

From: Amy Krum <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:13:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am greatly concerned at the proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. I am a person of faith and understand that believers formed this policy to protect religious freedom. It may sound good to have a bridge, but which religion will it support? I believe we cannot break down this separation without serious repercussions to religious freedom for every person, regardless of what they believe.

Please keep church and state separate. That is the only way I believe we can keep them both free.

Sincerely

Amy Krum

Colfax, California

Sent from my iPhone

From: Miguel Alonso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Objections to the DRAFT REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:15:39 -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

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

As a Christian and an American, I believe that your assessment of the “separation of church and state” should be re-evaluated.

In your assessment, you violate Executive Order 14291 Sec.2 (b)(iv) in that by dispensing with the separation of church and state, you will be paving the way for the church to influence the U.S. government to violate the First Amendment of the Constitution.

In order to ensure the upholding of the God-given right of liberty of conscience protected by the Constitution, we need to ensure that the “church” (or any religious institution) does not control government or dictate policy. Once religious establishments are directly involved with the government, they will begin looking out for their own interests. This in and of itself may not be bad; however, it is unlikely that they will encourage or lobby for legislation involving matters of conscience or the free exercise of religion.

We must respect all forms of religion if we are going to claim religious liberty. For example, the blue laws affected religious people who didn’t have beliefs aligned with the beliefs of the legislators. Many religions, Christian and non-Christian, hold other days as the day of rest (including the biblical Saturday Sabbath observed by Seventh-Day Adventists, Seventh-Day Baptists, Jews, and even the late Charlie Kirk). However, I do not think “blue laws” should be made in favor of the Saturday Sabbath either. I believe all religions and sects have the God-given right to practice their religion however they please, provided it does not violate someone else’s rights.

Although the First Amendment only restricts the state from going after the churches, it necessitates that the churches not go after the state. If the churches tell the state what to do, it will only be a matter of time before the church-state uses the power of the state to advance its own cause and infringe upon the rights of other religions or persons that hold different religious beliefs. Thus, in order to protect the God-given right to freedom of conscience as outlined in the First Amendment of our Constitution, we must keep the churches or religions out of

the government. We must remember that all forms of religion and all people are given the same rights by God, and it is the duty of the American government to protect those rights.

In conclusion, I appeal to you, the members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty, to reconsider your assessment and maintain the integrity of the American government by protecting the religious liberty of all people and religions. Protect our God-given rights by keeping religious establishments from having direct political influence. By allowing religion into the government, we end up trampling individual rights, as seen in Afghanistan, Iran, and other Islamic states instituting Sharia law. Just because it is our religion does not mean that our beliefs should govern another man's conscience. God gave the inalienable rights to all men, not just Christians.

Sincerely,

Miguel Alonso

From: George Prieto <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - George Prieto

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:16:56 -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,

George Prieto
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

From: Ronda Welch <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:18:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments please implement them

Geraldine

Flint Michigan

Sent from my iPhone

From: Paul Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response Letter to Religious Liberty Draft

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:19:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good Afternoon,

Im writing this email in response to the
Commissions suggestion that there should be a bridge between church and state instead of a wall.

Historically this nation was founded due to freedom of religious persecution in the "Old World", this religious persecution became most rampant when the Catholic church of Rome had civil authority over the empire.

The founding fathers recognized this as Benjamin Franklin states, "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, so that it's Professors are oblig'd to call for the help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one".

Benjamin Franklin could make such a profound statement like this because he understood, that historically when Church and State would be united, religious persecution would soon follow.

Jesus said in Matthew 22:21 "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesars, and unto God the things that are Gods." Furthermore He states in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world then my servants would fight."

These two verses combined demonstrates that there should absolutely be a separation between what is Caesar (State), and what is God's (Church).

Lastly in Matthew 23:37-39 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee... behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord". Since this statement comes after the 1st triumphant entry, we can understand that Jesus means this to be at his 2nd triumphant entry, that is at his second coming. The house of literal Israel will be desolate until Jesus establishes a New Jerusalem after His second coming. Again, Jesus states that His Kingdom is not of this world.

Therefore, I suggest that the founding fathers, the constitution, and the Bible confirms that there should be religious freedom for all, that there should not be a merging or a bridge between church and state, for the church belongs to God alone and the state belongs to Caesar.

From: stacey hudson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] 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.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:20:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Ave, 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 the 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 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 in Article V of the U.S Constitution.

Sincerely,
Stacey Hudson,
Concerned American Citizen

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Urgent Appeal: Defend Religious Liberty Before July 13 [REDACTED] The President's Religious Liberty Commission has opened a formal public comment period, allowing individuals the opportunity to submit written feedback and express their concerns regarding the Commission's work and recommendations. The deadline for submitting comments is July 13, 2026, making this a limited window to have your voices heard. Those who value the constitutional principles TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII 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 obvi

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:21:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of Church & State

Jo

From: Danny Ivette Moctezuma <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recomendaciones de la Comisión De Libertad Religiosa

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:21:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

RECOMENDACIONES DE LA COMISIÓN DE LIBERTAD RELIGIOSA

Gracias por la oportunidad de brindar comentarios sobre las recomendaciones del Comité de Libertad Religiosa presentadas al Presidente Donald J. Trump el 26 de junio de 2026. Si bien reconocemos el trabajo del Comité, que dio como resultado las 12 recomendaciones publicadas el 26 de junio, con algunas de las cuales estamos de acuerdo, escribimos para expresar nuestras preocupaciones y objeciones a la primera y novena recomendación del Comité [1] y su evidente consideración insuficiente de las advertencias de los Padres Fundadores sobre los peligros de una unión de iglesia y estado o las muchas lecciones de la historia al respecto.

El Comité recomendó que el Departamento de Justicia emitiera directrices que aclararan la interpretación correcta de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la iglesia y el estado. [2] En la presentación formal de las recomendaciones del Comité ese mismo día, el presidente del Comité, Dan Patrick, declaró públicamente que «la separación de la iglesia y el estado no está en la constitución» y que la frase «no tiene fundamento constitucional». [3]

Como ciudadanos, historiadores y cristianos, nos preocupa que la visión errónea e inconstitucional del Presidente del Comité sobre la supuesta «interpretación correcta de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado» pueda influir, o peor aún, servir de guía, para el Departamento de Justicia. Si la opinión del Comité sobre la supuesta «interpretación correcta» de la Cláusula de Establecimiento coincide con la de su Presidente, resulta evidente que dicha interpretación no es correcta, sino incorrecta.

El Padre Fundador, "Padre de la Constitución" y cuarto Presidente de los Estados Unidos, James Madison, contradijo la afirmación del Presidente Dan Patrick de que la separación entre la Iglesia y el Estado no está en la Constitución. Madison declaró que "Si bien la separación entre religión y gobierno está rigurosamente protegida en la Constitución de los Estados Unidos, el peligro de injerencia por parte de organismos eclesiásticos puede ilustrarse con los precedentes ya establecidos en su breve historia". Según James Madison, la separación entre la Iglesia y el Estado sí está en la Constitución. En cuanto a si James Madison, principal autor de la Cláusula de Establecimiento, o Dan Patrick, es la mayor autoridad en este tema, creemos que no es difícil para las personas razonables determinarlo.

Ciertamente, los Padres Fundadores eran conscientes de la persecución de bautistas, cuáqueros, judíos y otros en algunas colonias. Habían presenciado de primera mano los cortes de orejas, los azotes, el encarcelamiento y las ejecuciones en Massachusetts y otras colonias.

En Europa, la persecución de los mártires está bien documentada. Hoy damos por sentada la Biblia, pero olvidamos que William Tyndale fue ejecutado por traducirla al inglés, no por ateos, sino por fanáticos religiosos. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que reprimió la libertad de expresión y de prensa en Inglaterra. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que prohibió la traducción de la Biblia, que cambió el mundo. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que lo obligó a huir a Europa. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que lo mató.

Solicitamos respetuosamente al Departamento de Justicia que, al considerar la cuestión de la orientación pública sobre la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado, tenga en cuenta la historia de William Penn, fundador de Pensilvania y uno de los primeros Padres Fundadores, quien fue encarcelado repetidamente en Inglaterra por su fe religiosa. La colonia de Pensilvania se convirtió en un refugio, no de perseguidores ateos, sino de perseguidores religiosos que no creían en la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado. Lo mismo ocurrió con Roger Williams, fundador de la colonia de Rhode Island, a quien se le ordenó arrestar por declarar que el magistrado civil no puede hacer cumplir la primera tabla del Decálogo. Solicitamos al Comité que tome en cuenta la brutal flagelación pública que sufrió Obadiah Holmes, tatarabuelo del presidente Abraham Lincoln, en la colonia de Massachusetts, por el "delito" de disidencia religiosa. Obadiah Holmes no fue flagelado por ateos, sino por puritanos fanáticos que no creían en la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado. Solicitamos respetuosamente al Departamento de Justicia que considere esta historia al emitir orientación pública sobre el tema.

Nos preocupa que el Comité no haya tenido en cuenta el impacto de la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado en los demás derechos consagrados en la Primera Enmienda. La libertad de expresión y la libertad de prensa, por ejemplo, deben su auge en el mundo moderno en gran medida a la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado en Estados Unidos. Antes de las protecciones de la Primera Enmienda, la Iglesia Católica Romana mantuvo durante siglos una lista de libros prohibidos llamada Index Librorum Prohibitorum. Estos libros estaban sujetos a confiscación, y su posesión conllevaba el castigo de su propietario.

Lamentablemente, el Comité no menciona la censura en este contexto de Galileo y Kepler, Kant y Locke, John Milton y Maimonides, John Stuart Mill y Jeremy Bentham, David Hume y Edward Gibbon, y muchos otros, todos a instancias del Papado romano, que en sí mismo es una unión de iglesia y estado. La libertad de expresión en el mundo occidental es el legado de aquellos que arriesgaron la ira de una iglesia y un estado unificados, a menudo a costa de sus vidas. También solicitamos que el Departamento de Justicia considere los reiterados llamamientos modernos del poder papal a la censura de internet y la supresión de la libertad de expresión, en contravención de la Primera Enmienda. [4] No dudamos de que la censura de Galileo, Kepler, Milton y otros se llevó a cabo bajo la justificación de la censura de la desinformación.

La Iglesia romana no fue la única en sufrir esta persecución. Solicitamos al Departamento de Justicia que, al formular directrices públicas sobre la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado, recuerde las persecuciones religiosas llevadas a cabo por orden de Juan Calvino en Ginebra contra disidentes religiosos como Miguel Servet, quien pagó con su vida por sus escritos y enseñanzas.

Servet fue ejecutado por una unión de Iglesia y Estado. Nos preocupan las declaraciones públicas de quienes pretenden crear un sistema similar en Estados Unidos. [5]

Por lo tanto, nos preguntamos respetuosamente qué orientación adecuada puede esperar brindar el Departamento de Justicia al público sobre la "comprensión correcta de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la iglesia y el estado" si su objetivo está dirigido por un Comité y un Presidente de Comité que han descuidado analizar más a fondo las razones de la separación de la iglesia y el estado, o las razones por las que Estados Unidos codificó la separación de la iglesia y el estado en la Primera Enmienda en primer lugar.

La referencia al muro de separación entre la iglesia y el estado no solo la menciona el presidente Thomas Jefferson en la carta a los bautistas de Danbury, lo cual, por supuesto, es cierto. [6] Lo que a menudo se omite en la narración es que Jefferson afirmó creer personalmente que el principio de la separación entre la iglesia y el estado está codificado en la Constitución. En ella, Jefferson escribió: «Creyendo, al igual que ustedes, que la religión es un asunto que concierne únicamente al hombre y a su Dios, que no debe rendir cuentas a nadie más por su fe o su culto, que los poderes legítimos del gobierno solo alcanzan a las acciones y no a las opiniones, contemplo con soberana reverencia el acto de todo el pueblo estadounidense que declaró que su legislatura no debería "promulgar ninguna ley que establezca una religión ni que prohíba su libre ejercicio", construyendo así un muro de separación entre la Iglesia y el Estado». [7]

James Madison escribió: «Es apropiado alarmarse ante el primer intento de atentar contra nuestras libertades. Consideramos que esta prudente cautela es el primer deber de los ciudadanos y una de las características más nobles de la reciente Revolución. Los hombres libres de América no esperaron a que el poder usurpado se fortaleciera mediante el ejercicio y enredara la cuestión en precedentes. Vieron todas las consecuencias del principio y las evitaron negándolo. Valoramos demasiado esta lección como para olvidarla pronto». [8]

Por último, nos oponemos a la recomendación del Comité de que se elimine la Enmienda Johnson. Como seguidores de Jesucristo, recordamos las palabras de Nuestro Señor: «Dad al César lo que es del César, y a Dios lo que es de Dios». [9] Jesucristo estableció el principio de la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado y enseñó que lo que pertenece a Dios no puede ser dado al César. La aplicación de esta enseñanza es que los religiosos, que aspiran al poder civil, y los políticos, que aspiran a su respaldo, deben mantenerse separados en el sistema político estadounidense, tal como lo exige la Constitución. La unión de la Iglesia y el Estado resulta en la corrupción de ambos, un resultado que ninguno debería desear ni puede permitirse.

