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>

[4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>;

[5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPIfx-UA>

[6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.

[8] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments

[9] Matthew 22:21

[10] James Madison, Letter to Robert Walsh, March 2, 1819.

[11] John Adams, Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765.

<https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>

From: "Susan-Joanne [Frisbie]" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Susan Frisbie

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:34:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

The Johnson Amendment should not be repealed. It should be strengthened. The repeal would politicize America's churches, which we DO NOT WANT!

Also, the expansion of funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities will ultimately result in the government controlling religious entities because they will lose their religious focus and follow the money. This destroys them, which we DO NOT WANT!

Both of these issues need the separation of church and state to remain intact. Regardless of what you have to say, our forefathers designed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America and the Bill of Rights in such a way as to create the separation of church and state. It is a bedrock foundational principle of this country.

I am a retired person, old enough to be able to say that I was taught the importance of the separation of church and state when I was in junior high school. Please do not destroy this foundational principle.

Sincerely,

Susan Frisbie
Grass Valley, California

From: sanddevee <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] URGENT APPEAL RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:34:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: The Department of Justice

I am among others of like mind who value the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. And concerned about preserving genuine religious liberty and protecting freedom of conscience for all people. The pilgrims fled Europe where the king was the head of both the state and the Church of England, to escape persecution for their religious freedom. I believe this was the reason God blessed America above all other countries for its civil and religious freedoms and if disregarded may lead our nation to ruin.

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists. What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship... I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, believed in the separation of church and state. He stated, "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history."

James Madison wrote, "It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics... The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it."

In the Boston Gazette, John Adams, second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. And it was Madison who stated that, "In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments."

In my humble opinion, James Madison, the principal author of the Establishment Clause, has great authority on this subject.

Looking throughout history, certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the crop-eating, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. He was not whipped by atheists but by Puritan who did not believe in the separation of church and state

William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue.

Lastly, objection is given to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I am mindful of, Our Lord's words that we "render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The union of church and state results in the corruption of that.

Therefore, I respectfully request, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history.

Sincerely yours,
Sandra Valentine

From: Diane De Yager <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:35:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Earle D Knowles <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:41:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings:

Because government has no right or authority in religious matters, it cannot tell me Who to worship, or when or how. And it must not allow any religion to influence the government's policies in a way that would diminish or restrict any other religion. It seems to me that the current draft report does not adequately guard against that.

Sincerely,

Earle D Knowles

From: Diane De Yager <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:46:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Right and Freedom
Diane De Yager

Dear Chairman Daniella Patrick and members of Religious Liberty Commission

I want to thank you for your work of protect and secure the religious rights and freedoms of all American citizens. I support the commission's efforts to identify threats to religious freedom and upholding the rights of citizens of faith. I don't want to have the fear of sharing my faith or be silenced.

Thank you so much for your work.

Sincerely,

Diane De Yager

[REDACTED] PII

From: Doug Polifron <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public coment separation of church and state from D Polifron

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:47:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask that you reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God, and that's bad for the church and country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Doug Polifron

Wayne, NJ

From: James & Lynn <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT on Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:51:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline>

Although there is no favoritism or preference of one religion over another at face value in this draft report, I do have some concerns of language being used that could be misinterpreted in the future.

Public funding and partnership

In Appendix B on page 203, there's a heading of "Support Fruitful Partnerships for the Common Good." There are a lot of Christian mega-churches that may have more of an influence with government partnerships. I have a concern that a disproportionate amount of government funding may go to a majority-faith (de facto) religion over smaller ones.

Religious Heritage Language

In Appendix B on page 203, there's another heading of "Promote Appreciation for the United States' Religious Heritage." Historically, America has been predominately Protestant, worshiping on Sunday. Will there be favoritism in the effort of "religious heritage" emphasizing Christianity over minority faiths such as Messianic or Judaism?

I appreciate that this report repeatedly emphasizes religious liberty for all Americans. However, I would encourage this Commission to use more neutrality among faith traditions more explicit. To avoid future misunderstandings or favoritism, it should be expressly stated that protections for religious days of worship are applied equally to Sunday worship, Saturday Sabbath observance, Friday evening prayers and other religious practices. There needs to be more explicit neutrality language such as, "Government shall not favor one religion over another." I think this kind of clarification would strengthen the report's stated commitment to equal treatment of all faiths.

Respectfully,
James E Craig IV
Colorado Springs, Colorado

From: Allen Ellyson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] URGENT MATTER FOR THE Esteemed members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 00:56:11 -0400

Importance: High

Date July 11, 2026

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment expressing total opposition to the recommendations put forward in the June 2026 draft report. Rather than protecting true religious freedom, this document outlines an alarming blueprint to systematically break down the constitutional wall between church and state, while simultaneously narrowing the religious liberties of everyday Americans.

True religious freedom requires the government to remain strictly neutral. By attempting to elevate a singular, preferred religious viewpoint to a position of federal backing, this report actively undermines the First Amendment.

I urge the Commission to completely reject the following recommendations before a final report is issued:

1. The Subversion of the Johnson Amendment The recommendation to eliminate or weaken the Johnson Amendment directly threatens the independence of both our political system and our houses of worship. Allowing tax-exempt religious institutions to funnel money into political campaigns and endorse candidates turns sacred spaces into partisan tools. This narrows religious liberty by forcing churchgoers into politically divided congregations and inappropriately subsidizes political speech through tax-exempt dollars.

2. The Diversion of Public Funds to Religious Education The report's push to expand federal voucher programs and direct public tax dollars to religious private schools is a direct violation of the Establishment Clause. Public funds must support public education, which serves all children equally. Forcing taxpayers to fund religious instruction—including schools whose doctrines they may fundamentally disagree with—is a severe infringement on individual freedom of conscience.

3. The Weaponization of "Conscience Protections" to Discriminate The report seeks to radically expand "Free Exercise" rights for corporations, government-funded agencies, and healthcare providers at the direct expense of individual citizens.

In Healthcare: Expanding medical refusal clauses allows providers to deny essential care to patients based on religious dogma, compromising patient safety and autonomy.

In Social Services: Allowing taxpayer-funded adoption and foster care agencies to reject qualified families based on sexual orientation or religion is state-sanctioned discrimination. In the Workplace: Broadening corporate religious rights allows private business owners to override federal labor protections, stripping employees of their reproductive healthcare benefits and civil rights.

4. The Exclusion of Minority Faiths and Non-Religious Americans Religious liberty must be absolute and equal for all people. The draft report focuses almost exclusively on protecting majority Christian institutions while largely ignoring the documented rise of discrimination against Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist Americans, as well as the rapidly growing secular population. By favoring one religious tradition, the report inherently narrows the freedom of all others.

Conclusion

The recommendations in this report do not defend liberty; they attempt to create a dangerous union between church and state that historical precedent proves will lead to oppression, division, and the erosion of minority rights. I demand that the Commission uphold the strict separation of church and state—the very framework that has allowed diverse religious expressions to thrive peacefully in America for over two centuries.

Sincerely,

Allen D. Ellyson a concerned citizen

God Bless you,
and God Bless America the best Country on earth

Allen D. Ellyson

PII

PII

From: "Karen Bowen" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:05:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Karen Jean Bowen

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." My American heritage and religious freedom make me consider this to be exactly backwards — and as a person of faith, I find the idea alarming.

That wall wasn't built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built by believers who knew what persecution was about. Their desire was to keep the church free by keeping it separate from the government . A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for government money and political favors to march right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of to God. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one. I also fear that the bridge idea will eventually impede on my personal freedom of conscience which, as an American, I consider one of my greatest treasures.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,
Karen Jean Bowen
Bloomfield, New Mexico

Karen Bowen

[REDACTED]
PII [REDACTED]
PII [REDACTED]

From: Cheryl Farr <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:11:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I fully support religious liberty for ALL Americans. I stand by separation of church and state. Thank you
Cheryl Farr

[REDACTED] PII

From: Paul Lindberg <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 8: Religious Liberty for Religious Leaders - Paul A. Lindberg

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:15:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I quote from page 121: "...many churches tend to self-censor..."

I am 78 and have been deeply involved in Christian churches (five different denominations) all my life.
I am also politically active. And a VietNam Vet.

I have found that saying "... many churches tend to self-censor..." is putting it mildly. Before the Trump administration, it has seemed like my government (at least ever since Bill Clinton) has hated me, simply for being a Christian, believing the Bible, and having decent moral standards such as God-ordained marriage and family.

MANY times (probably in the hundreds) I have attempted to urge my congregation to consider the moral issues and vote for Christian values, or to consider the Biblical Standards and vote for candidates who at least try to maintain such standards.

In nearly all cases, I have been ordered by the lead pastor to keep quiet. The thinking was that it is "illegal" for a church to get involved in politics and we might lose our tax exemption.

I fervently believe that is wrong! I believe it is one of the church's jobs to help America elect more-godly leaders. And that only with honest and morally upright leaders can America (and indeed Western Civilization) be saved from destruction.

Therefore I wholeheartedly support the Religious Liberty Commission report. I pray that it will translate into laws that:

- 1.) Allow free speech for churches
- 2.) Block all government entities from interfering with church activities (except for muslims and others who may pretend to be religious but actually want to overthrow our Constitutional Republic.)
- 3.) Stop all federal funding for institutions (such as schools and abortion clinics) which indoctrinate with or use anti-Christian principles.

Thank you for listening.
Paul A. Lindberg

[REDACTED] PII

From: Patty Reiner <[REDACTED] PII >
To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State
Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:17:22 -0400
Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice,

I am writing to formally express my vehement opposition to the policy changes proposed in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. The recommendations outlined represent a significant departure from the separation of church and state, a principle foundational to American democracy and religious freedom.

Specifically, I object to the following proposals:

- Dismantling the Separation of Church and State: Minimizing this constitutional boundary risks government overreach and threatens the rights of religious minorities and non-religious citizens.
- Repealing the Johnson Amendment: Allowing tax-exempt houses of worship to endorse political candidates risks politicizing religious institutions and compromising the electoral process.
- Taxpayer Funding for Faith-Based Programs: Disbursing public funds to religious institutions that may legally discriminate based on faith, gender, or sexual orientation is a violation of taxpayer conscience.
- Broadening Religious Exemptions: Expanding exemptions to allow individuals or government employees to opt out of public health mandates, civil rights laws, and standard educational curricula may compromise public safety and the common good.

True religious freedom requires that the government remain neutral, neither promoting nor penalizing any religion. By favoring specific religious viewpoints within federal policy, these recommendations may violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

I urge the Department of Justice and the Commission to reject this draft report and uphold the government's duty to protect a secular democracy where all citizens remain equal under the law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Patricia Reiner
Phoenix, Arizona

From: Andrea Taylor <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church & State - Andrea Taylor

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:21:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Andrea Taylor
Pasadena, CA

From: Carlette McKenzie <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] NO MERGER OF CHURCH & STATE—NOT NOW, NOT EVER

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:22:40 -0400

Importance: High

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I submit this public comment out of grave and urgent concern for the future of religious liberty in the United States. The Commission must categorically reject any recommendation, whether directed at the Department of Justice or any other branch of government—that weakens the constitutional separation between religion and government or promotes any form of institutional entanglement. Such proposals are not harmless as they strike at the very foundation of American freedom.

America's legacy of religious liberty was not built on government endorsement of religion. It was built on the unwavering protection of every individual's right to worship according to conscience, without state pressure or control. This principle is the reason diverse faith communities have thrived in peace rather than fractured under sectarian conflict.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I speak from the position of a religious minority whose forebears suffered when government empowered the religious majority. In colonial America, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and other minorities were fined, jailed, and persecuted because established churches wielded state authority. These abuses directly shaped the Founders' decision to reject religious establishments and enshrine the First Amendment. They understood the danger clearly and we ignore their warning at our peril.

The history of Seventh-day Adventists underscores this danger with brutal clarity. In the late nineteenth century, Adventists who honored the seventh-day Sabbath were prosecuted under Sunday laws imposed by the dominant Christian majority. Some were imprisoned or forced into chain gangs for nothing more than obeying conscience. Their suffering proves an undeniable truth: when civil authority enforces religious practice, freedom of conscience is not merely threatened, it is crushed. And religious minorities are the first to pay the price.

History offers even harsher lessons. The medieval Inquisition used state power to torture and kill dissenters. Extremist movements that justify violence in the name of Islam show how state-backed religious ideology can suffocate liberty. Communist regimes that enforced atheism reveal the opposite but equally destructive error: when government suppresses religion entirely, believers are again persecuted. These systems differed in ideology, but all shared one fatal flaw which was that civil power was allowed to rule over conscience.

The American constitutional system was deliberately designed to prevent such abuses.

Government's role is to maintain order, protect rights, and ensure equal treatment. NOT to dictate spiritual life. The church's mission is persuasion, never coercion. Both institutions remain strongest, and least corrupt, when each stays firmly within its proper sphere.

The United States is home to an extraordinary diversity of churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious communities precisely because government has refrained from controlling or establishing religion. This constitutional heritage protects everyone, majority and minority alike. The Commission must therefore reinforce, not erode, the barriers separating ecclesiastical authority from

civil power. Religious liberty survives only when government neither advances nor suppresses religion but protects the equal rights of all people to follow conscience.

America must remain a nation where every church is free to proclaim its beliefs without government intrusion and every citizen is free to worship, or not to worship, without government pressure.

History has already shown the catastrophic consequences of abandoning this principle. We cannot afford to repeat mistakes that generations have bled and suffered to correct. To do so would once again unleash intolerance, religious bigotry, and injustice on American soil. NO MERGER OF CHURCH & STATE—NOT NOW, NOT EVER!!!!!!

Respectfully submitted,

-Carlette S. McKenzie

Yeshua's 2nd Coming is drawing closer and closer. Live boldly, Live intentionally, Live fear-free, Live proudly proclaiming His truth.

From: Dane Ewingt<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Liberty to Worship God

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:23:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am praying that the division between church and state continue to allow us to worship God who is creating us a kingdom at this moment that is not made by humane hands and that will last throughout eternity. That the government does not forcefully dictate the heart of man who has been given free will to choose truth rather than error. God never wanted man to take his place in possessing us with His Holy Spirit to mold us into the image of Jesus Christ; God has the power to transform us from within. Please I pray you choose to allow us to serve our Heavenly Father through a genuine heart of love for Him; not forced to model fallen man and his dictates of what he thinks a godly nation is. As Jesus said give unto Caesar the things of Caesar's and give unto God the things that are God's—Heart, Mind, and Soul, because Jesus paid the ultimate price to redeem us from this fallen world and reward us with eternal life in His kingdom ruled with love.

From: Donald Hines <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:24:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree strongly with the poorly named "Religious Liberty Commission" when they attack the wall of separation between church and state.

The wall of separation between church and state is NOT there to harm the church, it is there to protect it. It is the wall of a fortress defending Christians from the violence and coercion that inevitably results whenever there is that deadly and sacrilegious combination of the secular with the sacred. We should be like the Israelites of Nehemiah's time who worked on building up their wall with one hand, while holding a weapon to defend that same wall in the other. It's OUR wall, and yet, the very ones that it is protecting, have become the saboteurs who are tearing it down. Not even saboteurs, because saboteurs try to hide what they are doing, but today Christians proclaim loudly and proudly about their efforts to bring down the wall of separation between church and state.

The wall is weakening. In a large part due to the efforts of we Christians ourselves. And if it doesn't stop, eventually that wall will fall. It is our DUTY as Christians to preserve Religious Liberty. It is our Duty to build that wall and defend it against all attackers, especially ourselves.

That means we must often stand up for the rights of those we disagree with. It means we must even fight for the rights of those who call themselves our enemies.

Because if the wall does not protect EVERYONE'S liberty of conscience, it doesn't protect ANYONE'S.

The Wall of Separation between church and state is a GOOD wall. It is OUR wall. We need to maintain it.

Donald Hines

From: Margaret Mounce <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:26:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with freedom of state ! Keep the government out of the church!

Sincerely,

Margaret Mounce

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:31:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: smil.xml; text000001.txt

I wholeheartedly support the biblical principle of religious liberty and the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. Every person has been created by God with the freedom to choose whether or not to worship Him. Genuine faith cannot be compelled by law, government, or social pressure; it must be the voluntary response of a willing heart.

The separation of church and state does not mean separating God from society or excluding faith from public life. Rather, it means that the state should not control the church, and the church should not use the power of the state to compel religious belief or practice. Throughout history, whenever civil authority has enforced religious doctrine, both religious liberty and authentic faith have suffered.

I affirm the right of every individual to worship according to the dictates of conscience, to change their religious beliefs, or to hold no religious belief at all, without fear of coercion, discrimination, or persecution. These freedoms should be extended equally to people of every faith and to those of no faith.

As a Christian, I believe the gospel advances through the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth of God's Word, and the loving witness of Christ's followers—not through civil legislation or governmental force. Religious liberty is not merely a constitutional ideal; it is a biblical principle that reflects God's respect for human freedom. Therefore, I will continue to support and defend the religious liberty of all people while faithfully sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with love, conviction, and respect.

From: Pamlyn Grove/Preserving Life Ministries <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Religious Liberty Commission Proposal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:39:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and its obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

•The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain.

Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the ear croppings, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to take into account the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." [7]

James Madison wrote, "It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it." [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord's words that we "render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God's." [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

For example, the **Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom** (drafted 1777, enacted 1786) with its warning against "the impious presumption of legislators and rulers .e . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible"

Madison stated that "The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State." [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, "In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments."

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

We remain, Yours truly,

Robert and Pamlyn Grove

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

[3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>

[4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>;

[5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPlfx-UA>

[6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.

[8] James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments*

[9] Matthew 22:24

[10] James Madison, *Letter to Robert Walsh*, March 2, 1819.

[14] John Adams, *Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, 1765.

<https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA04dg2>

From: Jim Haynes <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Jim Haynes <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:42:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Fellow Americans,

The Constitution does not explicitly contain the exact phrase "liberty and justice for all," which comes from the Pledge of Allegiance. However, the concept is the foundational pillar of the document. The Preamble to the Constitution establishes the goal to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

The Fourteenth Amendment prohibits states from depriving "any person of life, LIBERTY, or property, without due process of law" and guarantees "the equal protection of the laws."

The first ten amendments of the The Bill of Rights restrict the government and explicitly secure liberty, such as freedom of speech, RELIGION, and assembly.

If America was to deprive or otherwise destroy Religious Liberty, the freedom to choose our religion individually, then we will never "bring back America." This is why I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments.

Respectfully,

James Haynes

From: john martin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission protesting a bridge

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:45:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding recent discussions about removing or replacing the wall of separation between church and state. From what I have read, it appears that there is an intention to foster a closer connection between government and churches. With all due respect, I believe this approach is contrary to the principles that have made our nation free and great.

A personal faith in God, or the choice to have no faith at all, must remain free from interference by any government agency. The idea of returning to a time when the government controls or influences religious institutions is troubling and could lead us back to the "dark ages." Such a shift would be disastrous for our liberty and our nation's foundation.

Our country was built upon the principle of freedom of religion — the right to worship or not worship according to one's conscience. This freedom has been central to our identity and strength. The wall of separation between church and state is vital to preserving that freedom. Churches must be free from government control and intervention; when that freedom is compromised, all other liberties are at risk.

History clearly demonstrates what happens when political entities become involved in religious institutions. When churches receive government funding or favors, there is a tendency for political agendas to influence their teachings and actions. Moreover, such entanglements often lead to the erosion of individual rights, as churches exercise political power and influence over personal freedoms.

For the sake of my children and grandchildren, I respectfully urge you to maintain a clear and firm separation between government and religion. Our freedoms have been purchased with the blood of countless men and women, ensuring that future generations can practice their beliefs free from coercion or undue influence by government.

As a Bible-believing Christian, I am not alone in this concern. I respectfully ask that the direction of this commission be reconsidered, and that the fundamental principle of a wall of separation between church and state be upheld.

Sincerely,

John Martin

From: Mary Kelley <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-PillarOfFreedom.org-MaryKelley

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:49:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am asking you to fully enforce the Johnson Amendment.
I object to funding religious non- profit activities.
I also object to religious Education and Clubs on public campuses.

My father served his entire career as an officer in the US Marine Corps-fighting in 2 wars in order to keep this country FREE from tyranny caused (historically) by forming state religions!

For 250 years, this country has proved that keeping a separation between church and state protects our freedom to practice our religion as we see fit to worship our God!

Our nation is a free nation as long as it is allowed to worship God freely and without government involvement. God, Himself, raised this country up in order to maintain our inalienable right of FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE!

Therefore, separation of church and state is NOT un-American nor is it unconstitutional! This ideology of NO separation of church and state is UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND un-American!

John Paul Jones said it very well "Don't Tread on Me"! You may not take our freedoms away-now or in the future!!!

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: [REDACTED PII]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Response

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 01:53:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with your report concerning the Separation between Church and State. First, it stealthily and surreptitiously presents the mandate that a response be submitted by Monday, July 13, or my public voice concerning this matter, will not be recorded. Most people have no idea that they can reply. Historically, it was Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, and not Thomas Jefferson who first founded the idea of a "Wall of Separation between Church and State." The report seems to depict Thomas Jefferson as somewhat of an atheist.

If there is a mix of Church and State, then the government would have a hold on the church because the church would have accepted their money. The government could then say because you refused to endorse a particular program or idea, then we will not fund certain policies, ideas, or programs in the future. This is akin to what happens in educational accreditation. Also, we need to keep the Johnson Amendment out of the Church because this will lead to a place where the Church does not want to go in that the church would be forced to endorse certain political candidates.

I love God because it is my choose, I have control over my desire to love. However, if government controlled, then I am mandated to love which is not really love at all if it is forced upon me. This also distorts the character of God. God is love and He does not force His disciples to love him. We run the occurrence of returning to the dark ages if there is no separation of Church and State.

From: Phillip Cooke <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:11:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and its obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

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Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain.

Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the ear croppings, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of

translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

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Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

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The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." [7]

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Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord's words that we "render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God's." [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that "The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State." [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, "In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments."

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

From: Nadia Perry <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:12:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

From: C C <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- The Conscience of the State– Curry Coleman

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:14:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Commission's findings in the report are extremely erroneous, and do not reflect an accurate assessment of the history of the interactions between government and religion in the history of the United States.

First, the report says that "The Declaration of Independence cites God as the source of unalienable rights and equality." The report is clearly trying to make it sound the Declaration is clearly referring to the Christian God and no other. This is extremely misleading, as the language chosen by the founders intentionally avoided doing that. The references in the Declaration refer to "Nature's God" and a "Creator", but are clearly going out of their way to not refer to God in the same manner Christians today do. Indeed, there is much scholarly debate over what exactly the religious beliefs of the primary author of the Declaration, Thomas Jefferson, held. For the report to hide the nuance of the references to God in the Declaration smacks of ill intent or poor judgement.

Second, the report pulls quotes without including relevant context. For example, the report references a quote from John Adams in which he says "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." While this is an accurate quote, it leaves out valuable context on Adam's complex views on the role of religion in American politics. For example, he also signed a treaty that unequivocally declared that "The government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion." This clearly shows that Adams's views on the relationship between religion and government were not as cut and dry as the report implies.

Third, the report misrepresents the nature of the relationship between religion and government in the United States. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped the actions and thoughts of individual founders, the founders as a whole largely sought to insulate government from the influence of any one religion or denomination. For example, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI of the Constitution and refused to assign any religious duties to the government. When the opportunity to amend the Constitution came, one of the first amendments proposed was to, in the words of Thomas Jefferson (whose work inspired the amendment), "build a wall of separation between church and state." The Constitution established a secular government that protects religion by keeping it independent of federal control. At the same time, it created an institution of government where political office would not depend on a person's religious beliefs or what denomination they followed. This interpretation of the views of the Founders is backed up by many of their own writings. George Washington put it very succinctly when he stated in a letter to the Jewish congregation of Newport, Rhode Island that "the Government of the United States ... gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." James Madison wrote that it would be an "arrogant pretension" for the government to act as a competent judge of religious truth or to employ religion "as an engine of Civil policy".

The report blatantly ignores decades of scholarship and instead uses its own fundamentally flawed misinterpretation of American history as justification for its attempts to establish religious favoritism by backing efforts by states to pass laws requiring public displays of religious tenets like the Ten Commandments. Such laws are clear and unequivocal violations of the promise of religious freedom offered by the First Amendment. To insert religion back into government in this manner is to erode the protections for religion from government interference that the Founders clearly intended.

From: t kremice<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concern on commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:15:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a sincere and active Christian citizen and believe the country is in need of a revival and reformation. However, history has shown that the use of political power by any religious organization always leads to oppression and often persecution of those not in line with the interests of the religious power in place. The Bible is clear on how much God values our choice and he never forces anyone, he allowed the choice to sin, costing the life of his Son rather than force his creation to serve and obey.

While I want to see Christianity have the same opportunity as atheism and native beliefs have in our schools and institutions, I very strongly disagree with the notion of the government funding any religious organization or building bridges to religious organizations. In fact I believe church and state should be very deliberately separated, which is indeed a founding principle in the constitution despite that some are suggesting otherwise.

I strongly urge the commission to recommend maintaining restrictions for government involvement in religion and the reverse. Legislating religion does not make for a freer or better country, rather just the opposite.

Thank you for your consideration.

T. Kremic
Ohio

From: Nadia Perry <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:16:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

From: Nadia Perry <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:19:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

From: David Peters <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - David Peters

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:24:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of Religious Liberty Commission:

As a person of faith I'm concerned that the Commission is recommending replacing the the "wall" with a "bridge" between church and state. This will destroy the protection provided in the 1st Amendment. It was written by the founders to keep the church Free from state control which they had previously experienced and from which they had fled.

A "bridge" opens the door for political favoritism and for government money. Which causes churches to compete for Grants and begin answering to politicians rather than to God. The result is not good for church or state as history shows.

Please keep the separation as provided by the 1st Amendment. Our own American experience has shown the wisdom of our founders who provided us with this protection.

As a citizen and person of faith I oppose these Commission recommendations.

Sincerely,

David Peters

Falling Waters, WV

From: Lucas Marrero <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission: Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 02:35:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

I strongly believe as our founding fathers did, in the separation of church and state! That all should have inalienable rights and liberty of our faith!

-Lucas Marrero

From: Rico Hill <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Church and State Separation – Rico Hill

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 03:00:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the President's Religious Liberty Commission:

As a committed Christian who believes the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, I write because I deeply value both religious liberty and the constitutional principles that have protected it throughout our nation's history. It is precisely because of my faith - not in spite of it - that I believe the separation of church and state remains one of the greatest safeguards of both religious freedom and the integrity of the Christian church.

Contrary to the misconception, the separation of church and state is not hostile to Christianity. Rather, it protects the church from becoming dependent upon government power and shields the government from becoming an instrument of religious coercion. Whenever the church seeks to accomplish its mission through the authority of the state, both institutions are diminished. The church risks exchanging its moral and spiritual authority for political influence, while the state is tempted to elevate one faith tradition above another.

Scripture teaches that matters of conscience belong to God alone. Genuine faith cannot be legislated, compelled, or sustained through political power. Christ Himself established an important distinction when He declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Civil government has a God-ordained responsibility to preserve justice and protect the rights of its citizens, but it was never intended to serve as the enforcement arm of religious belief or to empower one religious majority over another.

For this reason, I respectfully object to any recommendation that characterizes the separation of church and state as a constitutional mistake rather than one of the foundational principles that has preserved religious liberty in America. The two religion clauses of the First Amendment - the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause - were designed to work together. One protects the freedom to practice one's faith, while the other prevents government from establishing, promoting, or favoring one religion over another. Together they form one of the strongest protections of religious liberty ever established by any nation.

I would also encourage great caution regarding proposals to weaken the Johnson Amendment. Houses of worship fulfill their highest calling when they proclaim truth, disciple believers, and minister to their communities without becoming extensions of political campaigns or partisan organizations. The mission of the church is most effective when its allegiance remains first and foremost to Christ rather than to political parties or candidates.

History repeatedly demonstrates the wisdom of these constitutional safeguards. Religious persecution in America has seldom arisen from secularism alone; more often it has occurred when one religious group gained the support of civil authority and used governmental power to suppress the convictions of others. Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Jews, Seventh-day Adventists, and many others have experienced discrimination when government aligned itself with particular religious interests. Our Founders wisely sought to prevent such abuses by limiting the power of government in matters of religion, thereby protecting believers of every faith as well as those of no faith.

As a Christian, I do not view the separation of church and state as a threat to the gospel. I regard it as one of the essential protections that preserves the purity of the church, safeguards the sacred right of conscience, and secures the religious liberty guaranteed to every American. My prayer is that these constitutional principles will

continue to be upheld, ensuring that faith remains a matter of conviction rather than compulsion, and that both church and state remain faithful to their distinct and God-given purposes.

Respectfully submitted,

Rico Hill

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Liberty in America

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 03:04:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commissioner,
the purpose of this email is to request that the
Religious Liberty Commission reverse its final 12-point policy recommendation that
attacks the separation of church and state.

As a religious person and a responsible voter, I honestly believe that the Commission should help to defend the critically
important constitutional principles that protect the Religious Liberty that we are currently blessed to enjoy in the United
States of America.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
C. Alexander

Sent from my iPhone

From: Elizabeth Plaisted <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 03:28:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that God has given me the right to worship and serve Him according to free conscious. I believe that the government should not interfere with that right of free speech and freedom to worship. Our nation was founded on religious freedom. This should not in any way be compromised. Thank you. Elizabeth Plaisted. Sent from my iPhone

From: James Hulset< [REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" < [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT (Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 03:52:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Regarding the recently released *Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report* the intent of this letter is to comment on the first recommendation: "Instruct the Department of Justice to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the phrase "separation of Church and State."

My First recommendation is that the Department of Justice address the considerable historical foundations for the Establishment Clause. This undeniable history includes the European persecution of the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Antibaptists, the Lutherins, the Catholics, the Puritans by state governments aligned with particular religions. Dr. David Plaisted, a Research Professor (Ph.D. 1978) of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has published 2006 *Estimates of the Number Killed by the Papacy in the Middle Ages and Later*. His conclusions were that estimates of deaths due to religious persecution during the Middle Ages were as high as 68 million or more.

Further the well established history of religious intolerance among those of the 13 Colonies that were governed by various faith-aligned magistrates and governors.

It has been well established that the Pilgrims and many other immigrants to America came here to escape persecution by states that were doing the bidding of particular faiths.

The Department of Justice must take this historical background into consideration as it seeks to establish language that clarifies what the intent of the Establishment Clause was and should continue to be.

Next I wish to expose an area where the Physicalism religion has indeed become entangled in government. It seems that there has been something similar to mission creep associated with the phrase "separation of Church and State". History establishes that wreckless atrocities result when the State does the bidding of a Religion. This can be the case with Hinduism in India and with Islam in Iran with Buddhism in Myanmar with Communism in China and it can be the case with Lutheranism in Germany, Catholicism throughout Europe and with the church of England. In the United States the dogmatic aspects of the materialism belief system Physicalism has become the religion that has been unduly enforced by the State. In our Education System the materialistic explanation of origins has resulted in the suppression and persecution of competing explanations of data and this to the detriment of the development of critical thinking among students from Kindergarten to the doctorally prepared. I assert that it would be extremely difficult for the majority of our best prepared Ph.D science graduates to correctly represent the best competing explanations of data regarding origins. And should they attempt to reproduce these explanations the professors, classmates and institutions around them would seek to destroy them. One small example is that Nobel Laureate and Oxford Emeritus Professor Dennis Noble who pointed out that Neo Darwinism was a "Central Dogma" of science and for that he is now labeled as a "Clown" by the religious defenders of the Materialism worldview. If a Nobel Laureate and an Oxford Emeritus Professor points out a weakness in Neo Darwinism and then is labeled in this manner how do you think the graduate student or the college student or the high school student or the middle school students would be treated?

The marriage of the dogmatic materialism worldview with the power brokers in science has resulted in a stagnation in progress toward understanding of origins in general. It seems that the protectors of the scientific god of materialism have now exceeded the irrational behavior of William Jennings Bryan in the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial.

My second recommendation for what would be the right understanding of the implementation of the establishment clause to the field of science would be that the best materialistic scientific theories should be presented to students in our public schools by scientists of exception training who hold them. In addition equal time should be given to scientists with exceptional training who hold "Design" and "Creation" oriented world views. This sort of equity would be inline with recommendations for Critical Thinking that in this area have been traded for the teaching of dogma. This kind of approach would also help to right the religious intolerance of those who hold to the modern religion of Materialism (Physicalism). Don't you think that scientists should be held to the high qualities of Critical Thinking which exclude name calling and harming the profession or future scholarly pursuits of someone who simply disagrees with you. Because the Physicalism bias is entrenched, a review of it's potentially deleterious influences on all aspects of science including the peer review process is reasonable.

Sincerely

James Leland Hulse PhD

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My support,

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 04:12:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

"I support separation of Church and State as well as Religious Liberty for ALL Americans!"

From: scottie craig <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 04:31:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

The constitution grants us the freedom of the separation of church and state. This is very important and vital to everyone's existence whether they be religious or not. God grants us the freedom of choice, thereby having the separation of the two insures of this. The first for commandment's are our responsibility to God and the last 6 our duty to man. The state can have control of the last 6 but not the first four. Throughout human history, when church and state combine together, persecution takes place against those who oppose it. America was founded after the 1260 yrs of papal persecution or the dark ages. The founder just got out of Roman persecution and wanted to find a land free from the bond church and state combine therefore they separated the two letting each man choose for themselves how they want to serve their God or if they wanted to serve God(freedom of choice). Just as God wants it and that is why God blessed. The lamb like beast but it will eventually speak like a dragon(America). A forced religion God always oppose; we are to serve him out of LOVE if you choose to serve him at all that our choice and he respects that. I know according to Bible prophecy that the two will combine at some point and persecution will take place till the coming of our Lord and Savior. We won't be able to buy or sell unless we have the mark of the beast. All this will because the remnant will not go along with the mark of the Sunday worship. Let's keep these two separates and if you want to convert people to Jesus let them see Christ in you or Bible study whatever means God leads you to but leave the State and government out of it. K.S.