Madison afirmó que "El número, la diligencia y la moralidad del sacerdocio, así como la devoción del pueblo, han aumentado manifiestamente gracias a la separación total de la Iglesia del Estado". [10] Y tenía razón. Si se elimina la Enmienda Johnson, los religiosos que anhelan el poder civil harán campaña públicamente y prometerán sus votos y las contribuciones de sus congregaciones a cambio de favores políticos, y los políticos, sin duda, estarán más que

dispuestos a corresponder con la legislación que los religiosos desean, siempre y cuando les ayuden en sus intentos de acceder al poder.

En su tratado anónimo publicado en la Boston Gazette, John Adams, quien más tarde sería el segundo presidente de los Estados Unidos, escribió que el derecho canónico era una forma tiránica de gobierno, al igual que el derecho feudal, pero que la peor de todas las formas de gobierno era la unión de ambas. [11] Y fue Madison quien afirmó que, «En el sistema papal, el gobierno y la religión están de alguna manera consolidados, y se ha demostrado que ese es el peor de los gobiernos».

Por lo tanto, solicitamos respetuosamente que el Departamento de Justicia no adopte las recomendaciones 1 y 9 del Comité y que adopte la recomendación 1 del Comité, que consiste en convocar una audiencia pública, con presentaciones escritas y orales del público, para estudiar de manera más exhaustiva la cuestión de la separación de la iglesia y el estado en la historia, y en la historia estadounidense en particular, un estudio que apoyaríamos con entusiasmo.

Nos mantenemos, Atentamente,

[EL ABAJO FIRMANTE]

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

[2] *Ibíd., [Énfasis añadido].*

[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?vepAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?vCMBiPIfx-UA>

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

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson aquí se refiere claramente al Congreso. Que la Constitución prohíbe al Congreso formar una unión entre la iglesia y el estado.

[8] James Madison, Memorial y protesta contra las contribuciones religiosas

[9] Mateo 22:21.

[10] James Madison, Carta a Robert Walsh, 2 de marzo de 1819.

[11] John Adams, Disertación sobre el canon y el derecho feudal, 1765.

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

From: pauline smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] God-ordained the Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:23:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission.

I strongly oppose what the Religious Liberty Commission is proposing in regards to our government's involvement in religious practices in the United States. Bottom line is that ultimately, these changes and proposed laws will lead to forced expression of Christian religious practices with religious persecution being the end result for those who don't comply.

Let me remind you, that religious persecution was exactly the reason our Founding Fathers and Pilgrims fled from England to come to the new land in the west, America. That is why, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the passing or creation of ANY law that establishes a religious body and directly impedes on an individual's right to practice whichever religion they see fit. This delineated a clear separation of church and state. "No Pope - Protestantism; No King - Republicanism." This distinction is what has allowed this country to flourish as a religious haven for all, just as God who raised it up intended for it to be. So the clear separation of church and state must remain.

As a devout, Bible-believing Christian, myself, I know that Jesus never forces the conscience. He doesn't force people to serve Him. Instead, He says, like Joshua, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." Joshua 24:15. He gave all man-kind at creation, the power to choose. We were made free to choose who and how we will worship. It is our fundamental God-given right. Please do not allow our country, that God has shed His grace on, to become a despotic, persecuting power.

Thank you for the privilege of voicing my thoughts.

Pauline Smith
Spring Hill, TN

From: heidistein2002 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bridging Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:23:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Please keep Church and State completely separate. For 250 years, we have not mixed Church with State--so, respectfully, why now? Keeping Church and State separate protects our freedoms. The State should not be encouraged or allowed to impose one faith on everyone, as this most certainly will lead to discrimination and oppression, as proven through history. There are currently 372 faith groups in America. Please do not take away the religious freedom of 371 of these groups.

Our wonderful country was founded on principles separating Church and State. This is why so many people left their country under dire persecution to enjoy religious freedom here in the USA. What a huge disappointment to these brave people and to our Founding Fathers if we deny what they tried to protect.

Keeping Church and State separate is necessary to set us apart from other nations, so we can continue being the "land of the free, and home of the brave".

Sincerely yours,

Heidi Stein

Sent from my Galaxy

From: V Michniuk <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report opposition

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:28:40 -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,
Violet Enochs

From: Ginny Frost <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:30:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: Religious Liberty Commission;

The United States of America was founded on the principle of Religious Freedom and Free Speech for all people. Our constitution prohibits our government from "establishing a national religion, endorsing a specific faith, or favoring one religion over another." Please do not undermine these values that make us the nation that we are. All people have the right to their religious beliefs (or no religious belief), along with the right to talk about it freely, without the interference of government deciding how that should be interpreted. No one should be able to force their religion on another. Keep the government out of religious matters. Keep the church and the state separate. Please uphold the constitution and the rights of the American people in this matter. That is what makes us American!

Sincerely,
Ginny F.
Oregon

From: Zachary Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State separation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:33:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I stand with Pillar of Freedom. We must retain the separation of church & State that we may not return to the Dark ages. Persecution is not the way to bring morality back to our beloved country. Uniting church and state will without a doubt divide the country that was founded on freedom, the freedom to choose. To choose whom they serve. God or Mammon.

Jesus never forced himself on anyone. He led the people to the water and let them decide if they would drink. I truly believe that God raised up this country not so that we could be the best in the world, but so His people could have the freedom to study His word and know Him for their selves. (This is Eternal Life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you thou hast sent John 17:3). This commission is doing many good things that I can definitely stand behind and I really appreciate your hard work and dedication. I am praying for you all and Know that our almighty God will guide your decision and future works.

God Bless,

Zachary Smith

From: DEBORAH BAER <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Separation of Church and State-Deborah Baer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:33:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to let you know my objections to your proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. Our country was intended to be free of government intervention in religious matters.
I am against government funding of religious activities and bringing political processes into the church.
I am disappointed that this proposal has such a short time frame for citizens to voice their comments, but am hoping many people respond with a resounding no to your proposal .

Sincerely,
Deborah Baer
Sent from my iPad

From: Zachary Weijohn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of church and state and the Johnson Amendment - Zachary Weijohn

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:34:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I believe religious liberty is one of the bulwarks of our nation and I am concerned with the possible infringements that the recent recommendations to the Department of Justice might cause. My concerns are as follows: if theological institutions become involved in politics through money/donations it will negatively affect the spiritual institution by the politics of our day. Wherever you see religion become involved in politics in history it almost always results in the decline of the spiritual welfare of the group as well as persecution of people that do not share the "mainstream" view. The second concern I have is with the recommendation to repeal the Johnson amendment. This could encourage people to seek political goals through the church, causing a muddying of the waters. Our founding Fathers wisely kept church and state separate and history tells us that they were right to do so. This is not only for the State but also for the prosperity of the church. I would encourage the continued separation of church and state so that we might maintain the rights of American citizens and the welfare of Christians and non Christians alike.

Thank you,
Zachary Weijohn
Ronan Montana

From: Renee Kuhn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Devout Christians PROTESTING Union of Church and State According to the Holy Bible

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:36:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission and Public Audience of the United States of America and the World Stage,

I respectfully submit this letter as a PROTEST and as an expression of my commitment to religious liberty, the Word of God, and my faith in Jesus Christ.

My only creed is the Bible. I believe the Holy Scriptures are the final authority for faith and practice, and that all human traditions, laws, and religious systems must be tested by the Word of God. The Bible warns of a time when **religious and political powers** will unite in a way that **threatens freedom of conscience**. According to my understanding of Bible prophecy, **Revelation** describes a power that **risers like a lamb** but eventually **speaks like a dragon**, exercising authority that leads people away from true worship and pressures them to follow **religious commands enforced by civil power**.

I believe Revelation 13 describes the **United States as the second beast**, also called the **False Prophet of Revelation**, which appears with lamb-like characteristics but later exercises the authority of the first beast and causes the world to follow the same pattern of religious and governmental union. The 2-horned, lamb-like nation who rose up onto the world's stage was none other than the United States of America! My dear nation, set aside for great things – set aside to be the true beacon of light set upon the hill has been taken over by the Vatican. We all know that history has and is being scrubbed. Even you accuse the other side of doing the same thing. So, let me preach our dear history from the Holy Bible a moment. It is a true and sad situation that I have found myself having to accept. My dear friends, the United States of America rose as a two-horned lamb-like nation and those two beautiful horns represent:

1. Protestantism – freedom from the Papacy
2. Republicanism – freedom from the Monarchy

Any type of revamping of history that leads us FROM these two horns continuing to be SEPARATE is speaking like a Dragon, per the Holy Scriptures. However, we knew this would happen. We simply did not know exactly when and who the names and faces would be at that time. But the God above have always known you and your names. He knew you would do this. He also knows who will read this and take it seriously – repent and turn away from the Union of Church and State.

I understand the **first beast of Revelation** to represent the Vatican/Roman Catholic system, and I believe prophecy warns of a future restoration of religious power that will influence governments to enforce religious observances. As the great USA was rising up in the 1700s, the 1st beast of Revelation [which is the Vatican] was receiving a Deadly Wound given to it by Napoleon, in the French Revolution. It is no surprise that we see the Vatican taking on the Deadly Wound and then another nation rising up who would later give allegiance to that first beast/nation. While the devil has preached to all denominations and religions on planet earth that the Antichrist is one man, Paul said that even now [in his time] there are many antichrists as well as the power that would later become the Vatican—which was the Roman System that killed Jesus. It is no new revelation that the Papal Church came from the Pagan Church. I mean, we know that some of the statues are older than the day Jesus walked on the planet as a man.

I understand that many may disagree with this interpretation, but I cannot remain silent when I believe Bible prophecy is pointing toward a **coming crisis of conscience** involving the union of church and state and the enforcement of religious laws. If you do not think you NOW stand against my conscience, then prove yourselves faithful to the true God of Heaven. Prove it by NOT participating in the Union of Church and State.

A paraphrase attributed to **Alexis de Tocqueville**, "When religion is allied with political power, it may share in the decay of political power." Well, my friends, you version of Christianity that WILL FORCE ITSELF onto

Americans AND WILL BE TOLD to the World [since America is the False Prophet] will have an ending to it. All governments of the world will end, per Daniel 2 and 11 as well as Revelation 18. The only government that STANDS FOREVER is the Lord's Government that He has created.

Now, I considered whether I should even participate in this PROTEST, because Scripture says these things WILL HAPPEN. However, I believe that **knowing prophecy does NOT remove my responsibility to stand for truth**. I want to participate in the **keeping of the faith of my Lord Jesus Christ** and to faithfully share the warning that I believe God has given in His Word.

I also do not want to miss an opportunity to proclaim what I believe is the coming National Sunday Law and the warning contained in Bible prophecy. If even one person reads this message, searches the Scriptures, turns to God, and accepts the truth of Jesus Christ, then any personal cost, criticism, or backlash would be worth it.

Throughout history, when church and state have united, persecution has followed. **Jesus Christ Himself** was **condemned** and **crucified** through **a combination of religious and civil authority**. The apostles suffered persecution and martyrdom because they remained faithful to Christ rather than compromise their convictions.

The same principle is reflected in the testimony of early Christians. **Polycarp** of Smyrna refused to deny Christ and was killed for his faith. **Polycrates** of Ephesus defended the practice he believed was faithful to Scripture and the example of the apostles rather than submit to pressure from religious authorities. Their examples remind us that obedience to God must come before obedience to human commands.

I also wish to bring attention to historical statements **regarding Sunday observance**. **Bishop Thomas Enright** was quoted as stating:

"I have repeatedly offered \$10,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to **keep Sunday holy**."

The quotation and related historical material are available here: [Father Enright on the Sunday](#)

I will say, there are so many Catholic leaders who have written so boldly and clearly as this Bishop. So many have not held their beliefs silent—and how their belief in the Scriptures is one thing and yet their Catholic Church is something different.

I believe this illustrates the distinction between **a command found in Scripture** and a **religious tradition** established by human authority dictated by the Vatican. My concern is not directed toward individuals of any faith, but toward **any system—religious and/or political—that seeks to bind conscience** through **civil enforcement of religious requirements**.

The Bible teaches that **God does not change**. His **character does not change**, His **truth does not change**, and **His law does not change**. **His appointed times** and **His commands** have always **pointed** humanity **toward His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ**.

Jesus Christ is the **center** of **God's plan of salvation**. He is the One who dwells in believers through the **Holy Spirit**, and all true worship must point back to Him.

Therefore, I respectfully ask that **religious liberty** be **protected for every person**. **No government should force worship, enforce religious observance, or punish individuals for following their conscience before God**.

May we remember the words of Revelation 14:12:

"Here is the **patience** of the **saints**: here are they that **keep** the **commandments of God**, and the **faith of Jesus**."

My appeal is simple: **protect freedom of conscience, honor the Word of God, and allow every person the liberty to worship** according to **their faith without government coercion**.

As for me and my house, we shall serve the LORD.
Maranatha! Amen!

Respectfully,
Jeffery and Renee Kuhn

From: Lisa Collier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State from Lisa Collier

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:37:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was extremely 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. In history when church and state unite persecution of those who disagree with a narrative begins. If we don't learn from history we will be repeating it. I love my country and I love God. Removing the separation of church and state will begin the downward slide of the greatest nation on earth.

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

Sincerely,

Lisa Collier

Vonore, TN

From: Billie Burcham <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:41:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I am concerned about the government trying to put religion into the government. It should be separated, and it has proven in the past that it was talked against in the early early days of our history and Christ talked about it. That's why he said give to Cesar what is Caesars and to God what is God's.

We came here to be able to have the freedom of religion to worship in our own way and our own God. It is not up to the government to tell people how to worship or that they have to worship. That's why we were here. It's a free country and we are entitled to that freedom and why are you trying to want to take it away from us?

It is important to have separation of State and Church. They should have nothing to do with each other. It's not up to the government to tell people where and how to worship or to set their morals. Everybody has that freedom, and we want to keep these freedoms.

Thank you,

Wilhelmina Burcham

[Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Aryonna Waters <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:42:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

There are many critical issues that are a concern to me as a citizen of the United States, as well as all the inhabitants of the world, as the United State nations aspire to. The most critical issue by far is the Commission's effort to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state.

The Commission's attempt is marked by making two primary types of recommendations that alarm me.

The first is the repeal of the Johnson Amendment which will further politicize America's churches, and the second is the expansion of funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities.

Both of these recommendations are counter to the separation of church and state as provided for by the Constitution.

"I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments regarding the separation of church and state in this report. Please implement them."

Sincerely,
Aryonna Waters
Carson, Washington

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From: Lynn Price <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please retain Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:44:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe in the separation of church and state.

The principle has served this great country for 250 years.
And it has worked.

I firmly believe in retaining this cornerstone practice.

Thank you for the chance to voice an opinion.

Lynn from Florida

From: Julia Reynolds <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Kyle <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] United States Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:44:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Chair Ben Carson and members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

First I want to commend you for identifying abuses in religious liberty towards individuals that you have mentioned; and also I commend you for your desire to recognize and rectify those abuses.

As a Bible believer and patriotic American it is certainly true that secular humanism has become a favored religion in governmental institutions. This is clearly a peril that you have identified. Although you have correctly described the injuries and injustices done to peoples of faith, I respectfully disagree with your solutions of which I believe will undermine the foundations of our Constitutional Republic.

My ancestors arrived in New England from England in the middle 1600s. We were Separatists and we were fleeing the religious oppression in Europe. We gave up home and hearth and fought to establish and protect the freedoms we had gained at so much of a cost. But when we arrived, we realized that the early colonies were established to form a theocracy and unless you agreed with their version of Christianity you were persecuted and banished. It was freedom for me and not for thee. It wasn't until Rodger Williams founded RI and other states followed that we had true religious liberty in this country. Rodger Williams was banned in Massachusetts for believing that the state had no right to legislate the first 4 commandments of the decalogue and fled in the winter with his life under threat, or be forced on the first ship back to England.

Dear sirs, we never want to go back to the early tyranny of our Pilgrim Fathers. Instead we must reflect more of the position of Jefferson and Madison who clearly understood that the stonger the bond between the church and the state, the more oppressive the society.

Without the separation of church and state the constitution, which we love and which has made this nation great, would never have been founded. The commission is ignoring the most important aspects of the history of this nation and as a result are placing an incomplete and incorrect slant on the solution to the complex problems of our nation.

The state should be neutral in all cases. Not preferring atheism or Judaism or secularism or any one form of Christianity. We may have principles of justice and truth based upon reason and fairness. But anytime faith is coercive, religious persecution will be the results. We can make moral laws but we can't not and we must not compel the conscience. I fear that the direction this commission is heading will undermine what our god fearing men and women who founded this great nation, fought so hard to establish.

Please I urge you to reconsider your stand. If we want to make America great again we need not dissolve the very foundations of the house which it was founded. We must built instead upon liberty and justice for all.

We must not favor one religion over another. The commission will unfairly establish an unconstitutional establishment of religion if these 5 points below are instituted.

1. Financial support for religious, faith based non-profits
2. Financial support for religious education
3. Politicization of Churches and Religious non-profits by repealing the Johnson Amendment.
4. Singling out one religion for special government protection
5. Indoctrination of Americans in the ideology of the Commission.

Respectfully,

Julia Frazier

Sent from my iPhone

From: Nola Vandersloot <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:46:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Freedom Commission,

As someone who loves this country and the freedoms we enjoy. I am writing to ask the Department of Justice to protect our religious freedom. The freedom to worship how, where, and what we may is a founding principle of our country. Please protect this freedom.

Thank you for all you do to uphold the founding principles of this great country. God bless the USA.

Nola Vandersloot

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Lynelle Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:46:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it May Concern in the Justice Department,

I strongly believe in the separation of church and state. Please do not consider blending the two. Our government was founded on the principle of religious liberty. A man's relationship with God is a sacred and private thing that cannot be legislated by a third party. The ten commandments clearly outline our duties to God and to man. The first four outline our relationship to God. The last 6 outline our duties towards our fellow human beings. No where in scripture is it taught that government or another human being should control an individual's relationship with God.

Governments rightly enact laws to enforce the last 6 commandments to protect fellow human beings from other human beings that do not respect life. But the first 4 commandments outline sacred obligations to a higher power, the God who created us. Man cannot interfere with this.

Please uphold the important principle of separation of church and state. Thank you for allowing feedback on this issue.

Lynelle Smith

Sent from my iPhone

From: George Graves <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:47:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a physician who has practiced in Southeast Tennessee since 1985, and a lifelong, serious student of Scripture — not a trained theologian, but a deeply committed disciple of Jesus Christ. Practicing medicine for four decades has put me at the intersection of science, history, and faith, and I have found that genuine science and genuine Scripture have never actually been in conflict — only their distortions have. The Bible has stood the test of time and of scrutiny far longer than any political theory, including this one. I am the grandson of immigrants who left Europe to escape lands where church and state were fused together, the son of an Army medic who served in a field hospital in World War II, and the grandson of a Navy physician who served aboard the USS Panay, protecting American commerce and missionaries on the Yangtze before it was sunk in 1937. I write to object to the Commission's recommendations to repeal the Johnson Amendment and expand government funding of religious activity, and to its broader attempt to replace the separation of church and state with something far more permeable.

History is consistent on this point. From the Middle Ages through the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, whenever government and religion have fused, both have been corrupted. Dietrich Bonhoeffer watched the German church accommodate itself to Nazi ideology and warned that the church's calling is to bear witness to Christ, not to seek political power. Scripture warns of the same temptation: when Israel demanded a king to be "like the other nations" instead of remaining under judges and prophets, God told them plainly what it would cost them — and they got exactly what was promised. Any church that seeks worldly power to advance itself is on a doomed mission from the outset, one Scripture cannot defend.

The healthiest relationship is not one institution fused with the other, but two distinct vessels operating alongside one another — government protecting the freedom of all people, the church persuading by truth rather than force. A church that leans on government money stops depending on God and starts depending on politicians. What the Commission proposes is a bridge to nowhere — the kind built at great cost and never finished. This bridge will fail too, and the toll will be emotional, social, and spiritual, not just financial, leaving churches and communities stranded in a fog of confusion.

Revelation 13 describes a power that fuses religious and civil authority to compel conformity — never presented as a blessing, but as a warning. I ask the Commission to withdraw these recommendations and reaffirm, not dissolve, the separation of church and state.

Respectfully submitted,

A Family Physician

Southeast Tennessee

Supplementary Notes (optional reading)

On a historical missed opportunity: When Marco Polo returned from China in 1295, he reported that Kublai Khan had asked the pope to send one hundred learned Christian teachers to his court. The pope commissioned only two friars, who turned back before completing the journey. Many historians regard this as a remarkable missed opportunity for good-faith religious and intellectual exchange during a rare window of openness between East and West — one that arose not from state power, but from genuine curiosity and invitation.

On family history: My mother's father served as a Navy physician aboard the USS Panay, transferred off the ship shortly before it was attacked and sunk on the Yangtze River in 1937 while protecting American commerce and missionaries. My mother and her younger brother were in Shanghai at the time, which soon fell to Japanese forces. My father served as an Army medic in a field hospital in World War II — an experience that turned him from a planned career in engineering toward medicine, and toward a lifetime as a family physician. These are not abstractions to me; they are the reason my family has never taken religious liberty, or the dangers of unchecked power, lightly.

From: michael firestone <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: michael firestone <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:51:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

The ten commandments are the eternal law of God. They are divided into two tables. The second table of the law (commandments 5 through 10) can be the basis of civil laws. It is appropriate for the government to administer and judge in those commandments. The government can have laws against murder, adultery, perjury, and stealing.

But the first table of the law (commandments 1 through 4) involve an individual's private relationship with God. The government should have no authority over these commandments, nor should any worldly authority. God does not force people to love Him and keep His laws. And neither should the government enforce the first table of the commandments.

Any attempt by the government to legislate the way an individual relates to God (including on which day a person can worship God) must only end in unfairness, persecution, and probably violence. This form of church and state combined is a great evil to society.

From: Todd Guthrie <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State and religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:52:11e0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for receiving comments from the public on the draft report. I write to ask the Commission to uphold the separation of church and state — the arrangement that has kept faith in America both free and strong. My reasons are these:

Christ himself divided human duty into two jurisdictions: what we owe our neighbors belongs to civil law; what we owe God lies beyond it. As A. T. Jones told the United States Senate in 1888, “civil government is civil, and has nothing to do in the matter of legislation, with religious observances in any way.” I urge the Commission to keep every recommendation on the civil side of that line.

American government holds only the powers the people could delegate — and no person can delegate his relationship to God. Religious authority was therefore never among the powers the people could give, and what was never given was never received. The First Amendment did not create that exclusion; it recorded it.

Separation was the founders’ deliberate design, urged on them by the churches themselves. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention: “There is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it would be a most flagrant usurpation.” I ask the Commission to honor that design, not explain it away.

The founding generation’s own Congress already examined this question. The reports of Richard M. Johnson’s committees, adopted in 1829 and 1830, declared: “It is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false. Our government is a civil and not a religious institution.” I ask the Commission to align its report with that precedent.

I do not believe that the church should use the power of the State for furthering its own agenda.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Todd Guthrie, MD
Mount Shasta, CA

From: Elizabeth Pyke <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State. Elizabeth Pyke

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:56:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am troubled to see that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect I find this alarming.

Our forefathers left Europe because there was not liberty 🇺🇸 of conscience. When the government take charge of your religious position it violates your conscience. People are eventually killed by the government when their freedoms are not recognized.

Those of you involved in this want to be able to worship as you see fit soon does everyone.

Please don't build a bridge build a wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Pyke
Bourbon, Missouri

From: Kristi Dyer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Kristi A. Dyer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:58:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Please reconsider the Commission's proposal to bridge the gap between church and state. The separation of church and state is the best solution for those who actively practice their faith, on the day of his or her choice, such as myself. The church is held accountable to God's authority and only God.

For the government to get involved and bridge this gap can bring about a downfall for our country and the liberty of the people of this country will be stripped away. We need only to look at other countries who have followed this example to recognize an identity change that is the furthest from democracy, a republic, and freedom for all. History is our teacher, lest we forget and grow into darkness and corruption.

Thank you for keeping church and state separate as it is intended to be.