From: "R. Mac"<[REDACTED] PII >

To: <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Do not combine church and state.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 04:43:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

My vote is not to have the church and state united. History shows that when the church And state combine there is always persecution one way or the other. Voting no on Church and state Uniting.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Richard Okari <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 04:49:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

All in ages whenever we see church and state United they form beast or in others words monarchy form of government is formed and forced form of worship is introduced . As results persecutions is brought to the minority or dissenters .

From: Morgan Tyler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 05:11:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department Of Justice,

I respectfully and wholly commit my entire being to the separation of church and state. I am a Christian who disagrees with the the unwanted indoctrination of children, the state funding religious affairs, and the politicization of our churches. The integration of church and state ended horrible for billions of people over the past two thousand years. You can make the right decision. Jesus never forced himself on anybody, and we shouldn't be forcing Him on anybody either. This will lead to catastrophic failures in the future.

From: DerekAmest<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please Protect Religious Freedom for All Americans

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 05:36:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing because I deeply value religious freedom and believe faith must always be a matter of personal conviction, never government influence or coercion. For that reason, I respectfully ask you not to implement the recommendations contained in the draft report.

Government funding of religious institutions and education, the politicization of churches, and policies that give special protection to one religious viewpoint would weaken the separation of church and state. History has shown that when religion and government become joined, both religious liberty and genuine faith are placed in danger.

True religious freedom protects every person equally—the Christian, the member of a minority faith, and the person who follows no religion. Please preserve that freedom by keeping government from promoting, funding, or favoring religious belief.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

From: Brian Bidwell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Brian Bidwell

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 05:45:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Commission's draft report.

Religious liberty is one of our nation's greatest strengths. In my view, it is best protected when the government remains neutral toward religion, neither favoring nor disfavoring any faith or religious viewpoint. That neutrality has allowed people of many different beliefs to live, worship, or decline to worship according to their own consciences.

For that reason, I am concerned by recommendations that would expand government funding of religious activities or repeal the Johnson Amendment. While these proposals may be intended to strengthen religious liberty, I worry they could instead blur the line between religious institutions and government.

Churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other religious organizations should remain free to pursue their missions without becoming dependent on government funding or increasingly involved in partisan political campaigns. Likewise, government should avoid actions that could create the appearance of endorsing or favoring particular religious organizations or beliefs.

I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve the longstanding principle of separation between church and state and to reconsider recommendations that would weaken that principle. I believe this approach best protects both religious freedom and the constitutional rights of all Americans, regardless of their faith or lack of faith.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Brian Bidwell

Ooltewah Tennessee

From: Glory Proudfoot <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with pillaroffreedom.org

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 05:45:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

Please take the response of pillaroffreedom.org to heart as they represent my own views and tens of thousands of other fellow believers along with me.

Thank you & may God bless you!

Glory

From: Anthony Kroll <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] America

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 05:48:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I just wanted to let you know that I find it disturbing when people say that the separation of church and state is not in the constitution. Granted the exact words are not found there but the concept most certainly is, in fact it is one of the main reasons that our great nation came into being and it is what makes America great! To remove that freedom and just that one throws away what so many have fought for to make this country what it is, that being a free land where each person has the freedom to worship according to their own convictions or not at all, that's true freedom. Please keep America free for that is what has made America great that is what will keep America great! God bless America!

Sincerely,
Anthony Kroll

From: Dizimo Dez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] To the members of the White House Committee on Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 05:52:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the White House Committee on Religious Freedom

The history of the Inquisition demonstrates that every citizen needs the freedom to choose the religion to which they will dedicate their life. The State must respect this decision and not impose specific religious rules regarding the observance of a day of worship. This is essential for the nation's progress. Therefore, I call for the United States to be a 100% secular nation! Thank you.

Ass Ezequiel Mazaro

From: tJohnt<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – John C. Elenich

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:05:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I was deeply concerned to learn that the Commission is considering replacing the wall of separation between church and state with what it describes as a "bridge." Respectfully, I believe this approach is fundamentally misguided, and as a person of faith, I find it deeply troubling.

The wall separating church and state was not created to diminish religion or silence people of faith. It exists to protect the independence and integrity of religious institutions. A bridge between church and state does not strengthen the church; instead, it invites government influence through funding, political favoritism, and regulatory oversight. Over time, churches can become dependent on government support and accountable to political leaders rather than remaining solely devoted to their spiritual mission.

History offers many examples of the harm that results when religious institutions and government become too closely intertwined. Such arrangements ultimately weaken both religious liberty and democratic governance.

I respectfully urge the Commission not to replace this essential safeguard. Please preserve the wall of separation between church and state. It has long served to protect the freedom of the church far more than it has ever limited it.

Sincerely,

John C. Elenich

Swartz Creek, MI

From: Monroe Lines <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:11:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Torrents of blood have been spilt in the old world, by vain attempts of the secular arm, to extinguish religious opinion. time has at length revealed the true remedy, every relaxation of narrow and rigorous policy, wherever it has been tried, has been found to assuage the disease James Madison

From: Audra Hembree <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep church and state separated

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:12:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the United States Commission on Religious Liberty,

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the assertion that the United States Constitution does not establish a meaningful separation between church and state. Such a position is inconsistent with the text of the First Amendment, the intent of its principal architects, and the long American tradition of safeguarding liberty of conscience through the institutional separation of civil and ecclesiastical authority.

The First Amendment declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These twin protections were designed to secure religious liberty by preventing government from exercising authority over matters of faith. The Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause are not competing principles; rather, they work together to ensure that religion remains free from governmental control and also critically that government remains free from sectarian domination.

Thomas Jefferson articulated this principle in his famous 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. Referring to the First Amendment, Jefferson wrote that the American people had built "a wall of separation between Church & State." Contrary to modern efforts to dismiss this phrase as a mere metaphor without constitutional significance, Jefferson's statement reflected a principle already embedded in American constitutional thought. The purpose of the wall was not hostility toward religion but protection of religion from governmental interference and protection of government from sectarian control.

James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," expressed the same principle with even greater force. In his 1785 "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," Madison rejected proposals to support religion through taxation, arguing that religion "must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man." He maintained that civil society possesses no authority over the religious duties individuals owe to their Creator. For Madison, the right of conscience was an unalienable right that preceded the formation of government itself.

Madison's concerns were not theoretical. He observed throughout history that alliances between religious institutions and civil power had damaged both. In his later writings, he noted that ecclesiastical establishments had produced "pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; and in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution." His conclusion was clear: the purity of religion and the freedom of government are best preserved when neither exercises authority over the other.

The same principles were vigorously defended a century later by Alonzo T. Jones during the national debate over the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill of 1888. Appearing before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Jones argued that civil government possesses jurisdiction only over civil rights and civil conduct. Matters of morality (as defined by what is owed God) including worship, doctrine, belief, and religious obligation lie beyond the lawful authority of the state because they concern the relationship between the individual and God.

Jones warned that once government assumes the authority to legislate religious observance, it ceases to be a protector of liberty and becomes an instrument of religious coercion. He argued that even laws supported by a religious majority become unconstitutional when their purpose is to enforce religious duties or observances. The central question is not whether a law reflects a moral value held by religious people, but whether the state is exercising authority in an area reserved to conscience.

In his testimony and subsequent writings, Jones emphasized that Christ himself distinguished between civil and religious authority when He declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are

God's." Jones interpreted this teaching as establishing a permanent distinction between the jurisdiction of government and the jurisdiction of religion. Civil government may regulate matters affecting public order and the equal rights of citizens, but it may not direct worship, compel religious observance, or favor one set of religious convictions over another.

The constitutional structure adopted by the Founders reflects precisely this distinction. The federal government was granted no power over religion. Article VI forbids religious tests for public office. The First Amendment prohibits laws respecting an establishment of religion. Together, these provisions reject the European and ultimately Roman Catholic model of government-supported religion and establish a framework in which faith flourishes through persuasion rather than coercion.

Historically it was Roman Catholicism that stated "That the State must be separated from the Church is a thesis absolutely false, a most pernicious error. Based, as it is, on the principle that the State must not recognize any religious cult, it is in the first place guilty of a great injustice to God." Pope Pius X, *Vehementer Nos*, February 11th, 1906. It was also those same Catholic principles that led to bloodshed and inquisition historically when the state stepped into the region of a man's conscience. Historically in the late 19th century, when the National Reform Movement was also advocating similar principles in the United States, there were individuals of my own faith who were placed in Chain Gangs in Tennessee for no other reason than they labored on a common working day (sunday) and rested as God commands on the 7th day of the week. It is deeply concerning to me to see Christian Nationalists calling for blue laws and Sunday legislation once again as part of the same movement involved in tearing down and renouncing separation of church and state.

Those who deny the existence of a constitutional separation between church and state often argue that religion influenced the moral outlook of many of the Founders. That observation is undoubtedly true. Yet it does not follow that the Founders intended religious institutions to wield civil authority or that they intended government to exercise authority over religion. The historical record demonstrates the opposite. Jefferson, Madison, and many others believed that religion is most secure when it is independent of governmental power.

Indeed, the American commitment to religious liberty was revolutionary precisely because it departed from centuries of religious establishments. The Founders did not seek merely to tolerate dissenting beliefs under a dominant religious system; they sought to prevent government from acquiring jurisdiction over religion altogether. This principle protects the rights of all citizens—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and every other believer or nonbeliever—by ensuring that conscience remains free from political control. It is through liberty that true religion governed by the heart, is best allowed to flourish.

The wall of separation between church and state is therefore not a modern invention, nor a judicial distortion of the Constitution. It is a concise description of a principle deeply rooted in the First Amendment, articulated by Jefferson, defended by Madison, and reaffirmed by later advocates of religious liberty such as Alonzo T. Jones. The purpose of this separation is not to exclude religion from public life, but to prevent the use of governmental power to advance, enforce, privilege, or suppress religious belief.

For these reasons, I urge the Commission to reject any interpretation of the Constitution that diminishes the separation of church and state. The preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the distinction between civil authority and matters of conscience. That distinction is not only a constitutional necessity, a Christian and Biblical one, but also one of the greatest achievements of the American experiment in liberty.

Respectfully submitted,

Audra Hembree

From: John Elenich <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – John A. Elenich

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:12:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am concerned by the proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." Respectfully, I believe this would weaken, rather than strengthen, religious liberty.

The separation of church and state exists to protect the independence of the church, not to diminish faith. When government and religion become closely connected, political influence and government dependence can compromise the church's mission. History has shown that such entanglements ultimately harm both religious liberty and the church itself.

Please preserve the wall of separation between church and state. It remains one of the strongest safeguards for the freedom and independence of faith communities.

Sincerely,

John A. Elenich

Flint, MI

From: Jim Armstrong <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:17:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: ResponsetoCommission.pdf

Sorry, I forgot to attach the response.

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

On Sun, Jul 12, 2026 at 5:15 AM Jim Armstrong <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Have a great day!

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 6, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines this principle by proposing to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall of separation was not a secular invention imposed upon religion — it was built by people of faith, to protect faith. Breaching that wall will set the churches against one another in competition for government money and favor, and set the church against the state as each seeks power over the other — eroding the very freedom the Commission claims to defend. The Commission has recommended increasing government funding of religious activities and recommended repealing the Johnson Amendment. Both of

these recommendations, if followed, will bring the corruption of the political process into the churches. In making its recommendations the Commission has relied upon a faulty retelling of our history.

The American Development of Separation of Church and State

The establishment of a wall of separation between the church and the state first appeared in the modern world in 1636 when Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island. The success of Roger Williams' experiment would later inspire the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and to a lesser extent other colonies to roll back their religious legislation long before the Revolution of 1776. By 1790, all but three of the original 13 had disestablished their churches, and by 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, had disestablished its church as well. No state would ever enter the Union with an established church. The United States had learned from the colonies that liberty prospered better where church and state were separate. While the states themselves would take some time to extricate themselves from religious entanglements, the drafters and signers of the Constitution recognized the value of religious liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman who toured the United States from 1831 to 1832, observed this about the cause of religion's power in America and how religion indirectly influenced the nation.

In order to learn more about [the separation of church and state], I questioned the faithful of all communions. ... To each of them I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts, and I discovered that they differed among themselves only on matters of detail: to a man, they assigned primary credit for the peaceful ascendancy of religion in their country to the complete separation of church and state. I state without hesitation that during my stay in America I met no one — not a single clergyman or layman — who did not agree with this statement.¹

¹Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 341.

The [clergy] are careful to remain aloof from public affairs and do not involve themselves in the machinations of the parties. Therefore, one cannot say that religion in the United States influences the laws or the specifics of political opinion, but it does shape mores, and it is by regulating the family that religion endeavors to regulate the state.²

The Commission itself recognizes “that religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength,” and that “preserving it will require vigilance, education, and renewed commitment from institutions and citizens alike.” Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report at 13. The report then goes on to highlight a list of areas where religion and religious people are under attack. These areas of attack are fairly portrayed, and all people of faith should be concerned about the attack. America is in a culture war, and much of the battle is over values that are informed by religion. While the report does not go so far as to explicitly state that atheistic secularism is a religion, it certainly functions as one, and when the state supports secularism in its worst forms, the state is taking sides in the culture war against religion. This needs to stop.

The Commission’s Revisionist History of the American Experience

First, the Commission tells a false history of religious liberty in the colonies and in the early history of the nation. It completely ignores that the idea of building a wall of separation between the church and the state is a very old idea, which was fully enunciated in 1644 by Roger Williams. Report at 37. Next, they ignore the fact that Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware followed Rhode Island’s example by keeping a wall of separation between the church and the state. They also ignore that other colonies, seeing the freedom and success of the states which preserved the separation of church and state, repealed laws which supported their established churches in order to attract more immigrants. By 1776, the founding fathers concluded that separation of church and state had been a success, and while not using the phrase “separation of church and state,” drafted the concept into the Constitution. The inclu-

²Ibid. p. 336.

sion of separation of church and state, impressed upon James Madison by members of the Baptist church, united the Baptists and the members of other denominations to support the Constitution and ensure its adoption. Baptist support was contingent upon the addition of the First Amendment, which was speedily adopted after the adoption of the Constitution. Thus without separation of church and state, the Constitution would never have been adopted. Nevertheless, the Commission would have us believe that religious liberty did not exist in the states prior to the adoption of the Constitution, Report at 37, and that the concept of a wall of separation was the invention of Thomas Jefferson, and not central to the freedoms of our nation. They state that the idea of a wall of separation comes from a single letter, forgotten until the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947, completely omitting the rich history of both the phrase and the idea. Report at 42.

The metaphor of creating a wall of separation between the church and the state was first written by Roger Williams in a reply to John Cotton in 1644, and then reproduced and expanded upon in his *magnum opus*, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, published in London in the same year.³ Parliament banned the book. The metaphor was well known to the founding fathers, probably through the works of James Burgh, raised a Scottish Presbyterian who later became a devout Protestant dissenter. Thomas Jefferson's letter was not first quoted by the Supreme Court in 1947, but rather 68 years earlier in 1879 in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*. The Commission ignores a long line of Presidents who felt compelled to explicitly support the concept of a wall of separation. Besides Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, one of the primary drafters of the Constitution, said that there should be a "separation between religion and government,"⁴ and that religion flourished better without government patronage.⁵ George Washington's diplomats negotiated, and John Adams signed the Treaty

³Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (1644), in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 1, p. 108; the metaphor is reproduced and developed throughout *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Edward Bean Underhill (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1848), see, e.g., p. 435.

⁴ James Madison, "Detached Memoranda" (c. 1817), in Elizabeth Fleet, "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 534–568.

⁵ Madison's Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822.

of Tripoli, which stated that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”⁶ President Fillmore said that “Church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled.”⁷ President Grant said, “Keep the church and the state forever separate.”⁸ President Garfield said that it would be dangerous to use public funds for religious schools and that “The separation of the Church and the State in everything relating to taxation should be absolute.”⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt said there must be “complete severance of Church and State.”¹⁰

In attacking the Supreme Court decisions of the 1940s, the Commission resorts to two tactics that cannot survive scrutiny: a personal attack on Justice Hugo Black, and claims of philosophical influence that the timeline of history makes impossible. The Commission states “Even a few Supreme Court decisions seemed to track with this train of thought [defined earlier in the report as that of Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, and the belief that ‘God is dead’], culminating in a 1947 opinion [*Everson*], in which Justice Hugo Black, a former Ku Klux Klan member, repurposed a metaphor coined by Thomas Jefferson in an attempt to legitimize the new critical philosophy by placing it in the constitutional tradition. Specifically, the Supreme Court ruled on a series of decisions in which it used the ‘wall’ metaphor to regulate a child’s access to religious education and later to ban school prayer and public displays of religion (like the Ten Commandments).” Report at 41-42. Without any support for the notion that Justice Black wrote opinions in accordance with the anti-Catholic philosophies of the Klan, the Commission attempts to persuade the public that Justice Black was racist and that his opinions should be disregard-

⁶ Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, art. 11, signed Nov. 4, 1796; ratified by the U.S. Senate June 7, 1797; proclaimed by President John Adams June 10, 1797 (Barlow translation).

⁷ *The Ovation to Mr. Fillmore: Speeches of Mr. Fillmore*, 1856.

⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, Address to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 29, 1875.

⁹ James A. Garfield, Letter Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (to Hon. George F. Hoar), July 12, 1880.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 361; the statement originated in T. Roosevelt’s 1915 public letter opposing public funding of sectarian schools in New York.

ed. This is an *ad hominem* attack commonly used in the highly charged political debates of today, but counterproductive to finding truth and establishing unity. It is only useful in persuading the uninformed. The suggestion that *Everson* “tracked” with Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, or later critical theory is historically implausible. Foucault’s major works postdated *Everson*, Sartre was never a source of American Establishment Clause doctrine, and the Court grounded its reasoning in American sources: Madison, Jefferson, disestablishment, and the First Amendment tradition. To attempt to smear the Supreme Court with Justice Black’s much earlier Klan membership and with Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre is disingenuous. While Justice Black held that the Constitution established a wall of separation between the church and the state, in the same decision, the decision attacked by the Commission, Justice Black held that government reimbursement for transportation to Catholic schools was constitutional. How ironic! The Commission faults Justice Black for anti-Catholic bias from his Klan past, yet the very decision it attacks is one in which he upheld government support benefiting Catholic school-children. And it faults him for following philosophies that no serious legal historian would argue influenced the Court’s reasoning.

The Commission correctly states that much of the hostility towards religion in America today is based upon a “broader cultural assumption that religious belief should remain invisible while secular ideologies enjoy full freedom to influence public institutions.” Report at 21. The Commission is correct to say, “People of faith should not be required to leave their religious convictions behind when entering the workplace, engaging in commerce, serving their communities, or participating in public debate,” and that “institutions should foster environments in which citizens with divergent convictions can work together while maintaining fidelity to conscience.” Report at 21. Nevertheless, the Report goes on to continually overstate the case by saying that the “wall of separation” ideology creates a wall between personal faith and public life. While this may be true when the idea of a wall of separation is misconstrued and weaponized by secular atheists, it is not true that the wall of separation erected by the Constitution and so often referred to by generations of leaders who have gone before us is a wall between personal faith and public life. The true wall of separation is between the state and the church. It is

there so that a person can freely exercise their personal faith and freely engage in the public sphere, without prejudice or persecution. To deny that there is complete separation of church and state in the Constitution, aka “the wall,” and to deny that the wall can serve a useful purpose in protecting individual freedom is un-American and counter to both our experience and the knowledge and intent of our forefathers. The wall of separation is not a wall between religious people and public life; it is a wall between ecclesiastical power and civil power, protecting both religion and civil freedom.

The Commission’s Objectionable Recommendations

Based upon the above arguments, the Commission recommends that the United States adopt its recommendation to post in the workplace, to teach our students, and to teach as many citizens as possible that the Constitution neither creates nor requires the separation of church and state, and that there should be no wall of separation between church and state. If this false ideology is embraced by the people, it will allow for many different “reforms,” and eventually be used to justify any oppressive religious legislation so long as it is for the good of the people or represents the will of the majority. This is a radical teaching that has the potential, over time, to roll back the freedoms we enjoy in this nation, and return us to the political conflicts and tyranny our forefathers came to America to escape. This is the underlying philosophical foundation of additional, objectionable recommendations that the Commission makes.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations. It bases its argument on the idea that in times of need, to separate the physical help from spiritual help is to deny the full scope of the help that the person in need requires. This may be true in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this is an argument to the church that wishes to provide those services to fund them internally, and not rely upon the state. For religion to rely upon state funding is for religion to take the role of an imposter, pretending to provide aid, when in fact it is the state that is making the aid possible. It also allows the religion that is relying upon government funding to use that funding as an

aid in indoctrination and evangelism, thus the government is not remaining neutral. The Commission argues that church members today must leave their religious beliefs at home to engage in humanitarian work. That should never be true for work that they do without the aid of the state, and should only be true to the extent the state is providing them assistance. This is for the protection of religion as much as it is for the state and its citizens. Anytime government money is available, a religion will modify its beliefs to adhere to the values of the government so that it can obtain funds. Public money always brings public control. Furthermore, different religions may claim fairness requires equal funding, even though they do not provide equal services. This certainly will devolve into a quagmire that the state would do well to avoid.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious education. All the reasons against supporting religious philanthropy apply here, as well as additional reasons. The Commission argues correctly that the state benefits from a religious people. But the Commission errs in thinking the state can be involved in making people religious. In education, it is important what is taught. By supporting religious education, the state will be making decisions about what doctrines can be taught. This most commonly takes the form of accreditation. Many sectarian schools are not accredited for this reason. But it can go further. Will the state support a school whose religion teaches interracial marriage is a sin, or that women should not receive higher education? Will the state support a school that teaches polygamy? What about a school that doesn't teach many things, like the Amish? This puts the state into the business of determining what values are worth supporting and what values are not. Don't think that the decisions will only be required for that which may seem obvious to us today. Today the Commission is recommending that the Ten Commandments be posted in schools and courthouses. Which Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments of Exodus or Deuteronomy? One is more Jewish focused, one more focused on creation, both requiring the keeping of the seventh day, not the first day? Or maybe the Ten Commandments of a Roman Catholic catechism, which a Protestant will tell you dispenses with the law against graven images and a Catholic priest will tell you merely divides the commandments differently. Or maybe the state can just abbreviate the Ten Commandments, number

them like a Protestant, and hope everybody is happy. That is the solution in Texas. Texas is getting into the business of doctrine. A government that refuses to fund religious doctrine is not thereby endorsing secularism, rather, it is refusing to decide religious questions. That restraint is not hostility to religion; it is the condition under which religious communities remain free and prosperous.

The Commission has one more recommendation that has the potential to expand the breach in the wall of separation. The Commission recommends repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment prohibits churches from engaging in partisan politics, specifically supporting a candidate for election. It does not prohibit the church from speaking on the issues of the day, or even telling its members how to vote regarding issues, such as abortion and the right to life. What would repealing the Amendment do? Churches would become fabulous non-profit vehicles to engage in political activities. Pastors are known to exhibit tremendous sway over their congregations. It is not hard to imagine the intense pressure that a pastor could feel to deliver his congregation's votes for money. It is not hard to imagine that wealthy and powerful interests might attempt to influence political causes through the churches. Combine that with a patronage system whereby the congregations could receive government grants based upon the Commission's other recommendations, and there is a recipe for disaster. What failing congregation won't make a little compromise for a little financial gain? As scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV. As financial interests invade the churches, invariably the public will be able to smell hypocrisy, and any gains either the church or the state thinks may be had by their union will be lost. Only a dead, lifeless church on government life support will remain.

Today, the Johnson Amendment is already being dismantled by non-enforcement. In *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, the IRS and several religious plaintiffs proposed a settlement that would have substantially narrowed enforcement of the Johnson Amendment as applied to churches. This settlement was opposed by the Baptist Joint Committee and Americans United, two reputable religious liberty advocacy organizations, not secular humanists. A federal district court found that it lacked juris-

diction on March 31, 2026. The effort to remove the barrier between tax-exempt churches and partisan campaign activity is expected to continue. The Commission should reverse its recommendation for repealing the Johnson Amendment, and instead, recommend its enforcement.

The Commission Correctly Identifies a Peril, but Not the Solution

Commissioner Bishop Robert Barron made an important observation about secularism. He said, “[T]here’s a philosophical issue which is secularism proposing itself as some kind of neutral ground, but it’s not neutral ground. Secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system. It wants to dominate the whole of life and therefore to exclude religion [from the public square].” Report at 181. Commissioner Kelly Shackelford makes a particularly insightful comment that “the one thing a totalitarian regime will never allow is citizens who hold an allegiance to one higher than the government. So, whenever that type of power of coalescing comes together, the first flashpoint is always going to be religious freedom. And if you lose there, you will lose everything else. So, what we’re really dealing with here is the precipice of all our freedoms.” Report at 29. This should be particularly sobering when combined with the Commission’s observation that “contemporary progressive opposition to religious liberty ... seek[s] freedom for its own views but coercion of religious groups whose traditional beliefs conflict with current trends such as transgenderism.” Report at 35-36. The Commission is correct in urging the courts to view atheism and atheistic determinism as ideologically and functionally similar to religion. Just as secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system, religion, when granted power, tends toward the same result. Combining church and state together, financially or otherwise, will result in one or the other demanding power and control over the other. History has shown us that the stronger the bond between church and state, the more oppressed the society. The union of church and state is the recipe for the kind of totalitarian regime warned about by Commissioner Shackelford. This is not a new discovery. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams wrote, “Checks and Ballances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them, are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body.—Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as Soon as either

Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unballanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!”¹¹ The church and state should remain forever apart, neutral towards each other, and neutral towards secularism.

Finally, the country as a whole should not be swayed by arguments made for religion in the military. It is true, the military should be very careful not to support or oppose any religion, but it is also true that the military must be able to provide religious services to its members. The reason they must provide those services is that in the military, especially when deployed, there are no alternative means to obtain religious services. A service member deployed in a foreign land may not be able to go to the local Baptist, Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, or Mormon church, or synagogue or mosque, because they may not exist in the area, nor would it necessarily be safe to go off base to attend one.

Conclusion

Just before and after the Revolution, the disestablishment of the state churches was an important project of our founding fathers. It was not without controversy. The experience of it should not be lost upon us.

Reverend Lyman Beecher was a Congregationalist minister, one of the most influential evangelical preachers of the early 1800s, and a leader in the movement to maintain the established church of Connecticut. Before 1818, he argued for the need of an established church. He said, “So the democracy, as it rose, included nearly all the minor sects, besides the Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling tippling folk, infidels, and ruff-scuff generally, and made a dead set at us of the standing order.” He believed that an es-

¹¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 25 June 1813, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0202>. [Original source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 6, 11 March to 27 November 1813, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 226–229.]

tablished church was the only way to counteract these evil influences. In 1818, Connecticut voted to disestablish its church. Beecher described the experience. “For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.” He went on to observe, “They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe buckles, and cocked hats, and golden-headed canes.”¹²

Tocqueville observed on his trip to America, “When I arrived in the United States, it was the country’s religious aspect that first captured my attention.”¹³ By speaking to Americans, he learned religion flourished *because* of the complete separation of church and state, not in spite of it. That is precisely the lesson the Commission would have the nation unlearn, or rather, learn again the hard way.

The Commission is wrong to treat separation of church and state as a modern innovation. In America, the separation of church and state formed the foundation of our dearest freedoms, supported by Baptists, dissenters, and citizens of every faith, vindicated by disestablishment, and praised by foreign observers as religion and freedom thrived together.

As Roger Williams warned, freedom of conscience must be defended: “Having bought truth dear, we must not sell it cheap, nor the least grain of it for the whole world, no not for the saving of souls, though our own most precious..t”¹⁴

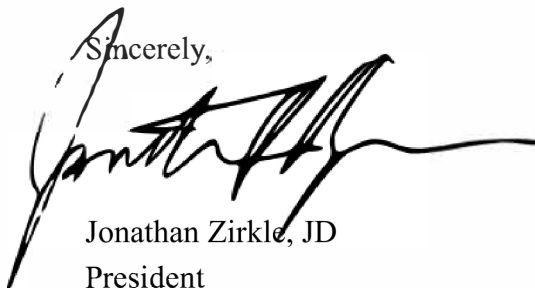
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 340.

¹⁴ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), p. 9.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. America will do best to forever maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Zirkle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Zirkle, JD
President

From: Beckie Hunter <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Wall of Separation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:28:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Screenshot_20260711_143902_Chrome.jpg

Separation of church and state is a legal doctrine in the United States primarily derived from the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The Establishment Clause prohibits the government from establishing an official religion or unduly favoring one religion over another.

The modern interpretation of this doctrine was articulated in the landmark Supreme Court case *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947). Writing for the majority, Justice Hugo Black invoked Thomas Jefferson's famous phrase describing the Establishment Clause as erecting "a wall of separation between Church and State." Justice Black emphasized that this wall must remain "high and impregnable," meaning that the government, whether federal or state, must not:

- Establish or support a church,
- Aid one religion or all religions,
- Coerce individuals to attend or avoid religious services, or
- Punish individuals based on their religious beliefs or practices.

From: RenietB <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:30:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to express my concern regarding the rhetoric that seeks to diminish, erode, and dismantle the foundational separation between church and state in the United States. As the Department of Justice works to uphold the rule of law and protect the civil rights of all Americans, it is vital to recognize that eliminating this separation does not merely alter our legal landscape, it actively reopens the door to the systemic abuses, civil strife, and state-sponsored atrocities that defined European history prior to our nation's founding.

Contrary to what this committee believes, the architectural blueprint of the constitution is indeed based on a separation of church and state.

- James Madison is regarded as the "Father of the Constitution," and argued that *"Strongly guarded as is the separation between religion and government in the Constitution of the United States the distinction between them is found to be essential to the purity of both, and to the dominion of mutual charity and forbearance."* This statement highlights the premise that both religion and government flourish best when kept completely independent of one another.
- Unlike the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution purposefully omits any mention of God, Jesus, or Christianity. It establishes its authority entirely within the secular domain: *"We the People..."* During the Constitutional Convention, delegates intentionally rejected attempts to insert religious language, refusing to declare the United States a formally Christian nation.
- Although John Adams was a highly religious man who lived out his morals (rejecting slavery nor practiced the barbarian act), he understood that this country was not built on religion as is illustrated in the Treaty of Tripoli (1797). During the presidency of John Adams, the Treaty of Tripoli was unanimously ratified by the Senate, Article 11 explicitly states: *"As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion..."* This demonstrates how the earliest federal leaders presented the nation's legal identity to foreign powers.

Although not all the founding fathers of this nation were believers, one might ask, "Why would those who professed a belief in Christianity be so quick to omit faith in government?" The Framers did not construct the barrier between church and state out of an abstract hostility toward faith; rather, they did so to protect both the citizen and religion itself in order to break the bloody cycle of historical oppression.

By reviewing the architectural layout of our founding documents alongside the historical record, we see an undeniable mandate for absolute state neutrality in matters of faith. Jen-Henri d'Aubigne in his book *History of the Reformation*, wrote of many bloody historical oppressions when there was a unification of church and state.

- England and the Subjugation of Conscience: Henry VIII simply substituted papal authority with royal authority, bringing religious practice under absolute state control. The resulting oscillations under monarchies, such as the public burnings of reformers under Queen Mary who forced her Catholic religion on the people resulting in the "Marian Exiles." These dissenters were forced to flee to mainland Europe, and their descendants eventually boarded the Mayflower to find a wilderness where the crown could not dictate their worship.
- France and the Destruction of the Huguenots: The tight alignment between the French monarchy and the Pope of Rome viewed religious dissent as an existential threat to the throne. This state-church monopoly culminated in horrific violence, including the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, where tens of thousands of Protestants were systematically slaughtered by royal decree. The subsequent revocation of the Edict of Nantes made Protestantism entirely illegal, forcing hundreds of thousands of Huguenots to flee their homeland.
- Germany and Switzerland: Under the principle of Cuius regio, eius religio ("Whose realm, his religion"), regional rulers dictated the specific faith of every citizen under their jurisdiction. Changing political allegiances forced entire populations to repeatedly alter their beliefs or face asset forfeiture and exile. This volatility led directly to armed conflicts like the Battle of Kappel (1531) and drove countless Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Pietists out of Europe altogether.

Reflecting on such atrocities, d'Aubigne writes,

"The church, rather than transforming the world, allowed itself to be transformed by the world... When the State took up the defense of the Church, it claimed the right to dictate its faith; and when the Church seized the scepter of the State, it used the sword to enforce its decrees."

When church and state align, theological disagreement is reclassified as treason against the state, inevitably resulting in persecution. Our founders recognized that state patronage ultimately corrupts religious institutions, making them politically ambitious and spiritually compromised, while turning the police, tax, and judicial powers of civil government into tools of religious coercion.

If our current legal and political systems yield to the rhetoric seeking to dismantle the wall of separation, we will inevitably repeat the cycles of fracture, persecution, and systemic overreach that our ancestors bled to escape. We must remain steadfast in defending the clear boundaries established by the text of our Constitution.

To guide our path forward, we must remember the profound lesson of our shared history: we have nothing to fear for the future except we forget how God has led in the past.

I urge the Department of Justice to remain vigilant in defending the strict neutrality required by the Establishment Clause, ensuring that civil power and religious faith remain completely independent for the protection of all Americans.

Renie Brown

Beloved, I wish above all things that you may

prosper and be in health, even as your
soul prospers. 3 John 1:2

From: Chary Hicks <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:37:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this public comment out of deep concern for the future of religious liberty in the United States. I urge the Commission to reject any recommendation directed at the Department of Justice or any other branch of government that would weaken the historic constitutional principle of keeping religion and government institutionally separate, as well as any proposal that encourages greater unity between the two.

America's greatest contribution to the cause of religious liberty has not been the state's endorsement of religion, but the protection of every person's God-given right to worship according to conscience without government interference. This principle has allowed religious communities of every tradition to flourish in freedom while preserving civil peace.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I write from the perspective of a religious minority whose spiritual ancestors experienced firsthand the dangers that arise when government aligns itself with the religious majority. During America's colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and many other religious minorities endured discrimination, imprisonment, fines, and civil persecution because certain established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These injustices were among the very reasons the Founders rejected religious establishments and adopted the First Amendment.