Sincerely,
Kristi A. Dyer
Asheville, NC

From: Reed Webster <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission plea

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I urge you to reconsider recommendations in your report that would erode the separation of church and state, particularly those involving government funding of religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. The proposal to replace the “wall of separation” with a “bridge” is misguided and concerning.

Religious liberty forms the very foundation of the First Amendment. The principle of separation was established to ensure the government neither establishes an official religion nor interferes with the free exercise of faith. This wall was erected by people of faith themselves, not to suppress religion, but to shield it from government control and intrusion.

Allowing government funds and political influence to cross into religious institutions would invite corruption, force churches to compete for grants, and make them accountable to politicians rather than to their own beliefs and congregations. History repeatedly shows that when church and state become entangled, both suffer.

True separation protects the vitality of faith in America. It keeps religion independent and strong by preventing politicians from wielding power over it. I respectfully ask that you uphold this foundational principle rather than weaken it. Preserving the wall safeguards the church far more than it limits it — and it remains essential to keeping both our government and our faiths free.

Sincerely,

Reed Webster
Colton, CA

From: Randall Morris <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

The reason no states sponsor churches and churches should not seek federal nor state financial support is that no sooner that one religion gets government backing than that system turns to persecute the religions that do not espouse their creed. Holy wars and financial penalties result against other religions. Athiesm is also religion and should be classified with religions. Apparently, the lgbt stuff is a religion by its objectives. But its federal and state funding is most questionable as it's desire to persecute in the name of suffering misgendering. Anyway, i judt want you to know i believe in separation of church and state as a concept nessary to avoid our nation from becoming like north Korea only under a different exhaulted ideology....

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

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC Comment-Aims of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this comment in response to the aims of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty drafted on 06-26-26. I am deeply concerned for the findings of this commission that do not bear the whole truth about the separation between church and state-something our founding fathers of our great nation saw as so vitally important to the strength and stability of our times and provided for the exercise of our basic rights and freedoms as citizens of this "land of the free and the home of the brave." I believe the repeal of the Johnson Amendment will only increase the politicization of our nation's churches, which will ultimately lead to ridicule, villification, & persecution. I am also strongly opposed to increasing the funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities, which will only lead to competition among the various organizations. Anytime the secular government is allowed in bed with religious entities, they will have to "play by the rules" of their benefactors. We cannot legislate morality, rather, we must educate, educate, educate! In conclusion, I emphatically state that I am opposed to the Commission's efforts to abolish the separation of church and state, and am not in support of their proposals to do so-which will be at the expense of all citizens of this great nation. Please maintain the bastion of the separation of church and state, for everyone's good and peace of mind.

Thank you for listening. Am praying earnestly for us all.

Respectfully submitted,

D.rG.

From: Timm Eickmann <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am concerned about what is being considered currently about separation of Church and State. This Country was founded by people fleeing religious persecution. And when the State joins and is in partnership with a religious institution it is also apt to further preference and religious persecution. I value the Freedoms we HAVE. Why repeat a previous mistake.
TimmEickmann

From: Brittany Juergens <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Brittany Inostroza

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:01:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I was deeply troubled to hear that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state. As a person of faith, I find the idea alarming. Personally, I have dealt with workplace discrimination in regards to religious freedom with my current job. I thank God that our country's constitution currently protects my freedom to worship on the Saturday Sabbath instead of being forced to work.

Legislation that combines church and state, like what is currently being proposed, would not only negatively affect my life and those who believe similarly, but harm those of all different faiths and beliefs. History has shown us what happens when the state is able to regulate religious beliefs and practices, leading to persecution and even death for those who stood for their right to religious freedom.

Please reconsider this draft, and continue to keep church and state completely separate. Thank you for your time.

- Brittany Inostroza
Redlands, CA

From: Vijai Jaladhi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Vijay David

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:02:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who cares about both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses, and I ask you to weigh four arguments before recommending any measure that would draw government further into religious territory.

The first argument is Christian, not secular. Christ himself divided all human duties into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government exists to enforce duties owed to fellow men; duties owed to God belong to another authority entirely, one no earthly power may touch. As one witness put it before a Senate committee in 1888, there is a limit to the lawmaking power, and that limit is the line Christ drew — government may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses that line. The objection is not that such measures are too religious for a secular state; it is that they are forbidden by the very faith they claim to honor.

Second, rights come from the Creator, not from majorities. If a vote could grant religious liberty, a vote could take it away, and it was never a right at all — only a permission. Man's first allegiance is to his Creator, so the domain of conscience lies beyond the reach of human government, whether of one ruler or of many voters. Popular government is instituted precisely to protect the minority, since the majority can already take care of itself at the ballot box. As one advocate told a Senate committee, the people, however numerous, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. Congress's own 1829 committee report affirmed that the Constitution regards the conscience of a single dissenter as sacred as that of the whole community. Popular support can justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one.

Third, religious power was never delegated to government in the first place. Our system rests on the consent of the governed, but no person can delegate his relationship to God — he cannot authorize anyone to believe, worship, or answer for his soul in his place. What was never given could never be received. No government can answer to God for any individual, and none will stand at the final judgment for the people it governs. Whoever claims jurisdiction over another's belief claims a prerogative that God himself declines to exercise.

Fourth, the founders' separation was deliberate design, not accident, and it grew out of respect for religion, not hostility to it. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The churches of that era — Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers — pressed for exactly this separation, having felt establishment from underneath. The founders did not wait for full establishment before objecting; they denied the principle at its first appearance.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Vijay David

Sent from my iPhone

From: Sandy Eickmann <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:02:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I have been so grateful to live in a nation where the church and state are separate. We have a history of people fleeing Europe because of persecution and then coming here and persecuting other religious people who also fled, I am so glad that Roger Williams saw the problem and established Rhode Island and other colonies followed its example. When the state controls the church somehow it ends in persecution.

Several things in the Commission Draft Report concern me:

1. I don't want my pastor telling our politically diverse congregation who to vote for. Please keep politics out of my church. Leave the Johnson Amendment in place.
2. I don't want government money funding our Christian Schools because I don't want the government telling us what to teach and what not to teach. I have a hard time hearing about states insisting that the ten commandments be displayed. When I was in the fourth grade during the 1950's, my teacher tried to teach our class the ten commandments. But knowing that I kept the 7th day Sabbath on Saturday she attacked my belief. As a young child it was hurtful and confusing. Which commandments should be displayed? The Catholic version, ones from Deuteronomy or ones from Exodus, or should you do like my teacher, and try to eliminate a clear description of which day is the Sabbath by condensing them? Who gets to decide, the majority, or someone sitting in a government position?
3. Regarding funds to support churches as non-profits: Money tempts nonprofits to compromise their mission. I was very happy when an orphanage I support let me know that DOGE didn't change their funding because they don't take any money from any government in any of the countries they operate in so that they can be evangelistic in their ministry. It seems to me that if a church's nonprofit ministry isn't compelling enough to attract funds from the congregation and needs state funding, maybe they aren't worth supporting. By having the state fund it is a sneaky way of getting credit for a church when the taxpayers are footing the bill.
4. I do believe that secular atheism is operating like a religion/church. It's so difficult to know how to respond to it. I am in a state where it is scary to see what is being passed regarding gender issues. I appreciate that you are trying to address those issues. But the church acting like secular atheism and taking over isn't the answer. If secular atheism gets ahead in the elections, will they trade places with the churches and then tell the churches what to teach and believe? I think we need to keep social, political and religious issues out of the schools.

I am praying that the Commission, as they refine the draft report, will keep the state and church separate so we can worship freely.

Blessings,

Sandra Eickmann

From: Rhonda Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] religious liberty; honor the constitution; avoid government favoring of one religion over another

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:05:14 -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 (with help from Andy Roman from Oklahoma),

Rhonda Brown from Oregon

P.S. I am very sorry for all the political shenanigans going on here

From: "Clayton D. Brandt" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:05:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

We are very apposed to anything allowing the government to interfere with or coerce people in matters of conscience. We uphold the first amendment as it reads without any reinterpretation of it.

--

Clayton D. Brandt

[REDACTED] PII

From: Mike McGinley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:06:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a citizen of the United States of America and Christian who is troubled by the recommendations of this commission that would destroy the separation between church and state. God gave us free will to worship the way we choose, or not to worship at all.

I object to the repealing of the Johnson Amendment and request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced. I object to funding of religious non profit activities and to the funding of religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.

I believe the government should keep their hands out of the churches business and worry about taking care of our great nation. The Bible warns us that we are headed for great times of trouble and persecution and that we won't be able to buy or sell unless we have the mark of the beast. Revelation 14:12 says Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus. I am 78 years old and I don't know if I'll be around long enough to suffer the persecution and the Sunday laws they talk about but I know that if I am I will do my best to follow God and not man. God will protect and provide for those who love Him.

From: Jay Abell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:06:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Letter.pdf

To Whom it May Concern,

The attached is a letter addressing the released draft report.

Jay Abell

July 12, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to RLC@usdoj.gov

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

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

I am an American citizen, who values the freedoms of America. When the Twin Towers fell, as a newly married man, I chose to join and serve in the Armed Forces to defend these freedoms. My wife and our children have experienced the sacrifices a military family makes to ensure the freedoms Americans hold dear.

I value our unalienable rights given by God and expressed in our founding documents. I have backed this desire with the blank check written to protect my country from all enemies foreign and domestic. I have diligently taught our children the importance of what the founders of America fought for and how precious these freedoms are. As a person who enjoys studying history, a history curriculum which would accurately reflect our nation's history and values was of vital importance in the education of our children. The pages of history tell of the oppression of the past, of a time when the Bible was not in the language of the common man nor could the common man possess a copy. John Wycliffe's work was condemned by the Roman church as was

William Tyndale's. In addition, Tyndale was put to death by the Roman Catholic church.¹ Queen Elizabeth I increased religious freedom for the Church of England, but those who were labeled dissenters were often persecuted. The two largest dissenters were Catholics and Puritans, with some Puritans labeled Separatists. King James I and King Charles I claimed a divine right of kings, "the theory that kings have the right to rule absolutely and without criticism because they are chosen by God."² Absolute power absolutely corrupts. King James I allowed severe persecution of the Separatists. As a result, a group of Separatists fled to Holland which allowed people to worship freely. The Separatists stayed eleven years and were respected by the Dutch; yet the Separatists felt the need for space to be Englishmen and to spread the Gospel.³ These desires are remembered every November, as Americans continue the tradition of thanksgiving begun by the Pilgrims in the 1600's. Thomas Hooker, a pioneer of Connecticut, and Roger Williams continued to lead the colonies toward freedom. Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were banished from Massachusetts for disagreement over religion. "Williams insisted that civil government should not interfere in religious affairs and that churches should never use civil force to promote religion."⁴ Rhode Island was a refuge for those who experienced religious oppression. Rhode Island has proved, through the test of time, Biblical Christianity can thrive without government assistance. Many settlers who came to America were strongly motivated by freedom: religious, political, and economic; desirous of escape from oppression by either the

¹ Michael R. Lowman, *United States History: Heritage of Freedom*, 4th ed. (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Christian College, Inc., 2020), 16.

² Ibid., 17.

³ William Bradford, *Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation: 1606-1646*, ed. William T. Davis (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908).

⁴ Michael R. Lowman, *United States History: Heritage of Freedom*, 4th ed. (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Christian College, Inc., 2020), 29.

church or government (state) fostering unity through diversity.⁵ Much more could be recounted as to the history which has shaped the freedoms Americans hold dear; but for brevity's sake, does God's Holy Word support the separation of church and state?

The Word of God supports the ideology of separation of church and state. When God established the Israelite nation, He chose the tribe of Levi to serve as priests in the tabernacle.⁶ Many years later, when Israel desires to be like the nations around them and have a king, God establishes the line of kings from the tribes of Benjamin and then Judah.⁷ Jesus, Himself, is recorded in the book of Matthew saying, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."⁸ Both the example in Ancient Israel and the words of Jesus signal a separation between the religious leaders and the leadership of the king. The Word of God also supports freedom of conscience and freedom to choose.⁹

My request is for this committee to hold fast to the freedoms our Founding Fathers and those who risked everything to travel to America in search of freedom have fought for: freedom from oppression, freedom of church and state, freedom to exercise humanity's unalienable rights. I, myself, and my family have also sacrificed and recognize the value of the freedoms established in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Please do not remove the wall between church and state

⁵ Ibid., 15-36.

⁶ Exo. 28:1; Num. 3:5-13, 8:5-22, King James Version.

⁷ 1 Sam. 8:19-20; 9:1; 2 Sam. 5:2, 12.

⁸ Matt. 22:21

⁹ Phil. 2:12, Gen. 2:16-17, 1 Sam. 8:6-10, Josh. 24:14-15, Isa. 1:18.

and replace it by building a bridge. History portrays in grim details where the bridge will lead, and those who choose to ignore history are doomed to repeat it.¹⁰

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jay Abell, MA

US Army Ret.

¹⁰ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1980).

From: RRP <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- [Religious Liberty Commission Report] – [Randy Phelan].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:08:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Report_Reply.pages

Attached is my comments on the Religious Liberty Commission Report.

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

God alone is the Moral Governor of the Universe.

The apostle Paul declares in Romans 13:1-7 that civil government is ordained of God to protect the good and punish the evildoer. Yet authority is limited to civil matters-theft, fraud, violence and murder. These are offenses against human rights, life, liberty and property, not against the inner conscience.

To protect liberty of conscience is the only duty of the State, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion. (Great Controversy p.201).

Moral transgressions such as hatred, lust, coveting and unbelief belong to the jurisdiction of God alone. The attempt of earthly rulers to enforce moral religious laws-even in the name of righteous-is a usurpation of Divine Authority and history declares the long list of abuses that have resulted from these unions.

The State may restrain acts that injure others, **but it cannot compel faith or worship without stepping into the place of God himself.**

Freedom of religious faith was granted, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. **Republicanism and Protestantism are the founding principles of our Nation** not catholic social teachings.

Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists is being taken out of context. "Believing with you 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 what American people which declared that their legislature shall "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," there building a wall of separation between church and state.

Jefferson was not saying that the Church should not be involved with the State. Jefferson meant that the State should not have power over the Church.

"I have no doubt that every new example, will succeed, as every past one has done, in shewing that religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together" James Madison Letter to Edward Livingston July 10, 1822.

I agree with those recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission Report that deal with the protection of religious rights, which is the State's only duty in the First Amendment of the Constitution. I disagree with the Report's recommendation that proposes any legislation that violates the Constitution. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is clear: Congress shall make No Law respecting an establishment of religion or free exercise thereof.

The role of government is civil law protection it is not religious authority. Jesus himself set the boundary clearly: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21)

I agree with Rabbi Berman's assessment and hopes to cut off the dangerous cancer of anti-semitism in America. The U.S. must remain a place where people of all faiths including Jewish Americans can live in freedom. I would hope Rabbi Berman would extend an olive branch and call for the repeal of the Noahide laws. Noahide laws passed in direct violation to the the First Amendment of the Constitution. The Noahide law calls for the death of non-Jews that worship their God on the seventh day, Saturday Sabbath. The Religious Liberty Commission Report should call on Congress to immediately repeal the Noahide laws.

Appendix A, Page 199, #14. Elected officials may issue proclamations that reflect religious traditions and culture of their communities, so long as the proclamation do not coerce religious observation or reflect a policy of discrimination among faiths.

Appendix B, page 209, #11. Limit federal government assertion of compelling interest to clearly establish law.

President Donald Trump has appointed Paula White to the White House faith office. The Trump administration is on a slippery slope with his advisors calling for Sunday Blue laws that would violate the above two recommendations in the Report. Vice President Vance, Labor Secretary Barry, Secretary of War Hegseth, Heritage CEO Kevin Roberts, Dr. Frank Turek, Bishop Robert Barron and Pastor Longshore are just a few of Trumps advisors that are pushing for the worship of the Trinity and Sunday Blue laws. On May 20, 2026, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Secretary of Defense Anthony Tate dramatically reduced its number of recognized religious faiths and belief systems from 211 to 31.

The Trump administration is aligned with Pope Leo XIV. Cardinal Robert Prevost chose his Papal name because he admired Pope Leo XIII. Leo XIII was famous for his 1891 Rerum Novarum, which is the foundational doctrine for catholic social teaching-cessation from work and labor on Sunday and worshipping the trinity by force.

The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The advisors are concealing the true issue. Under Christian Nationalism they want to legislate morality and worship. If you are not baptized under the name of the Trinity, believe in the Apostles' creed and worship on Sunday; you are an outlaw of the State. God is mentioned 4400 times in the Bible, not one of those refer to a Trinity. 2 Pet 2:1, Jude1:4, 1 Cor 8:6 and John 3:16-19.

The Papacy itself acknowledges that it changed the day of worship from Saturday (God's Sabbath) to Sunday. "Sunday is our mark of Ecclesiastical authority. The Catholic church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is evident of that fact."-Catholic record, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923. "Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act., but the Bible grants no such power."-The Catholic press, Sydney, Australia, August 23, 1893.

During Trump's presentation of the Religious Liberty Commission report, Robert Barron commented that "We do not want to establish a religion". Bishop also has stated that "If you marginalize and privatize religion, Democracy is in danger".

Privatization of religion is Freedom of Liberty of your conscience. Bishop Barron is stating you should not have a choice of religion. Opposite of privatized religion is Government control of religion. So is my worshipping GOD on His true Saturday Sabbath instead of Sunday deadly to Democracy? Is worshipping God the Father (one person) and his begotten Son, Jesus Christ (second person) instead of the Trinity deadly to Democracy? Everything is backward with this Religious liberty commission!

The Trump administration is on a slippery slope. History is repeating itself. Constantine at the Council of Nicene in 325AD mandated the Day of the Sun as a day of public rest. In 508AD, King Clovis destroyed the Arian Visigoths. The Catholics stated this was a theological victory of Rome (State Power) which was the victory of the triumph of the Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity over Arianism. This followed by destroying the nations of the Ostrogoth and Vandals. The Justinian Code was forced in 538AD "Concerning the most exalted trinity and the catholic faith providing that NO ONE SHALL DARE TO PUBLICLY OPPOSE THEM". From 538AD for 1260 years of the Dark Ages Rome killed 100 million in the Crusades until 1798AD when France removed the Pope ending the State power.

Revelation 13 speaks of an "image" to the beast - union of church and state enforcing worship under penalty of economic restriction: "that no man might buy or sell" (Rev 13:17).

This is why James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, declared: "The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep from these shores the ceaseless strife that soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries."

"Millions of innocent men women, and children have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity" - Thomas Jefferson Notes on the State of Virginia 1785.

Page 20 #2. Investigate terrorism-funded activities: I agree with Sam Adams who quantified that freedom of religion is available to those religions that are **Friends of this Country**. A muslim mosque that preaches Death to America, promotes sharia law in place of our Constitution or funds terrorist is not a Friend of America and should not have religious freedom in this country to promote their hate against America.

I pray that the Trump administration will reject the darkness of their Sunday movement. They will repent of their efforts to destroy freedom of conscience that belongs only to God and not Caesar. The Trump administration will see the error of their way and protect the Constitution and freedom of religion.

From: Cheryl Toppa <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Cheryl A. Toppa

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen from Lake City, Florida, because I believe worshipping God should come from the heart of the individual, not from government. That conviction is not new; it runs through Scripture itself, through our founding documents, and through the hard lessons of history, and I ask you to weigh it as you consider recommendations that would draw government further into religious life.

Jesus Christ himself drew the line his followers still owe civil authority, teaching that what belongs to civil rulers should be given to civil rulers, and what belongs to God should be given to God alone. That teaching divides human duty into two jurisdictions, one owed to neighbors and enforced by civil law, one owed to God and answerable to no earthly power. The state's competence is limited to one question: does an act injure another person? It may punish theft or violence because these are civil injuries, but it has no authority to ask whether a person is religious, irreligious, or in error, for that judgment belongs to God alone. When government promotes a particular text, display, or lesson as religiously authoritative, it does not merely risk overreach; it crosses a boundary that its own founding tradition, and the very faith it invokes, forbids it to cross.

Beyond this scriptural boundary lies a structural one. Our government's legitimacy rests on powers the people delegate to it. But no person can delegate his relationship with God to anyone else - not to a neighbor, not to a church, and certainly not to a legislature. I cannot authorize a representative to believe or worship in my place, so that power was never mine to give and never the government's to receive. It follows that government cannot bear religious responsibility, because it can never answer for it before any higher judgment. This is why the First Amendment should be read as recording an exclusion that already existed, not merely forbidding the narrow case of an official national church.

Finally, history testifies that state help injures the very faith it means to assist. Coercion can move the body into a pew but cannot place love of God in the heart; it manufactures conformity, not conviction, and multiplies hypocrisy rather than genuine devotion. The record of state-favored churches across centuries shows pride and indolence among clergy and superstition among the people, not renewed piety. A faith that must lean on the police power to survive confesses that it has lost confidence in its own persuasive power. As one American president counseled long ago, the family altar, the church, and the private school - supported by private conviction, not public funds - are the rightful homes for religious formation, with government kept apart from them.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Cheryl A. Toppa
Lake City, Florida

Sent from my iPad

From: dee kaz <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Commission report/ recommendations

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:10:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am writing you about my concern for religious liberty. I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I believe Christ is the Savior of this world.

I am worried , as a student of history, that whenever there was a merger of church with the state persecution followed. No matter how well intended are the motives, sinful man always attempts to force his opinion on others. Because of this , I am convinced, the founding fathers believed in separation of church and state. The founding of this great country was largely by people escaping the merged church and state in the European nations.

I thank you for you time and consideration .
D. Kazmierczak

From: Benjamin and Breanna <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:11:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Separation of church and state protects freedom. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on everyone, leading to discrimination and tyranny.

Religion is personal. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress.

It was exactly why the USA was founded originally! The first people came here exactly because church and state in their own countries was NOT separate.
So please, keep church and state completely separate.

We want everyone to be able to worship in the way they wish, whenever they wish. Do not take away this freedom that has made America great.

Sincerely,

Breanna Barnett
Talmage, NE

From: Dennis Hayes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:11:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Separation of church and state protects freedom. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on everyone, leading to discrimination and tyranny.

Religion is personal. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress.

It was exactly why the USA was founded originally! The rst people came here exactly BECAUSE church and state in their own countries was NOT separate.

So PLEASE, keep church and state completely separate.

From: William Riley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State ,

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:12:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I do not want to get rid of Church and State. I feel like you people are selling us down the river and I don't know how much plainer to say it than that.

William J. Riley

From: Brenda <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:14:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission Members,

I appreciate the time and effort invested in preparing the religious liberty document. However, I have some disagreements with certain aspects of it. I firmly oppose the repeal of the Johnson amendment. I believe that politics has no place in churches or their activities. Government funding for church activities is akin to a government handout, rather than a blessing from Jesus. Therefore, I request that the Johnson amendment be fully enforced.

Furthermore, I do not support government funding for religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.

I have closely followed the story of Carrie Prejean Boller, who was removed from the RLC due to her differing viewpoints from other members. This incident has led to her persecution. The commission's actions underscore the urgent need for the separation of church and state.

Thank you,
Brenda Mercer
Citizen of the United States
and servant of Jesus Christ.

From: Danielle Ferreira <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clause – Danielle Ferreira

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:14:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who takes both halves of the First Amendment seriously, and I ask you to consider an argument that is not secular in origin but Christian. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority over duties owed to God. Testifying before a Senate committee in 1888 against the national Sunday bill, A. T. Jones put the limit plainly: "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state may ask only whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the very line Christ drew, and does so in his name.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightly claim this ground: it was never given to government in the first place. Our founding rests on the premise that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — no one can believe, worship, or answer for another's soul. What could never be given could never be received. As Jones argued, no government will ever stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer even for itself, much less for its citizens, and therefore no government can rightly assume responsibility in matters of religion. This is the answer to anyone who says the Establishment Clause only forbids a national church: the exclusion runs deeper than any clause. The First Amendment did not create this limit; it simply recorded one that already existed.

This is not only a religious argument — it is our own government's settled precedent. When Sabbatarians petitioned Congress to halt Sunday mail, the committee reports of 1829 and 1830, adopted by Congress while men who had lived through the founding still served, took up the very question this Commission now faces, and concluded that deciding which religion is true or false simply falls outside what a legislature exists to do. The 1830 House report warned that if Congress defines even one point of religious duty, it may with equal right define every article of revelation and every form of worship. It also observed, correctly, that declaring a day holy will not convince the Jew or the Sabbatarian of anything; it will only dissatisfy both. A commission proposing government-defined religious duties today must reckon with this precedent, not a modern court case.