The experience of Seventh-day Adventists provides another historical warning. During the late nineteenth century, Adventists who faithfully observed God's seventh-day Sabbath were prosecuted under Sunday laws that were imposed, once again, by the religious Christian majority. Some of our fellow believers were fined, imprisoned, and even forced into chain gangs because they chose to honor Saturday as the biblical Sabbath rather than conform to popular Blue Law Sunday observances. Their only offense was obeying the dictates of conscience and remaining faithful to their religious convictions. Their experience stands as a warning that whenever civil authority is used to enforce religious beliefs or practices, freedom of conscience is inevitably endangered, and religious minorities are often the first to endure discrimination and persecution.

The medieval Inquisition demonstrated how religious institutions armed with civil authority suppressed dissent through torture, punishment, and even death. Various forms of religious extremism, including movements that have justified violence in the name of Islam, have shown how state-backed religious ideology can deny liberty of conscience. Likewise, communist regimes that officially embraced atheism illustrate the opposite side of the same error: when government suppresses religion altogether, believers are again persecuted. Though these different oppressive systems differed in ideology, they shared one common characteristic—the concentration of civil power over matters of conscience.

The strength of the American constitutional system is that it avoids these extremes. Government was never commissioned to direct the spiritual lives of the people. The mission of the state is to preserve order, protect individual rights, and secure equal treatment under the law. The mission of the church is altogether different: to preach the gospel, emphasize truth and love through persuasion, not coercion, and call people to a voluntary faith, as Jesus did. These two institutions are strongest and remain uncorrupted when each remains within its proper sphere.

Our nation has become home to a diverse group of churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious communities because government has generally refrained from controlling or establishing religion. This constitutional heritage

has protected both the majority and the minority alike. I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to recommend policies that reinforce—not diminish—the constitutional barriers separating ecclesiastical authority from civil government. Religious liberty is best preserved when government neither advances nor inhibits religion but instead protects the equal rights of all people to follow their own conscience.

The United States must remain a nation where every church is free to proclaim its beliefs without governmental control and where every citizen is free to worship—or not to worship—without governmental pressure. History has already taught us the consequences of abandoning this principle. We should not repeat mistakes that countless generations have paid dearly to overcome. For if we do, we would once again be fanning the flames of intolerance, religious bigotry, and injustice.

Respectfully submitted,

Chary Hicks, Fulton NY

From: Jacqueline Miller <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 06:56:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone. Our constitution guarantees that Congress has no authority to tell us how to worship, or when to worship. Our relationship with God is a private choice and cannot be rightfully restricted by any governmental authority. Please do not bring in Sunday laws. Thank you.

From: Robyn Edgerton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:04:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello -

Please protect our religious freedoms and do not mix politics and religion.

When government gets too involved in religion, peoples individual beliefs, over time, will be tread upon.

Thank you.

Robyn Edgerton

From: Alan Salhany <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Edwin Salhany

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:14:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen in opposition to your recommendations to build a bridge between the church and the state. Both entities are best served if the legal barriers the currently exist between them are kept in place. Once removed, who determines which flavor of Christianity, or non-Christian religion will receive government support? Please read, consider and implement the recommendations of PillerOfFreedom.org.

Your report would weaken the weaken our historic position on the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. Not all religions espouse ideas that are in the best interests of our society or country. Do you want to support the radical anti-American ideas of the Suri Islamic religion?

We are currently in a period of historic political corruption, and when churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike.

Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and freedom. It's the reason personal freedom has stayed strong here.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Edwin Salhany

Ethridge, Tennessee

From: Jordan Raquepaw <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberties

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:33:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States, I am writing to thank the Religious Liberty Commission for doing some good work in defending the Free Exercise Clause and express my concern with its dismissive approach to the Establishment Clause and the Separation of Church and State.

Today, I think it's important to remember that we can thank Christians for the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment of the US Constitution. The first person in the American colonies to keep the church out of government and the government out of church was Roger Williams, a devout Christian pastor. He fought for this new arrangement because of the religious persecution that he and millions of others experienced in Europe and the American colonies. He saw the results of churches who persecuted dissenters and he was committed to the example of Jesus who never forced anybody and declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

The disestablishment of church was an extraordinary achievement that has contributed significantly to America's success. As somebody who belongs to a religious minority, I am alarmed at the new willingness to redefine the Establishment Clause to accommodate a much closer union of church and state that will inevitably favor larger religions. The Founding Fathers gave us the Establishment Clause to protect against religious tyranny and the Free Exercise Clause to protect against secular tyranny. When the two are out of balance the future of religious liberty in America is threatened.

Specific areas of concern from your report include:

- * It sets a dangerous precedent when you openly oppose the separation of church and state.
- * Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools. A key part of disestablishment in America was to no longer use tax dollars to support religious institutions.
- * Sectarian religion should not be forced in school, such as the required posting 10 Commandments in classrooms, or required prayers.
- * Repealing the Johnson amendment removes safeguards that protect houses of worship from partisan politicking and preserves their spiritual purpose.

The Christian's commitment to religious liberty should be guided by God's character of love, his respect for human choice and free will, and the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). I pray that God grants you discernment to understand the legacy of religious freedom in America and the courage to defend the eternal principles so important to us.

Thank you for receiving my feedback!

Jordan Raquepaw

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From: jo berkont<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:35:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Let our conscience have freedom please keep it be separated,,
So there'll be persecution to happen again. Thank you

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Kim Ferreira <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment separation of church and state - Kim Ferreira

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:43:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a deeply concerned US Citizen to ask you to please reconsider the recommendations in your report that will weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes into the church.

Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of God — that's negative for the church and the country alike.

Separation wasn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here in the United States of America!

Please keep church and state separate.

That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Ferreira

From: Marticiesol Lewis <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:49:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Politician,

I dearly appreciate my religious freedom as a US citizen and know from history that there should be a separation between church and state because the state will impose religion on the citizens when both parties are combined. God has given everyone the ability and freedom to choose what to believe but if the state and church are united, people are forced to follow what the state mandates or succumb to penalties. Please do not encourage this decision.

Marti Lewis

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: a jacobe <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Petition

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:50:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sirs:

We are Christians and patriots and love our country, and believe that the separation between religion and government was instituted as a safeguard by the Founding Fathers.

We ask you to please consider our petition.

I will render unto you the govt what needs to be done as good citizen and render unto God what is due to Him.

I love my freedom which has cost a lot of blood and I salute the men and women that have defended our freedom and are defending now.

Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

From: " [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" < [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 07:53:01e0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission Members,

The joining of church and state is highly concerning when considering the persecution that has always inevitably resulted from doing so in the past. This country was founded on the understanding that the separation of church and state is what keeps us free. God has endowed every human with a conscience and the freedom of choice to choose whether or not they want to serve Him. He does not accept forced worship and that can be seen throughout the Bible. Jesus says, "I stand at the door and knock, and if any man will open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with Me." Jesus never forces His way into anyone's heart. To allow a government or a church to dictate man's conscience is an infringement on God's territory.

The last six commandments can and should be implemented because they are civil in nature and hold us accountable as to how we treat each other, however, the first four are between the individual and God. By uniting church and state, forced worship will inevitably result, and forced worship can never be true worship. Please reconsider this proposal for the sake of our country, its citizens, and its prosperity.

Sincerely,
Sam and Melissa Saggio

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] True Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:00:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Recently on vacation I purchased a book at a small book shop down at the Jersey Shore. It was The Constitution of the United States of America. It is a reprint of course in honor of our 250 anniversary.

As a first generation American, I was raised believing that we have God given rights and the United States Government is one of the few nations in the world that acknowledges and upholds those rights. I wanted to have in possession those rights, written out clearly so I would have a better understanding of what our founding fathers had proposed and established for this great nation.

After writing the Constitution, They had the foresight to write out the an Amendments to the US Constitution, establishing what these God given write are in detail so there would be no question what these rights are.

The First Amendment, as you may be familiar with states the following: Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or the prohibition the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances.

Well, I have a grievance, it is clear to me after reading the first amendment that our government has no right to get involved in religious matters. We as Americans and Gods created beings have a freedom to worship according to our conscience. While it does not use the term that there is a separation of church and state it is clear what our founding fathers meant. And I know the argument is that the term separation of church and state was only stated in a letter but it's clear that the letter was written to farther explain and define what true freedom of religion means.

Furthermore, millions of people have immigrated to this great nation to escape from religious persecution. They came from countries where there was no separation of church and state and the government forced their citizens against their will to practice whatever religion they established. The Pilgrims came here escaping religious persecution in England. Many Jews throughout Europe have also come here to escape religious persecution. People from communist countries, where people are not allowed to worship anything at all, have also come here to have the freedom to worship God according to their conscience. The list could go on and on. Roger Williams, a Puritan pastor, spoke out against the Puritans forcing the people of Massachusetts to follow all the religious laws they established. He stood up for religious liberty and established the colony of Rhode Island. That is what our founding fathers were also trying to do. They wanted to establish a nation where we have the freedom of religion and speech, where the government does not have religious authority. Are we now, after 250 years, going to take away these freedoms that so many have fought and died for?

There is an another problem that I see with dissolving this separation of church and state as well. It is my understanding that this commission now wants to allow religious institutions to make donations to political candidates. This is current illegal and a conflict of interest. That would then make politicians obligated to establish or enforce the beliefs of that religious institution that supported their campaign. This would be a violation of our religious freedoms and the ability to worship according to our conscience if the government starts making religious laws.

As I see it and as our founders fathers have defined it, there is and should always be, as long as this great nation stands for freedom, a separation of church and state.

Sincerely your fellow Patriot,
Dawn Salmon

Sent from my iPhone

From: Carrie Hickman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to amendment changes

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:19:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

I am totally against any changes to our religious freedom policies as they now stand

From: Edward Urbina <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:23:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a U S citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — in particular when it comes to using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. We see similar examples of misuse of our tax dollars being misappropriated, ie. Michigan, California and Virginia to name a few. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike.

Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. I humble but firmly ask-Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Edward Urbina

Franklin, Tennessee

From: "Naomi C. DeBaillie" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State providing Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:26:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please continue to support the separation of church and state that every human being may continue to have religious freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience.

[REDACTED] PII

Phone: 1-[REDACTED] PII - L

From: Kate Blood <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- Separation of church and State -- Kate Blood

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:27:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Member of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am troubled by your wanting to replace the wall of separation of church and state with a bridge. So many of our ancestors and forefathers came to this country because of religious persecution in their home country. Mine did.

My great-great-great grandfather Ludwig Krubsack and his family experienced religious persecution in Prussia, Germany under the Prussian King Fredrick Wilhelm III. Between 1830 and 1843, under the King, an order was issued to unite the protestant churches under one head, namely the Union Church of Germany. The Lutherans from the Brandenburg Province fought against the oppression and unionism and decided to emigrate to America, where freedom of religious doctrine was prevalent.

The whole reason that religious freedom was prevalent in America was because of the separation of church and state, whether or not those exact words are used. So many of the early Europeans that populated this country were fleeing religious persecution. Please go back and thoroughly study the first thanksgiving story. The pilgrims were escaping religious persecution. They knew how tyrannical and oppressive government can be when church and state are united.

Religion can flourish when there exists a separation of church and state, because we must serve God in the freedom of our conscience, and if the higher powers of the nation attempt to force citizens to believe and worship according to their conscience, which may be influenced by money or gain of higher political power, the whole nation will suffer and crumble. The government will become tyrannical and oppressive and we will be left with only a form of godliness.

The only way to "make America great again" is to have individual heart searching, and humbling of oneself before God. Using force, monetary, and political power to coerce people to serve God never works. The bridge between church and state will be the end of the great and peaceful America that many have enjoyed. The founding fathers were religious themselves and led by God to create the wall of separation in the first place. That has been the key to the prosperity of this nation.

Please do not use government money to support religious schools. The Johnson Amendment should be fully enforced. Let each religion fund their own schools. Church and politics should not mix, it will encourage further and faster corruption.

Please seriously reconsider and enforce the separation of church and state so our nation does not become like the muslim nations of the middle east, developing an intolerance of anyone who says a word against the government or the religion of the government. The government, if making doctrinal decisions, will only allow one religion, and all others will be persecuted.

Protect the beloved American freedom of free worship. Support the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

Kate Blood

From: Dennis Kendall <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the Importance of the Separation of Church and State -
Dennis Kendall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:28:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

I agree with the attached Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. The separation of church and state has more than any other factor made this nation great, and only by retaining this foundational pillar of religious liberty will America remain a great nation. God Himself ordained this wise arrangement, and its annulment by legislation will ultimately lead to persecution and national ruin, rather than to the anticipated golden age of prosperity.

Sincerely,

Dennis Kendall
Addy, WA



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 6, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines this principle by proposing to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall of separation was not a secular invention imposed upon religion — it was built by people of faith, to protect faith. Breaching that wall will set the churches against one another in competition for government money and favor, and set the church against the state as each seeks power over the other — eroding the very freedom the Commission claims to defend. The Commission has recommended increasing government funding of religious activities and recommended repealing the Johnson Amendment. Both of

these recommendations, if followed, will bring the corruption of the political process into the churches. In making its recommendations the Commission has relied upon a faulty retelling of our history.

The American Development of Separation of Church and State

The establishment of a wall of separation between the church and the state first appeared in the modern world in 1636 when Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island. The success of Roger Williams' experiment would later inspire the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and to a lesser extent other colonies to roll back their religious legislation long before the Revolution of 1776. By 1790, all but three of the original 13 had disestablished their churches, and by 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, had disestablished its church as well. No state would ever enter the Union with an established church. The United States had learned from the colonies that liberty prospered better where church and state were separate. While the states themselves would take some time to extricate themselves from religious entanglements, the drafters and signers of the Constitution recognized the value of religious liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman who toured the United States from 1831 to 1832, observed this about the cause of religion's power in America and how religion indirectly influenced the nation.

In order to learn more about [the separation of church and state], I questioned the faithful of all communions. ... To each of them I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts, and I discovered that they differed among themselves only on matters of detail: to a man, they assigned primary credit for the peaceful ascendancy of religion in their country to the complete separation of church and state. I state without hesitation that during my stay in America I met no one — not a single clergyman or layman — who did not agree with this statement.¹

¹Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 341.

The [clergy] are careful to remain aloof from public affairs and do not involve themselves in the machinations of the parties. Therefore, one cannot say that religion in the United States influences the laws or the specifics of political opinion, but it does shape mores, and it is by regulating the family that religion endeavors to regulate the state.²

The Commission itself recognizes “that religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength,” and that “preserving it will require vigilance, education, and renewed commitment from institutions and citizens alike.” Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report at 13. The report then goes on to highlight a list of areas where religion and religious people are under attack. These areas of attack are fairly portrayed, and all people of faith should be concerned about the attack. America is in a culture war, and much of the battle is over values that are informed by religion. While the report does not go so far as to explicitly state that atheistic secularism is a religion, it certainly functions as one, and when the state supports secularism in its worst forms, the state is taking sides in the culture war against religion. This needs to stop.

The Commission’s Revisionist History of the American Experience

First, the Commission tells a false history of religious liberty in the colonies and in the early history of the nation. It completely ignores that the idea of building a wall of separation between the church and the state is a very old idea, which was fully enunciated in 1644 by Roger Williams. Report at 37. Next, they ignore the fact that Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware followed Rhode Island’s example by keeping a wall of separation between the church and the state. They also ignore that other colonies, seeing the freedom and success of the states which preserved the separation of church and state, repealed laws which supported their established churches in order to attract more immigrants. By 1776, the founding fathers concluded that separation of church and state had been a success, and while not using the phrase “separation of church and state,” drafted the concept into the Constitution. The inclu-

²Ibid. p. 336.

sion of separation of church and state, impressed upon James Madison by members of the Baptist church, united the Baptists and the members of other denominations to support the Constitution and ensure its adoption. Baptist support was contingent upon the addition of the First Amendment, which was speedily adopted after the adoption of the Constitution. Thus without separation of church and state, the Constitution would never have been adopted. Nevertheless, the Commission would have us believe that religious liberty did not exist in the states prior to the adoption of the Constitution, Report at 37, and that the concept of a wall of separation was the invention of Thomas Jefferson, and not central to the freedoms of our nation. They state that the idea of a wall of separation comes from a single letter, forgotten until the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947, completely omitting the rich history of both the phrase and the idea. Report at 42.

The metaphor of creating a wall of separation between the church and the state was first written by Roger Williams in a reply to John Cotton in 1644, and then reproduced and expanded upon in his *magnum opus*, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, published in London in the same year.³ Parliament banned the book. The metaphor was well known to the founding fathers, probably through the works of James Burgh, raised a Scottish Presbyterian who later became a devout Protestant dissenter. Thomas Jefferson's letter was not first quoted by the Supreme Court in 1947, but rather 68 years earlier in 1879 in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*. The Commission ignores a long line of Presidents who felt compelled to explicitly support the concept of a wall of separation. Besides Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, one of the primary drafters of the Constitution, said that there should be a "separation between religion and government,"⁴ and that religion flourished better without government patronage.⁵ George Washington's diplomats negotiated, and John Adams signed the Treaty

³Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (1644), in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 1, p. 108; the metaphor is reproduced and developed throughout *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Edward Bean Underhill (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1848), see, e.g., p. 435.

⁴ James Madison, "Detached Memoranda" (c. 1817), in Elizabeth Fleet, "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 534–568.

⁵ Madison's Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822.

of Tripoli, which stated that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”⁶ President Fillmore said that “Church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled.”⁷ President Grant said, “Keep the church and the state forever separate.”⁸ President Garfield said that it would be dangerous to use public funds for religious schools and that “The separation of the Church and the State in everything relating to taxation should be absolute.”⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt said there must be “complete severance of Church and State.”¹⁰

In attacking the Supreme Court decisions of the 1940s, the Commission resorts to two tactics that cannot survive scrutiny: a personal attack on Justice Hugo Black, and claims of philosophical influence that the timeline of history makes impossible. The Commission states “Even a few Supreme Court decisions seemed to track with this train of thought [defined earlier in the report as that of Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, and the belief that ‘God is dead’], culminating in a 1947 opinion [*Everson*], in which Justice Hugo Black, a former Ku Klux Klan member, repurposed a metaphor coined by Thomas Jefferson in an attempt to legitimize the new critical philosophy by placing it in the constitutional tradition. Specifically, the Supreme Court ruled on a series of decisions in which it used the ‘wall’ metaphor to regulate a child’s access to religious education and later to ban school prayer and public displays of religion (like the Ten Commandments).” Report at 41-42. Without any support for the notion that Justice Black wrote opinions in accordance with the anti-Catholic philosophies of the Klan, the Commission attempts to persuade the public that Justice Black was racist and that his opinions should be disregard-

⁶ Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, art. 11, signed Nov. 4, 1796; ratified by the U.S. Senate June 7, 1797; proclaimed by President John Adams June 10, 1797 (Barlow translation).

⁷ *The Ovation to Mr. Fillmore: Speeches of Mr. Fillmore*, 1856.

⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, Address to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 29, 1875.

⁹ James A. Garfield, Letter Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (to Hon. George F. Hoar), July 12, 1880.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 361; the statement originated in T. Roosevelt’s 1915 public letter opposing public funding of sectarian schools in New York.

ed. This is an *ad hominem* attack commonly used in the highly charged political debates of today, but counterproductive to finding truth and establishing unity. It is only useful in persuading the uninformed. The suggestion that *Everson* “tracked” with Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, or later critical theory is historically implausible. Foucault’s major works postdated *Everson*, Sartre was never a source of American Establishment Clause doctrine, and the Court grounded its reasoning in American sources: Madison, Jefferson, disestablishment, and the First Amendment tradition. To attempt to smear the Supreme Court with Justice Black’s much earlier Klan membership and with Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre is disingenuous. While Justice Black held that the Constitution established a wall of separation between the church and the state, in the same decision, the decision attacked by the Commission, Justice Black held that government reimbursement for transportation to Catholic schools was constitutional. How ironic! The Commission faults Justice Black for anti-Catholic bias from his Klan past, yet the very decision it attacks is one in which he upheld government support benefiting Catholic school-children. And it faults him for following philosophies that no serious legal historian would argue influenced the Court’s reasoning.

The Commission correctly states that much of the hostility towards religion in America today is based upon a “broader cultural assumption that religious belief should remain invisible while secular ideologies enjoy full freedom to influence public institutions.” Report at 21. The Commission is correct to say, “People of faith should not be required to leave their religious convictions behind when entering the workplace, engaging in commerce, serving their communities, or participating in public debate,” and that “institutions should foster environments in which citizens with divergent convictions can work together while maintaining fidelity to conscience.” Report at 21. Nevertheless, the Report goes on to continually overstate the case by saying that the “wall of separation” ideology creates a wall between personal faith and public life. While this may be true when the idea of a wall of separation is misconstrued and weaponized by secular atheists, it is not true that the wall of separation erected by the Constitution and so often referred to by generations of leaders who have gone before us is a wall between personal faith and public life. The true wall of separation is between the state and the church. It is

there so that a person can freely exercise their personal faith and freely engage in the public sphere, without prejudice or persecution. To deny that there is complete separation of church and state in the Constitution, aka “the wall,” and to deny that the wall can serve a useful purpose in protecting individual freedom is un-American and counter to both our experience and the knowledge and intent of our forefathers. The wall of separation is not a wall between religious people and public life; it is a wall between ecclesiastical power and civil power, protecting both religion and civil freedom.

The Commission’s Objectionable Recommendations

Based upon the above arguments, the Commission recommends that the United States adopt its recommendation to post in the workplace, to teach our students, and to teach as many citizens as possible that the Constitution neither creates nor requires the separation of church and state, and that there should be no wall of separation between church and state. If this false ideology is embraced by the people, it will allow for many different “reforms,” and eventually be used to justify any oppressive religious legislation so long as it is for the good of the people or represents the will of the majority. This is a radical teaching that has the potential, over time, to roll back the freedoms we enjoy in this nation, and return us to the political conflicts and tyranny our forefathers came to America to escape. This is the underlying philosophical foundation of additional, objectionable recommendations that the Commission makes.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations. It bases its argument on the idea that in times of need, to separate the physical help from spiritual help is to deny the full scope of the help that the person in need requires. This may be true in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this is an argument to the church that wishes to provide those services to fund them internally, and not rely upon the state. For religion to rely upon state funding is for religion to take the role of an imposter, pretending to provide aid, when in fact it is the state that is making the aid possible. It also allows the religion that is relying upon government funding to use that funding as an

aid in indoctrination and evangelism, thus the government is not remaining neutral. The Commission argues that church members today must leave their religious beliefs at home to engage in humanitarian work. That should never be true for work that they do without the aid of the state, and should only be true to the extent the state is providing them assistance. This is for the protection of religion as much as it is for the state and its citizens. Anytime government money is available, a religion will modify its beliefs to adhere to the values of the government so that it can obtain funds. Public money always brings public control. Furthermore, different religions may claim fairness requires equal funding, even though they do not provide equal services. This certainly will devolve into a quagmire that the state would do well to avoid.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious education. All the reasons against supporting religious philanthropy apply here, as well as additional reasons. The Commission argues correctly that the state benefits from a religious people. But the Commission errs in thinking the state can be involved in making people religious. In education, it is important what is taught. By supporting religious education, the state will be making decisions about what doctrines can be taught. This most commonly takes the form of accreditation. Many sectarian schools are not accredited for this reason. But it can go further. Will the state support a school whose religion teaches interracial marriage is a sin, or that women should not receive higher education? Will the state support a school that teaches polygamy? What about a school that doesn't teach many things, like the Amish? This puts the state into the business of determining what values are worth supporting and what values are not. Don't think that the decisions will only be required for that which may seem obvious to us today. Today the Commission is recommending that the Ten Commandments be posted in schools and courthouses. Which Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments of Exodus or Deuteronomy? One is more Jewish focused, one more focused on creation, both requiring the keeping of the seventh day, not the first day? Or maybe the Ten Commandments of a Roman Catholic catechism, which a Protestant will tell you dispenses with the law against graven images and a Catholic priest will tell you merely divides the commandments differently. Or maybe the state can just abbreviate the Ten Commandments, number

them like a Protestant, and hope everybody is happy. That is the solution in Texas. Texas is getting into the business of doctrine. A government that refuses to fund religious doctrine is not thereby endorsing secularism, rather, it is refusing to decide religious questions. That restraint is not hostility to religion; it is the condition under which religious communities remain free and prosperous.

The Commission has one more recommendation that has the potential to expand the breach in the wall of separation. The Commission recommends repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment prohibits churches from engaging in partisan politics, specifically supporting a candidate for election. It does not prohibit the church from speaking on the issues of the day, or even telling its members how to vote regarding issues, such as abortion and the right to life. What would repealing the Amendment do? Churches would become fabulous non-profit vehicles to engage in political activities. Pastors are known to exhibit tremendous sway over their congregations. It is not hard to imagine the intense pressure that a pastor could feel to deliver his congregation's votes for money. It is not hard to imagine that wealthy and powerful interests might attempt to influence political causes through the churches. Combine that with a patronage system whereby the congregations could receive government grants based upon the Commission's other recommendations, and there is a recipe for disaster. What failing congregation won't make a little compromise for a little financial gain? As scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV. As financial interests invade the churches, invariably the public will be able to smell hypocrisy, and any gains either the church or the state thinks may be had by their union will be lost. Only a dead, lifeless church on government life support will remain.

Today, the Johnson Amendment is already being dismantled by non-enforcement. In *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, the IRS and several religious plaintiffs proposed a settlement that would have substantially narrowed enforcement of the Johnson Amendment as applied to churches. This settlement was opposed by the Baptist Joint Committee and Americans United, two reputable religious liberty advocacy organizations, not secular humanists. A federal district court found that it lacked juris-

diction on March 31, 2026. The effort to remove the barrier between tax-exempt churches and partisan campaign activity is expected to continue. The Commission should reverse its recommendation for repealing the Johnson Amendment, and instead, recommend its enforcement.

The Commission Correctly Identifies a Peril, but Not the Solution

Commissioner Bishop Robert Barron made an important observation about secularism. He said, “[T]here’s a philosophical issue which is secularism proposing itself as some kind of neutral ground, but it’s not neutral ground. Secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system. It wants to dominate the whole of life and therefore to exclude religion [from the public square].” Report at 181. Commissioner Kelly Shackelford makes a particularly insightful comment that “the one thing a totalitarian regime will never allow is citizens who hold an allegiance to one higher than the government. So, whenever that type of power of coalescing comes together, the first flashpoint is always going to be religious freedom. And if you lose there, you will lose everything else. So, what we’re really dealing with here is the precipice of all our freedoms.” Report at 29. This should be particularly sobering when combined with the Commission’s observation that “contemporary progressive opposition to religious liberty ... seek[s] freedom for its own views but coercion of religious groups whose traditional beliefs conflict with current trends such as transgenderism.” Report at 35-36. The Commission is correct in urging the courts to view atheism and atheistic determinism as ideologically and functionally similar to religion. Just as secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system, religion, when granted power, tends toward the same result. Combining church and state together, financially or otherwise, will result in one or the other demanding power and control over the other. History has shown us that the stronger the bond between church and state, the more oppressed the society. The union of church and state is the recipe for the kind of totalitarian regime warned about by Commissioner Shackelford. This is not a new discovery. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams wrote, “Checks and Ballances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them, are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body.—Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as Soon as either

Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unballanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!”¹¹ The church and state should remain forever apart, neutral towards each other, and neutral towards secularism.

Finally, the country as a whole should not be swayed by arguments made for religion in the military. It is true, the military should be very careful not to support or oppose any religion, but it is also true that the military must be able to provide religious services to its members. The reason they must provide those services is that in the military, especially when deployed, there are no alternative means to obtain religious services. A service member deployed in a foreign land may not be able to go to the local Baptist, Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, or Mormon church, or synagogue or mosque, because they may not exist in the area, nor would it necessarily be safe to go off base to attend one.

Conclusion

Just before and after the Revolution, the disestablishment of the state churches was an important project of our founding fathers. It was not without controversy. The experience of it should not be lost upon us.

Reverend Lyman Beecher was a Congregationalist minister, one of the most influential evangelical preachers of the early 1800s, and a leader in the movement to maintain the established church of Connecticut. Before 1818, he argued for the need of an established church. He said, “So the democracy, as it rose, included nearly all the minor sects, besides the Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling tippling folk, infidels, and ruff-scuff generally, and made a dead set at us of the standing order.” He believed that an es-

¹¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 25 June 1813, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0202>. [Original source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 6, 11 March to 27 November 1813, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 226–229.]

tablished church was the only way to counteract these evil influences. In 1818, Connecticut voted to disestablish its church. Beecher described the experience. “For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.” He went on to observe, “They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe buckles, and cocked hats, and golden-headed canes.”¹²

Tocqueville observed on his trip to America, “When I arrived in the United States, it was the country’s religious aspect that first captured my attention.”¹³ By speaking to Americans, he learned religion flourished *because* of the complete separation of church and state, not in spite of it. That is precisely the lesson the Commission would have the nation unlearn, or rather, learn again the hard way.

The Commission is wrong to treat separation of church and state as a modern innovation. In America, the separation of church and state formed the foundation of our dearest freedoms, supported by Baptists, dissenters, and citizens of every faith, vindicated by disestablishment, and praised by foreign observers as religion and freedom thrived together.

As Roger Williams warned, freedom of conscience must be defended: “Having bought truth dear, we must not sell it cheap, nor the least grain of it for the whole world, no not for the saving of souls, though our own most precious..t”¹⁴

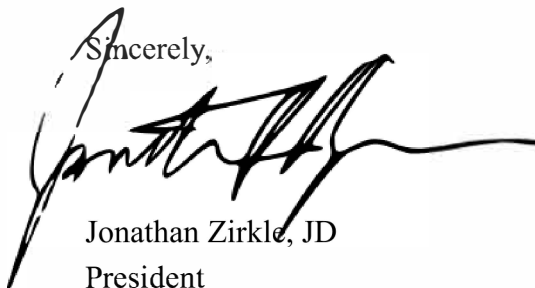
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 340.

¹⁴ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), p. 9.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. America will do best to forever maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Zirkle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Zirkle, JD
President

From: tR Sarnt<[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Religious Liberty Commission draft

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:28:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hi Religious Liberty Commission members,

I DO NOT agree with the plan to "build a bridge" between church and state, as this will corrupt both parties. We need to keep the wall between church and state intact, and even strengthen it for the good of both church and state.

In countries where the two entities are combined, there is destruction of both.

Thank you,

Riel Sarno
Fort Wayne, IN

From: ella miller <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:37:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: ella miller <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >

Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2026 at 08:30:35 AM EDT

Subject: Separation of church and state

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to respectfully express my disagreement with any effort to weaken the longstanding principle of the separation of church and state.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," I believe this principle protects both religious freedom and the right of every individual to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, without government establishing or favoring one religious belief over another.

The Bible teaches that matters of conscience belong to God, not to civil government. While many Americans, including myself, value the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Scripture, genuine faith cannot be compelled by law. True obedience to God comes from a willing heart, not from government mandate. Religious liberty is best preserved when every person is free to follow his or her conscience without coercion.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to uphold and protect the principle of the separation of church and state, ensuring that both religious freedom and freedom of conscience remain secure for all Americans.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,
Dianne Hogan

From: Cathy Ludgate <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:38:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I would like to request that you please protect my right as a citizen to have the freedom to choose who and how to worship. We do not see anywhere in the Bible that God forces people to worship him. He has given mankind freedom of choice from the very beginning. Historically, we have seen nations fall when they force a particular choice on their people. And, while I strongly believe in Christian values, I believe this nation will follow that same path should our leaders, YOU, make this same decision.

Praying that you will follow God's wisdom and not your own,

Cathy Ludgate

Sent from my iPhone

From: Steven Poenitz <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:39:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please reconsider our religious liberty for separation of church and state.

Steven Poenitz

[REDACTED] PII

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Donna Bridges <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:42:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

We are strongly urging that this committee of the RLC stand behind the original meaning of the separation of church and state and that there be no compromise on this issue. Looking at the history of the church being tied up with the state, there is never a good outcome....the state begins enforcing and persecuting those who won't do what the government wants.....The Pilgrims left England because the government would not let the people worship as their conscience demanded....The crusades and Spanish Inquisition killed millions because of the government forcing THEIR PREFERRED RELIGION!

Please keep keep the separation of church and state SEPERATE!

Sincerely,

Philip and Donna Bridges

[REDACTED] PII

From: SusantMejeur<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Separation of church and state- Susan Mejeur

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:43:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a United States citizen, I am writing to urge you to reconsider any recommendations to repeal the Johnson Amendment or otherwise breach the separation of church and state.

History demonstrates that when the state interferes with religious independence or combines the two institutions, it invariably leads to persecution. Many who first settled in this country, as well as those who immigrate here today, do so specifically to escape such environments and to seek the freedom to practice their beliefs without government overreach.

The separation of church and state is a founding principle of our nation and a vital protection that has personally benefited me in my own workplace. Please do not move forward with changes that would jeopardize this essential safeguard.

Sincerely,

Susan Mejeur
Kalamazoo, Michigan

From: Monique Miller <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Preservation of Separation of Church & State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:45:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this work.

Religious liberty not only includes the freedom TO practice religion; it also includes the freedom to NOT practice religion. Most importantly, religious liberty is about respecting individual conscience. There are many belief systems. It is inappropriate and potentially abusive for one particular belief system to be pushed, or worse, enforced, on the population. Who decides what religious tenets will be enforced? Even Jesus did not coerce people to accept His words. Who are those who would seek to destroy separation of church & state? Is there desire for power & control?, which is the opposite of God's kingdom.

Coersion and control have no place in a free country.

May the commission's work focus on the gospel, not culture wars. The love of Christ constrains us: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, not government interpreting scripture and mandating religious behaviors. The preservation of Separation of Church & State is essential for freedom of conscience. History has shown this. Indeed, this country came into existence on this very principle. Please review the history of Roger Williams, and how the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations was founded.

Thank you,
Monique Miller
Sent from my iPhone

From: Thu Clark<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom coment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:46:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with "Pillar of Freedom comments. Please implement them". Thank you.

Sincerely,
Thu Clark.

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] McLean <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to RLC Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:46:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

We CAN'T legislate religion....

There's serious danger in pursuing solidifying integration of church and state. Instead of "making America Great Again", it's actually a regression. People actually fled persecution in Europe, coming to this land, in order to avoid the very principals that your initiative opens the gates to.

As Christian's, we are admonished that Jesus Himself said in John 18:36 (My Kingdom is not of this world); as well as Philipians 3:20 tell us that our citizenship should be in heaven

Our principal commission as Christian's is to "occupying until HE comes".... and spread the gospel. As the "Wheat" and "tears" will grow together. our job is to sound the alarm so others can recognize the danger and prepare for Christ SOON coming.

Always Prayerful
S.A.McLean

From: Richard and Jancie Clark <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State-JANCIE LEE CLARK

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:53:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you!

I believe that God has blessed our nation BECAUSE we offer everyone liberty to believe as their conscience requires.

If the government makes laws to force obedience to their brand of religion, RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION is sure to follow.

Please, let us keep the US a nation of religious freedom, and NOT change it to one of PERSECUTION.

Respectfully,

Jancie Lee Wilson Clark, RN, BSN

From: Glory Proudfoot <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with pillaroffreedom.org

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 08:54:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

Please take the response of pillaroffreedom.org to heart as they represent my own views and tens of thousands of other fellow believers along with me.

Thank you & may God bless you!

Glory

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Linette

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:03:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a person of faith, I am deeply concerned that the religious liberty commission is seeking break down the wall of separation between church and state and replace it with a bridge. And as a person of faith, I am asking you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state such as using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

The idea of separation is not a secular idea meant to destroy religion but was created by those who had seen the dangers of church and state holding hands, and understood that a close friendship between the two will ultimately lead to the corruption of both. And who understood that if our nation was to be truly free, the church and state must remain separate.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Linette De Graw

Davenport, Florida

From: Kuffa Hinsene <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] In supporting religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:03:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

My name is Tigist Fantaye
I support church and state separation

From: Jeffrey Rittenour <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-- Religious Liberty Commission Report (Jeffrey Rittenour)

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:11:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States, Jeffrey Rittenour, writing to thank the Religious Liberty Commission for its vital work in defending the Free Exercise Clause, while also expressing my earnest concern regarding a growing, dismissive approach to the Establishment Clause and the Separation of Church and State.

Today, it is vital to remember that we can thank Christians for the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment of the US Constitution. The first person in the American colonies to advocate for keeping the church out of government and the government out of church was Roger Williams, a devout Christian pastor. He fought for this new arrangement because of the severe religious persecution that he and millions of others experienced.

Williams famously warned that opening a gap in the "hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world" ultimately corrupts the faith itself. He was committed to the example of Jesus, who never forced compliance and declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

The disestablishment of religion was an extraordinary achievement that has contributed significantly to America's success. As someone who belongs to a religious minority, I am alarmed at the new willingness to redefine the Establishment Clause to accommodate a much closer union of church and state—a trajectory that will inevitably favor majority religions at the expense of others. The Founding Fathers gave us the Establishment Clause to protect against religious tyranny, and the Free Exercise Clause to protect against secular tyranny. When the two are out of balance, the future of true religious liberty in America is threatened.

Specific areas of concern from your report include:

- **Opposition to Separation:** It sets a dangerous precedent when an organization dedicated to liberty openly opposes the separation of church and state.
- **School Funding:** Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools. A key milestone of disestablishment was ensuring tax dollars are not used to support religious institutions, which inherently invites state entanglement and compromises taxpayer conscience.
- **Coerced Sectarianism:** Sectarian religion should not be mandated by the state, such as requiring the 10 Commandments in classrooms or state-led prayers. Coerced devotion contradicts the very nature of genuine faith.
- **The Johnson Amendment:** Defending the repeal of the Johnson Amendment removes crucial safeguards that protect houses of worship from partisan politicking, preserving their higher, spiritual purpose.

The Christian commitment to religious liberty should be guided by God's character of love, His absolute respect for human free will, and the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). If we desire our own faith to be free from government interference, we must guarantee that same freedom to all.

I pray that God grants you discernment to honor the full legacy of religious freedom in America and the courage to defend these balanced, eternal principles.

Thank you for receiving my feedback.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Rittenour

From: "Paul & Kari" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State Kari Novak

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:13:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Kari Novak
Yakima, Washington

--

Everyone smiles in the same language.

Melinda

From: Samuel goffaux <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Commentary on the preliminary report on religious freedom.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:14:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty,

I am writing to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the conclusion of your preliminary report that the doctrine of the separation of church and state is foreign to the founding principles of the United States or contrary to the Constitution.

I fully recognize that the Founding Fathers regarded religious liberty as a fundamental right. However, the historical record also demonstrates that they sought to prevent any union between civil authority and religious authority, believing that such a separation protected both freedom of conscience and the integrity of religion.

The First Amendment states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

This provision establishes a dual principle: the government must neither establish an official religion nor interfere with the free exercise of religion by its citizens.

In his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association on January 1, 1802, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

"I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State."

This expression was never intended to exclude religion from society. Rather, it was meant to prevent the government from exercising authority over religious matters and, likewise, to prevent religious institutions from exercising authority over civil government.

James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," expressed a similar conviction in his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785):

"Religion... can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence."

Madison also observed:

"Experience witnesseth that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of religion, have had a contrary operation."

These statements demonstrate that the Founding Fathers did not regard the separation of church and state as hostility toward religion, but rather as an essential safeguard for religious liberty.

George Washington affirmed this same principle in his 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, stating that the Government of the United States "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." This declaration reflects the conviction that the government must protect the rights of all people, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Regarding the separation of Church and State in the holy scriptures:

(Daniel 3:4-6,12,14-18t)

It is true that Nebuchadnezzar was entirely out of his place and did wholly wrong when he attempted to exercise authority in religion; and the story is written to show to all people forever that every autocracy is just as much of place, and just as far wrong, when it presumes to assert authority in religion. At the same time it is true, and equally important to remember, that the three Hebrew individuals openly and uncompromisingly disregarded that autocratic assertion of authority in religion. And the story is written to teach that all other individuals forever must do as did those three individuals, if these too will be true to God, to the right, to themselves, and to their kind.

(Daniel 6:6-8, 15-16, 22t)

It is true that, notwithstanding its principles of supremacy and inflexibility of the law, the Medo-Persian government did wrong when it by its law entered the field of religion; and the story is written to show to all governments and people forever that every government is equally wrong in entering by law the field of religion. It is equally true, and equally important to remember, that the individual, - Daniel, - did absolutely and uncompromisingly disregard that law; and that the story is written to teach all individuals forever that in all like circumstances they must do as did that individual, if they will honor God and the right and be true to themselves and to their fellowmen.

(John 11:48t, John 5:16, 18, Lucas 20-25t)

It is true that the Church of Israel did an enormously wicked thing when she allied herself with the civil power in order to make her will effective; and the story of it is written to show to all the world forever that every church commits the like enormity whenever, under any pretext whatever, she seeks to control the civil power to make her will effective. It is equally true, and equally important to recognize and remember, that the One lone Individual Who was the object of this wicked alliance of the church and State, would die under it rather than to yield to it or to recognize it in the slightest degree. And this is all written, that every other individual to the world's end shall be ready under like circumstances to do as did the Lord Jesus, in order to be true to God, to the truth, true to himself, and true to the human race.

(Acts of the Apostles 4: 18,19-20, Acts of the Apostles 5: 28-29,32)

It is true that the church of Israel went out of the right way, and did entirely wrong, when she assumed the authority to decide what the members of that church should or should not believe and teach; and the story of it is written to make plain to all churches and people forever, that every church is just as far from the right way, and equally wrong, when she assumes any authority to decide what any member of the church shall or shall not believe and teach. It is equally true, and just as important to remember, that the individual church-members there openly and uncompromisingly refused to recognize any such authority to any extent or in any degree whatever. And this is written to teach to all church-members forever that they must individually do the like, if they will be true to God, true to Christ, true to the right, true to themselves, and true to mankind.

The three Hebrew young men did right when they refused to recognize any right of autocracy in religion. Daniel did right when he refused to recognize any right of civil government of law in religion. The Lord Jesus did right when he refused to recognize any right of the church through the civil power to make effective her will. The apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus did right when they refused to recognize any right of the church to decide or to dictate what they should or should not believe and teach. In each of these cases God openly and in mighty miraculous power made perfectly plain to all that these individuals were right. By this it is openly demonstrated not only that they were right, but that they were divinely right. And in each case the story has been written out that all powers and people forever may know that such course is divinely right. And whosoever will stand with God as did each of these in his place, can know it.

History confirms that whenever civil and religious powers have become united, freedom of conscience has suffered. The Founding Fathers were well acquainted with the religious persecutions of Europe and deliberately sought to ensure that such abuses would never be repeated in the United States.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider the interpretation presented in its preliminary report. Maintaining a clear distinction between religious institutions and civil government does not weaken religious liberty; on the contrary, it ensures that every individual is free to worship according to conscience, without governmental favoritism or discrimination.

Thank you for considering these observations. I respectfully submit them in the hope that the Commission's final recommendations will continue to uphold the enduring principles of liberty upon which the United States was founded.

Respectfully,

Samuel Goffaux
Belgium

From: Dan Brown <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:16:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Commission's Objectionable Recommendations Weakening the Separation of Church and State

As the draft report has rightly pointed out on page 42, the words "wall of separation between church and state" do not appear in the First Amendment or in the Constitution.

I am opposed to what appears to be a weakening and dismantling of the separation of church and state. The religious liberty draft report speaks of the negative influence the state can exert on the church but does not address the opposite problem, namely the church influencing the state in an effort to use the state to enforce its agenda and dogmas.

History clearly shows the principle, the concept, beginning with Roger Williams in Rhode Island in the early 1600's and then William Penn in Pennsylvania that the separation of church and state was an early American principle. In these early cases it was the church who used the state to enforce its dogmas. In 1635, the Massachusetts Bay Colony convicted the Puritan minister Roger Williams of sedition and heresy. The court found him guilty of spreading "new and dangerous opinions" such as the absolute separation of church and state.

On page 42 the draft report speaks of the government not taking over the functions of the church or coercing religious observance. My great fear is the opposite, the church taking over the functions of the government as the Massachusetts Bay Colony did by enforcing the beliefs of the Puritans upon its own citizens.

Commission's Objectionable Recommendations of the Johnson Amendment

The Johnson Amendment should not be altered, modified, or relaxed. It should remain as written. Houses of worship exist to address spiritual and moral concerns, provide guidance to their own community, as well as encouraging the world to a more spiritual and moral existence. The Johnson Amendment bans all 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations—including religious institutions, charities, and universities—from endorsing or opposing political candidates for public office. Should this prohibition not be maintained as it currently is, political figures and influential organizations with political relationships would be able to make tax deductible donations to religious organizations in order to have the religious organization endorse political figures to its own membership thereby corrupting the separation between church and state. This is not the role of religious institutions nor should it become the role.

Removal of Carrie Prejean Boler from the Religious Liberty Commission

The removal of Carrie Prejean Boler from the Religious Liberty Commission and attaching the label of "antisemitic" because she was vocal regarding her theological disagreement with some on the committee is concerning and casts much doubt on the ability of this commission to be nonpartisan and fair. The draft report spends much time and space on hearing and recording the accounts of various individuals, invited by commission members, and their religious liberty struggles, which are valuable and important. The question arises, was Carrie Prejean Boler permitted to have any individuals bring their religious liberty struggles to the

attention of the commission. The value of a commission that permits only accounts from individuals with similar political leanings is questionable.

The antisemitism label is used today among a plethora of other labels to cancel people often to silence them and stifle their voice. Canceling the messenger is easier and quicker than canceling the message. This appears to have been the choice of the commission. Either go along or be removed.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully ask that the Commission withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. Separation of church and state is a principle that has been part of America since the 1600's.

From: Alain Hamele <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:19:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with pillar of freedom's response. I will never agree to a union of church and state. World history has taught us that such unions are destructive to religious freedom. In the early history of this nation, many settlers came to this country to escape persecution and religious oppression. This exactly why the founding fathers of this nation were careful to make sure that this was not repeated by lawmakers in this country.

While we learn that history has a tendency to repeat itself, we the people should do everything in our power to protect the rights of all peoples to exercise their right to freely worship God according to their conscience whether we share their beliefs or not.

I believe that the gospel should be preached from the pulpits and not from courts.

Sent from my iPad

From: Leslie Dillert<[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Removal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:20:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

I base my response to your proposal to eliminate the protective wall between church and state which our U.S. Constitution provides in stating that government shall make no laws regarding the establishment of religion. The scriptural basis for my response is Rom.1:16. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

This states that the power to redeem man from sin and recreate us completely back into God's likeness and image, morally, mentally and in everyway is the power of God alone. No power of the state is needed by Christ in order to bring us back to His moral image. This is the Gospel Commission given to the churches, not involvement in government. This is a pure and powerful Gospel. Please do not corrupt the churches through joining into the political realm. I believe you will bring God's displeasure upon this nation by doing so!

Sincerely,

Leslie Diller

From: Josh Wilson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- OVERALL REPORT – Josh Wilson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:25:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I strongly support this comprehensive Religious Liberty Commission Report, which rightly affirms religion as an indispensable foundation for human flourishing, civic virtue, strong families, and a free society, while documenting the growing threats to conscience, faith-based institutions, parental rights, students, military personnel, healthcare workers, and houses of worship. Its clear-eyed historical grounding in America's founding principles—particularly the recognition that our rights are endowed by our Creator—and its practical recommendations to restore genuine religious liberty for all Americans provide an essential roadmap to counter ideological overreach, restore institutional integrity, and renew our national commitment to the First Amendment. This draft should be finalized and acted upon swiftly to protect the bridge between faith and government that has sustained our republic.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Josh Wilson

From: Josh Wilson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTe- OVERALL REPORT / EDUCATION CHAPTER – Josh Wilson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:25:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

In review previous public comments, I would like to reply to the Americans United for Separation of Church and State's claim that private school voucher programs violate religious liberty by "forcing" taxpayers to fund religion is misleading and ahistorical. Vouchers empower parents—especially low-income and minority families—with choices already available to wealthier households, directing funds to follow the child rather than entrenching a government monopoly on education that often marginalizes religious perspectives. The Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld such neutral aid programs (e.g., *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, *Espinoza v. Montana Dept. of Revenue*, *Carson v. Makin*) as consistent with the Free Exercise Clause, rejecting the outdated "no aid" separationism that Americans United promotes. Far from coercion, these programs enhance pluralism, improve outcomes for many participants, and prevent the state from compelling families to subsidize secular indoctrination against their beliefs—precisely the kind of government overreach the First Amendment guards against. The Report rightly prioritizes parental rights and institutional autonomy over rigid secular uniformity.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Josh Wilson

From: Josh Wilson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTe- CHAPTER 14 / MYTH OF SECULAR NEUTRALITY – Josh Wilson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:25:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I strongly support Chapter 14's unmasking of "The Myth of Secular Neutrality," which rightly exposes how aggressive secularism functions as a rival ideology that displaces the Christian faith that was foundational to America's founding. Our nation's charters, state constitutions, Declaration of Independence, and early laws were steeped in biblical principles, Protestant ethics, and the conviction that rights are endowed by our Creator—not granted by government or invented by secular elites. This chapter effectively demonstrates how pretending secularism is neutral has enabled the marginalization of Christianity in public schools, institutions, and policy, undermining the moral and civic virtues that sustained self-government. By calling for renewed civic education and celebration of America's Judeo-Christian heritage, it charts a vital course to restore religious liberty where Christianity can once again freely shape a flourishing republic without apology or coercion.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Josh Wilson

From: Elsa McCullough <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:25:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I want separation of church and state. I believe it has make America great and blessed by God.

From: Shelley Senner <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty attacked

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:27:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States, and have enjoyed religious liberty since becoming a member of a Bible believing minority, now for many years. . . I join with many others in my minority community to thank the Religious Liberty Commission for doing some good work in defending the Free Exercise Clause. However, I do express my concern with its dismissive approach to the Establishment Clause and the Separation of Church and State.

I agree with a former pastor of my church in what he has written....

Today, I think it's important to remember that we can thank Christians for the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment of the US Constitution. The first person in the American colonies to keep the church out of government and the government out of church was Roger Williams, a devout Christian pastor. He fought for this new arrangement because of the religious persecution that he and millions of others experienced in Europe and the American colonies. He saw the results of churches who persecuted dissenters and he was committed to the example of Jesus who never forced anybody and declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

The disestablishment of church was an extraordinary achievement that has contributed significantly to America's success. As somebody who belongs to a religious minority, I am alarmed at the new willingness to redefine the Establishment Clause to accommodate a much closer union of church and state that will inevitably favor larger religions. The Founding Fathers gave us the Establishment Clause to protect against religious tyranny and the Free Exercise Clause to protect against secular tyranny. When the two are out of balance the future of religious liberty in America is threatened.

Specific areas of concern from your report include:

- * It sets a dangerous precedent when you openly oppose the separation of church and state.
- * Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools. A key part of disestablishment in America was to no longer use tax dollars to support religious institutions.
- * Sectarian religion should not be forced in school, such as the required posting 10 Commandments in classrooms, or required prayers.
- * Repealing the Johnson amendment removes safeguards that protect houses of worship from partisan politicking and preserves their spiritual purpose.

The Christian's commitment to religious liberty should be guided by God's character of love, his respect for human choice and free will, and the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). I pray that God grants you discernment to understand the legacy of religious freedom in America and the courage to defend the eternal principles so important to us.

Thank you for receiving my feedback!

Shelley Senner

ABIDING IN CHRIST: "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." John 15:10

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world....We love Him, because He first loved us....For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 4:17-5:3.

From: melissa wheeler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:27:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear head of the Religious liberty Commission,

Thank you for your interest in promoting religious liberty. This is a cause dear to me. I want to express my concern for the future of religious liberty in America and the World.

The first amendment was well written and if enforced our freedom would be secure. The main problem has been the Establishment clause being held above the free exercise clause. If both were held in equal weight we would not have the current state of affairs. Additionally men's hearts need to be reached to create a moral society it cannot be legislated. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

I also want to say I am in agreement with the Pillars of Faith statement, sent to your office by attorney Johnathan Zirkle.

Please prayerfully consider your course.

Sincerely

Melissa Wheeler

From: Kay Campbell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protesting the combining of church and state separation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:31:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have read the Pillar of Freedom response, and I agree with it!!!

There church should not have any jurisdiction over the state, and vice versa. To do so, is to infringe upon the conscience of Individuals, of any faith!!!

Thank you

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Jan Grentzt<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report - Janice Grentz

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:33:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

As a citizen, I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

In my study of history I recall the horrific results of the mingling of church and state during the middle ages and in the early history of our own country. Roger Williams' experiment proved a success. We would be foolish not to learn lessons from those times. We do NOT need a bridge, but a wall to protect each citizen to be allowed to follow the dictates of their own conscience.

I appreciate my voice being heard and these points to be seriously considered.

Sincerely,
Janice R Grentz

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:35:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please vote to keep church and state issues separate. There are too many risks when allowing government to sponsor and control religious issues.

Keep them totally separate!

Thanks

Jon Richards

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for Android.

From: Sharon Ferryt<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:39:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Comittee,

As a concerned citizen and as the grand daughter of a decorated (German heritage by the way) WW 2 veteran, the daughter of a veteran and the wife of a veteran I feel compelled to speak on the religious liberty report before you.

I am concerned because your report has the potential to lay the groundwork for many decisions including Executive Orders in future.

Although not avidly religious, my grandfather gave the best years of his life to support and defend the freedoms we find in our U.S. Constitution. He was shot down over Germany, imprisoned, starved, tortured and then marched for an unbelievable distance in terrible weather to be surrendered to the American lines. The scars never fully healed but the satisfaction of knowing he had protected his homeland against all enemies foreign and domestic allowed him to sleep at night because he had done the right thing. He respected the liberty of his wife to choose a different religion during their marriage than the one she espoused when they took their vows. Her change in faith rocked their marriage but it survived for over 50 years because the principal of freedom of choice was respected. To say that "Congress shall make no law ..." and then write reports saying that no separation of church and state concept exists in our governing documents could be and would be a huge step in undermining the very idea that we should never copy every other nation in history by assigning a state religion.

Although the freedom to "choose ye this day whom you will serve" is Biblical it does not make the US an officially Christian nation nor should it try to become one.

Outward conformity never produces inward integrity.

I ask you to carefully consider the influence this report will have on future generations and administrations and make no statements that will erode this precious and unique freedom.

Sincere thanks for your service,

Sharon Ferry

Bloomsburg, PA

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:47:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

When the protesters in England came to the US they were leaving oppression from the government. They were seeking freedom from church and state. God is my protector and i choose freedom from the US government to determine who i pray to, and freedom to worship whomever i choose and on what day of the week i worship my Higher power. Do not go back in time when millions of people were killed because the government had the power to enforce worship. I choose freedom from church and state united.

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)

From: Debi Beach <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission - Comment on Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:49:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this public comment out of deep concern for the future of religious liberty in the United States. I urge the Commission to reject any recommendation directed at the Department of Justice or any other branch of government that would weaken the historic constitutional principle of keeping religion and government institutionally separate, as well as any proposal that encourages greater unity between the two.

America's greatest contribution to the cause of religious liberty has not been the state's endorsement of religion, but the protection of every person's God-given right to worship according to conscience without government interference. This principle has allowed religious communities of every tradition to flourish in freedom while preserving civil peace.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I write from the perspective of a religious minority whose spiritual ancestors experienced firsthand the dangers that arise when government aligns itself with the religious majority. During America's colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and many other religious minorities endured discrimination, imprisonment, fines, and civil persecution because certain established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These injustices were among the very reasons the Founders rejected religious establishments and adopted the First Amendment.

The experience of Seventh-day Adventists provides another historical warning. During the late nineteenth century, Adventists who faithfully observed God's seventh-day Sabbath were prosecuted under Sunday laws that were imposed, once again, by the religious Christian majority. Some of our fellow believers were fined, imprisoned, and even forced into chain gangs because they chose to honor Saturday as the biblical Sabbath rather than conform to popular Blue Law Sunday observances. Their only offense was obeying the dictates of conscience and remaining faithful to their religious convictions. Their experience stands as a warning that whenever civil authority is used to enforce religious beliefs or practices, freedom of conscience is inevitably endangered, and religious minorities are often the first to endure discrimination and persecution.

The medieval Inquisition demonstrated how religious institutions armed with civil authority suppressed dissent through torture, punishment, and even death. Various forms of religious extremism, including movements that have justified violence in the name of Islam, have shown how state-backed religious ideology can deny liberty of conscience. Likewise, communist regimes that officially embraced atheism illustrate the opposite side of the same error: when government suppresses religion altogether, believers are again persecuted. Though these different oppressive systems differed in ideology, they shared one common characteristic—the concentration of civil power over matters of conscience.

The strength of the American constitutional system is that it avoids these extremes. Government was never commissioned to direct the spiritual lives of the people. The mission of the state is to preserve order, protect

individual rights, and secure equal treatment under the law. The mission of the church is altogether different: to preach the gospel, emphasize truth and love through persuasion, not coercion, and call people to a voluntary faith, as Jesus did. These two institutions are strongest and remain uncorrupted when each remains within its proper sphere.

Our nation has become home to a diverse group of churches, synagogues, mosques, and religious communities because government has generally refrained from controlling or establishing religion. This constitutional heritage has protected both the majority and the minority alike. I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to recommend policies that reinforce—not diminish—the constitutional barriers separating ecclesiastical authority from civil government. Religious liberty is best preserved when government neither advances nor inhibits religion but instead protects the equal rights of all people to follow their own conscience.

The United States must remain a nation where every church is free to proclaim its beliefs without governmental control and where every citizen is free to worship—or not to worship—without governmental pressure. History has already taught us the consequences of abandoning this principle. We should not repeat mistakes that countless generations have paid dearly to overcome. For if we do, we would once again be fanning the flames of intolerance, religious bigotry, and injustice.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Beach from California

From: Naomi Griffin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:57:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

In view of the invitation to the public to submit their concerns, I wanted to share some of my thoughts.

Throughout history, when ever a Religious Body gains political power, persecution in one form or another takes shape. The United States has been a haven for peoples from all over the world who have fled from Religious persecution. If our government begins to enforce Religious principles on the population, those who hold different religions views will suffer in some way. This land would no longer be the a haven of safety for the oppressed. The only safe measure would be to keep government and church separate from each other.

Thank you,

Naomi Griffin from Idaho

From: Bob Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Bob Parrish

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:57:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Bob Parrish
McArthur, California

From: Andrea R Swales <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- Separation of Church and State - Andrea

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 09:59:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Commission,

This is in response to the Commission's attempt at repealing the Johnson Amendment and the expansion of funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities. Both of these recommendations are against the separation of church and state as provided for by the Constitution. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches will end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God. As a citizen, that is bad for both the church and country. Separation is not a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed here in America. Please keep church and state separate.

Thank you,
Andrea

Sent from my iPhone

From: Karen Keaton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Separation of Church and State-Karen Keaton

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:07:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am asking that you **please** keep the current separation of church and state policy, that is already part of our United States Constitution. Even though our forefathers may not have called it as such, I truly believe that having the two separate was their intent that has kept this great country of our so great.

God Bless you as you continue to keep this country GREAT!

Praying that the LORD will give you as our leaders the wisdom that only God can give.

Karen Keaton

U.S. Citizen

[REDACTED] PII

From: Bob Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious liberty commission report - Bob Parrish

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:08:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment expressing total opposition to the recommendations put forward in the June 2026 draft report. Rather than protecting true religious freedom, this document outlines an alarming blueprint to systematically break down the constitutional wall between church and state, while simultaneously narrowing the religious liberties of everyday Americans.

True religious freedom requires the government to remain strictly neutral. By attempting to elevate a singular, preferred religious viewpoint to a position of federal backing, this report actively undermines the First Amendment.

I urge the Commission to completely reject the following recommendations before a final report is issued:

1. The Subversion of the Johnson Amendment

The recommendation to eliminate or weaken the Johnson Amendment directly threatens the independence of both our political system and our houses of worship. Allowing tax-exempt religious institutions to funnel money into political campaigns and endorse candidates turns sacred spaces into partisan tools. This narrows religious liberty by forcing churchgoers into politically divided congregations and inappropriately subsidizes political speech through tax-exempt dollars.

2. The Diversion of Public Funds to Religious Education

The report's push to expand federal voucher programs and direct public tax dollars to religious private schools is a direct violation of the Establishment Clause. Public funds must support public education, which serves all children equally. Forcing taxpayers to fund religious instruction—including schools whose doctrines they may fundamentally disagree with—is a severe infringement on individual freedom of conscience.

3. The Weaponization of "Conscience Protections" to Discriminate

The report seeks to radically expand "Free Exercise" rights for corporations, government-funded agencies, and healthcare providers at the direct expense of individual citizens.

In Healthcare: Expanding medical refusal clauses allows providers to deny essential care to patients based on religious dogma, compromising patient safety and autonomy.

In Social Services: Allowing taxpayer-funded adoption and foster care agencies to reject qualified families based on sexual orientation or religion is state-sanctioned discrimination.

In the Workplace: Broadening corporate religious rights allows private business owners to override federal labor protections, stripping employees of their reproductive healthcare benefits and civil rights.

4. The Exclusion of Minority Faiths and Non-Religious Americans

Religious liberty must be absolute and equal for all people. The draft report focuses almost exclusively on protecting majority Christian institutions while largely ignoring the documented rise of discrimination against Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist Americans, as well as the rapidly growing secular population. By favoring one religious tradition, the report inherently narrows the freedom of all others.

Conclusion:

The recommendations in this report do not defend liberty; they attempt to create a dangerous union between church and state that historical precedent proves will lead to oppression, division, and the erosion of minority rights. I demand that the Commission uphold the strict separation of church and state—the very framework that

has allowed diverse religious expressions to thrive peacefully in America for over two centuries.

Sincerely,
Bob Parrish
McArthur, California

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:08:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED PII]

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty U.S.
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706 Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Ben Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a concerned citizen, respectfully expressing my disagreement with the now recommendation to reinterpret The First Amendment of the Constitution which unambiguously expresses "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." It is clear that our founders strongly believed in a form of government with no King (STATE) nor Pope (CHURCH). This sentiment was echoed by President John F. Kennedy in one of his memorable speeches. Your recommendation is dangerous and puts our country in a slippery slope. The Establishment Clause prevents government from exercising authority over religion, while the Free Exercise Clause protects every citizen's right to worship or not worship according to conscience. Jointly, they have made the United States one of the greatest examples of religious liberty in human history.

These principles are not merely constitutional, they are biblical. When questioned about civil authority, Jesus Christ declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." In those few words, Christ established a distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience. Government possesses legitimate authority over civil order and the protection of equal rights, but worship, doctrine, and the relationship between an individual and God remain beyond its lawful reach. When the religious leaders of Israel's Sanhedrin (the church) appealed to the Roman Power (the state), Jesus a citizen of Israel was condemned to death for a false accusation of blasphemy. Throughout the annals of history, when church and state have united, persecution has been the end result.

Our nation came into existence when European settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled governments that enforced religious conformity. The founders sought to break from that centuries-old pattern by denying the federal government any authority over religion. Article 6 prohibits religious tests for public office and the First Amendment forbids laws respecting an establishment of religion. These provisions were not unintentional; they were deliberate safeguards designed to preserve liberty of conscience for every citizen. The dangers of abandoning these principles are not merely theoretical as I have stated above.

In recent history, in the 1890's proposals such as the Blair-Sunday Rest Bill sought to use civil law to enforce what many considered a religious duty. At the same time, members of mine own faith were imprisoned in Tennessee and sentenced to chain gangs simply for working on Sunday while observing the 7th Day Sabbath according to their convictions. Their experience serves as a reminder that sincere religious majorities, when empowered by civil authority, can unintentionally deny the very liberty they seek to preserve. This is why contemporary calls to weaken the separation of church and state are deeply concerning. A government that possesses the authority to favor one religious tradition necessarily possesses the authority to disfavor another. The same power that today may benefit one denomination could tomorrow be turned against it. Religious liberty cannot be secure if it depends upon which faith happens to hold political influence at a given moment.

It is with humility, that I respectfully appeal that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its present recommendations. Our country will benefit and do well forever if it continues to maintain a complete separation of church and state as legislated in the First Amendment of our Constitution.

Sincerely,

Nuria Sendros

From: Bryan Przychodniec <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE:Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:12:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs:

I am writing to express my very strong concern and distress at the Commission's proposal to abolish the wall of separation of church and state. To form a union of church and state and to give the reins of our civil government into the hands of the Christian church will prove to be a fatal error to our country. It will not promote religious liberty for all but will destroy it, and will make way for the ushering in of total religious tyranny and persecution. To undo and remove from our country the inalienable rights of the people of our country to freedom of religion protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution, will cause a stench to rise in the nostrils of the LORD Almighty. It will surely bring upon the head of our nation the wrath of God, poured out without mixture. It is my strong recommendation and plea to reverse the course of the Religious Liberty Commission before our nation crosses a terrible line from which there will be no turning back. We cannot, we must not promote in our beloved country the abolishment of the wall of separation of church and state, not only for the sake of our own country, but for the sake of the world, as the world looks to our lead. Lest we bring in worldwide religious tyranny and persecution and a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, we must immediately repent of this utterly heinous action of tearing down the wall of separation of church and state, which would be tantamount to removing the shelter and sanctuary for religious freedom for which this nation was established by God. Please, I beg of you consider the pleas for mercy, that my petition and other like petitions may not fall on deaf, unsympathetic ears, and that the course of our nation might be corrected before it is forever too late. It is with great alarm that I write this, seeing that we are on the precipice of committing such a grave error.

Thank you for your consideration,
Bryan Przychodniec

From: Lisa Stewart <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:12:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

2. 3. 4. Objections to funding religious non-profit activities.
Objections to funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.
Objections to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities.
A request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Shawn Sonnentag <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] We must maintain separation between church and state!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:16:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a natural-born citizen of the United States to respectfully urge you to reconsider—and ultimately revise—those recommendations in your report that would erode the separation of church and state. I am particularly concerned by proposals to permit government funding of religious activities and to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

When churches accept government funds or become entangled in partisan politics, they inevitably invite the very corruption they seek to avoid. History shows that the pursuit of public money leads institutions—whether labor unions, nonprofits, or religious organizations—to compete aggressively for resources, compromise their principles, and ultimately answer to politicians rather than to God, their own congregations, or conscience. This outcome harms both the church and the republic.

The separation of church and state is not a secular invention designed to weaken faith; it is a safeguard that people of faith themselves helped establish to protect religious liberty. It is one of the primary reasons vibrant religious practice has endured and flourished in America longer than in most other nations.

I fully endorse the response submitted by Pillar of Freedom and Jonathan Zirkle (available here: <https://pillaroffreedom.org/> and <https://drive.google.com/file/d/13wd1AsF3m6STwD-v0ywpXFYnI-VRv8TF/view>). Their analysis is thorough and compelling. However, I believe it would be strengthened by placing even greater emphasis on the unintended consequences of weakening these longstanding protections. When policymakers and influencers rely on incomplete or inaccurate information, the downstream effects can be swift and severe. I respectfully encourage the Commission to prioritize rigorous accuracy and intellectual honesty over any political objective.

Thank you for your important work on behalf of religious liberty. Preserving the separation of church and state remains the best way to keep both institutions free and healthy.

Sincerely,
Shawn & Norma Sonnentag
Peeples Valley, Arizona

Shawn Sonnentag

[REDACTED] PII

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. The seventh day (Saturday) is the Sabbath of the Lord." -- Exodus 20:8,10

From: Joy Palmer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-[Separation of Church and State]-Wanda Walker

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:17:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to say that the separation of Church and State is not a secular idea.