Finally, history shows what state-sponsored religion actually does to faith. Coercion cannot reach the heart; it produces conformity, not conviction. Madison's own survey of fifteen centuries of established Christianity found, in his words, "pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both superstition, bigotry, and persecution." Grant's counsel remains sound: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and keep state and church forever separate. Government backing would not strengthen faith; it would hollow it out.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Danielle Ferreira

Danielle de Almeida Ferreira

PII

From: Wendy Childers <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:14:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that government has no authority to tell anyone what to believe, or how to worship, and that government lacks authority over religion.

Blessings,
Wendy D Childers

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Sandra Waychoff <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:15:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a United States citizen and there are many objections I have to the draft by the Religious Liberty Commission. These are a few of the objections:

The Johnson Amendment must remain in full enforcement. Restricting a church's activities is restricting freedom of expression. I object to government funding of non-profit activities, religious education and religious clubs on public campuses. Government funding opens the door wide to corruption and control. Historically, that is the case. EVERY TIME. I do not approve of religious censorship of any sort. There must be an in-penetrable wall between church and state.

I can't help but think of the removal of Carrie PreJean (from the Commission) in February this year. She was a member who expressed personal beliefs. The Commission championing more freedom of religious expression in government is intolerant of that very thing. Even by one of it's own members! The Religious Liberty Commission is it's OWN glaring example why Church and State must FOREVER be separated. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Many of our founding fathers were religious and were committed to separation of Church and State. That history of the United States has in part, made us exceptional and unique among all the nations of the world. It is also one of the many reasons people from every country want to be an American citizen. The proposed draft is suggesting the U.S become more like the governments of all other countries. In essence, lowering our standards.

Please re-think, re-consider what you are actually proposing. The constriction of the religious freedom of American citizens. The bottom line.

Sincerely,
Sandra Diaz
Chula Vista, California

From: Philip Jones <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation between Church and State (ch. 2) – Jones

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:15:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding recent efforts to weaken, or otherwise remove, the "separation between church and state." I strongly believe that, for the same reason that churches should be protected from the government's meddling in matters of religion, which impedes the dictates of personal conscience and the free exercise of religion, the reverse is equally important: government should be protected from churches. After all, what is a government other than a body of individuals whose actions maintain a functioning state? Each individual has his or her personal beliefs and biases. When they enter office, thus becoming a member of the government, they should not be permitted to legislate or enforce their personal religious beliefs such that it tramples upon the conscience of other members of society who may hold different beliefs. A personal moral compass should guide elected officials as they conduct the duties of their offices fairly with honor and integrity, but they should not be allowed to use their offices to promote their religion or otherwise force the American people to adhere to their personal religious beliefs. This is why I am gravely concerned by recent efforts to weaken, disregard, downplay, or discredit the vital importance of maintaining a clear separation between church and state in this country.

From: Gerald Hamman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Gerald and Pam Hamman

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:15:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

We are writing to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. We are people with faith in Jesus, and members of a local Christian Church. We have always valued this country's position on separation of church and state. We believe the founders of our government were intentional about providing for freedom of religion and they were intent on securing the rights of individuals to worship according to their conscience. Our objections include faith organizations receiving government funding for purposes of education, religious clubs on campuses, or other religious activities. When government money is made available to faith bases organizations, it encourages administrators to answer to politicians instead of to God. We object to repealing the Johnson Amendment, and request that the Johnson Amendment remain in force. It is our desire to have complete neutrality in the government's relationship with religion. 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 shows that when church and state join hands, 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,
Gerald and Pam Hamman
Monterey, TN

From: Danielle Ferreira <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clause – Danielle Ferreira

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:16:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who takes both halves of the First Amendment seriously, and I ask you to consider an argument that is not secular in origin but Christian. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority over duties owed to God. Testifying before a Senate committee in 1888 against the national Sunday bill, A. T. Jones put the limit plainly: "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state may ask only whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the very line Christ drew, and does so in his name.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightly claim this ground: it was never given to government in the first place. Our founding rests on the premise that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — no one can believe, worship, or answer for another's soul. What could never be given could never be received. As Jones argued, no government will ever stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer even for itself, much less for its citizens, and therefore no government can rightly assume responsibility in matters of religion. This is the answer to anyone who says the Establishment Clause only forbids a national church: the exclusion runs deeper than any clause. The First Amendment did not create this limit; it simply recorded one that already existed.

This is not only a religious argument — it is our own government's settled precedent. When Sabbatarians petitioned Congress to halt Sunday mail, the committee reports of 1829 and 1830, adopted by Congress while men who had lived through the founding still served, took up the very question this Commission now faces, and concluded that deciding which religion is true or false simply falls outside what a legislature exists to do. The 1830 House report warned that if Congress defines even one point of religious duty, it may with equal right define every article of revelation and every form of worship. It also observed, correctly, that declaring a day holy will not convince the Jew or the Sabbatarian of anything; it will only dissatisfy both. A commission proposing government-defined religious duties today must reckon with this precedent, not a modern court case.

Finally, history shows what state-sponsored religion actually does to faith. Coercion cannot reach the heart; it produces conformity, not conviction. Madison's own survey of fifteen centuries of established Christianity found, in his words, "pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both superstition, bigotry, and persecution." Grant's counsel remains sound: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and keep state and church forever separate. Government backing would not strengthen faith; it would hollow it out.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,

From: stephanie campbell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:18:04 -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,
Stephanie Campbell
Tustin, MI

From: Prieto George <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - George Prieto

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:18:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Through a friend, I found out that this commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge" and also and wants to repeal the Johnson Amendment. As a person of faith I find this unacceptable as it will open the door for the corruption of politics to enter.

Please keep church and state separate.

Cordailly,

George Prieto
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

From: Erik Hall <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- [Religious Liberty Commission] – [NAME]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:19:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Regarding religious liberty and the separation of the state and the church. I strongly support and approve of the concept

As an American it is a fundamental element of the nation and it's founding. As a Christian it is vital in the daily life. Government interference in religion in any form or fashion ultimately corrupts both. It is of extreme importance for the health of the nation religious institutions and organizations remain free of government interference. Any change to this dynamic alters the form any function of these institutions, perverting there purpose. Freedom must maintain. I stand in agreement with Pillars Of Freedom on this and the other issues raised in the report. Government funding should not be used in any way to fund any religious activities no matter how insignificant. Religious institutions must remain free from even the slightest hint of government oversight. As to the repeal of the Johnson Amendment I strongly object to this, and desire it to be fully enforced. While directing to the establishment clause of the first amendment to the US Constitution. Lastly, no religious group, Jewish or otherwise should be given any special treatment or consideration. Neither should the state of Israel be given such attention. An America without religious liberty is certainly not the same country. And would remove a cornerstone of the nations' ideals. For these institutions and the nation as a whole to prosper they must remain independent of each other. Interference would lead to catastrophe. The freedom and ability to practice my religious beliefs is something I hold very dear to my heart.

From: Kathy Marshall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:20:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

There was a reason our founding fathers believed in the separation of church and state

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.

I don’t believe that the Bible should be taught in schools or in any other institution... we are a nation of many cultures and religions, not just Christian and to be honest i can’t believe i am writing this to our very government explaining how important this is..

it’s been this way for 250 years!

Kathy Marshall. Oregon

United States Citizen and a patriot

From: Jo Allison <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendations of Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:20:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide input for consideration in the matter of the 12 recommendations sent to President Trump on June 26,2026.

Please consider the history of such conditions that are recommended by this committee if the removing of the separation of church and State were to occur in this free and wonderful country

What will happen without this separation when put in the hands of those who think different than you or I?

I'm sure that you are aware of such histories to which I speak, and I am alarmed at such a suggestion.

Respectfully consider the thoughts of our forefathers on this subject.

Please keep The United States of America free of interference in the choice that remains ultimately between each person and God.

May God bless and lead this commission to take the appropriate next action in this important matter.

Respectfully,
Jo Krome

From: Magna Parks-Porterfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:23:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission:

I appreciate the work that you are trying to do to defend the Free Exercise Clause. However, I am very concerned about what you are promoting regarding separation of church and state. This separation is one that I believe should be upheld because it is good for both (church and state). It is a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. It is also a principle 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 of worship... Christ Jesus never directed His disciples to the civil magistrate for help in his cause." -- Roger Williams.

The separation of church and state provides the foundation for individuals to choose how to worship (or not worship) according to the dictates of their conscience. This freedom has been a refuge for many and I am fearful that this can change with the current view of church and state promoted by your organization.

Thus I am sending this email/letter to express my disagreement. I love this country and do not want to see the rights and freedoms of those of different faiths (or not of any faith) who live in our country to eventually be dissolved.

Yours respectfully,
Dr. Magna Porterfield

From: Rogersn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comments-Chapter14-Pat Rogers

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:23:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

This country was founded on religious principles and the Bible was our first educational book.

The Bible states that we should be involved in all aspects of our life and a big part of this is our governments, both federal and local.

Nowhere in the constitution does it state that church and state should be separated.

I am thanking you for bringing this to my attention. I have been involved in our public school system and their circumlunar for several years. I also participate in my city's activities

From: Juli Graham <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:23:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

As a life-long US citizen that is also a life-long Christian, I ask that this administration continue to uphold the separation of church and state. People fled to this land from the persecution of the old world to seek freedom of conscience from a king and from a pope. They longed to live in a land where they could worship according to their own religious convictions.

May we continue to allow citizens to worship as their conscience dictates without the interference of the government or a church's influence over the government.

Thank you.

Juli Graham

[REDACTED]
PII
PII

PII

From: R. Peter Neri <[REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:25:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep government out of religion. Freedom to worship as conscious dictates, informed by the Bible, will safe guard against anarchy. Let the Spirit of God be our leader and not the halls of legislation. Thank you
R. Peter Neri

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "PII" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:26:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern:

We value our religious freedom. Government should have no authority to tell us what to believe or how to worship and the government should not have authority over religion.

Thank you,

Jim Childers

Sent from my iPhone!

Jim Childers

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From: Kirstie Richman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support of Recommendations in the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:28:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I fully support the recommendations of this report. Our Founding Fathers intended for government to be kept out of religion, not for religion to be kept out of the government or public sphere. This report corrects this common myth and misinterpretation of our Constitution. The religious freedom of Americans has been wrongfully restricted because of this misinterpretation. I am glad to see that this administration is looking to fix this injustice. Freedom of religion is the basis of all other freedoms. Without the freedom to decide what one will believe, none of the other freedoms matter. That is what the freedom of religion grants to everyone -- the freedom to choose to believe as they want, whether that is to practice a religion or not. Citizens should not have to defend their right to practice their religion in a peaceful and non-coercive manner. Too often, people of faith are restricted from practicing their faith because of the misunderstanding of the First Amendment. The first settlers came to America because of their desire to freely practice religion. It is ironic that the same freedom they risked everything for is now slowly being eroded. I appreciate how this report takes the time to review the history of this issue and hope it will enlighten many Americans and bring a greater appreciation for the important role that religion plays in American civilization.

From: joyce saadi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:31:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have read the report of your Religious Liberty Commission. I find it to be an egregious polemic with the obvious intent to characterize the United States as a Christian country. It is not. The United States cannot be a Christian country because the Constitution forbids this. The Constitutional framers could have created a national religion. They did not. They could have created a country with freedom of religion by having The First Amendment's religious guarantee start and stop with the Free Exercise Clause. They did not. They could have mentioned Christianity or Jesus in the Constitution. They did not. They could have mentioned God. They did not. They could have created a religious test for President. They did not. They could have included the words in the Presidential oath, "So help me God." They did not.

Certainly, national religions were known to the Constitutional framers. They specifically, intentionally walked away from creating a national religion.

But certainly Constitutional lawyers will have informed you of all of this, and no doubt, knowing Constitutional history yourselves (as surely some of the Commission members must) you have turned a blind eye to the plain meaning of the Constitution's Establishment Clause. Why? How is it that you do not see the strength of the United States is its guarantee of not just freedom of religion, but freedom from one particular religious doctrine, and freedom FROM religion.

Morality was not born in the Biblical story in Exodus of Moses and the Ten Commandments. The Code of Hammurabi, perhaps the inspiration for Mosaic law, predates the biblical story as written by one thousand years. Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle believed that morality was not God-based but rather based on civic duty. To believe that Christianity has some sort of special claim on social mores is to deny and denigrate secular civil traditions and other religious traditions (Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and the hundreds of other religious beliefs) that illuminate humanity.

There is a terrible harm in your attempts to insinuate Christianity into the governmental structure of the U.S. The message you send is that non-Christians will be tolerated, but not celebrated, not encouraged, not full-fledged members of society. I grew up in the 1950s and '60s when "The Lord's Prayer" was said in public schools. I felt confused, and also coerced. I knew that the prayer was not one that was said in my parents' household, and I was unsure if it was wrong of me to say it, against my family's religious tradition. Yet, to sit while the class stood, at an age of 6 or 7, seemed impossible. Would the teacher be angry at me? Would class members ostracize me?