Our forefathers incorporated the separation of Church and State into our founding documents because of vivid memories of government control over religion. I am disturbed to hear your desire to tear down the wall that has kept religion and government strong for 250 years.

I am especially concerned about the government funding of religious activities. It's a matter of record that government funds often cause compromises that weaken the spiritual element.

Please keep church and state separate. That is how we keep both of them free!

Sincerely,
Wanda Walker

From: Edith Herbt <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:19:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am opposed to the so called Religious Liberty report . Church and state must remain separate

[Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

The Religious Liberty Commission issued its final report, in part, attacking the separation of church and state. Seventh-day Adventists have been at the forefront, historically, in defending this critically important constitutional principle.

When Thomas Jefferson first invoked the phrase, he explained why it was important:

“Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State,” Jefferson wrote.

Edith Herb

I

From: Sheila Cavilee <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] A Comment on Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:19:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I was greatly concerned when I learned that your commission would replace the principle of separation of church and state with a bridge. I have treasured this separation my entire life. History shows that when church and state mix freedom is lost

From: Naomi DePuy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTt– Separation of Church and Statet– Naomi DePuy

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:21:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly backwards — and as a person of faith, I find the idea alarming.

That wall wasn't built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for government money and political favors to march right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of to God. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Naomi DePuy
Springfield, Oregon

From: Jill Reading <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:23:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good morning,

I am writing as a concerned Christian, American citizen and mother of two. I am thankful to live in the this country and have the freedoms that I do. I am grateful to the Americans who have gone before me and paved the way for the future of which I am now living in. Men and women have given their lives to fight for the privilege to live and worship or not worship, believe or not believe, to choose one way or another. I believe in a God who gives us this freedom. My allegiance is to Him first and then my country.

I believe that you are overstepping in your decision to bring down the wall between church and state. I believe as we have learned through the pages of the Bible or history books what this brings. This may seem good and your intentions I believe are, but please consider the consequences moving forward.

Please prayerfully consider your decision.

Jill Reading

From: Jeff Halpern <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments to Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:25:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

With the comment period ending today, I wanted to write to express my opinion that the report does not go far enough when it comes to Antisemitism in the US.

The current political climate, with the war in Iran and the US relationship with Israel, has raised the level of antisemitism within the US. While this began with the October 7th massacre and Israel's ongoing response, the current "skirmish" (since our President doesn't seem to want to call it a war) has only heightened the issue and enabled others to feel brave enough to heighten the antisemitic behaviors we are now seeing.

It doesn't help that there are certain political leaders, who despite being voted into office, don't have the common sense to not be involved. One could specifically point to Mamdani, who has made numerous comments that impact the Jewish community in NY, which is the largest in the US. If leaders are able to stand up for Palestine (which is their right), then they need to at least protect those who are hurt by their statements.

So while the report addresses the idea of antisemitism, it does not (nor could it based on when it was drafted) address the issue of political leadership and tacit approval of behaviors that threaten the freedom of large sectors of the population. While the Jewish population is a minority in the US, the fact remains that antisemitism and antisemitic behavior is continuing to rise. And if we use that as a barometer for the loss of civil rights, we are not heading the right direction.

If the report were to make it clear that political leaders are not, and should not, be supporting this type of behavior, it would go a long way to curbing the entitlement people feel. Religious freedom and freedom of speech need to find a way to live in harmony. One can "speak" their opinion...but when that turns into harmful actions, it needs to be immediately squashed and appropriate measure taken to prosecute the offenders — on both sides.

I appreciate your efforts, but think it needs to go much further if we are truly going to enable religious freedom in this country as it was meant by our founding fathers.

Jeff Halpern

From: SelenatE <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Selena Etherton

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:25:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly backwards - and as a person of faith, I find the idea alarming.

That wall wasn't built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for government money and political favors to march right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead to God. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,
Selena Etherton

Monticello KY

From: Keith Osborn <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Petition against unification of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:26:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my firm opposition to any unification of church and state. Such a union is in direct conflict with the original purpose of our Constitution, which I believe should remain unchanged.

As immigrants who came to this country in search of a better life, we value our status as a free nation. Freedom of religion is vital to maintaining harmony in a country as diverse as ours, with its many different peoples and cultures. History provides clear examples of the negative consequences that arise when religion is allowed to join with politics; when church and state come together, the freedoms we cherish are destroyed.

I am totally against any such unification. Thank you for taking the time to hear this message and for considering my perspective on this vital issue.

Best regards,

Keith Osborn

Keith Osborn UXO T1

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Bob Fulfordt<[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] public comment-religious liberty in the US

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:28:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

The commission own conduct proves the need for the separation of church and state. In stating that in the Bible ! Thess 2;14-15 is not antisemitic as it is correctly stated as such in the Bible. The Jewish nation did truly crucify Jesu Christ. That is a true statement and The Jewiish nation needs to accept what they did, My vote is to continue to allow for the constitution to stay the way it is-to maintain a separation of church and state.. The government should not have the ability to change this part of the constitution.

Sincerely

Bob Fulford
Reliance, TN

From: Katja Würzer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State – Daniel & Katja Würzer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:29:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen of Switzerland and as a strong supporter of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.

The role of civil government is to protect the equal civil rights, liberty, safety, and property of all people. It may regulate outward conduct when that conduct violates the equal rights of others. However, civil government has no jurisdiction to determine religious truth, settle religious controversies, or enforce religious doctrines, duties, forms of worship, or religious observances.

Its duty is to protect every person equally in the free exercise of religion and conscience. Religious liberty is not a concession, exemption, or act of toleration granted by government. It is an equal and inalienable right belonging to every person.

Every person, regardless of creed or religious belief, must be equally protected in following the dictates of conscience. This includes the freedom to practise a religion, change one's religion, or profess no religious faith.

This freedom cannot fully exist when the state favors a particular religious tradition or uses public institutions to promote its teachings.

Neither a religious majority nor a political majority has authority over the conscience of even one individual. Faith, worship, and religious obedience must remain voluntary. Civil compulsion cannot create genuine belief; it can produce only outward conformity, resentment, or hypocrisy.

Religion does not need the coercive power of government. Civil government must protect the freedom of every conscience, but it must never use its authority to promote, prescribe, or enforce religious belief or observance. Genuine faith must arise from personal conviction and must remain entirely voluntary.

When religious belief or observance is supported by civil compulsion, both religious liberty and the integrity of faith are endangered.

American religious liberty did not arise from complete religious unity. It developed in a society marked by disagreements among different denominations and by the need to protect diverse religious communities.

The prohibition of religious tests for public office in Article VI of the United States Constitution, together with the protections of the First Amendment, expresses the principle that civil rights must not depend upon adherence to a particular religious belief.

James Madison warned against allowing government authorities to become judges of religious truth or to use religion as an instrument of state policy. Thomas Jefferson likewise described religion as a matter between the individual and God and defended a wall of separation between church and state.

This principle was also defended by committed Christians such as Alonzo T. Jones, who opposed proposed national Sunday legislation. He argued that civil government may protect civil rights but must not enforce

religious duties.

His example demonstrates that opposition to state-sponsored religion is not opposition to religion itself. Rather, it may arise from the sincere conviction that faith must remain free from government coercion.

For these reasons, I am concerned by recommendations that could promote government-supported religious displays, devotional instruction, worship, religious observances, or the doctrines of a particular faith in public schools.

Public schools serve children and families with many different religious and non-religious convictions. They may teach objectively about religion, history, and religious diversity. However, the state should not conduct, mandate, sponsor, or privilege devotional religious instruction or worship.

Governmental neutrality toward religion must not be used as a pretext to suppress voluntary and private religious expression. Students and their families must remain free to express their faith within the generally applicable rules of the school.

Teachers likewise retain their personal religious freedom, provided that they do not act on behalf of the school, place pressure on students, or present their religious expression as an official message of the school.

The separation of church and state does not remove faith from public life. Individuals remain free to believe, worship, speak, teach, and participate in society according to their convictions.

Separation instead prevents the state from selecting and favoring particular religious beliefs. At the same time, it protects religious communities from political control and individuals from religious coercion.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to revise the report so that it properly recognizes the historical complexity of American religious liberty, the reality of religious diversity, the limits of civil government in matters of faith, and the importance of equal protection for every conscience.

Religious liberty must be the equal and inalienable right of every person. It must not become a privilege that primarily benefits a religious or political majority.

Sincerely,
Daniel & Katja Würzer
Switzerland

From: Marie Putman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty and Freedom of Speech

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:30:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear RLC,

Please protect our freedom of speech and the separation of church and state!

We want to be able to share our faith in a positive way and not have it considered as hate speech. Government should have no say in how I choose to worship God! Government should control when and where I choose to go to the church to worship God! Government has no place when it comes to freedom of religion and conscience!

Marie Putman

From: Kenneth Ray <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Plea for Religious Liberty for All

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:30:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for providing the public an opportunity to comment on the draft report regarding religious liberty in the United States.

Religious liberty is one of America's most fundamental freedoms. It protects every individual—the deeply religious, members of minority faiths, and those with no religious affiliation alike. The enduring strength of this right lies in its equal application to all people without favoritism or discrimination.

I respectfully encourage the Commission to ensure that its final recommendations remain firmly grounded in the First Amendment's twin protections: the free exercise of religion and the prohibition against governmental establishment of religion. These principles have worked together for generations to safeguard both individual conscience and a diverse, peaceful society.

The government should vigorously protect every person's right to worship, to change religious beliefs, to practice no religion at all, and to live according to sincerely held convictions, so long as doing so does not infringe upon the constitutional rights and liberties of others. Religious freedom should never be viewed as a privilege reserved for one faith, denomination, or worldview. Instead, it should remain a universal civil liberty enjoyed equally by all Americans.

As the Commission finalizes its report, I encourage careful consideration of how its recommendations may affect religious minorities, public education, healthcare, charitable organizations, employers, and the many citizens who hold differing beliefs. Policies that foster mutual respect, equal treatment under the law, and governmental neutrality toward religion help preserve both religious freedom and national unity.

Our nation's history demonstrates that protecting freedom of conscience for everyone strengthens—not weakens—our democracy. The Constitution provides a framework that allows people of many beliefs to live together peacefully while respecting one another's rights.

Thank you for considering these comments and for your service to the American people.

Respectfully,

Larry Ray

Definitely a Christian, but Advocate for All

From: Paris Thalheimert<[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Petition against unification of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:32:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my firm opposition to any unification of church and state. Such a union is in direct conflict with the original purpose of our Constitution, which I believe should remain unchanged.

As immigrants who came to this country in search of a better life, we value our status as a free nation. Freedom of religion is vital to maintaining harmony in a country as diverse as ours, with its many different peoples and cultures. History provides clear examples of the negative consequences that arise when religion is allowed to join with politics; when church and state come together, the freedoms we cherish are destroyed.

I am totally against any such unification. Thank you for taking the time to hear this message and for considering my perspective on this vital issue.

Best regards,

From: Terri Jenks <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Draft

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:33:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: IMG_4196.jpeg

Pull up the following QR code and let the past religious persecution speak for itself. When church and state are combined, religious persecution will follow. God set up this country for religious freedoms.

Respectfully,

Terrie Jenks

And there was war in
heaven: Michael and His
angels fought against the
dragon... And the great
dragon was cast out, that old
serpent, called the Devil, and
Satan, which deceives the
whole world: he was cast
out into the earth, and his
angels were cast out with him.

REVELATION 12:7,9



LESSONS FROM HISTORY
TRUTH FOR THE PRESENT
HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

GreatControversyCard.com

From: Douglas Stilson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Defending religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:39:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my deep appreciation for the vital work of defending religious liberty. I also wish to share a conviction that has become increasingly meaningful to me as I have studied the principles of Scripture and the foundation upon which true religious freedom rests.

The Decalogue beautifully sets forth humanity's two great spheres of duty: our duty to God and our duty to our fellow human beings. Jesus summarized these eternal principles in the words, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Upon these two great commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

The law of God is, at its heart, the law of love. Its principles are as unchangeable as the character of God Himself. Because God is eternal and immutable, His law is likewise complete, perfect, and incapable of being set aside or abrogated.

The life of Jesus Christ provides the clearest revelation of this truth. He was the living embodiment of God's law—the Law made flesh. Every act of His life demonstrated perfect, self-sacrificing, others-centered love. In Christ we see not merely an explanation of the law but its perfect expression.

Likewise, the cross stands as the greatest testimony to the immutability of God's law. Scripture declares that death is the penalty for transgression. If God's law could have been altered or abolished, there would have been no necessity for Christ's sacrifice. His death forever testifies that the principles of God's government are eternal and unchangeable.

Yet the very essence of love requires freedom. Love cannot exist where there is coercion. It must spring voluntarily from the heart. The moment love is compelled by legislation or enforced by civil authority, it ceases to be genuine love. Obedience that is extracted by force is no longer the willing response of a devoted heart.

This truth explains why civil government has a legitimate responsibility in protecting society and preserving justice between human beings, but it has no authority to compel worship or enforce our personal obligations to God. The state may rightly protect the rights of every citizen and restrain actions that injure others, but it cannot create love for God, nor can it legislate true worship. These belong solely to the realm of conscience.

This principle lies at the very heart of our nation's founding. Religious liberty recognizes that every individual must remain free to respond to God according to the dictates of conscience. The separation of church and state is not hostility toward religion; rather, it is one of religion's greatest safeguards. It preserves the freedom necessary for faith to remain sincere and prevents civil power from becoming an instrument of religious coercion.

Whenever government attempts to enforce duties that belong exclusively to God, freedom of conscience is compromised. The result may produce outward conformity, but it can never produce genuine worship. Love that is compelled is no longer love.

For this reason, I believe religious liberty is not merely a constitutional principle but a profoundly biblical one. God Himself desires willing service rather than forced obedience. Throughout Scripture, He appeals to the heart, invites, persuades, and calls, but He never compels love. Genuine allegiance to God must always remain the free choice of every individual.

As we witness increasing calls for the blending of religious interests with civil authority, I believe it is more important than ever to uphold these timeless principles. May we continue to defend the God-given freedom of every person to worship—or not worship—according to the dictates of conscience, while preserving the distinction between the authority of civil government and the authority of God.

Thank you for your faithful service in protecting this precious gift of religious liberty. My prayer is that we will continue to champion these principles with clarity, humility, and unwavering fidelity to both Scripture and the freedoms entrusted to us.

Respectfully,

Douglas Stilson

From: Trenton Frost <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State - Oriana Frost

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:39:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly backwards — and as a person of faith, I find the idea alarming.

That wall wasn't built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for government money and political favors to march right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of to God. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Oriana Frost
Avon Park, Florida

From: Blaine Fults <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:40:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Committee on Religious Liberty:

My name is Blaine Fults, I am a Pastor of a Christian denomination serving since 1988.

I would like to register my concern and dismay at the direction. Our country is going with regard to the careless way in which people are talking about the separation of Church and State.

Well, Meeting, people and Christian and government leaders are pushing for bringing religion into the government, thinking it will solve some problems. Our nation is facing spiritually. And while it is true, we As a nation are facing a spiritual crisis and need greatly a revival and reformation among our people, The danger of mixing Church and State Is not adequately regarded.

Anyone who knows the history of Europe during its times of religious wars and persecution, knows that America was founded on the principle of separation of Church and State, precisely because of the abuse of the past.

Opening this door by abolishing, the separation of religion from government would unleash the seeds of some of the worst evils our world has ever witnessed.

Maybe not at first, but gradually, as one group gains power over others. The temptation to enforce and inflict penalties on those who do not believe as the ruling majority is always a real danger.

Please be diligent and preserve our religious liberty by keeping these things separate. State power must never be used as a means of Coercion, rather persuading of the heart is the only means that preserves the freedom of choice that is so necessary and integral to true religious liberty.

Please do not make the mistakes of the past! Or Else it may become true of us..twhat George Santayana Famously warned: "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it!"

Sincerely,
Pastor, Blaine Fults

From: X <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State- Blair Trepagnier

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:42:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free. You speak about upholding the Constitution and what our Founding Fathers wanted. They wanted SEPARATION of church and state! They wanted to escape a king, a monarch. Pursuit of Liberty in ALL forms.

Amendment 1: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

The Supreme Court has ruled that the 14th Amendment (ratified in 1868) requires states to guarantee fundamental rights such as the First Amendment's prohibition against the establishment of religion. This means that states, like the federal government, can "make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

Sincerely,
Blair Trepagnier

[Hixson, TN]

From: estela d amore <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I disagree of Union church and estate, I want separation.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:45:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Cindy Lampa <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:45:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I agree with the Pillar of Freedom response to the RLC report. Separation of church and state is not a new atheistic idea. It is a safeguard to protect religious liberty and freedom of conscience for all people.

Sincerely,

Cindy Lampa

Sent from my iPhone

From: Estela Sifuentes <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation from church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:46:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I firmly believe in the critical importance of a clear and unequivocal separation between religious institutions and governmental functions. This foundational principle is essential for fostering a truly equitable and free society. It safeguards individual freedoms of conscience and belief for all citizens, ensuring that no single faith or doctrine dictates public policy, legal frameworks, or educational curricula.

Furthermore, maintaining this distinct boundary protects religious organizations from potential political co-option or undue influence, allowing them to pursue their spiritual missions independently. It reinforces the notion that governmental decisions should be based on secular, inclusive reasoning that serves the diverse populace, rather than being swayed by specific theological interpretations. Upholding this separation is vital for preserving democratic integrity and promoting mutual respect among people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

I disagree with the Union of church and state". I want separation"

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: DARLENE Newman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: RLC <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: Re: Automatic reply: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:47:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the auto reply.

Please understand that in my letter (attached) that when I write common good, it is within frame of English language and not as "common good" as defined by the Catholic Church since the term they use has a much broader usage and encompasses ideologies in which I do not agree.

Thank you.
Darlene Newman

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 11, 2026, at 7:25 PM, RLC (OASG) <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

Thank you for your email! Please be aware public comments to the Commission may be subject to public inspection. Please do not include personally identifiable information such as addresses, birth dates, or other details you may wish to keep private.

From: Cynthia Freeman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comments. Cynthia Freeman

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:48:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Commission

I am writing to express my strong opposition to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts political activities by religious organizations.

Our nation's founders came to America to escape state persecution and to establish true religious freedom, ensuring that the government does not interfere with personal, spiritual choices. Maintaining the separation of church and state is vital to protecting this fundamental right.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Freeman

From: Mark Robanske <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Separation between Church and State -- Mark Robanske

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:48:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any recommendation that would weaken the "constitutional separation" between "Church and State" by encouraging government funding of religious activities, expanding political involvement by churches, or replacing the historic "wall of separation" with a so-called "bridge."

Such a bridge would not strengthen religious liberty—it would endanger it. I have home churched for more than 30 years mainly because of the "Church and State" connections with the non-profit organization 501(c)3 status of the churches. In 1994 I read the bylaws of a nonprofit and realized the state control that is placed on the Churches through this tax exemption restriction of "religious liberty." I am not against any denomination (people group), or against any religious belief system, though I do not agree with many of their creeds and beliefs. I am non-combative, but I cannot and will not stand for our rights to worship God as a people, and or individual to be removed. I believe that we must be allowed to understand, and interpret the Scriptures, according to the dictates of our own conscience, and not become controlled by any department of government. This country has just celebrated 250 years of "freedom" that have caused millions to seek America's shores, including my own grandparents, that they might live according to the dictates of their own conscience, ultimately freedom. The rights of the people to worship, work, and enjoy the pursuit of "freedom of religion" is what has made America so great!

The First Amendment protects both religion and conscience by forbidding government from establishing religion while guaranteeing the free exercise of faith. These protections were established because history repeatedly demonstrates that when civil government acquires authority over religion, both liberty and religion suffer.

The wall separating church and state was not built to keep religion out of government; it was built to keep government out of religion.

History leaves little room for doubt. In A.D. 321, Emperor Constantine issued the first empire-wide civil Sunday law, requiring rest on "the venerable Day of the Sun." Although certain exceptions were allowed, this marked the beginning of civil authority enforcing a religious observance. In the centuries that followed, church and state became increasingly united. Civil government enforced religious doctrine, punished dissent, compelled support for established churches, and persecuted those who worshiped according to conscience. Countless faithful believers were fined, imprisoned, exiled, and even executed—not for crimes against society, but for refusing to violate their convictions.

The American founders understood these lessons well. Many of their ancestors had fled governments that compelled attendance at state churches, collected taxes to support religion, and punished religious dissent. James Madison therefore wrote that religion "can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." The guarantee of religious liberty was designed to prevent America from repeating the mistakes of history.

The United States Supreme Court likewise recognized that the First Amendment erected "a wall of separation between Church and State," describing that wall as one that must remain "high and impregnable." That wall protects believers far more than it restrains them.

Government funding of religious organizations, however well intended, begins to erode that protection. Public money inevitably brings public oversight, regulations, reporting requirements, and political influence. A government powerful enough to finance religious work is also powerful enough to regulate it.

Likewise, encouraging churches to become instruments of partisan politics threatens both religion and representative government. The church should always be free to proclaim moral truth, but it should never become dependent upon political favor or governmental power. Political alliances are temporary; matters of conscience are eternal.

History teaches a simple but profound lesson: whenever government assumes authority over religious observance, liberty of conscience is diminished. The power to compel one religious practice is the power to compel another. Once government enters the realm of worship, no conscience remains truly secure.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Commission to reject any recommendation that would:

- Expand government funding of inherently religious activities.
- Encourage greater political entanglement between churches and the state.
- Weaken the constitutional separation between civil authority and matters of conscience.
- Create greater governmental influence over religious institutions.

Please preserve the wall separating church and state. It is one of the greatest safeguards of religious liberty ever established. It protects every citizen's freedom of conscience and preserves the independence of both church and government.

History has already shown us the consequences of joining civil power with religious authority. America should not repeat that mistake.

“A bridge between church and state is not a path to greater religious liberty; history demonstrates that it is the first step toward governmental control of religion and the erosion of liberty of conscience.”

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Robanske
Caddo Gap, Arkansas

From: Gilbert Valentine <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protest at RLC Report on Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:53:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir/Madam

I write to express my deep concern at the final report of the Religious Liberty Commission which appears to attack and override the principle of the separation of church and state.

I believe as Thomas Jefferson did that the powers of government have only to do with a person's behavior and nothing to do with a person's beliefs and opinions. Legislatures "should make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." There is a wall separating church and state and it is vital that it be maintained. To weaken it or to nullify it is to depart from the intent of the constitution and the genius of what makes America a distinctive nation.

America, though founded by many people who shared christian values was not founded as a Christian nation. To reason that it was is a major error in understanding.

On this matter the report is decidedly in error and is dangerous.

Sincerely

Gilbert M Valentine

[REDACTED] PII

From: marva foster <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Separation of Church & State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 10:54:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Thank you,
Marva Foster
Kansas City, MO

From: BARBARA Blaney <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Barbara Blaney

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:03:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a Christian Sabbath keeper to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. Replacing the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge" and repealing the Johnson Amendment is bad for the church and country alike. Our nation was built on freedom of religion allowing each individual to fully follow their conscience. People fled Europe for this exact reason. Have we forgotten the "Dark Ages" so quickly. Do we think that it could not possibly happen again, especially in this country. I think not.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the church opens itself up to the corruption of politics. Churches can end up competing against each other for government funding and answering to politicians/government instead of to God. This is a scenario that wouldn't be good for the church or the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built this country to protect faith, and it's the reason why religion has stayed strong in our country. We do not need political individuals thinking they know what's best for the rest of us. God created us free men and woman. No human being has the right to take that away. Please keep church and state separate. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Barbara Blaney
So. Lancaster, Massachusetts

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: RLct <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:04:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission: Separation of Church and State

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

[Juana Villanueva]

[Weslaco, Texas]

<https://tuta.com/free-email>

From: tZ <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- separation of Church and State-Zetha

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:04:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of Religion in Liberty Commission

I was trouble to read that the Commissioner wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a “bridge” with respect that is exactly backwards—and as a person of faith, I find this idea alarming

That wall wasn’t built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge doesn’t strengthen the church. It opens the door for government, money and political favors to march right in until church are competing for grants and answers to Politicians instead of to God History is clear about what happens when Church and State join hands and it isn’t good for either one.

Sincerely

Zetha Hankins

South Pittsburg, TN

[REDACTED] PII

From: Jessica Sorrow <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:06:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not change the constitution on religious freedom! You will then take away my freedom/right to practice my faith as the Almighty God wants me to do.

God bless America,
Jessica

From: Anton Cost <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:08:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

The constitution's first amendment cannot be changed .There is danger in the proposition of allowing government to have any dealings in religious matters through legislation ,especially because it leaves the door open for any religion to be forced upon people depending on which religion is favoured by the government and also the different religious groups may therefore begin to war against one another in their attempts to gain power. That's why the State or government must be kept seperate from religious affairs and never be allowed to make any laws regarding the observance of any religion.

Yours sincerely

Anton

From: tZ <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: Re: Automatic reply: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- separation of Church and State-Zetha

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:09:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please don't build the bridge keep the wall it protects the church more than constrains 🙏

On Sun, Jul 12, 2026, 10:04 AM RLC (OASG) <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

Thank you for your email! Please be aware public comments to the Commission may be subject to public inspection. Please do not include personally identifiable information such as addresses, birth dates, or other details you may wish to keep private.

From: Lindsey Morgan <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The First Amendment's Religion Clauses and the Constitutional Necessity of Church-State Separation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:11:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Chairman Dan Patrick
Vice Chairman Ben Carson
Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission
c/o United States Department of Justice

Re: The First Amendment's Religion Clauses and the Constitutional Necessity of Church-State Separation

Dear Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Carson, and Members of the Commission:

I respectfully submit this comment regarding the Commission's treatment of the Establishment Clause, the Free Exercise Clause, and the principle commonly described as the separation of church and state.

The Commission is right to reject any use of "separation" that would exclude religious citizens from public life, suppress private religious expression, or deny religious organizations equal access to generally available public benefits. The Supreme Court has made clear that the Constitution does not permit governmental hostility toward religion, and that religious institutions generally may not be excluded from neutral public-benefit programs because they are religious. *Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist.*, 597 U.S. 507, 1514, 535-36 (2022); *Carson v. Makin*, 596 U.S. 767, 778-80 (2022).

But it would be a legal and historical mistake to conclude that separation itself is hostile to religion, or that the Constitution favors an affirmative church-state partnership in which civil and religious authority are expected to strengthen one another. The First Amendment protects religious exercise while denying government the power to sponsor doctrine, prefer one faith over another, coerce religious observance, or assume religious authority. U.S. Const. amend. I.

The Religion Clauses work together

The Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause are not competing commands. They are complementary protections for liberty of conscience. See U.S. Const. amend. I; U.S. Const. art. VI, cl. 3.

The Establishment Clause limits the state. It prevents government from establishing religion, favoring denominations, compelling observance, deciding theological questions, or using public power to advance religious doctrine. See *Everson v. Bd. of Educ.*, 330 U.S. 1, 15-16 (1947); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421, 429-31 (1962); *Larson v. Valente*, 456 U.S. 228, 244-46 (1982).

The Free Exercise Clause protects individuals and religious communities from unjustified interference or discrimination in matters of belief, worship, practice, and religious governance. See *Kennedy*, 597 U.S. at 514; *Carson*, 596 U.S. at 778-80.

This structure protects both church and state. Government remains responsible for civil law, public administration, and equal rights. Religious institutions remain responsible for doctrine, worship, internal governance, and the selection of religious leaders. As *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & Sch. v. EEOC* illustrates, separation is not only a restraint on state support for religion; it is also a shield that protects religious autonomy from state control. 565 U.S. 171, 188-89 (2012).

Current doctrine supports separation without hostility

Modern Supreme Court doctrine does not require removing religion from public life. In *Kennedy*, the Court rejected the former *Lemon* framework and emphasized that private religious observance may not be suppressed merely because someone might misperceive it as governmental endorsement. 597 U.S. at 535-36.

In *Carson*, the Court reaffirmed that religious participants may not be excluded from otherwise available public programs because of their religious character. 596 U.S. at 778-80.

At the same time, the Court has continued to recognize meaningful Establishment Clause limits. Government may not prefer one denomination over another, sponsor religion, coerce participation, or decide which beliefs are sufficiently orthodox to receive legal protection. See *Larson*, 456 U.S. at 244-46; *Kennedy*, 597 U.S. at 532-33. Properly understood, church-state separation avoids both governmental hostility to religion and governmental control of religion.

History supports this understanding

Although the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear verbatim in the Constitution, the principle it describes is firmly rooted in the Religion Clauses.

James Madison argued that religion is a matter of conscience that precedes civil authority and is not subject to governmental control. *James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* paras. 1, 15 (1785). Thomas Jefferson's well-known "wall of separation" metaphor likewise served to reassure a religious minority that government could not rightfully assume authority over belief. *Letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Ass'n* (Jan. 1, 1802). However phrased, the underlying point is the same: non-establishment protects religious liberty by denying civil government jurisdiction over matters of faith.

Separation is necessary to religious liberty

Separation is not hostility to religion. It is one of the main conditions of genuine religious freedom.

Religious faith must remain voluntary if it is to remain authentic. Once government compels prayer, worship, financial support, or profession of belief, conscience is displaced by power. See *Engel*, 370 U.S. at 429-31; *Abington Sch. Dist. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 222-23 (1963).

Separation also provides reciprocal security. Any majority that gives the state power to advance its own faith also gives the state power to advance a different faith, or to regulate religion more aggressively, when political control changes. See Douglas Laycock, *Religious Liberty and the Culture Wars*, 2014 U. Ill. L. Rev. 839, 844-48.

Government also lacks theological competence. Courts and agencies may decide civil rights and legal disputes, but they are not equipped to determine religious truth, orthodoxy, or spiritual legitimacy. See *Hosanna-Tabor*, 565 U.S. at 184-90; *Larson*, 456 U.S. at 244-46.

Institutional separation also protects religious integrity. Government support may appear beneficial in the short term, but it often brings conditions, political pressure, oversight, and dependency. Religious communities are most secure when their legitimacy does not depend on political approval. See Michael W. McConnell, *The Origins and Historical Understanding of Free Exercise of Religion*, 103 Harv. L. Rev. 1409, 1511-16 (1990); John Witte Jr., Joel A. Nichols & Richard W. Garnett, *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment* 16-19, 111-16 (5th ed. 2022).

Finally, separation helps preserve civil peace in a pluralistic republic. Citizens remain free to speak, vote, advocate, organize, teach, and participate fully in public life on the basis of religious conviction. What the

Constitution forbids is not religious participation in society, but the use of public power as an instrument of religious conformity. See U.S. Const. amend. I; *Kennedy*, 597 U.S. at 537-38.

Comparative experience also reinforces this point. Where religious and political authority are closely joined, protections for dissent, minority faiths, and freedom of conscience are often weakened. When the state aligns itself with an official faith or treats religious authority as part of governmental power, the risk of coercion, exclusion, and religious conformity increases. That is not a model the United States should emulate. The American constitutional model is stronger because it protects religion without allowing the state to control it.

Recommended revisions

I respectfully urge the Commission to make four points explicit in its final report:

1. Define separation correctly. It means the institutional independence of religious and civil authority, not the exclusion of religion from public life.
2. Distinguish private religious expression from governmental religious action. Individuals do not surrender their religious liberty by entering public institutions, but government itself may not use public authority to sponsor or pressure religious observance.
3. Affirm both equal treatment and non-establishment. Government should neither discriminate against religious people and institutions nor grant them privileged governmental status because they are religious.
4. Protect liberty for all. Religious liberty includes the rights of majority faiths, minority faiths, converts, dissenters, and nonbelievers alike. It cannot depend on theological popularity or political power.

Conclusion

The United States need not choose between a secularism hostile to religion and a government empowered to direct or support religion. The First Amendment rejects both.

The Establishment Clause prevents government from becoming a religious authority. The Free Exercise Clause protects religious belief and practice from suppression and discrimination. Together, they preserve a public order in which religion can flourish precisely because the state does not control, establish, or prescribe it.

For that reason, the most constitutionally faithful position is neither a public square emptied of faith nor a formal partnership between church and state. It is a government that protects religious liberty for everyone while refraining from becoming a religious actor itself.

I respectfully urge the Commission to affirm that balanced understanding in its final report.

Sincerely,

L. Morgan

Praise be to God in the Highest!

From: Donna Caplingert <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] comment regarding June 26 letter of commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:11:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern--

As a Christian and a citizen of the United States who has experienced religious freedom as a result of separation of church and state, I am writing to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state.

The correct history of the founding of this country shows that all colonies and states, over time, realized that maintaining a deliberate separation between church and state results in a genuine freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness.

I ask that you not rewrite history. The Constitution's first and fourteenth amendments may technically lack the specific phrase "wall of separation" but the wisdom of that intent is plain enough. I do not support any attempt to do an end run around these amendments, and I do not support any attempt to reeducate and confuse U.S. citizens regarding that intent.

I therefore ask that you not repeal the Johnson Amendment, that you not entangle the federal budget with any church budgets, and that you not build any bridges over the wall that protects both the state from the church and the church from the state.

Sincerely,
Donna Caplinger

From: Ann Meeker <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report – Craig Meeker

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:12:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the recommendation that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment be reinterpreted to diminish the historic separation of church and state. Such a recommendation is inconsistent with the text of the Constitution, the intent of its principal architects, and the biblical principle that matters of conscience belong to God rather than civil government.

The First Amendment declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These two protections were designed to work together. The Establishment Clause prevents government from exercising authority over religion, while the Free Exercise Clause protects every citizen's right to worship or not worship according to conscience. Together, they have made the United States one of the greatest examples of religious liberty in human history.

Thomas Jefferson famously described this constitutional principle as a "wall of separation between church and state." Contrary to modern claims that this phrase has no constitutional significance, Jefferson was not inventing a new doctrine. He was describing a principle already embedded within the First Amendment: that government possesses no rightful authority to establish, direct, or compel religious observance.

No founder articulated this principle more clearly than James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution." In his 1785 memorial and remonstrance against religious assessments, Madison declared that "religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." Religion, he argued, must remain beyond the jurisdiction of civil government because the duty owed to God precedes the authority of the state itself.

Decades later, Madison reaffirmed this conviction, writing in 1822, "Religion and government will both exist in greater purity the less they are mixed together." This was not hostility toward religion. It was the recognition that both faith and government are corrupted when either assumes the authority of the other.

Benjamin Franklin expressed the same principle in remarkably practical terms, "When a religion is good...it will support itself... and when its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power... tis a sign of its being a bad one." True religion persuades by truth and love, not by legislation or coercion.

These principles are not merely constitutional--they are biblical.

When questioned about civil authority, Jesus Christ declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." In those few words, Christ established a distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience. Government possesses

legitimate authority over civil order and the protection of equal rights, but worship, doctrine, and the relationship between an individual and God remain beyond its lawful reach.

History repeatedly confirms the wisdom of this distinction. Whenever church and state have been joined, both have suffered. Religious institutions have too often sought the power of the sword, while governments have attempted to regulate the conscience. The result has not been greater faith, but persecution, division, and the suppression of religious liberty.

Americans understood this lesson well. Many of the earliest settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled governments that enforced religious conformity. The Founders sought to break from that centuries-old pattern by denying the federal government any authority over religion. Article VI prohibits religious tests for public office, and the First Amendment forbids laws respecting an establishment of religion. These provisions were not accidental, they were deliberate safeguards designed to preserve liberty of conscience for every citizen.

The dangers of abandoning these principles are not merely theoretical. During the late 19th century, proposals such as the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill sought to use civil law to enforce what many considered a religious duty. At the same time, members of mine own faith were imprisoned in Tennessee and sentenced to chain gangs simply for working on Sunday while observing the seventh day Sabbath according to their convictions. Their experience serves as a reminder that sincere religious majorities, when empowered by civil authority, can unintentionally deny the very liberty they seek to preserve.

This is why contemporary calls to weaken the separation of church and state are deeply concerning. A government that possesses the authority to favor one religious tradition necessarily possesses the authority to disfavor another. The same power that today may benefit one denomination could tomorrow be turned against it. Religious liberty cannot be secure if it depends upon which faith happens to hold political influence at a given moment.

The genius of the American experiment is that it protects the conscience of every person equally, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and every other citizen enjoys the same protection because government is forbidden from deciding questions of religious truth. That neutrality has not weakened religion in America. It has allowed it to flourish through conviction rather than compulsion.

Government is at its best when it protects the free exercise of religion, not when it defines, directs, or advances it. Likewise, religion is at its strongest when it relies upon persuasion rather than political power. The preservation of both depends upon maintaining the distinction the Founders carefully established.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any interpretation of the Constitution that diminishes the historic separation of church and state. The preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the proper boundaries between civil authority and matters of conscience. That principle is faithful to the Constitution, consistent with the teachings of Scripture, affirmed by the architects of our Republic and essential to preserving liberty for future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Meeker

From: SFComcast <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commission Report-[your name]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:12:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly OPPOSE the Religious Liberty Commission and the associated report as written. This country has a long history of religious "liberty" as stated in the constitution. This commission and every thing that it stands for is an affront to our personal liberties and a clear infringement on our right to the separation of church and state.

Stephen M Fore
Sent from my iPhone

From: Ariel Marantes <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission (L.F.T.A)

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:13:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: 7690C4E5-0B24-442F-A7F4-70FE5970CC6C.png

LUKUMI FEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS
UNITY • CULTURE • LIBERTY • JUSTICE

July 11, 2026

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Associate Attorney General
Religious Liberty Commission
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Public Comment – Protecting the Religious Liberty and Cultural Heritage of the Lukumí Community

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

On behalf of the **Lukumí Federation of the Americas**, I respectfully submit this public comment for the Commission's consideration as it evaluates the state of religious liberty in the United States.

The Lukumí community represents one of America's oldest Afro-Atlantic religious and cultural communities. Historical records from Spanish colonial Florida identify individuals described as **Lucumí** during the eighteenth century, and scholarship documents the presence of Lucumí-associated communities within the broader history of Spanish Florida, Fort Mose, and the Atlantic world. The constitutional protections affirmed by the Supreme Court in **Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah**, 508 U.S. 520 (1993), remain a landmark affirmation that the First Amendment protects minority faiths on equal terms with all other religious traditions.

Despite that landmark decision, members of our community continue to experience challenges that deserve public attention.

One recurring concern is the **intentional destruction and public desecration of sacred religious objects**. Community members have reported incidents in which individuals who have left the Lukumí tradition—and in some cases Christian ministers or preachers associated with their new religious communities—have publicly burned sacred ceremonial articles and distributed videos of these acts on social media. Such conduct, when celebrated as a religious victory or used to encourage hostility toward another faith, contributes to an atmosphere of intimidation and religious animosity. We recognize that the First Amendment protects a broad range of expressive activity, but we respectfully ask the Commission to consider how public acts of religious desecration and online campaigns that encourage contempt toward minority faiths affect the ability of those communities to practice their religion freely and safely.

We also respectfully ask the Commission to recognize that religious liberty extends beyond freedom from governmental interference. For many minority faith communities, meaningful religious liberty also depends upon the ability to preserve history, educate the public, maintain cultural institutions, and transmit traditions to future generations.

Although Lukumí religious communities have existed in the United States for decades and their historical roots reach back to the Spanish colonial period, many organizations serving our community continue to face

significant challenges in developing cultural archives, educational initiatives, museums, libraries, and community institutions dedicated to preserving our history. We encourage the Commission to recommend that qualified minority-faith nonprofit organizations have equitable access to existing programs that support historic preservation, nonprofit capacity-building, educational programming, security improvements, and cultural preservation.

We further encourage the Commission to recommend:

- Recognition that minority faith traditions deserve equal protection under the Free Exercise Clause and equal treatment in public policy.
- Greater public education concerning Afro-Caribbean and other minority religious traditions to reduce prejudice and misunderstanding.
- Continued enforcement of constitutional protections against discrimination directed at minority faith communities.
- Encouragement of partnerships among universities, museums, libraries, archives, and nonprofit organizations to preserve the documented history of the Lukumí community.
- Support for voluntary community-led historical preservation initiatives, including efforts to document genealogies, institutions, oral histories, and cultural heritage for future generations.

Religious liberty is strengthened when every community regardless of its size or public familiarity

can practice its faith without fear of discrimination, intimidation, or the destruction of its sacred traditions. We respectfully ask the Commission to ensure that its final recommendations reflect the unique experiences of minority religious communities while reaffirming the constitutional promise that religious liberty belongs equally to every American.

Thank you for your consideration of this public comment and for your commitment to protecting the constitutional rights of all people.

Respectfully submitted,

Ariel José Marantes
Chairman
Lukumi Federation of the Americas



LUKUMÍ FEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS

— UNITY • CULTURE • LIBERTY • JUSTICE —

July 11, 2026

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Associate Attorney General
Religious Liberty Commission
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

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Thank you for your consideration of this public comment and for your commitment to protecting the constitutional rights of all people.

Respectfully submitted,

Ariel José Marantes

Ariel José Marantes
Chairman

Lukumí Federation of the Americas



From: Tracie Foree <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commission Report-[your name]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:14:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly OPPOSE the Religious Liberty Commission and the associated report as written. This country has a long history of religious "liberty" as stated in the constitution. This commission and every thing that it stands for is an affront to our personal liberties and a clear infringement on our right to the separation of church and state.

Tracie Foree

From: Douglas Sorrow <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:16:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not change The Constitution on Religious Freedom; if you do you will take away my freedom/right to practice my faith as the Almighty God wants me to do.

God bless America,
Douglas sorrow.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Oppose presidential religious recommendations

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:21:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This dangerous framework seeks to redefine the Establishment Clause and undermine the critical separation of church and state. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a gross violation of civil rights. Furthermore, these recommendations threaten vital healthcare access—including reproductive freedom, miscarriage management, and transgender care—leaving vulnerable communities without safe alternatives. Finally, attempting to dismantle the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally injects dark political money into tax-exempt religious institutions.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

Tina Olson

[REDACTED] PII

From: albert lui <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom Monday tomorrow vote.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:21:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment expressing total opposition to the recommendations put forward in the June 2026 draft report. Rather than protecting true religious freedom, this document outlines an alarming blueprint to systematically break down the constitutional wall between church and state, while simultaneously narrowing the religious liberties of everyday Americans.

True religious freedom requires the government to remain strictly neutral. By attempting to elevate a singular, preferred religious viewpoint to a position of federal backing, this report actively undermines the First Amendment.

I urge the Commission to completely reject the following recommendations before a final report is issued:

1. The Subversion of the Johnson Amendment

The recommendation to eliminate or weaken the Johnson Amendment directly threatens the independence of both our political system and our houses of worship. Allowing tax-exempt religious institutions to funnel money into political campaigns and endorse candidates turns sacred spaces into partisan tools. This narrows religious liberty by forcing churchgoers into politically divided congregations and inappropriately subsidizes political speech through tax-exempt dollars.

2. The Diversion of Public Funds to Religious Education

The report's push to expand federal voucher programs and direct public tax dollars to religious private schools is a direct violation of the Establishment Clause. Public funds must support public education, which serves all children equally. Forcing taxpayers to fund religious instruction—including schools whose doctrines they may fundamentally disagree with—is a severe infringement on individual freedom of conscience.

3. The Weaponization of "Conscience Protections" to Discriminate

The report seeks to radically expand "Free Exercise" rights for corporations, government-funded agencies, and healthcare providers at the direct expense of individual citizens. In Healthcare: Expanding medical refusal clauses allows providers to deny essential care to patients based on religious dogma, compromising patient safety and autonomy. In Social Services: Allowing taxpayer-funded adoption and foster care agencies to reject qualified families based on sexual orientation or religion is state-sanctioned discrimination.

In the Workplace: Broadening corporate religious rights allows private business owners to override federal labor protections, stripping employees of their reproductive healthcare benefits and civil rights.

4. The Exclusion of Minority Faiths and Non-Religious Americans

Religious liberty must be absolute and equal for all people. The draft report focuses almost exclusively on protecting majority Christian institutions while largely ignoring the documented rise of discrimination against Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist Americans, as well as the rapidly growing secular population. By favoring one religious tradition, the report inherently narrows the freedom of all others.

Conclusion

The recommendations in this report do not defend liberty; they attempt to create a dangerous union between church and state that historical precedent proves will lead to oppression, division, and the erosion of minority rights. I demand that the Commission uphold the strict separation of church and state—the very framework that has allowed diverse religious expressions to thrive peacefully in America for over two centuries.

Sincerely,

Albert Gordon lui

Sent from my iPhone

From: Aaron Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Aaron Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Government Neutrality in Matters of Faith – Aaron Brown

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:22:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Public Comment on the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and Members of the Commission:

I write to express concern regarding portions of the Commission's draft report that appear to diminish the longstanding constitutional principle of separation between church and state. While I strongly support the free exercise of religion and robust protections for religious liberty, I believe the Commission's proposed framework risks weakening one of the most important safeguards of religious freedom ever devised.

The principle of church-state separation was never intended to diminish religion. Rather, it was designed to preserve religious liberty by preventing government from deciding which faiths, denominations, or theological interpretations deserve official favor. The Founders understood that religious belief flourishes best when it is freely chosen, not when it is favored by the state.

James Madison, often referred to as the Father of the Constitution, warned of the dangers inherent in government involvement with religion. In his Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments (1785), he asked:

"Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects?"

I would further ask the commission, would you be in favor of this same established authority to select a particular religion as favored to name a non-christian faith as the state sponsored religion? Madison recognized a truth that remains relevant today: once government acquires the power to favor religion generally, it inevitably acquires the power to favor some religious groups over others. The result is not greater religious liberty, but increased governmental authority over matters of conscience. We have ample examples throughout history and even today that this point is based on fact not opinion.

As you know, Thomas Jefferson expressed the same principle in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, describing the First Amendment as "building a wall of separation between Church and State." This was not a rejection of religion. Rather, it was an affirmation that faith should remain free from governmental control and that government should remain free from sectarian influence.

The legislative roots of this principle are equally clear. Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom declared that "no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever." This landmark statute helped establish the intellectual and legal foundation for the First Amendment's protections of both religious liberty and governmental neutrality.

George Washington reinforced this vision in his 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, assuring religious minorities that "the Government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." Washington did not promise government support for a particular faith. He promised equal protection for all faiths.

The Constitution itself reflects this commitment. Unlike many governing documents of the eighteenth century, it establishes no national religion, imposes no religious test for public office, and places sovereignty in the hands of "We the People." The First Amendment further ensures that government may neither establish religion nor prohibit its free exercise.

History demonstrates why these protections are necessary. Throughout Europe, the union of religious authority and political power frequently produced persecution, sectarian conflict, and restrictions on individual conscience. The Founders were well aware of these examples and deliberately constructed a constitutional system designed to avoid repeating them.

Religious liberty and church-state separation are not competing principles. They are complementary principles. The separation of church and state protects religion from political manipulation and protects government from sectarian domination. Most importantly, it protects the freedom of every American—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, atheist, agnostic, and others alike—to live according to the dictates of conscience without governmental coercion.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reaffirm the historic understanding of the Establishment Clause, maintain governmental neutrality in matters of faith, and preserve the constitutional framework that has protected both religious freedom and democratic governance for more than two centuries.

The Founders understood that religious liberty is strongest when faith is voluntary and government remains neutral. Their wisdom remains as relevant today as it was at the founding of our Republic.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron Brown

Ooltewah, TN

PII

From: barbara1888 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Barbara Russo

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:23:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled that the Commission wants to do away with the wall of separation between church and state and replace it with a bridge. Our religious freedom is built on the separation of church and state, while the joining of church and state encourages religious intolerance. America was built on the freedom to worship as each individual's conscience dictates.

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: PII PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" < PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I disagree with this

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:27:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

The constitution needs to stay the same,no changes should be made the United States constitution was made many years ago to protect us and give us all equal freedoms.By changing this you yourselves will be going against what the United States stands for and means.I am a born citizen here and agrer to the constitution as it has been for many years Don't change it!

Sincerely a concerned Citizen

From: Sarah Painter <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Sarah Painter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:28:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

My name is Sarah Painter, and I am writing as both an American citizen and a Christian who believes firmly in the importance of religious liberty.

I am DEEPLY concerned by recommendations that would weaken the separation between church and state. I do not see that separation as a barrier to faith, I see it as one of the greatest protections faith has ever had. Our founding fathers sought freedom to believe and say what they wanted without governmental oversight or overreach.

The church does not need government power to accomplish God's work. In fact the very premise that God needs a man made government's support, goes against everything the Christian faith believes. History shows time and time again, whenever governments and churches become too closely intertwined, both are corrupted. Governments begin to influence religion, and churches begin to compromise spiritual conviction for political power or financial support. Neither serves the country nor the church.

My faith teaches me that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. The mission of the Church has always been to transform hearts, not to gain influence through the state. We don't have to speculate on this either, Jesus repeatedly criticized religious leaders who had let the world and government infiltrate and manipulate His people.

I urge you to reconsider recommendations encouraging government funding of religious activities or reducing safeguards such as the Johnson Amendment. This moves us toward a relationship that history repeatedly warns against.

The First Amendment protects both the free exercise of religion and freedom from government establishment of religion. Those principles are not in conflict they work

together to preserve genuine religious freedom for everyone. They have allowed churches to thrive independently and have protected people of every faith, including my own.

I love this country, and I love my faith. Precisely because of those convictions, I believe government should never have the authority to influence, reward, punish, or direct religious institutions. The Church belongs to Christ, not to the government, and it must stay that way.

It's critical we preserve the institutional separation that has protected both our republic and our religious communities for generations. I respectfully urge you to reject recommendations that would erode those protections.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Painter

Winter Garden, Florida

From: Brenda Bolanos <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission On Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:29:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, and Vice Chair Dr. Carson and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

The separation of church and state has been a fundamental condition and right of religious liberty for Americans since the signing of the Constitution of the United States on September 17, 1787.

If we were to allow the civil government to join with the church to enact legislative laws to enforce certain beliefs on the citizens of the United States of America, we would be neglectfully inconsiderate of the various religious and non religious beliefs people have who may not agree or believe a certain way that the church state coalition would impose on them that very well may go against their conscience.

By *not* keeping the church and state separate, we would be imitating the despotic times of The Dark Ages when the papacy ruled the people, which brought upon the people incredible oppression and indescribable torture and death for men, women and little children even babies.

In Christ's day he lived under a church state Roman Jewish power and this is what enabled the Pharisees to put Him to death. Is this the kind of nation we want to become and ultimately have the power to enact laws to kill people because they don't agree with the government? It's appalling to even contemplate such a way of thinking especially with the knowledge of knowing how against God this would be.

Respectfully, please do not make this terrible mistake and bring ruin to our nation. The United States of America the land of the free will no longer be the land of the free, but will be a nation that speaks like a dragon if you make a church state coalition.

Revelation 13:11

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon."

The United States began as country that was lamb-like with two governing bodies; namely the Democrats and the Republicans with a God inspired Constitution. May all of you prayerfully consider the repercussions of such a volatile decision and turn away from such serious folly. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Brenda Bolanos

From: Mark Miller <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposition to religious freedom commission.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:32:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I am vehemently opposed to the guidelines set forth in the religious freedom commission proposal and also the abolishment of the Johnson act. In light of the fact that this country's primary success is attributed to the separation of church and state, it behooves all lawmakers and policy makers who have a voice in this movement, to cease and desist from any further deterioration of our religious liberties in this United States of America. The first amendment is clear of this religious liberty and the 14th amendment guarantees that no state will supersede that. This is a direct reputation of the principles of our constitution. Please act accordingly.

Regards,

Mark G Miller, retired United Airlines Captain and former US Air Force fighter pilot. Contact me at, [REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPhone

From: Leonard Galloway <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:33:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support religious liberty for all Americans.

Leonard M Galloway
Yakima, Washington

From: Roger Gibson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment--Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:33:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

I would like to express my opposition to any tenets of Christian Nationalism being included in any government documents, including the "Religious Liberty Commission" report. I support strict separation of church and state whose principles are inherent in our Constitution and because I believe and value that both are strengthened when separate. As an educator, I believe that public schools should not in any way endorse or push any sectarian agenda and that public money should go only to public schools. I also support the Johnson Amendment that protects houses of worship from partisan politicking. The First Amendment insures freedom of religion and religious expression, and the government's embrace of Christian Nationalism is a violation of this founding principle. As a practicing Christian and follower of Jesus Christ, I am adamantly opposed to the false political idolatry called Christian Nationalism.

From: Marti Soler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:35:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I agree with the Pillar of Freedom Comments. Please implement them.

Marti Soler

From: Wendy Leep <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:38:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

I want to oppose the apparent rewriting of what defines the separation of church and state. This country was founded because people were fleeing the oppression of the church and state (government) from the Church of England many years ago. Our forefathers came here to build their own communities and practice their faith strictly on their own terms. What business is it to our government to tell people who or what to believe in, and how they should worship according to their own dictates? The only thing that will come of this is favoritism of one religion of another, and then persecution for all who don't worship this religion how they are told. This is accurately portrayed in the Book of Revelation in the Holy Bible and it warns us that a One World Religion will come about, and those who do not follow, will not be able to buy or sell. I am keenly aware that there are some good honest Christians behind this movement, as well as some wolves in sheep clothing who do not have people's best interest at heart. The writers of the constitution knew EXACTLY why there should be a separation of church and state, and so should we. This will lead only to Dictatorship and Tyranny! Please, for the love of God and mankind, do not redefine what separation of church and state means and leave people free to worship God how they choose, and also free to not worship God if they so choose! God's love never forces anyone. If he forced us to love him, it wouldn't truly be love, would it? If we want a Christian nationalist, let us from a spirit of repentance and a contrite heart, turn, and give our whole heart to God and LEAD by example! That's the way Jesus and his disciples did it. Force and coercion never work. Only true love. For remember what the bible says "there is no greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." Lay down your pride and your desire for hierarchy, which is the spirit of Satan. Jesus took care of people's needs and bid them, "follow me". This is the only way you will get a truly Christian Nation. By loving God first and loving your neighbor as yourself!

Sincerely,

Wendy Leep

[REDACTED] PII

From: Merrilee McCain <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:38:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the United States Commission on Religious Liberty,

I respectfully submit this letter to express my deep concern regarding the claim that the United States Constitution does not establish a genuine separation between church and state. Such an interpretation is difficult to reconcile with the language of the First Amendment, the writings of the Founding Fathers, and the longstanding American commitment to protecting liberty of conscience by maintaining distinct spheres for civil government and religious authority.

The First Amendment provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” These two clauses were intentionally crafted to preserve religious freedom by preventing governmental intrusion into matters of faith. The Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause are complementary safeguards: together they protect religion from state control while ensuring that the state itself remains free from domination by any religious body.

This understanding was clearly expressed by Thomas Jefferson in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. Reflecting upon the First Amendment, Jefferson described it as building “a wall of separation between Church & State.” Although some have attempted to minimize this language as merely rhetorical, Jefferson was summarizing a constitutional principle already understood by many of the nation’s founders. The “wall” was intended neither to diminish religion nor exclude it from society, but to preserve both religious liberty and civil government by preventing either institution from exercising authority over the other.

James Madison, widely regarded as the principal architect of the Constitution, articulated the same principle with equal clarity. In his 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, Madison opposed government financial support of religion, insisting that religion “must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man.” He argued that each individual’s duty to the Creator lies beyond the jurisdiction of civil government. Because the right of conscience is inherent and precedes the formation of government, it cannot rightly be surrendered to political authority.

Madison’s position was grounded in history as much as philosophy. He believed that whenever religious institutions and civil governments became intertwined, both suffered harmful consequences. In later writings he observed that established churches had too often produced “pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; and

in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution.” His conclusion was straightforward: religion is at its purest, and government at its freest, when each remains within its proper sphere.

More than a century later, these same constitutional principles were eloquently defended by Alonzo T. Jones during congressional consideration of the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill in 1888. Appearing before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Jones argued that civil government possesses authority only over civil rights and civil conduct. Questions of worship, doctrine, religious belief, and obligations owed to God belong exclusively to the realm of conscience and therefore fall outside the legitimate jurisdiction of the state.

Jones warned that whenever government undertakes to prescribe or enforce religious observance, it abandons its proper role as guardian of liberty and instead becomes an instrument of religious coercion. Even if supported by a religious majority, laws enacted for the purpose of compelling religious duties exceed constitutional authority. The constitutional issue is not whether legislation reflects values held by religious citizens, but whether government is exercising power in a domain reserved exclusively to individual conscience.

Jones further observed that Christ Himself established the distinction between civil and religious authority when He declared, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” Jones understood this statement as defining the permanent limits of governmental jurisdiction. Civil authorities may legislate concerning public order, justice, and the equal rights of citizens, but they possess no authority to regulate worship, compel religious practice, or grant legal preference to one system of belief over another.

The constitutional framework adopted by the Founders reflects precisely this understanding. Article VI prohibits religious tests as qualifications for public office, while the First Amendment denies Congress any authority to establish religion or interfere with its free exercise. Together these provisions reject the European—and ultimately Roman Catholic—model of church-supported government in favor of a system where faith advances through conviction rather than governmental compulsion.

History offers sobering examples of the dangers that arise when these boundaries are abandoned. In *Vehementor Nos* (February 11, 1906), Pope Pius X declared:

“That the State must be separated from the Church is a thesis absolutely false, a most pernicious error. Based, as it is, on the principle that the State must not recognize any religious cult, it is in the first place guilty of a great injustice to God.”

Historically, similar principles contributed to centuries of persecution, inquisitions, and bloodshed whenever civil governments assumed authority over matters of conscience. The tragic results of allowing the state to enforce religious obligations are well documented.

Nor are such concerns confined to Europe. During the late nineteenth century, as the National Reform Movement sought to promote Sunday legislation in the United States, members of my own faith were imprisoned in Tennessee chain gangs simply because they labored on Sunday—a common working day—and observed the seventh-day Sabbath according to their understanding of Scripture. Their offense was not criminal conduct but fidelity to conscience. That history makes it especially troubling to witness renewed calls by some Christian Nationalists for blue laws and compulsory Sunday observance while simultaneously rejecting the constitutional principle of separation between church and state.

Those who deny the constitutional separation of church and state often point out that many of the Founders held sincere religious convictions and that biblical principles influenced their moral philosophy. That observation is historically accurate. However, it does not follow that they intended churches to wield civil authority or that they granted government jurisdiction over religious practice. The historical record consistently demonstrates the opposite. Jefferson, Madison, and numerous other Founders believed that religion is strongest when it remains independent of governmental power.

America's commitment to religious liberty represented a profound departure from centuries of religious establishments. Rather than merely extending tolerance to minority faiths under an officially preferred religion, the Founders sought to deny government jurisdiction over religion altogether. This constitutional arrangement protects the conscience of every citizen—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and all others alike—by ensuring that faith or unbelief remains beyond political coercion. Genuine religion flourishes through freedom, persuasion, and heartfelt conviction, never through civil compulsion.

For these reasons, the separation of church and state should not be dismissed as a modern judicial invention or constitutional distortion. It is a concise expression of a principle firmly rooted in the First Amendment, clearly articulated by Jefferson, consistently defended by Madison, and powerfully reaffirmed by later champions of religious liberty such as Alonzo T. Jones. Its purpose is not to remove religion from public life but to prevent governmental authority from advancing, enforcing, privileging, or suppressing religious belief.

To the United States Commission on Religious Liberty,

I respectfully submit this letter to express my deep concern regarding the claim that the United States Constitution does not establish a genuine separation between church and state. Such an interpretation is difficult to reconcile with the language of the First Amendment, the writings of the Founding Fathers, and the longstanding American commitment to protecting liberty of conscience by maintaining distinct spheres for civil government and religious authority.

The First Amendment provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” These two clauses

were intentionally crafted to preserve religious freedom by preventing governmental intrusion into matters of faith. The Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause are complementary safeguards: together they protect religion from state control while ensuring that the state itself remains free from domination by any religious body.

This understanding was clearly expressed by Thomas Jefferson in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. Reflecting upon the First Amendment, Jefferson described it as building “a wall of separation between Church & State.” Although some have attempted to minimize this language as merely rhetorical, Jefferson was summarizing a constitutional principle already understood by many of the nation’s founders. The “wall” was intended neither to diminish religion nor exclude it from society, but to preserve both religious liberty and civil government by preventing either institution from exercising authority over the other.

James Madison, widely regarded as the principal architect of the Constitution, articulated the same principle with equal clarity. In his 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, Madison opposed government financial support of religion, insisting that religion “must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man.” He argued that each individual’s duty to the Creator lies beyond the jurisdiction of civil government. Because the right of conscience is inherent and precedes the formation of government, it cannot rightly be surrendered to political authority.

Madison’s position was grounded in history as much as philosophy. He believed that whenever religious institutions and civil governments became intertwined, both suffered harmful consequences. In later writings he observed that established churches had too often produced “pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; and in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution.” His conclusion was straightforward: religion is at its purest, and government at its freest, when each remains within its proper sphere.

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History offers sobering examples of the dangers that arise when these boundaries are abandoned. In *Vehementor Nos* (February 11, 1906), Pope Pius X declared:

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America’s commitment to religious liberty represented a profound departure from centuries of religious establishments. Rather than merely extending tolerance to minority faiths under an officially preferred religion, the Founders sought to deny government jurisdiction over religion altogether. This constitutional arrangement protects the conscience of every citizen—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and all others alike—by ensuring that faith or unbelief remains beyond political coercion. Genuine religion flourishes through freedom, persuasion, and heartfelt conviction, never through civil compulsion.

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life but to prevent governmental authority from advancing, enforcing, privileging, or suppressing religious belief.

Accordingly, I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any interpretation of the Constitution that weakens this foundational safeguard. The preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the distinction between civil authority and the sacred realm of conscience. That distinction is not merely a constitutional imperative but also one that is consistent with biblical teaching and among the greatest achievements of the American experiment in liberty.

Respectfully Submitted,

Merrilee McCain

Sent from my iPhone

From: Rob Randall <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep wall of separation between church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:40:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

As US citizen, I believe in the freedom we have in the United States and want to keep the wall of separation between church and state as Jefferson and founding fathers wrote. I am counting on you to preserve this freedom as it has been.

Sincerely,

Robert Randall, D.Min.

Retired Pastor

From: Karen Norris <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Karen J Norris

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:43:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I am opposed to the idea of the Commission wanting to replace the "wall" of separation between church and state with a "bridge". I respectfully submit to you that this idea is completely opposite from the idea our founding fathers set up when this nation was born.

The wall is not built by secularists to keep religion suppressed, it was built by people who believe to keep church free. A bridge doesn't not make the church strong, on the contrary, it opens the door for government money and political favors to enter in, until churches are competing against each other for grants and thus answering to politicians when they SHOULD BE ANSWERING TO GOD. If you search history, you will find that when church and state join hands, this is the very thing that leads to religious persecution.

This is not good for the church, it is not good for our country, and it is not good for me!

Please don't try to build a bridge between church and state - keep the wall that separates church and state, as it was originally designed by our fore fathers. This protects the church and gives us all a right to worship as we choose - not to be forced to worship in a certain way. God wants us to CHOOSE to worship Him, not to be forced to worship.

I am thanking you in advance for hearing my letter, and for maintaining the beautiful country that we love, the land of liberty!!!

Sincerely,

Karen J Norris

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Debbie Sawyer <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:44:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_Presidential_commission_on_religious_liberty.docx

July 11, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As citizens of this great country and members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church we wish to respectfully express our concerns for the commission's recommendation to reinterpret the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and thereby diminish the historic intent of our founding fathers to create a safeguard where individuals were able to seek God, worship God and follow Him according to the dictates of conscience.

For 250 years this great country has operated under the same principal that Jesus expressed in Matthew 22:21 "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Jesus is teaching us that we have an obligation to the governments laws which direct our conduct between human beings, but when it comes to question of faith, our allegiance belongs to our God. It is interesting to note that the Ten Commandments given by GOD are divided into the commandments related to our relationship with God (commandments 1-4) and those related to our relationship to our fellow humans (commandments 5-10). These commandments are not intermingled but are separate.

The early settlers flocked to this country seeking religious freedom and a government free from a king and a pope. I suggest that each member of the commission read the Great Controversy by Ellen G White. Clearly history shows that when church and state are combined the result is persecution for those who do not adhere to the church's dictates of how we should worship and follow our God, or even to not believe in God at all. Our God is a God of love and freedom and gives each person the right to choose Jesus as their personal savior or to not believe at all. I (Debbie Sawyer) grew up in Rhode Island and was always proud of the principals of the state's founding father Roger Williams. His beliefs of separation of church and state and freedom of

conscience are my beliefs. Many of the founding fathers of this country had similar beliefs, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin shared the belief that church and state should not be joined. History shows that when government and religion combine to bring about an attempt to coerce morality, the result is persecution.

In this wonderful country that God has established in His providence as a haven for those who were fleeing from religious persecution, we need only to look to history to see the results of the combining of church and state. When Roman Emperor Constantine gave his authority to the Roman Catholic church, breaking down the separation of church and state, horrendous persecution ensued against those who protested the catholic dogmas. This resulted in taking away religious freedom from the people and creating an environment in which the protestant reformation came forth. The separation of church and state provides a barrier to protect people of all faiths. This is Godly freedom that cannot be forced or coerced against the citizens of this great country.

We can see where having our tax dollars go to institutions of faith for humanitarian needs could be objectionable to us if these institutions do not conform to our beliefs. Herein lies the problem we see of taxpayer dollars going to support certain religious institutions, maybe one faith over another depending upon where the government's philosophy is at the time. We believe the government should support humanitarian needs for its citizens but not through religious organizations, including our own. We do contribute to NPO's and various church ministries that conform to our religious beliefs, but do not agree with the government distribution of tax dollars to faith based NPO's, church organizations or faith based religious education institutions; this funding should come from individuals who support those entities. We are not speaking for the Seventh Day Adventist Organization, but as Bible believing Christians who happen to be members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

We beseech the committee to consider history and what it is that makes this country so great. The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty may perhaps find itself on the wrong side of history; in its quest to uphold religious liberty may be the cause of taking away the rights of some of its citizens. Yours is a very solemn position to be in when you stand before your creator. We pray for this country and its leaders, which is our right and our solemn duty. We ask that you carefully consider the positions you take in amending the documents that were put in place at the birth of this great nation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
John and Debbie Sawyer
Citizens of the United States of America

From: Ivan Cowles <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty in the United States of America

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:45:11e0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

I would like my voice to be heard demanding that government shall make no law respecting any establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof whether it be Christian or Hindu or Muslim or even a strictly personal belief as long as it is not violating the rights of others or hurting others. When ever governments in the past begin showing favoritism to one religious belief over another persecution has inevitably resulted to the minority even when the majority claim to be Christian. I vote for religious freedom for all as long as it is not actually hurting those who believe differently.

From: Barbara Church <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT, Chapters 3 and 9, Barbara Church

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:52:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm 80 years old and I don't have a doctor because when my doctor left a year ago, they haven't been able to replace her. I searched all my options with my medical coverage and I did find a doctor, but will have to wait close to a year to replace the one I lost. I would like to have the security of knowing that if something happens, I have a doctor who knows me, but I don't have that.

I live in a state that passed a "Death with Dignity Act". I have medical directives if something happens to me at my age. However, I'm not sure if the hospital will follow through, especially without having a doctor who knows me and who I have a relationship with who will honor my directives. One of the hospitals taking emergency call is St. Joes who, because of their affiliation with the Catholic Church, would not follow my directives. Consequences for me could mean limited capacity and increased need for care. With reduced medicare/medicaid subsidies, that could be costly for my family and the state—especially since I'm on a fixed income.

The "Religious Liberty Commission" in its current form, is incomplete and would protect the hospital's ethical and religious directives and not me and my wishes/directives. I pay taxes and when a hospital accepts public dollars, the public should be treated according to their beliefs and directives and not excluded from them.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments and concerns. Barbara Church

From: Diane Rogers <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment/Religious Liberty Commission draft report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:52:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

Any direction working towards joining church and state should be prohibited for the good of the American people. The First Amendment grants American citizens the right to religious freedom. If church and state are united, history will repeat itself, with oppression and persecution sure to follow. Religious freedom in the separation of church and state is unique to our great country and should not be infringed upon.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our opinion.