Many years later, as a teacher in high school, students came to me upset because the high school football coach was leading players in a bended knee prayer circle. The fear of those who were not Christian: if they refused the circle, would the coach still play them? Would their teammates think they were hurting camaraderie?

The school had a club, "Fellowship of Christian Athletes," that was organized and run by some school athletic coaches as an offshoot of a national club. The purpose: "To mold athletes in the way of Jesus Christ." Students were encouraged to join the club and many felt uncomfortable and dismayed. I let the principal know that this club, as well as coach-led prayer, was unconstitutional. With your efforts, will it still be?

Your Commission report seeks to do so much harm, and you do it in the guise of protecting Christianity. I must tell you that Christianity is not in danger of disappearing in the United States. I live in Gaithersburg, MD. It is a very diverse community. Yet, there are over 70 Christian churches in Gaithersburg alone representing many denominations. If I want to attend a Church, it is easy to find one. If I want a Christmas movie, why then,

Hallmark Channel runs them nonstop. In the winter, if I want to hear Christmas music, there are myriad radio stations and tv stations with religious programming. At Easter, passion plays are performed at many churches. If I wanted to send my children to a Christian parochial school, there are many choices. Christianity is ubiquitous.

So really, what is your agenda? What are you afraid of? Why are you frightened of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and I don't know...Wiccans?

Your report is disgusting, disingenuous, and would trash the Constitution.

Count me as a big "NO!"

(And ironically, if Jesus were somehow to come back to earth and want a place to pray, he wouldn't head to a church. Just saying...)

Sincerely,
Joyce Saadi

From: Bill Warcholik <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:32:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Roger_Williams'_THE_BLOODY_TENENT_OF_PERSECUTION.pages

Dear Religious Liberty Commission:

Please note the attached document that expresses my concern about what your committee will recommend to the Department of Justice. Having spent several years as a pastor while living in Rhode Island and having taken advantage of information from the many historical sites, I have appreciated the position of Roger Williams which led to his suffering persecution and almost led to his death more than once.

item number 1: Please note the contrast between your committee chairperson's position on the separation of church and state and that of others who were actually involved in writing the constitution.

May God guide in what guidance is given to the leaders of our great nation. I served in the USAF and was proud to serve my country during Vietnam. The USA is a nation founded by people who believed in God and who also respected the Bible including the way Jesus Christ limited the power of the state to make people conform to the will of the majority. The article attached below gives wonderful insights into those limits to civil power. Here is a sample:

“Neither Cotton nor Williams ever conceded any major points in the argument, and Massachusetts Bay continued to operate as a theocracy while Providence maintained its vision of individual religious rights as a true democratic republic in which any male citizen over the age of 21 could be elected to public office regardless of their religious convictions. The Bloody Tenet of Persecution would later influence the philosophical writings of [John Locke](#) (l. 1632-1704 CE) whose vision informed the [Founding Fathers of the United States](#) of America, especially [Thomas Jefferson](#) (l. 1743-1826 CE), one of the framers of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. In the present day, the work is considered a classic on religious freedom and the necessity of the separation of church and state for a stable and inclusive civil society.”

One other suggestion for the Religious Liberty Committee: Item number 9: Repealing the Johnson Amendment would be a good step toward improving religious liberty in the USA.

Thank you for your dedication to providing wise guidance for improving religious liberty in the USA!

Sincerely,

Willam Warcholik, Sr.

Roger Williams' The Bloody Tenent of Persecution

“Commentary

Williams' main point throughout is that political intervention in religious matters is not only bad for religion but also for government as it causes civil unrest (clearly expressed in his eighth point concerning civil war). Whenever a political agenda is joined to religious ideals, both the government and the faith are degraded and the people suffer. Scholar Frank N. Magill sums up the book's basic message:

“Within the setting of a civil society, Williams' argument goes on, a church has the same nature and status as a medical society or a business corporation. A religious society has its own functions, which are distinctly separate and different from those of a civil society. Civil harmony and order are the responsibility of the state and not of the Church. Christians have a duty as Christians to protect the purity and integrity of their churches, but they have no warrant whatsoever for ridding civil society of Jews, Muslims, pagans, and others who do not properly belong in the Church. Such persons are clearly qualified for full membership in civil society. (437)

“The book was addressed specifically to John Cotton because Williams believed (wrongly) that Cotton had been the main author of the document *A Model of Church and Civil Power*, which had been sent to the church at Salem by the Boston magistrates in 1635 CE when they were pressuring the church to dismiss Williams as pastor. Cotton, actually, had nothing to do with this work, but it did express his views that the state could, and should, enforce conformity with the religious views of the

majority of the citizenry in order to preserve unity and harmony of spirit.

“Neither Cotton nor Williams ever conceded any major points in the argument, and Massachusetts Bay continued to operate as a theocracy while Providence maintained its vision of individual religious rights as a true democratic republic in which any male citizen over the age of 21 could be elected to public office regardless of their religious convictions. The Bloody Tenet of Persecution would later influence the philosophical writings of [John Locke](#) (l. 1632-1704 CE) whose vision informed the [Founding Fathers of the United States](#) of America, especially [Thomas Jefferson](#) (l. 1743-1826 CE), one of the framers of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. In the present day, the work is considered a classic on religious freedom and the necessity of the separation of church and state for a stable and inclusive civil society.”

Mark, Joshua J.. "Roger Williams' The Bloody Tenet of Persecution." World History Encyclopedia, 29 Jan 2021,

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1666/roger-williams-the-bloody-tenet-of-persecution/>.

[Joshua J. Mark](#)

Joshua J. Mark is World History Encyclopedia's co-founder and Content Director. He was previously a professor at Marist College (NY) where he taught history, philosophy, literature, and writing. He has traveled extensively and lived in Greece and Germany.

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From: janet freeman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Constitution Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:32:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

When you take away liberty of conscience, this is one of the 1st Steps to Communism. Matthew 22:21 Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God things that are God's."

This is our liberty of conscience controlled by God and the Holy Spirit. Not the state(govn't).

The Bible is our ultimate authority...

April 19, 1529 Protestation @Speyer where all the German princesses and representatives of imperial cities, signed that in "matters of conscience, the majority has no power." This document gave the people liberty of conscience and not to be ruled by the Catholic Church anymore. This is where we get the word protestantism

James Madison (father of our constitution) declared that "Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the 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.

In 1822, decades later, Madison reaffirmed this conviction, writing in 1822, Religion and Government will both exist in greater purity the less they are mixed together." It was the recognition that both faith and government are corrupted when either assumes authority of the other.

Isn't there enough corruption in Washington,DC now. Weren't we supposed to 'Drain the Swamp'??? Then why not keep church and state separate as it should be!!!

From: Jannise Wells <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reject Sunday Worship Law

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:32:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Government has no right to subject GODS Commandment Sabbath (Saturday) Keeping Christian's to a federal Sunday law to force the Nation to worship on Sunday. This Nation was built for a day of (Freedom of Worship) without the influences of a Sunday Only worship day with a legislation to support it. The Separation of Church and State and a Religious freedom this Country was founded upon, The Government has no right to tell me how to worship and when to worship. The government has no right to determine or legislate what twenty four hours of a day of the week a people should rest nor should they try to interfere with and try to control the people with some community rest laws made up by "Catholic Social Teaching's and Brainwashing Protestants, and Evangelicals" who want to control the World even the Worship of the One and Only True GOD of Heaven on His Holy True Sabbath Day (Saturday). These people follow The Beast system and are A part of it and they're trying to usher in the MARK of The Beast System, Sunday Worship is the MARK of The Beast, it denies GODS One true Holy Day and to legislate Sunday Federally will only lead to the persecution of Christians GODS true Saints who keep the true Sabbath Day (Saturday) and the Fall of America and the World by the Seven last plagues of GOD. The Fourth Commandment of GOD Says., EXODUS Chapter 20 Verse 8 ; Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy GOD in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy Son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the Seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and Hallowed it. NO SUNDAY LAW.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: kathy spinolo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:33:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

With regard to your recommendation to build a "bridge" between church and state, I wish to share my opinion that there should be space preserved between the church and the state rather than a platform which connects the two. History makes plain the negative results of such a union. With respect, I ask you to reconsider your recommendation and preserve a fixed separation between the two.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Spinolo
Pioneer, Tennessee

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World." John 8:12

From: Barry Krall <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Barry Krall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen from Colton, California, with a concern that has grown in me over many years of watching how religion and government interact. I believe that eventually the state will overreach in its attempt to legislate religion or its practice. There are so many different world views of religion in this country, and no single body — Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Protestant, Hindu, or otherwise — should be trusted to determine the rule of faith and practice for everyone else. That conviction shapes everything I want to say to you.

Any law touching religion, even one meant to help a favored faith, ultimately undermines free exercise for all. Once a legislature concedes that religion is a proper subject for civil law, the only remaining question is who holds the majority at any given moment — and majorities shift. A law that favors my own beliefs today can be turned against me tomorrow by different hands. It has been argued that no man can safely consent to legislation favoring his own faith, because in doing so he gives up his right to ever adopt a different conviction, should he become persuaded it is truer. Religious liberty must include the liberty to keep searching, to change one's mind. A citizen who locks his present belief into law has surrendered his own future conscience along with everyone else's present one.

History confirms where this road leads. The first Sunday law, issued by Constantine while he still held a pagan religious office, opened the door to imperial patronage of the church, mercenary conversions, state-enforced doctrine, and ultimately the Inquisition. These were not accidents but a logical chain: once government is granted the authority to enforce religious observance, it is drawn inevitably into taking sides in religious quarrels, and in doing so it loses the very capacity to keep civil peace between factions. I do not believe anyone on this Commission intends anything so severe as an Inquisition. But no one intends the last step when they take the first one. The danger is that the last step is already contained in the first, small, well-meaning measure.

There is also a further danger closer to home: financial entanglement. If the state provides funding to a church body, that body's practice ceases to be a matter of pure conscience and becomes a matter of expediency — conforming to whatever conditions guarantee the aid. Government money always carries government terms, spoken or unspoken.

Underlying all of this is a distinction I believe goes back to Christ's own words: render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government's proper concern is civility between neighbors — whether an action harms another person's rights. It has no legitimate authority to ask whether an action is religious, irreligious, or heretical; that judgment belongs to a different jurisdiction entirely. Any measure that puts the government behind a religious text, practice, or institution steps outside the boundary Christ himself drew, regardless of how well-intentioned the sponsors may be.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Barry Krall
Colton, California

From: Wendy Nelson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC Report- Public Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the RLC:

I am writing today to object to the direction this commission is taking and to object to the report.

I think there should be a clear separation of church and state and history has shown the damage that is done to freedom and liberty when there is not this separation.

As a Doctor I have seen the damage lack of freedom to diagnose and treat patients has caused our medical community and the same type of damage will occur if we do not have strict clear liberties when practicing our religious beliefs.

Church's should not be in the political fundraising business as they will become political tools instead of places of worship.

Church's should continue to teach us to love our neighbors and respect everyones individual choices.
Thank you for considering this response.

Wendy

From: Mario Aguilar Romero <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Questions

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

My name is Mario Aguilar

You see as a citizen I'm get I did disgusting when I see this demonic entity type of departments with that you guys don't show any type of your guys principles at all from your Mario system from down to you guys personal prohibiting practices, which are meant for evil when you guys are supposed to be some type of white collar, organization of super like a clowns like I don't know if you even see yourself in the TV laughable very much. I believe that you guys department has nothing to do with representing religion. You stand for evil the whole United States it's meant for evil, looking here for California. You guys enjoying having a bunch of devil mountains, and then using the labyrinth scheme of RLC I just don't understand where you guys are sore your guys earth with your incredible scheme of using Jesus a mascara to show some type of lucrative war to yourselves, but you know it seems like it's more like a war for war for the God says that Serral, which is another words Leticia type of act of shining green yourself from one way to another. It could be women it could be a man and nothing is pretty disgusting. I will be going down to your department to speak of manners on this cause there's a bunch of departments here in California and central 209 Central Valley, but stand out of Livingston where there's a bunch of federal crime three festival offenses to just create crime police crime and set up and stuff like that. That's no good bunch of Tweaker departments too demonic way way too much demonic activity pursuing themselves back-and-forth breaking civil and federal type laws represent if they can reach back to me because I wouldn't want to waste my time typing stuff back-and-forth and getting you guys new pole system, you know, obituary, systematic, demonically entity, type of way.