Sincerely,
Charles and Diane Rogers

From: Linda Green <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Religious Liberty Commission LINDA GREEN

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:56:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

Please pause, reflect honestly and reconsider the publication of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

As a humanist and a citizen who deeply values our democratic principles, religious liberty, and the right of every individual to follow—or not follow—a religion according to their own conscience, I respectfully urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

The strength of religious freedom in the United States lies in the constitutional principle that our government must neither favor nor disfavor any religion. That commitment to church-state separation protects people of every faith as well as those with no religious affiliation. Unfortunately, the Commission's membership and deliberative process were dominated by representatives of a narrow segment of Christianity, while the perspectives of religious minorities and nonreligious Americans received little meaningful consideration. This imbalance undermines the very neutrality and equal treatment that the Establishment Clause was designed to safeguard.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not strengthen religious liberty—it will weaken one of our nation's most important constitutional protections. I respectfully urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and refrain from issuing further recommendations. Instead, I hope our government will recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular principles embodied in the Constitution, ensuring that every American—regardless of faith, denomination, or lack of religious belief—is treated with equal dignity and protected in the exercise of conscience.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Linda Green

US citizen

--

Linda G. Green

[REDACTED] PII

Mobile: [REDACTED] PII

From: Story of Jesus <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] No union of church and state!!!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 11:57:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a follower of Jesus Christ, I am mindful of our Lord's Words that we "render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God's." [9] Jesus Christ established the Principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that "The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State." [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, "In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments."

Prayerfully,

JTG

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John 17:3 And this is **LIFE ETERNAL**, that they might **KNOW** You the Only True God, and **JESUS** Christ, Whom You have sent. (Find refuge in obedience.)

While He Was Building mansions for them, they were to **build characters after The Divine Similitude**. Affection and Love...in every movement....earnest zeal and energy. **THE LOVE OF JESUS SHOULD PERVADE...REGARD THIS AS THE HIGHEST EDUCATION.**

From: "gina.knight12" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:01:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a sabbath keeper that values religious freedom. I am concerned that we r heading down the same path as Muslim countries by demanding that sunday be kept as the official day of worship. We tried this many years ago and SDAs were thrown in jail 4 non compliance.

I am pro Christian values but know that u cannot FORCE a heart change. Only God can change a heart and Satan uses force 2 keep his kingdom GID dies not.

Gina warkentin knight

Sent from my Galaxy

From: "CAN GODS WORD BE TRUSTED?" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Church and State Separation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:02:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to strongly oppose any recommendation, policy, or legal strategy that would weaken the separation between church and state in the United States.

Religious liberty cannot survive when religious institutions and government authority are combined. History has repeatedly shown that when the church gains the power of the state, or when the government gains control over the church, both institutions become corrupted. The church can become a persecuting power backed by civil law, while the government can use religion to justify coercion, censorship, discrimination, and the denial of basic human rights.

The separation of church and state was not established because religion is unimportant. It was established because faith is too important to be controlled, enforced, manipulated, or corrupted by government.

Jesus Himself distinguished between the authority of civil government and the authority of God:

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”
—Matthew 22:21

Jesus also said:

“My kingdom is not of this world.”
—John 18:36

Christ did not instruct His followers to seize the power of government and force religious observance upon others. True faith must be based upon conviction, conscience, and a voluntary relationship with God. Religious belief that is forced through civil law is not genuine faith.

The First Amendment states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Both parts of that protection are essential. Government must not establish or favor religion, and government must not prohibit individuals from freely practicing their faith. Protecting religious exercise does not require breaking down the safeguards that prevent government and religious institutions from controlling one another.

Thomas Jefferson described the First Amendment as building “a wall of separation between Church & State.” That wall protects the believer, the unbeliever, the Christian, the Jew, the Muslim, members of minority religions, and people who claim no religious faith at all.

Many people came to America seeking freedom from the religious establishments of Europe, where governments and state churches worked together to punish people for their beliefs. The history of combined church and state power includes religious persecution, imprisonment, torture, executions, inquisitions, censorship, forced conversions, and other serious human-rights abuses.

Religious arguments were also used by many churches and political leaders to defend slavery and the oppression of African Americans. This demonstrates the danger of allowing religious institutions to use the power of government to enforce their interpretations of Scripture upon others.

The problem is not Christianity or sincere religious faith. The problem is the combination of religious authority with coercive governmental power.

Governments are operated by imperfect human beings and are often influenced by political ambition, corruption, wealth, prejudice, and the desire for control. Churches are also made up of imperfect human beings. When these two powerful institutions are united, there is no remaining safeguard to protect liberty of conscience.

The government should never be permitted to control the church, and the church should never be permitted to control the government.

Religious liberty means that people are free to worship God according to their conscience, speak openly about their faith, gather for worship, teach their beliefs, and live according to their convictions, so long as they do not violate the rights of others. It does not mean that any church or religious group should be given the power to impose its doctrines through civil law.

I urge the Religious Liberty Commission to preserve the constitutional separation of church and state and to reject recommendations that could weaken the Establishment Clause or allow government to promote, enforce, or favor particular religious beliefs.

Please protect freedom of religion by also protecting freedom from government-imposed religion.

For everyone who loves freedom, religious liberty, and liberty of conscience, church and state must remain separate.

Sincerely,

Ross T. Sawyer

From: Denise Williams <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:03:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Against taking away our rights concerning religious freedom
Sent from my iPhone

From: nancy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:03:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Respectfully I ask that the separation stays just that. The first amendment guarantees this. Check what presidents Jefferson and Madison say about this. Please don't take this from us.

From: James Vincentt<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and state are always to be separate.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:03:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

By whatever means keep the government out of religious matters. History is consistent.
Whenever governments and religions join together, persecution always follows.

Respectfully, James Vincent.

From: Walt Zillt<[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:13:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I oppose the USA following the recommendations of the RLC because religious activity is a personal matter, not the prerogative of a state government elected to protect the civil rights of its citizens who are compelled to support the government by taxes imposed upon them.

In matters termed religious the manner of worship and timing of such activity, including choice of day for worship, must remain solely between the individual and object of worship. Let the worshiper allow that same freedom to others, with no coercion exercised involving force being against those who worship differently. The infliction of bodily pain or injury is forbidden against those who have done no harm to others. In the matter of faith the force of persuasion by word or print is to be preserved unrestrained.

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:13:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Church State Council,

I am writing to emphasize how critical it is to maintain a strong separation between church and state. Our government should never dictate how we worship our God or practice our faith. That freedom belongs to each of us, not to politicians.

Religious liberty thrives when government stays out of matters of personal belief. Mixing the two only leads to coercion and division. Please continue to protect this fundamental principle that keeps our country free for everyone.

Sincerely, Allen

Sent from my iPhone

From: Soonyoung Chung Park <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:15:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear God chosen leaders of our country

In the history of the world , there always has been a great persecution of people to the point of death due to the religious persecution . I believe that God would not use the state to enforce religion upon His people . I just watched a documentation of the governing people and Jesuits who are proclaiming their stances of their beliefs about religious freedom. They have already plans to declare death decree when the people would not keep the Sunday as a sacred day . But God's word in the bible , true Sabbath is Saturday . According to the biblical prophecy , Roman Catholic Church will enforce Sunday law with United States and eventually persecute and pass death decree to true people of God who keeps the Sabbath . Separation of state and religion being dismissed is part of the prophecy that precursors the governmental persecution of people true to God's law . We need to be warned that we do not stand in the place of the enemy of God and to know the truth . "The Last Day Evens " by EG White in YouTube chapter 8 the cities NY 911 and LA fire is given by vision in the year 1905. Chapter 9 depicts "the Sunday Law". God gave us vision and warning 120 years ago already how all these things are against God's law and against God's will . Check it out for yourself . Check out the book "The great controversy" written by the same author , check the last ten chapters . You will be shocked to learn that what is happening throughout the world politics and events are clearly already foretold in these prophetic writings through the inspirations from God ! Please read and share the informations you read and find the truth . May God redeem you and us all and protect us to stand on God's will.

Sincerely

Soonyoung Chung Park

[REDACTED] PII

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom, Separation Church & State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:19:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: text_0.txt

I believe in freedom we have (had) in the United States. I am a U.S. citizen, born in the United States.

I am voicing to keep the wall of separation between church and state as Jefferson and founding fathers envisioned.

Do not alter it.

Sincerely,
Jacquie Randall
Pastor's wife
Licensed Therapist

From: Glenn Henderson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State-Gale Glenn Henderson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:22:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religion Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a private citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and

state—especially using government money to fund religious activities and the repealing of. the Johnson Amendment.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Gale Glenn Henderson

Phoenix, AZ

From: Kimberley Walcott <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- separation of church and state - Kimberley S Walcott

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:23:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello.

The God of the Bible wants love that is freely given, not given by coercion. The God of the Bible is not in favor of laws made on Earth on His behalf. His government is in heaven, not on Earth.

Thank you.

Kimberley S Walcott

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Margie Perscheid <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT– SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE–
MARGIE PERSCHIED

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:24:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by extremist Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of those with minority beliefs, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

This in no way, as your report suggests, silences religious voices. On the contrary, it ensures that ALL religious voices will be allowed to flourish. This report, and the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, make it clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be dangerously undermining it. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs.

Margie Perscheid

[REDACTED] PII

From: Donna Ferguson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- Separation of Church and State -- Donna Ferguson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:25:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was alarmed as I read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly backwards -- and as a person of faith, I find that idea troubling, to say the least! That wall wasn't built by secularists to keep religions down. It was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for government money and political favors to march right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of to God. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. That's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one. Please don't repeal the Johnson Amendment and please keep church and state separate. It protects the church far more than it constrains it. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Donna Ferguson
Chattanooga, Tennessee

From: mtsergent00 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church & State - Theresa Sergent

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:26:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Comission Members:

America was built on the idea that all people are free. I believe this also includes the freedom of individuals to practice the religion they choose. I am concerned that the recommendations in your report will weaken the separation of church and state, which will lead to government dictating how we can worship and not allowing us to follow God fully.

I have a close family member that had lost a job opportunity because of his belief that he should keep the Seventh-day Sabbath. If the separation of church and state were to weaken there will be a greater chance for persecution of our individual beliefs.

Please reconsider building a bridge to weaken the separation of church and state. It can lead to less freedom. America is the land of the free and it should stay that way.

Sincerely,
Theresa Sergent
Vassar Michigan

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Susan Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Susan Moore

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:26:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm requesting that you reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. I am especially concerned about the government using money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches use government money or participate in partisan politics, the possibility of corruption will follow. Churches will end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God - which I believe is a bad idea for both church and state. Separation isn't a secular idea but people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong in the United States. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Susan Moore
Fort Myers, FL

From: LotusHiatus <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] [REDACTED] PII

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:29:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Bullying is the use of force or intimidation to dominate others.

Christian Nationalism is bullying people into behaving as if they believe the things that christians believe in fear of some kind of retaliation.

It is not christianity that has taken over the Whitehouse, but a cultish offshoot of christianity that believes, against historical fact, that christians should be the only people in power. Christian Nationalists.

The United States was not, in any sense, created to be a nation of only christians.

No taxation without representation.

The largest sect of christianity is catholic @ 29% of the population. That is the same number as those who responded 'other' in unaffiliated religion. Not atheist, or agnostic, literally 'I am not religious and I don't care about it'. This public comment will have a lot of receipts to show the facts that we are NOT a christian nation, so I want to speak to the physics of bullying.

Anything you do to someone who you view as your opponent, you authorize them to do the same thing to you in return.

Push always gets pushback.

What would it look like if the other 29% infiltrated Congress and decided to pay christians back for what they are putting The Nation through right now?

Would they mandate that all churches have a communist, atheist drag queen to give a 30 minute speech in economics to a captive congregation that were not allowed to leave until that speech was over?

Every Sunday and Wednesday. Any time there is a preacher on site, a communist, atheist drag queen must also be on site.

Would they maybe hire thousands of people like Hasan ♥ Piker to be the new ICE and task them with preaching to christians just before we load them up on a ship and send them to Guantanamo Bay to stay in those nice facilities, without medical attention and fed poorly, so that we have time to go through their digital life and find a ticket they haven't paid or, oh, just anything as a reason to label them as terrorists and then air lift them to the Somalian desert and drop them off without any kind of aid?

Just spitballing.

From: Zsolt 3669t<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:30:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Commission's draft report. I appreciate the Commission's concern for those who have experienced discrimination or hostility because of their religious convictions. Every person should be free to live according to conscience and to participate fully in public life without being required to conceal or surrender sincerely held beliefs.

I also appreciate the report's acknowledgment that government may not officially prefer one religion over another, take over the functions of a church, or coerce religious observance. I agree that the separation of church and state should never be misused to exclude religious people or their convictions from public life.

My concern arises from the report's suggestion that church and state strengthen and support one another and that religious liberty may be understood as a bridge between them. Although the report also recognizes that church and state have distinct roles, I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve a clear institutional boundary between civil and religious authority. (*Draft Report at 21, 43, 179.*)

Religious liberty has been one of the greatest blessings and strengths of the United States. This nation became a refuge for many who desired to worship God according to conscience, free from religious persecution and civil compulsion. America's contribution to religious liberty has not been the government's endorsement of religion, but its protection of every person's freedom to believe and worship according to conscience.

By separation, I do not mean that people of faith should be excluded from public office, political life, or public discussion. My concern is not with religious people serving in government, but with civil government exercising religious authority.

Civil government and the church naturally have distinct responsibilities. Government preserves civil order, protects equal rights, and restrains injury between persons. The church teaches truth, proclaims the gospel, serves others, and appeals to the conscience. Keeping these responsibilities distinct protects both institutions and preserves liberty of conscience.

Christ recognized this distinction when He spoke of the things belonging to Caesar and the things belonging to God. Matters of worship, faith, and duty toward God belong to the individual conscience and should not be directed or enforced by the state.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I value religious liberty as a God-given right—not only for those who share my beliefs, but for every person. Genuine faith must be voluntary. It must be received through conviction and persuasion, never produced through political influence or civil compulsion.

The history of seventh-day Sabbath keepers gives me particular reason for concern. During the late nineteenth century, Seventh-day Adventists who observed Saturday as the biblical Sabbath were prosecuted under Sunday blue laws for performing ordinary work on Sunday, which they regarded as a common working day. Some were fined or imprisoned, and some were sentenced to chain-gang labor.

Those believers were not attempting to compel others to accept their faith or observe their Sabbath. They were simply seeking the freedom to obey God according to conscience while allowing others the same freedom. Their

experience shows how quickly conscientious minorities can lose their liberty when civil government requires conformity to a religious observance.

The separation of church and state is not hostility toward religion. Properly understood, it protects religion from civil control and protects every person from religious coercion. It allows faith to flourish through truth, service, persuasion, and voluntary conviction rather than through the power of the state.

I therefore respectfully ask the Commission to preserve and clearly affirm the constitutional boundaries between civil and religious authority. Please protect liberty of conscience equally for people of all faiths and for those who profess no religion. Religious liberty cannot remain secure unless it belongs to everyone.

My sincere hope is that the Commission will preserve the freedom that has allowed religion to flourish without civil control and every person to worship according to conscience.

Respectfully submitted,

Erno from Alabama

From: Kimberly Lee <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Kimberly Lee

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:33:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to strongly object to the recommendations made in your draft report recently passed to President Trump for his consideration. As a person of faith, I do not want the government interfering in any way with my ability to freely practice my faith as my conscience dictates. There is no way the government has money to fund all religious organizations equally and without prejudice. Moreover, I know that funding will come with regulations that must be followed to receive the funds, and there is no "one plan fits all" that will not violate the rights of some.

Specifically, I do not want the Johnson amendment repealed or the government to fund religious organizations that engage in religious education or clubs on public campuses. I believe the individual sects will fund their own activities if they deem that a proper use of their money. Additionally, there are many clubs and activities that I do not wish to support with my tax dollars.

Please keep my sentiments in mind as you move forward.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Lee
Bakersfield, CA

From: Gary Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Chapter 14-Dawn Benedetti

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:34:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am familiar with the report from the Religious Liberty Council and I am in total agreement with the recommendations in their report and feel that those recommendations follow God's intentions in the Constitution.
Respectfully Submitted
Dawn Benedetti



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From: Jacquie Randall<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Jacquie Randall<[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom, Separation Church & State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:36:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a U.S. Citizen, born in the United States.

Please keep the wall of separation between church and state.

Keep separation between church and state as Jefferson wrote and other founding fathers envisioned for our nation.

Do not alter it.

Sincerely,
Jacquie Randall
Pastor's wife
Licensed Therapist

--

Jacquie Randall

From: Alisha Alderson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Commission on Religious Liberty-draft report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:38:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a Christian family in America, religious liberty is a safe haven that gives us refuge from the world of politics. The separation of church and state has provided protection from governmental impositions on doctrinal differences since the work of Roger Williams in the 1600s. My fervent prayer is that this administration will preserve respect for religious liberty as a foundational human right. Future generations of Americans deserve the right to be protected from the same types of persecutions that terrorized early American Quakers and Anabaptists. We deserve to know that our children and grandchildren will remain in a free country where they are able to worship as they please without fear of retribution.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: DeNita Wilson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC Letter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:39:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: RLC.docx

To Whom it May Concern:

The following letter expresses my concerns to the proposals made by the religious liberty commission.

July 12, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

RE: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

I am NOT in favor of the repeal of the Johnson Amendment, and I am NOT in favor of any changes to the Establishment Clause.

Regarding the Johnson Amendment I believe that government should remain neutral regarding religious beliefs, churches and liberty of conscience. The First Amendment states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." Also, as Thomas Jefferson elucidated to the Danbury Baptist Association on January 1, 1802; "I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church and State". "Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the right of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convince he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties."-Thomas Jefferson,

With The Establishment Clause, no changes should be made. The United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land, and its core principles-such as the separation of powers, the rule of law, and civil liberties-cannot be legally repudiated without formally amending the document itself which requires two-thirds of approval from both houses of congress or a request of two-thirds of state legislatures to petition Congress and to call a national convention to propose amendments. Once proposed, the amendment must be ratified by three-fourths of the states as stated in Article V of the U.S. Constitution.

Sincerely,

DeNita A. Wilson

Concerned American Citizen

From: James Milam <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment separation of church and state james milam

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:40:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Pr. James Milam

From: Greg Dutat <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment separation of church and state Greg Duta

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:42:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state, including the use of government funding for religious activities and the repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

Having lived under communist rule in Romania, I know firsthand what can happen when the government becomes too closely involved with religion. I witnessed how political power sought to influence, control, and restrict religious life. Churches that remained independent often faced pressure, while those that cooperated with the government risked compromising their mission and message.

One of the greatest blessings I found in coming to the United States was its strong commitment to religious liberty. The separation of church and state has allowed churches to remain free to preach according to conscience without government control or political interference. It has protected the rights of people of every faith—and those of no faith—to worship freely.

History has taught me that once the lines between church and state begin to blur, both institutions suffer. Government gains influence over matters of faith, and the church risks losing its independence and moral authority.

Please preserve the historic safeguards that have made America a beacon of religious freedom. Future generations deserve the same liberty that has blessed so many who came to this country seeking freedom of conscience.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Greg Duta

From: Skip MacCarty <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to the religious liberty commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:43:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I register my concern against any action of the United States government making any attempt to take away the rights of any United States citizens choosing to belong to any or no religious organization they choose, and to follow the dictates of their conscience regarding such matters as long as they respect the rights of others to do the same and to help protect all citizens' duly granted right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

William (Skip) MacCarty

From: Gary Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Chapter 14-Sherry Butler

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:43:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a warrior in the army of God for the benefit of our wonderful Nation. I believe the recommendations given in the RLC's report to return our nation to the original Intent of our constitution are a great step forward in returning our country to what the founders originally intended. Religious liberty is one of the first and most important liberties in the bill of right.

Respectfully Submitted

Sherry Butler



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From: Yvonne Perret <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Commission on Religious Liberty report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:44:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public comment:

1. I believe that this report should be more widely publicized for comment. I happened to read about it and feel as well that the 10-day comment period is too short.
2. Although the Constitution does not specifically require separation of church and state, it does state that the government shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion. Multiple comments from the current Administration suggest the adherence to a Christian religious belief. Secretary Hegseth's requirements at the Pentagon for extensive documentation of religious beliefs that require certain grooming is an example of a leaning towards Christianity and, somehow, an evaluation of military members' sincerity in their beliefs. I'm not sure how one evaluates that. It seems that any government agency, including the military, that requires interference in one's religious beliefs is out of line.
3. While the Commission report states it focuses on protecting religious liberties, its composition favors strict religious beliefs that are often considered to be to the right of the general public. This means, to me, that any sort of liberal or progressive perspectives are not being considered.
4. Representation of some religions, e.g., Islam, are absent from the Commission membership, suggesting once again a bias.
5. The following text: from the report: "Nominate and confirm federal judges with the courage to decide religious liberty cases on the merits where warranted, rather than engage in improper judicial avoidance" is vague and troublesome. What does "on the merits" mean? Federal judges need to follow federal law; judges are always deciding cases based on interpretation of the law. This sounds as though it's a different instruction. Judges' ethics need to be decided based on a history of their legal decision-making, not on some vague merits.
6. I oppose repealing the Johnson Amendment. Repealing it blurs the lines between government and religion. These lines are important because it is not the government's job to support particular religions. This Administration has spoken out widely and loudly for Christianity being THE religion of the United States. This is not true and should not be considered in this way. I believe that religion is a private and personal belief. Government funded institutions and Federal agencies should not blur the lines nor espouse a particular religion. While the recommendations in the commission report appear to be benign, the implementation could oppose one religion against another. This is dangerous.

For years, presidents have espoused certain faiths. None has said what faith the country should believe in. This administration's Cabinet members and presidents have come closer to stating this than any previous president. This is worrisome and, for me, dangerous.

Thank you.

--

Yvonne M. Perret, MA, MSW, LCSW-C

Pronouns: She, her, hers

Founder of SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR)

Executive Director, Advocacy and Training Center

PII
PII

PII

"Whoever debases others debases [themselves].--James Baldwin

From: Patty Harmon <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment religious liberty. Patty Harmon.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:44:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

I would like to respectfully disagree with the religious liberty commission on the separation of church and state.

Whenever Church and State combine persecution follows, the marrying of the Roman Church with the civil power resulted in millions of martyrs that would not adhere to the Roman rule.

Jesus said, render unto Caesar, that which is Caesars and to God, that which is God's.

The first amendment states that the government shall not make any law regarding religion and the free exercise of it.

Our country became a country to get away from the tyranny and oppression of a combination of Church and state. And we have been the land of the free and have been a safe Haven for many people escaping persecution.

I ask you to please not let our nation become like other nations that have taken it upon themselves to legislate morality to their people which results in persecution.

Thank you for your time, and I pray for God's will to be done in this matter.

Patty Harmon

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Separation of Church and State - Merry Moody

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:45:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches use government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics follows. Churches end up competing for funding and looking to politicians instead of to God. God is our ultimate authority. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong in the United States. Please keep church and state separate. Freedom depends on being separate.

Sincerely,
Merry Moody
Grand Rapids, MN

From: Vernon Newmant<[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:46:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

History speaks loudly to the truth that when those in government exercise their civil power to reach into and over religious matters, persecution inevitably ensues.

The statement made by members of the RLC that the U.S. Constitution does not contain the notion of the separation of church and state is to ignore the clear history of why people from Europe first came to this land. Such an egregiously inaccurate view ignores the documented statements on the subject from great men such as Roger Williams and Thomas Jefferson, as well as others. It is a revisionist approach to our founding only for religio-political reasons.

This will lead to what was prophesied in Revelation 13, the two "beasts" working to subjugate the peoples of the world to worship under a coercive regime. There is only one power capable of such coercion, who in concert with a religious power of world-wide scope and influence (I'll let you decide who/what that could be) can pull this off.

Those who find themselves supporting or bowing down to such will find themselves on the wrong side of prophecy and history to their eternal loss. It will definitely lead to the ultimate (not immediate - there will be a period of seeming "peace and safety") downfall of the country we all love.

It's that important!

There are people on the Commission who should know this. They will be the ones held most accountable for what will undoubtedly ensue.

From: Gary Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -Chapter 14-Nick Merendo

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:48:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice but when the wicked rule the people mourn.

Respectfully Submitted

Nick Merendo



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From: ShawntDayt<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Recommendations of Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:52:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

First, I would like to thank you for allowing feedback from the community about the recommendations from the Religious Liberty Commission to President Trump on June 26, 2026. They are working hard to bring back values that America was founded upon. I am personally a God fearing citizen of the United States. However, I have to voice my conscience pertaining to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations. History is overflowing with evidence of why people fled from their own country of birth, and families, to start over in a place that was free for everyone to choose, without coercion. To worship according to their conscience or not at all. In short, they were being persecuted; imprisoned, tortured and even put to death by religious authorities (church and state) if they did not comply with the beliefs of that authority. God does not coerce anyone. He gives all the freedom to choose whether they love him or not, otherwise it would not be love and we would all be robots. Yes, this country was founded by God fearing Christians. But they personally witnessed what happens to people and religion when it mixes with authority (the state); persecution. Our government is here to protect all citizens. Laws are made, hopefully, so that we can continue as the greatest land and home of the free. To try and command or force that people love God and worship Him in accordance to dictate or demand is against ALL that God is. We are, as of now, a free country. We are able to vote on issues that are against the fabric of society. We never have to allow a mob rule mentality. To me, freedom is choice, my choice to follow God as my conscience dictates. To legislate religion is to take away all freedom. I will always vote for a moral government and laws that pertain to what is good and right. But history has already shown us, and our founding fathers have made it so clear about what happens when church and state unite. They thought it so devastating to the good of mankind, that they wrote it in the framework of this new land so that no one would have to go through what they did. Please, don't go against the founders of this country. God blessed what they did and made this the most beautiful and powerful country in the world. Solomon wrote there is nothing new under the sun. History repeats itself. Unless we learn the lessons from history.

Sincerely,
SD and FD

From: Carl Merkle <[REDACTED]>
To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Drake Slayer <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Government Accountability – Carl N Merkle
Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:56:38 -0400
Importance: Normal
Inline-Images: 439A7994-2F06-4451-A1B9-10F0757D12EB.png; 06FFFE65-F798-45EA-AB12-0CBC8FF3AD82.png

Email to: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: **Public Comment** – Government Accountability – **Carl N Merkle**

Respectfully submitted to Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and Members of the Commission:

I reviewed your [comprehensive report](#) examining religious liberty across the United States. One observation immediately stood out to me: the report spends considerable time discussing religious liberty, but comparatively little discussing judicial accountability.

So I want to speak briefly here about the lack of judicial accountability, including what I believe was serious judicial misconduct in my own case as documented in my newly published memoir: KIDNAPPED: A Memoir of Faith and Injustice. (Alleged Corruption in the U.S. Judicial System).

That book is now available electronically on Amazon.com or my website: KIDNAPPEDbook.com.

I've just completed this business card for my site:

Front:

KIDNAPPED book.com

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KIDNAPPEDbook.com

210-596-4088
— TEXT ONLY —

EXPOSING INJUSTICE. DEFENDING FREEDOM. SEEKING TRUTH.

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— ★ FAITH. MORALITY. LAW. EDUCATION. LIBERTY. ★ —

— ★ —
Monument to the Forefathers ★ Plymouth, MA ★ America's Founding Principles —

I have one more key matter winding its way through the judicial system where three documents were docketed last Friday. Dkts 19 to 21 were docketed in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals case Cribbs Ringer v Merkle. One of three pending Texas Ten Commandments cases.

Where I present evidence supporting my conclusion that the “God of the Founding Documents,” identified in Article VII of the Constitution, has acted in ways I regard as extraordinary and worthy of careful investigation.

The latest court filings of mine, are here:

Dkt 20 - Affidavit - <https://tinyurl.com/5thC-25-50991-Dkt20>

Dkt 21 - Motion & Appellants Brief - <https://tinyurl.com/5thC-25-50991-Dkt21>

I would be happy to testify, under oath, before the commission about my experience.

Sincerely,
Carl N Merkle, CPA retired

Sent from my iPhone

From: Fred Hardinge <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-- Religious Liberty Commission Report -- [Fred Hardinge].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 12:56:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to comment on several of the points in the RCL Report. While the concept may be abused occasionally, there is no justification to abandon these important principles for more harmful and egregious ones.

The separation of church and state is an idea that originated with persecuted Christians like Roger Williams, who wrote that Civil magistrates only have jurisdiction over civil matters and are not “judges, governors, or defenders of the spiritual, or Christian, state and worship..t *Christ Jesus never directed his disciples to the civil magistrate for help in his cause.*” - Roger Williams

Thomas Jefferson recognized this when he wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State,”

Jesus Himself never built His Kingdom with political power. He declared to the Roman governor that “My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, my servants would fight...” John 18:36. Instead, Jesus calls His followers to seek justice for the oppressed and fulfill the Great Commission through loving words and acts.

Roger Williams wrote that “The unknowing zeal of Constantine and other emperors, did more hurt to Christ Jesus’s crown and kingdom, than the raging fury of the most bloody Neros.” This reminds us that using the force of government to promote Christianity never advances the true kingdom of God.

The separation of church and state is good for both. It’s a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns. It reminds churches that they are not mere political machines but embassies of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.

Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer. This misrepresents the character of a God of love, who never forces in matters of faith.

Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally. Christians, of all people, should support this idea, which originates in the Golden Rule.

Respectfully,

Fred Hardinge

From: Anthony Cortés III <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Anthony Cortes

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:00:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide a comment on the draft report.

I am a Christian and I believe that true religious liberty is protected to the utmost by maintaining a clear separation between the church and the state. I'm concerned by some recommendations that would weaken that principle. Some examples include proposals to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

History has repeatedly shown that when government and religion become intertwined, both are ultimately harmed. Churches should remain free to follow their convictions without political influence or financial dependence on the government.

Even if the exact words "separation of church and state" are not in the constitution, the principle is undoubtedly embedded in the very fiber of this document and in the reason for this great nation's establishment.

Please reconsider these recommendations and preserve the constitutional protections that safeguard freedom of conscience for people of every faith and those of no faith.

Anthony Cortés III, OD

From: Diane Berry <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:01:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm writing in concern of the potential bridge between our government and church in focus on creating a more Christian state in the US. I am a Christian but believe as our founding fathers did, the need to keep religion and state separate. We need to look at history and see why it is so important. When religion dominates a government it changes the dynamics of both and becomes a force instead of an individual choice and can cause tyranny and persecution. Perfect example: IRAN. Please consider this matter carefully and prayerfully. Keep America Free! Thank you, Clyde L Berry

From: Gary Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -Chapter 14-Leonard Lord

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:02:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am Pastor Leonard Lord and I have been working to bring us back to seeking for the covering of His spirit over our nation. Thank you for your involvement and help in this season of our nation's turmoil and my main comment at this point is the truth of God's word identifying the truth of God's Church. As we have been called to prove everything by God's word so we be not deceived. Paul's letter to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:15 says the church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth.so any ruling from judge or court that would separate church and state must be identified as a lie and the threat to the future existence of the liberty of our nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for your recommendations



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From: Eunice Fernandez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Separation of Church and State - Eunice Fernandez

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:04:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I agree with Pillars of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Sincerely,
Eunice Fernandez
Macon, GA

Sent from my iPhone

From: Pilar Anderson <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Pilar V. Anderson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:05:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen of 63 years, to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state – especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God – and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Pilar V. Anderson
Ooltewah, TN

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From: Jose Rivera <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:08:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the United States Department of Justice

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing as a concerned American citizen to express my belief that maintaining a clear separation between church and state is essential to preserving the freedoms that have made our nation strong. My purpose is not to diminish the importance of faith or religion. On the contrary, I believe religious liberty is one of our greatest constitutional rights. However, history repeatedly demonstrates that when government and religious institutions become too closely intertwined, both religious freedom and civil liberty suffer.

The Founders understood the dangers of allowing government to favor one religion over another. Many early settlers came to America seeking refuge from religious persecution in Europe, where governments often enforced official religions. People were imprisoned, exiled, or even executed simply for worshiping differently. These experiences helped shape the principles found in the First Amendment, which protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits the establishment of a state-sponsored religion.

History offers many examples of the consequences of merging religious authority with political power. During the European Wars of Religion in the 16th and 17th centuries, millions suffered because governments used religion to justify conflict and suppress dissent. The Spanish Inquisition illustrates how state-backed religious authority can result in persecution, forced conversions, and violations of individual rights. In colonial America, some colonies enforced religious conformity, leading to discrimination against those who held different beliefs.

Our own nation's history also demonstrates why neutrality is important. The First Amendment was crafted to protect believers of every faith, as well as those with no religious affiliation. By preventing the government from endorsing or establishing a particular religion, the Constitution ensures that every American can worship—or choose not to worship—according to the dictates of their own conscience.

The separation of church and state protects both institutions. Government remains accountable to the people rather than to a particular religious doctrine, while religious organizations remain free to practice their faith without political interference or government control. When government begins deciding which beliefs receive preference, it inevitably places some citizens at a disadvantage and risks dividing communities along religious lines.

America has grown increasingly diverse. People of countless religious traditions—and those who profess no religion—live together as neighbors, coworkers, and fellow citizens. Our Constitution provides a framework that allows each person to enjoy equal protection under the law regardless of faith. Weakening that principle could create unnecessary conflict and undermine the unity that our nation depends upon.

As you continue your important work of upholding the Constitution and protecting the rights of all Americans, I respectfully ask that you remain vigilant in defending the principles of religious liberty and governmental neutrality. These protections are not obstacles to faith; they are safeguards that allow faith to flourish freely without coercion or favoritism.

I also ask that we consider not only today's political debates but the future of the American people. The decisions made today will shape the freedoms enjoyed by future generations. If government gains the authority to promote one religious viewpoint today, a future government could promote a different one tomorrow. The constitutional protections we preserve now will protect all Americans—regardless of their beliefs—for generations to come.

I urge you to continue defending the constitutional principles that have served our nation for more than two centuries. Our country's strength has always come from protecting individual liberty, respecting diversity of belief, and ensuring that every citizen stands equal before the law.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to justice and the Constitution of the United States.

Respectfully,
Concerned US citizen Jose Rivera

From: Peggy Serra <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:10:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

I serve the living God of Abraham, Isaiah and Jacob. The creator of this world and all that is in it. I keep His holy sabbath which is the 7th day of the week, Saturday. My husband keeps the first day of the week which is Sunday. I believe the freedom to worship and choose which day we worship is our God given right. I believe the constitution makes the point very clear that laws are not to be made that usurp our worship in this country.

I agree with the Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Sincerely,

Peggy Serra

From: mariorobinson1 <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with pillar of freedom's comments. Please implement them

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:10:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Doj representative:

I agree with "pillar of freedom's" comments. Please implement them

Mario Robinson

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From: Tera Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Chapter 14-Kathy Lord

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:11:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern,

I Kathy Lord thank you for upholding the Federal Laws and the Constitution protecting all citizens participation and protecting the free exercise of wisdom.

God Bless,
Kathy Lord

From: Carlos Antuna <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTt- [Conclusion - page 21 and Recommendations - page 23]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:14:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for your desire to bring spiritual order to our American society.

I read the following passage in the conclusion: "What the First Amendment does say about the relationship between religion and the government is that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.' In practical terms, that means that the government may not officially prefer one religion over another, take over the functions of a church, or coerce religious observance."

Comment: I agree with your statement, but how and by whom will it be determined when a group of "believers" wants to force others, who do not share their beliefs, to live under "Sharia" law? Or what if they want to lie down and pray in public in the middle of the sidewalk, impeding the free flow of people? Or what if they allow marriages between minors and adults? Which judge or court will say, "Up to here and no further; that is enough"? Which God will we call upon to settle this case? This land was raised on Christian values. We can allow freedom of religion, but only as long as other religious values do not contradict our own. In this and every other case, Jesus' biblical values need to be the standard of the land. The government should legislate the last six Commandments of the moral law, and not the first four.

Under opportunities to strengthen religious liberties for all Americans, I noticed #11. It reads: "Continue efforts to restore the retirement or re-enlistment eligibility of service members who lost employment, health insurance, pensions, and other benefits because of their religious beliefs about the COVID-19 vaccine."

Comment: How about everyday Americans who faced religious discrimination and even punishment in the private sector? Is the Commission not for everyone? Should the Commission ensure that all Americans of all faiths, whether military or non-military, are protected?

Thank you.

May God bless you all and give you divine discernment as you search for answers.

From: Michelle Castelbuono <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State - Michelle C

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:16:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen who is extremely concerned with some of the recent recommendations made by this committee to the President of the United States in your draft report on June 26, 2026. Specifically, I am concerned about the committee's efforts to weaken and even remove the protections surrounding separation of church and state that has been a founding building block and safety feature of our country.

The Johnson Amendment helps to keep in place this necessary separation by keeping religious entities and government officials unbiased towards one another. No church or religious entity should be able to significantly influence government actions through endorsement whether verbal or financial. This would bias government officials towards particular religious groups, enabling those churches with stronger voices and greater financial means to sway political decisions in their favor. I request the committee to remove the action of repealing the Johnson Amendment from their draft, as well as any action that includes or encourages government funding of religious non-profit activities or religious education.

I am also concerned with the focus on special treatment of the Jewish religion. While I am disgusted by antisemitism and do not believe there is any possible justification for it, I also believe strongly that a government should be neutral towards all religions. Laws regarding violence against any persons is appropriate and should be enforced, but a government taking action purely to be protectionist towards one religious group is a bias that the government should NOT engage in. All religions should be treated equally and without bias towards any.

The beauty of America is it's freedom - religious freedom. Freedom to think and worship and believe how one chooses. Please reconsider these points in your draft and don't work towards tearing down the protections around religious freedom for all.

Thank you,
Michelle C

From: Gary Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -Chapter 14- Danny Fields

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:16:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

I just want to thank you for the work that you've done on the Religious Liberty Report. My appeal and my plea is that our DOJ would uphold our Constitution's original intent of the founding fathers for Religious liberty. In Psalms 33:11-12 The council of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart are for all generations. Blessid is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people He has chosen as His Inheritance. All the men and women who fought for our freedom we ask you to honor. and I ask God to bless you with wisdom to stand for freedom.
In Jesus name,
Respectfully Submitted By Danny Fields



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From: Aurora DUTA <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment separation of church and state Aurora Duta

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:17:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

[REDACTED] PII

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state, including the use of government funding for religious activities and the repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

Having lived under communist rule in Romania, I know firsthand what can happen when the government becomes too closely involved with religion. I witnessed how political power sought to influence, control, and restrict religious life. Churches that remained independent often faced pressure, while those that cooperated with the government risked compromising their mission and message.

One of the greatest blessings I found in coming to the United States was its strong commitment to religious liberty. The separation of church and state has allowed churches to remain free to preach according to conscience without government control or political interference. It has protected the rights of people of every faith—and those of no faith—to worship freely.

History has taught me that once the lines between church and state begin to blur, both institutions suffer. Government gains influence over matters of faith, and the church risks losing its independence and moral authority.

Please preserve the historic safeguards that have made America a beacon of religious freedom. Future generations deserve the same liberty that has blessed so many who came to this country seeking freedom of conscience.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Aurora Duta

From: Sybil Anderson <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:22:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am all for Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State.
Sent from my iPhone

From: Glenda House <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Steve and Glenda House

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:24:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty

We are writing as citizens to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state, especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead to God which is bad for the church and country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea, people of faith built it to protect faith and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Steve and Glenda House
London, Kentucky
Sent from my iPad

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE- Melanie Soper

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:24:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my deep concern about the trend towards eliminating church and state. As evidenced by history, the separation of church and state is essential for our freedoms.

We are not a country based on control and discrimination but a country who values freedom for all- freedom to worship as and who one chooses or not to worship at all.

Please do not allow the principle, nor the practical governance of separation of church and state to be dismantled.

Our constitution must not be changed in this matter and must continue to protect our God given right to have freedoms of religion without government involvement in any way.

Please do your duty and protect the separation of church and state.

Thank you.

Melanie Soper

From: Augusta Carbray <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment separation of church and State Augusta Carbray

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:27:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state- specially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God. Please keep church and state separated so both can stay free.

Sincerely

Augusta Carbray

From: Zachary <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:27:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

I believe that conjoining church and state would be very detrimental to the individual religious liberty of the citizens of the U.S.

Looking back through history we can easily see that when the church and state unite it has always resulted in the persecution of groups of people.

While the phrase separation of church and state may not be in the Constitution it was very much implied in the phrase " Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof."

Jefferson (one of the main writers of the Constitution) clarified this in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association when in speaking of the first amendment he said "thus building a wall of separation between church and state."

While those in government want to rewrite history, it is a blatant untruth to make the claim that our founders intended the church and the state to be united. Our founders recognized the fact that America was and needed to be a safe haven from the Papal persecution that had plagued humanity for over a thousand years. If we blur the lines in this country between church and state we will bring back the religious tyranny our ancestors fled.

Vr,

Zachary Pyke

From: jakiavery <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:28:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a proponent in the belief and practice of the separation of church and state, I am opposed to the Commission's effort to weaken and/or minimize this policy.

Religious schools and clubs should remain separate and distinct from government power and/or oversight and funding.

Thank you

Sincerely, Joan Avery

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for iOS.

From: Doug Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state attacked by recent Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:29:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Gentlemen:

I am writing in support of the basic principle of the separation of church and state. I believe the **freedom of worship is a fundamental constitutional right. It is explicitly protected by the First Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits the government from making laws that respect the establishment of religion or prohibit the free exercise thereof.

I stand against the recent report of the Religious Liberty Commission attacking the separation of church and state. I do not believe the government has any right to dictate how I worship God.

Sincerely,
Doug Brown

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State& State - Floyd Courtney

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:29:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commission Members:

As I am a person of faith, I am deeply concerned by the movements I see in politics, especially in what I hear about the work of your commission to destroy the separation of church and state. If you study history you will find that as churches and religions gain the civil authority to enforce their beliefs and dogmas, persecution, often to the point of death ,always has followed.

I believe that one reason the US has prospered so much over the past 250 years is because our God-given right to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience has been respected by our government.

In reference to the 10 commandments, the last 6 define our relationship to one another and the state is responsible to enforce those commandments. The first 4 describe the relationship we should have with God. It is the role of government, not to enforce those first four commandments directly, but the role of government is to guarantee that we have the freedom to interpret those 4 commandments and follow them according to our own conscience and understanding.

Thank you for your attention to this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Floyd Courtney
Harlingen, Texas

From: Denise Lant <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:30:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

This report appears to be focused on "how to promote religion" rather than "how to protect religious freedoms." I am not going to address the report line by line because the overarching issues are so ubiquitous.

To begin, I disagree with the original hypothesis that "religion is essential to human identity." That notion was dispelled during the Enlightenment over 250 years ago, as embraced by America's founding fathers. In fact, **about 1/3 of America neither needs nor wants a "role of faith" in our public life.**

Given that, I applaud your effort to **begin** to collect information. No one should be "abused" for what they believe. However, it appears that information was collected from only one, narrowly focused group: those who feel they have been abused under the Judeo-Christian view of the world, and many of the grievances stem from individuals seeking their own "rights" (no matter how misguided their "beliefs") over the good of the public and the facts of science. **Where is the data from the plethora of legal, public policy, and other research institutions including the relevant case law of the Supreme Court?**

The **discriminatory language throughout the report toward already-marginalized groups** (e.g., transgender, LGBTQ, pro-choice promoters) is appalling in light of scientific evidence. The ignorance toward public health initiatives is frightening. I am reminded of historical religious institutions that insisted the world was flat, supported slavery, and denied evolution. Thank goodness for public education and its noble efforts to inform the population and thereby promote progress! **Withdrawing funds from public schools to promote religious ideology would likely retard our progress.**

While the Constitution provides the freedom both to BELIEVE and to ACT on those beliefs, the freedom to act on those beliefs is not absolute. The Supreme Court has long held that **religious practices can be regulated if they run afoul of "public morals" or a "compelling governmental interest."** So what happens when one person's right to freely exercise religious beliefs conflicts with another person's right to equal treatment under law? Where does society draw the line between accommodating sincere faith and upholding laws that ensure public health, safety, and non-discrimination for all? These should be the questions addressed by the commission, not the question of **how to better promote religion, especially promoting it over non-religion.**

The challenge for regulators and government officials is to define the balance. This biased commission and this prejudiced report with its dogmatic recommendations do nothing to create the balance. It may be a good start for one side of the debate, but it cannot be taken seriously until other positions are weighed and considered. **You have much more work to do.**

The effort obviously begins with a bias, provides "evidence" to support the bias (with no apparent effort to collect data or evaluate differing viewpoints), and results in a Judeo/Christian-prejudiced list of recommendations that promote religion over non-religion. **It is unacceptable as a position on public policy.**

From: Irene Choi <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerned about religious freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:30:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I agree with Pillar of Freedom comments. Please implement them.

Sincerely

Irene Choi

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From:

To:

" PII "

PII

" PII "

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:30:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I am deeply disturbed by the statements released by this commission. History has repeatedly shown how when the government and church lines disappear, persecution results.

This should be clear by the all the lessons of history and by the war going on as we speak. The Iranian government Is run by it's religion and we can see that the results are clearly counter to freedom.

How is it that we are going to follow their line of reasoning? Many other governments throughout history have followed this same course of action. When religion is fused with government, freedom disappears and ultimately so does the power of that country.

There is a line of separation between church and state and it needs to stay there.

PII

PII

From: David Butler<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Luminita Butler <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State – David & Luminita Butler

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:31:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing to you as a natural born citizen of United States and prayerfully asking you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would sadly weaken the separation of church and state — especially by allowing the government to use money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

My wife fled to this country from Romania in 1975 with her family as an eight-year-old girl to escape the communist controlled state and persecution against religious liberty. America was founded on the principles of religious freedom and prospered with the separation of church and state.

History has revealed when churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics drastically increases and compromises are unavoidable. Churches will end up competing against one another for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God. This will only lead to strife and compromise and will have negative effects for the church and country alike.

Our American history reveals that separation of church and state isn't a secular idea; the people of faith built it to protect our faith and is the main reason why religion has stayed strong in America for the past 250 years. It's not the separation of church and state that moved our nation into a Godless country, but the radical ideology that has infiltrated into Government, Education, Schools and Politics.

I therefore object to the following recommendations:

1. I object to the funding of religious non-profit activities
2. I object to the funding of religious education and religious clubs on public campuses
3. I object to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities.
4. I request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.

I prayerfully request that you keep church and state separate and not build that bridge uniting church and state. The wall between church and state protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

David & Luminita Butler

Creswell, Oregon

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment re: Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:32:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

The report of the Commission for Religious Liberty would do the opposite of securing religious liberty in the US. It is a grave threat to allow a bridge to form between the church and State. It opens the door to abuse, as we have already seen with the Israeli influence over this country.

Please do not go forward with the recommendations made in the report.

Jill Baker

Jill Baker, MLA

[REDACTED]
PII
[REDACTED] PII

From: cbasstxDt<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Cory Bartusek

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:33:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission:

First off I'd like to thank you for the work you do. The ability to worship with freedom in regard to individual conscience is of the utmost importance! It is concerning though, hearing that the Commission wants to remove the wall of separation between church and state and in its place build a "bridge." The wall was built to keep the church free and pure from civil powers and influence.

Shortsightedness may make it appear a good thing to build a bridge, especially while conservative Christians hold office. However, history, specifically the dark ages, show us that eventually even this led to Christians persecuting/murdering Christians. And once this bridge has been established what might legislative powers do when our democracy changes hands to a liberal ruling body?

America offers liberty to all. If this wall is brought down it will, through its legislative powers, inevitably lead to defining what "Christian" is, which will only persecute religious Americans by not allowing individuals to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience. Please reconsider building that bridge. Keep the wall. It is protection that was set in place by individuals that had first hand experience with the results of such a union. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,
Cory Bartusek
Ooltewah, Tennessee

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledging Him, and He shall direct your paths!"

Proverbs 3:5,6

From: Janet Harris <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:33:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am asking that you vote to uphold the separation of church and state . That is why the settlers came to the United States , because of religious persecution. Every person should have the freedom of choice. Thank you

Janet Harris

Georgia resident

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: ariel kotyrlo <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:34:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with pillar of freedom comments. Please implement them. Church and state must be separated to ensure Christian freedom is present in our country.

From: Kelci Oeftger <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Religious Liberty- Kelci

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:34:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

The United States was the first country to separate church and state for the very reason of preventing religious persecution/conflicts/corruption. We are unique in this way. The only way to maintain religious freedom is to keep church and state separate.

Thank you.

From: "Allen, Carlene" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:35:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with the pillars of freedom response. Please implement them.

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From: dfuytn <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 13:38:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: ReligiousLibertyReportResponse.pdf; Response_to_Commission.pdf

Please find my response to the Religious Liberty Commission Report as well as a more detailed response I fully support.

Thank you,

Kim

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Religious Liberty Commission Report.

The United States of America was founded upon the principle of the separation of Church and State. This principle enshrined in our Constitution directed the State to be neutral towards Religion.

It is true that the phrase “wall of separation between Church and State” does not appear in the Constitution, however, what defines the separation of Church and State is its First Amendment.

In Thomas Jefferson’s January 1, 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists, Jefferson declared how the wall of separation between Church and State came into existence. A section of his letter reads:

“Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”

Jefferson believed that the “wall of separation between Church and State” came into existence as a result of the “act of the whole American people” when the “whole American people” declared in the First Amendment that Congress shall “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” It is the First Amendment of the Constitution that built the “Wall.” Jefferson uses the phrase “thus building” to show that the “Wall” came into existence when the First Amendment was ratified. The “Wall” would not exist were it not for the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Thus, if the Religious Liberty Commission is seeking to dismantle the separation of Church and State by building a bridge between Church and State, the Commission is by this act dismantling the First Amendment that built the “Wall”. Tear down the “Wall” and you tear down the First Amendment.

I respectfully request that the Religious Liberty Commission uphold the First Amendment to the Constitution by not repealing the Johnson Amendment and not expanding funding to religious organizations that are engaged in religious activities.

I fully support the attached document of detailed reasons for this request.

Sincerely,


Kim Kjaer



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 6, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines this principle by proposing to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall of separation was not a secular invention imposed upon religion — it was built by people of faith, to protect faith. Breaching that wall will set the churches against one another in competition for government money and favor, and set the church against the state as each seeks power over the other — eroding the very freedom the Commission claims to defend. The Commission has recommended increasing government funding of religious activities and recommended repealing the Johnson Amendment. Both of

these recommendations, if followed, will bring the corruption of the political process into the churches. In making its recommendations the Commission has relied upon a faulty retelling of our history.

The American Development of Separation of Church and State

The establishment of a wall of separation between the church and the state first appeared in the modern world in 1636 when Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island. The success of Roger Williams' experiment would later inspire the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and to a lesser extent other colonies to roll back their religious legislation long before the Revolution of 1776. By 1790, all but three of the original 13 had disestablished their churches, and by 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, had disestablished its church as well. No state would ever enter the Union with an established church. The United States had learned from the colonies that liberty prospered better where church and state were separate. While the states themselves would take some time to extricate themselves from religious entanglements, the drafters and signers of the Constitution recognized the value of religious liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman who toured the United States from 1831 to 1832, observed this about the cause of religion's power in America and how religion indirectly influenced the nation.

In order to learn more about [the separation of church and state], I questioned the faithful of all communions. ... To each of them I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts, and I discovered that they differed among themselves only on matters of detail: to a man, they assigned primary credit for the peaceful ascendancy of religion in their country to the complete separation of church and state. I state without hesitation that during my stay in America I met no one — not a single clergyman or layman — who did not agree with this statement.¹

¹Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 341.

The [clergy] are careful to remain aloof from public affairs and do not involve themselves in the machinations of the parties. Therefore, one cannot say that religion in the United States influences the laws or the specifics of political opinion, but it does shape mores, and it is by regulating the family that religion endeavors to regulate the state.²

The Commission itself recognizes “that religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength,” and that “preserving it will require vigilance, education, and renewed commitment from institutions and citizens alike.” Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report at 13. The report then goes on to highlight a list of areas where religion and religious people are under attack. These areas of attack are fairly portrayed, and all people of faith should be concerned about the attack. America is in a culture war, and much of the battle is over values that are informed by religion. While the report does not go so far as to explicitly state that atheistic secularism is a religion, it certainly functions as one, and when the state supports secularism in its worst forms, the state is taking sides in the culture war against religion. This needs to stop.

The Commission’s Revisionist History of the American Experience

First, the Commission tells a false history of religious liberty in the colonies and in the early history of the nation. It completely ignores that the idea of building a wall of separation between the church and the state is a very old idea, which was fully enunciated in 1644 by Roger Williams. Report at 37. Next, they ignore the fact that Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware followed Rhode Island’s example by keeping a wall of separation between the church and the state. They also ignore that other colonies, seeing the freedom and success of the states which preserved the separation of church and state, repealed laws which supported their established churches in order to attract more immigrants. By 1776, the founding fathers concluded that separation of church and state had been a success, and while not using the phrase “separation of church and state,” drafted the concept into the Constitution. The inclu-

²Ibid. p. 336.

sion of separation of church and state, impressed upon James Madison by members of the Baptist church, united the Baptists and the members of other denominations to support the Constitution and ensure its adoption. Baptist support was contingent upon the addition of the First Amendment, which was speedily adopted after the adoption of the Constitution. Thus without separation of church and state, the Constitution would never have been adopted. Nevertheless, the Commission would have us believe that religious liberty did not exist in the states prior to the adoption of the Constitution, Report at 37, and that the concept of a wall of separation was the invention of Thomas Jefferson, and not central to the freedoms of our nation. They state that the idea of a wall of separation comes from a single letter, forgotten until the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947, completely omitting the rich history of both the phrase and the idea. Report at 42.

The metaphor of creating a wall of separation between the church and the state was first written by Roger Williams in a reply to John Cotton in 1644, and then reproduced and expanded upon in his *magnum opus*, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, published in London in the same year.³ Parliament banned the book. The metaphor was well known to the founding fathers, probably through the works of James Burgh, raised a Scottish Presbyterian who later became a devout Protestant dissenter. Thomas Jefferson's letter was not first quoted by the Supreme Court in 1947, but rather 68 years earlier in 1879 in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*. The Commission ignores a long line of Presidents who felt compelled to explicitly support the concept of a wall of separation. Besides Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, one of the primary drafters of the Constitution, said that there should be a "separation between religion and government,"⁴ and that religion flourished better without government patronage.⁵ George Washington's diplomats negotiated, and John Adams signed the Treaty

³Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (1644), in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 1, p. 108; the metaphor is reproduced and developed throughout *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Edward Bean Underhill (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1848), see, e.g., p. 435.

⁴ James Madison, "Detached Memoranda" (c. 1817), in Elizabeth Fleet, "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 534–568.

⁵ Madison's Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822.

of Tripoli, which stated that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”⁶ President Fillmore said that “Church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled.”⁷ President Grant said, “Keep the church and the state forever separate.”⁸ President Garfield said that it would be dangerous to use public funds for religious schools and that “The separation of the Church and the State in everything relating to taxation should be absolute.”⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt said there must be “complete severance of Church and State.”¹⁰

In attacking the Supreme Court decisions of the 1940s, the Commission resorts to two tactics that cannot survive scrutiny: a personal attack on Justice Hugo Black, and claims of philosophical influence that the timeline of history makes impossible. The Commission states “Even a few Supreme Court decisions seemed to track with this train of thought [defined earlier in the report as that of Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, and the belief that ‘God is dead’], culminating in a 1947 opinion [*Everson*], in which Justice Hugo Black, a former Ku Klux Klan member, repurposed a metaphor coined by Thomas Jefferson in an attempt to legitimize the new critical philosophy by placing it in the constitutional tradition. Specifically, the Supreme Court ruled on a series of decisions in which it used the ‘wall’ metaphor to regulate a child’s access to religious education and later to ban school prayer and public displays of religion (like the Ten Commandments).” Report at 41-42. Without any support for the notion that Justice Black wrote opinions in accordance with the anti-Catholic philosophies of the Klan, the Commission attempts to persuade the public that Justice Black was racist and that his opinions should be disregard-

⁶ Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, art. 11, signed Nov. 4, 1796; ratified by the U.S. Senate June 7, 1797; proclaimed by President John Adams June 10, 1797 (Barlow translation).

⁷ *The Ovation to Mr. Fillmore: Speeches of Mr. Fillmore*, 1856.

⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, Address to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 29, 1875.

⁹ James A. Garfield, Letter Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (to Hon. George F. Hoar), July 12, 1880.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 361; the statement originated in T. Roosevelt’s 1915 public letter opposing public funding of sectarian schools in New York.

ed. This is an *ad hominem* attack commonly used in the highly charged political debates of today, but counterproductive to finding truth and establishing unity. It is only useful in persuading the uninformed. The suggestion that *Everson* “tracked” with Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, or later critical theory is historically implausible. Foucault’s major works postdated *Everson*, Sartre was never a source of American Establishment Clause doctrine, and the Court grounded its reasoning in American sources: Madison, Jefferson, disestablishment, and the First Amendment tradition. To attempt to smear the Supreme Court with Justice Black’s much earlier Klan membership and with Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre is disingenuous. While Justice Black held that the Constitution established a wall of separation between the church and the state, in the same decision, the decision attacked by the Commission, Justice Black held that government reimbursement for transportation to Catholic schools was constitutional. How ironic! The Commission faults Justice Black for anti-Catholic bias from his Klan past, yet the very decision it attacks is one in which he upheld government support benefiting Catholic school-children. And it faults him for following philosophies that no serious legal historian would argue influenced the Court’s reasoning.

The Commission correctly states that much of the hostility towards religion in America today is based upon a “broader cultural assumption that religious belief should remain invisible while secular ideologies enjoy full freedom to influence public institutions.” Report at 21. The Commission is correct to say, “People of faith should not be required to leave their religious convictions behind when entering the workplace, engaging in commerce, serving their communities, or participating in public debate,” and that “institutions should foster environments in which citizens with divergent convictions can work together while maintaining fidelity to conscience.” Report at 21. Nevertheless, the Report goes on to continually overstate the case by saying that the “wall of separation” ideology creates a wall between personal faith and public life. While this may be true when the idea of a wall of separation is misconstrued and weaponized by secular atheists, it is not true that the wall of separation erected by the Constitution and so often referred to by generations of leaders who have gone before us is a wall between personal faith and public life. The true wall of separation is between the state and the church. It is

there so that a person can freely exercise their personal faith and freely engage in the public sphere, without prejudice or persecution. To deny that there is complete separation of church and state in the Constitution, aka “the wall,” and to deny that the wall can serve a useful purpose in protecting individual freedom is un-American and counter to both our experience and the knowledge and intent of our forefathers. The wall of separation is not a wall between religious people and public life; it is a wall between ecclesiastical power and civil power, protecting both religion and civil freedom.

The Commission’s Objectionable Recommendations

Based upon the above arguments, the Commission recommends that the United States adopt its recommendation to post in the workplace, to teach our students, and to teach as many citizens as possible that the Constitution neither creates nor requires the separation of church and state, and that there should be no wall of separation between church and state. If this false ideology is embraced by the people, it will allow for many different “reforms,” and eventually be used to justify any oppressive religious legislation so long as it is for the good of the people or represents the will of the majority. This is a radical teaching that has the potential, over time, to roll back the freedoms we enjoy in this nation, and return us to the political conflicts and tyranny our forefathers came to America to escape. This is the underlying philosophical foundation of additional, objectionable recommendations that the Commission makes.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations. It bases its argument on the idea that in times of need, to separate the physical help from spiritual help is to deny the full scope of the help that the person in need requires. This may be true in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this is an argument to the church that wishes to provide those services to fund them internally, and not rely upon the state. For religion to rely upon state funding is for religion to take the role of an imposter, pretending to provide aid, when in fact it is the state that is making the aid possible. It also allows the religion that is relying upon government funding to use that funding as an

aid in indoctrination and evangelism, thus the government is not remaining neutral. The Commission argues that church members today must leave their religious beliefs at home to engage in humanitarian work. That should never be true for work that they do without the aid of the state, and should only be true to the extent the state is providing them assistance. This is for the protection of religion as much as it is for the state and its citizens. Anytime government money is available, a religion will modify its beliefs to adhere to the values of the government so that it can obtain funds. Public money always brings public control. Furthermore, different religions may claim fairness requires equal funding, even though they do not provide equal services. This certainly will devolve into a quagmire that the state would do well to avoid.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious education. All the reasons against supporting religious philanthropy apply here, as well as additional reasons. The Commission argues correctly that the state benefits from a religious people. But the Commission errs in thinking the state can be involved in making people religious. In education, it is important what is taught. By supporting religious education, the state will be making decisions about what doctrines can be taught. This most commonly takes the form of accreditation. Many sectarian schools are not accredited for this reason. But it can go further. Will the state support a school whose religion teaches interracial marriage is a sin, or that women should not receive higher education? Will the state support a school that teaches polygamy? What about a school that doesn't teach many things, like the Amish? This puts the state into the business of determining what values are worth supporting and what values are not. Don't think that the decisions will only be required for that which may seem obvious to us today. Today the Commission is recommending that the Ten Commandments be posted in schools and courthouses. Which Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments of Exodus or Deuteronomy? One is more Jewish focused, one more focused on creation, both requiring the keeping of the seventh day, not the first day? Or maybe the Ten Commandments of a Roman Catholic catechism, which a Protestant will tell you dispenses with the law against graven images and a Catholic priest will tell you merely divides the commandments differently. Or maybe the state can just abbreviate the Ten Commandments, number

them like a Protestant, and hope everybody is happy. That is the solution in Texas. Texas is getting into the business of doctrine. A government that refuses to fund religious doctrine is not thereby endorsing secularism, rather, it is refusing to decide religious questions. That restraint is not hostility to religion; it is the condition under which religious communities remain free and prosperous.

The Commission has one more recommendation that has the potential to expand the breach in the wall of separation. The Commission recommends repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment prohibits churches from engaging in partisan politics, specifically supporting a candidate for election. It does not prohibit the church from speaking on the issues of the day, or even telling its members how to vote regarding issues, such as abortion and the right to life. What would repealing the Amendment do? Churches would become fabulous non-profit vehicles to engage in political activities. Pastors are known to exhibit tremendous sway over their congregations. It is not hard to imagine the intense pressure that a pastor could feel to deliver his congregation's votes for money. It is not hard to imagine that wealthy and powerful interests might attempt to influence political causes through the churches. Combine that with a patronage system whereby the congregations could receive government grants based upon the Commission's other recommendations, and there is a recipe for disaster. What failing congregation won't make a little compromise for a little financial gain? As scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV. As financial interests invade the churches, invariably the public will be able to smell hypocrisy, and any gains either the church or the state thinks may be had by their union will be lost. Only a dead, lifeless church on government life support will remain.

Today, the Johnson Amendment is already being dismantled by non-enforcement. In *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, the IRS and several religious plaintiffs proposed a settlement that would have substantially narrowed enforcement of the Johnson Amendment as applied to churches. This settlement was opposed by the Baptist Joint Committee and Americans United, two reputable religious liberty advocacy organizations, not secular humanists. A federal district court found that it lacked juris-

diction on March 31, 2026. The effort to remove the barrier between tax-exempt churches and partisan campaign activity is expected to continue. The Commission should reverse its recommendation for repealing the Johnson Amendment, and instead, recommend its enforcement.

The Commission Correctly Identifies a Peril, but Not the Solution

Commissioner Bishop Robert Barron made an important observation about secularism. He said, “[T]here’s a philosophical issue which is secularism proposing itself as some kind of neutral ground, but it’s not neutral ground. Secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system. It wants to dominate the whole of life and therefore to exclude religion [from the public square].” Report at 181. Commissioner Kelly Shackelford makes a particularly insightful comment that “the one thing a totalitarian regime will never allow is citizens who hold an allegiance to one higher than the government. So, whenever that type of power of coalescing comes together, the first flashpoint is always going to be religious freedom. And if you lose there, you will lose everything else. So, what we’re really dealing with here is the precipice of all our freedoms.” Report at 29. This should be particularly sobering when combined with the Commission’s observation that “contemporary progressive opposition to religious liberty ... seek[s] freedom for its own views but coercion of religious groups whose traditional beliefs conflict with current trends such as transgenderism.” Report at 35-36. The Commission is correct in urging the courts to view atheism and atheistic determinism as ideologically and functionally similar to religion. Just as secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system, religion, when granted power, tends toward the same result. Combining church and state together, financially or otherwise, will result in one or the other demanding power and control over the other. History has shown us that the stronger the bond between church and state, the more oppressed the society. The union of church and state is the recipe for the kind of totalitarian regime warned about by Commissioner Shackelford. This is not a new discovery. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams wrote, “Checks and Ballances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them, are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body.—Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as Soon as either

Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unballanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!”¹¹ The church and state should remain forever apart, neutral towards each other, and neutral towards secularism.

Finally, the country as a whole should not be swayed by arguments made for religion in the military. It is true, the military should be very careful not to support or oppose any religion, but it is also true that the military must be able to provide religious services to its members. The reason they must provide those services is that in the military, especially when deployed, there are no alternative means to obtain religious services. A service member deployed in a foreign land may not be able to go to the local Baptist, Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, or Mormon church, or synagogue or mosque, because they may not exist in the area, nor would it necessarily be safe to go off base to attend one.

Conclusion

Just before and after the Revolution, the disestablishment of the state churches was an important project of our founding fathers. It was not without controversy. The experience of it should not be lost upon us.

Reverend Lyman Beecher was a Congregationalist minister, one of the most influential evangelical preachers of the early 1800s, and a leader in the movement to maintain the established church of Connecticut. Before 1818, he argued for the need of an established church. He said, “So the democracy, as it rose, included nearly all the minor sects, besides the Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling tippling folk, infidels, and ruff-scuff generally, and made a dead set at us of the standing order.” He believed that an es-

¹¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 25 June 1813, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0202>. [Original source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 6, 11 March to 27 November 1813, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 226–229.]

tablished church was the only way to counteract these evil influences. In 1818, Connecticut voted to disestablish its church. Beecher described the experience. “For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.” He went on to observe, “They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe buckles, and cocked hats, and golden-headed canes.”¹²

Tocqueville observed on his trip to America, “When I arrived in the United States, it was the country’s religious aspect that first captured my attention.”¹³ By speaking to Americans, he learned religion flourished *because* of the complete separation of church and state, not in spite of it. That is precisely the lesson the Commission would have the nation unlearn, or rather, learn again the hard way.

The Commission is wrong to treat separation of church and state as a modern innovation. In America, the separation of church and state formed the foundation of our dearest freedoms, supported by Baptists, dissenters, and citizens of every faith, vindicated by disestablishment, and praised by foreign observers as religion and freedom thrived together.

As Roger Williams warned, freedom of conscience must be defended: “Having bought truth dear, we must not sell it cheap, nor the least grain of it for the whole world, no not for the saving of souls, though our own most precious..t”¹⁴

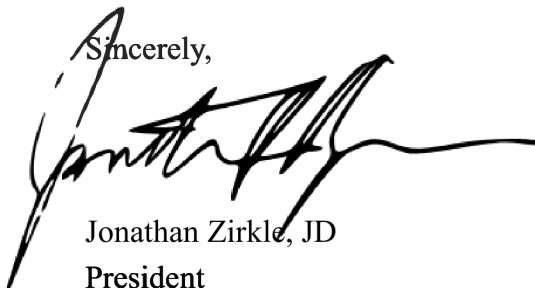
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 340.

¹⁴ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), p. 9.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. America will do best to forever maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Zirkle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Zirkle, JD
President