From: Bonnie Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a retired professor of history. I can tell you that religious liberty is foundational to the United States of America. The founding fathers, all Protestants, **deliberately** maintained that there should be no state religion in America. They knew the damage such an institution could do to personal freedom and liberty. There is NO historical reason to put this dreadful concept into play.

Sincerely, Bonnie S. Anderson, Professor Emerita, City University of New York

From: Robin Ferguson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT CHAPTER 3 & 9 Robin Ferguson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:35:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing about the Religious Liberty commission.

I am a retired LPN who was raised in the Catholic faith. I have lived in WA state my entire life.

Religion is a faith not a right and not a bill for the government to decide.

An example is my personal experience with having been of the Catholic faith and the need for an abortion. I have read the bible repeatedly and cannot find anywhere where it speaks specifically about abortion being against God.

Having a faith in a believe should not have rules and regulations.

So I am asking the commission NOT to pass Trumps Religious Liberty Commission.

Sincerely Robin Ferguson

From: luis ruben rodriguez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:36:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen and as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty. I appreciate the opportunity to submit a public comment on the Commission's draft report.

I believe that freedom of conscience is one of the greatest blessings our nation has. Throughout history, the separation of church and state has helped protect both religious liberty and the rights of all people, regardless of their beliefs.

For this reason, I am concerned about recommendations that could weaken that separation, including increased government funding of religious activities and changes to the Johnson Amendment. I believe churches should remain free to follow their convictions without becoming dependent on government support or partisan politics.

As a person of faith, I want my church to be guided by God's Word rather than by political influence. I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve the constitutional principles that have protected religious freedom for generations.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your service.

Sincerely,

Luis Rodriguez Hialeah, Florida

From: Solace7 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State, Daniel R. Taylor

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:37:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Please note that I positively object to your efforts to "bridge" the Church and State of the United States of America. The Separation of Church and State was a basic principle of the Founding Fathers of our Nation. If you will simply study history in Europe and elsewhere, you will see that combining Church and State invariably results in the State persecution of the Church. Churches MUST be free to exercise their God given rights and freedoms. Being under the control of any State will eventually destroy the Church. Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Please do NOT replicate the mistakes of past generations and nations who tried to bring Church and State together. In these instances, only Satan wins.

Thank you gentlemen for allowing me to comment.

From: Carla Garland <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Urgency

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:39:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It may Concern,

Church and State MUST remain separate.

The Bible clearly states in Matthew 22:21, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Ceasar's; and unto God the things that are God's "

Keep Church and State SEPARATE!!!

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

From: Irene Edwards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:40:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please know how very important this is to myself and all my church Families.

We prefer to worship on the Sabbath, which of course, is Saturday. Please do not make that preference impossible for Saturday worshipers simply because we are in the minority. We count, we are staunch supporters of everything American but this important issue.

Respectfully,
Irene Edwards

From: P W <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] White House Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:41:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm providing this feedback 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. It has allowed the USA to avoid many conflicts that have been seen in the old world that resulted from the lack of separation between church and state. Both have their proper spheres and both spheres should be respected. The state should not use religion for its ends nor should religion use the state for its purposes.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) 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 of the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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." While I believe that America was founded on Christian principles, it was nor is a Christian nation in that it does not have a state religion. All are to enjoy equal rights under the law and the government is to respect the consciences of the citizenry from which it derives its power.

The experience of Seventh-day Adventists provides another historical warning. During the late nineteenth century, Adventists who faithfully observed God's seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) as found in the Bible 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. It is to protect life, limb, and property. 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. Even an atheist should enjoy liberty of conscience, perchance God's Spirit may be working on their heart too. 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.

We are witnessing some fairly astounding history occurring with the election of outright marxists to positions of leadership in this country. It is a concerning testament to our educational system when people are willing to vote themselves into the bondage that comes with marxism despite historical precedence. I'm concerned that people think American can do Communism better despite its 100% failure rate in history. I'm also afraid that the right might be moving towards a similar misstep but with religion. History has shown that freedom and liberty are best ensured when there is a separation of religion and the state. History is full of religious wars, both internal and external to various nations. It also shows that persecution eventually follows those that may hold a different view than the majority despite being good citizens.

I urge the rejection of the idea that there is no separation between church and state in the Constitution.

Sincerely,

Paeter Weikum

Spokane Valley, Washington

From: Mo Braun <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state letter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:43:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENT - SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE - Maureen Braun

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As an American citizen, and a person of faith, I oppose the desire of the commission to replace the wall of separation between Church and state.

Respectfully, while the exact words 'separation of church and state' may not appear in the constitution, it is certainly within the 'spirit' of the constitution to keep these entities separate. Was it not why the people of England fled to America in the first place - to escape religious tyranny; and the power the church had over their lives. They came seeking freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. While the joining of church and state, and the desire to bring Christian values back to our country is admirable; I fear we do not know where we are treading. I believe history is clear on the outcomes when Church and state join forces. The historical outcomes are religious persecution, diminished liberties and bloodshed. I do not believe this is what the founders of our great country envisioned.

When governmental monies fund religious activities, or, when churches end up competing for government funds... We end up answering to politicians rather than God.

Questions that emerge for me are: Who decides who the church is? What religions are acceptable? Do certain religions get canceled when they are outside of the 'common good' for society? I have to wonder if that is really the 'religious freedom' we desire as a country.

So, it is my request that you please reconsider this draft thoughtfully.

Because you speak for all of the citizens of the United States of America, it is imperative that you consider all the possible outcomes. Does this really make America better, or does it create more chaos in an already uncertain political and social climate.

Thank you for your time and attention. We, the people, depend on you, our leaders, to make the best decisions possible for all.

Sincerely,
Maureen Braun
Ocala, Florida

From: Vincen [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request to the White House Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:43:26 -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,

Vince Cantrell
from Airway Heights Washington.

From: kelly davis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:43:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

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:

We did not vote the current cabinet into office to have this type of legislation put into effect. Freedom of religion is one of our founding principles, and it is not something that should be taken away.

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

PillarofFreedom.org | [REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

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

From: GARY PYKE <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:44:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Our constitution states that "congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof"
We do not want the tyranny that our founders fled from, and what you are doing will lead us back in that direction. Please halt
what you are doing immediately. This report undermines our constitution. The Bible predicts this very thing will happen, and
woe to them that promote it.
Gary W Pyke

From: Rebecca Proffitt <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Rights

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:46:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

America is a country built on religious freedom and rights... Following the Catholic dominance and trying to have a Sunday law, is not what American needs.
They've changed this seventh daySabbath to Sunday and take full credit for it. I'm a believer in the Seventh Sabbath, just Charlie Kirk believed.

Rebecca Miller

Sent from my iPhone

From: Sarita <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Funding Faith-based Entities -The Johnson Amendment-Sarita Cantrell-Mayhawk

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:46:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: The Religious Liberty Commission:

1. Objections to funding Non-profit Entities

I as a person of faith and a citizen of the United States of America. I have an issue with faith-based Initiatives and Entities receiving federal and-or state funding. The first that I recall this activity was in 2002 under the leadership of President George W. Bush.

There has always been a clear demarcation between church and United States government in the United States of America. The lines have become more blurred in the years since President George W. Bush's presidency.

It is sad watching the lines blur.

2. The Repealing of The Johnson Amendment

I recall sitting in a church in 2008. When I first noticed the Johnson Amendment being breached. I was appalled as I sat in church waiting for the sermon about faith in my LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, but what I received in place of sermon was a political rally for the person who was running for the presidency of the United States of America at that time.

The church is to be a place of worship and refuge from the cares of life. Where I come apart to worship and fellowship with the CREATOR WHO gives all living organisms life, not for a political rally!!!

I ask this commission to please keep these two institutions separate.

Thank you,

Sarita Cantrell-Mayhawk

From: ADRIAN P <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty- public input

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:50:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs,

I am objecting to the intent of uniting church and state. The Pilgrims undertook a perilous journey across the Atlantic to the land we now know as the United States of America to be able to exercise freely their religion without fear of persecution or state interference. This experiment of uniting church and state has been played out in Europe and other places where the majority oppress, persecute, control, coerce, socially ostracize, commercially cut off, not allowed to inherit or inhabit lands or to conduct business in order to promote the popular church agenda. All others were considered as heretics, dissenters, social outcasts, etc. We cannot return to the dark ages of religion and allow despotism of church and state to control the conscience and reign along with the strong arm of the state. This would be the pinnacle of UN-American activities. The union of church and state would stifle voices that may teach contrary to the established religion of the state. Constantine in the year 321A.D. Made laws to force the population to adopt one religion as the state religion. Such did not produce genuine conversion. It opened itself up to buy adherents. It was so unsuccessful, that other more restrictive laws were legislated to reign in the population to force people to adopt the popular church's way of doing things. This was repeated until the voice of one man was regarded as the voice of conscience for everybody. All we have to do is look at those countries that are antithetical to the freedoms and rights guaranteed by our masterpiece, the Constitution of the United States of America and see that the systems of Russia, China, N.Korea, etc. are not beacons of Light, Truth, Freedom as this Great nation has been. The state must not be united with the church to effectuate or enforce the dogmas of the church. The words of Christ were abundantly clear of two spheres of influence. They cannot be combined except to the peril of both the church and the state. "Give unto Cesar the things that be Cesar's. And unto God the things that are God's." Both church and state must exist independent of each other. One cannot intrude into the sphere of the other.

Very truly yours for freedom of religion,
Adrian Prado

From: Curt Hall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:50:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Replace only the **Alonzo T. Jones** section with this expanded version. Everything else in your letter can remain unchanged.

Biblical and Constitutional Principles Defended Before Congress

During the congressional hearings on the Blair Sunday Rest Bill (1888–1889), Alonzo T. Jones presented a biblical and constitutional defense of religious liberty. His testimony was based on the conviction that God alone is Lord of the conscience and that civil government has no authority to compel religious observance.

Government Has Authority Over Civil Matters—Not the Conscience

- God established civil government to preserve order, punish evil, and protect society.
 - Romans 13:1–7
 - 1 Peter 2:13–14
- God never authorized government to determine how, when, or whom people must worship.
- The conscience belongs to God alone.
- Jesus clearly separated the sphere of civil government from the sphere of worship.
 - Matthew 22:21

Worship Can Never Be Legislated

- Worship is an act of the heart.
- True obedience cannot be created by civil law.
- Love cannot be forced.
- Faith cannot be compelled.
- God invites mankind to choose rather than forcing obedience.
 - Joshua 24:15
 - Revelation 3:20
- Any law requiring religious observance exceeds the authority God has given civil government.

A Sunday Law Is Religious Legislation

- A national Sunday law is not merely a labor law if it requires or favors the observance of Sunday as a sacred day.
- Once government determines which day should be observed as holy, it has entered the realm of religion.
- Religious observance must remain a matter between the individual and God.
- Civil government may protect the right to worship, but it must never prescribe worship.

God Alone Is Lord of the Conscience

- Every individual must answer to God personally.
- No president, king, legislature, congress, governor, church council, or court can stand between God and the conscience.

- Isaiah 33:22 declares:

“The LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”

- Ultimate authority belongs to God—not to man.

Christ Never Used Civil Power

- Jesus possessed all authority.

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” —Matthew 28:18

- Yet He never asked Rome to enforce His teachings.
- He never sought legislation requiring worship.
- He never compelled belief through political power.
- Christ persuaded through truth, compassion, and the Holy Spirit.

History Warns Against Church and State Union

- Throughout history, whenever church and state have united, persecution has followed.
- Civil power has repeatedly been used to punish those whose faith differed from the majority.
- Religious liberty disappears when government enforces religious practice.
- The Blair Sunday Rest Bill demonstrated that such dangers are not merely theoretical.

The First Amendment Protects Liberty of Conscience

- Government should neither establish religion nor prohibit its free exercise.
- The role of government is to protect liberty—not control worship.
- Religious liberty protects every citizen equally, regardless of religious belief.

Religious Liberty Belongs to Everyone

- The freedom I ask for myself must also be extended to others.
- Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists, and every other person possess the God-given right to freedom of conscience.
- Religious liberty is strongest when it protects those with whom we disagree.

The Christian’s Duty When Government Conflicts With God

- Christians should obey lawful government whenever possible.
 - Romans 13:1
- Christians should pray for those in authority.
 - 1 Timothy 2:1–2
- But when government commands what God forbids—or forbids what God commands—the Bible gives one clear answer:

“We ought to obey God rather than men.” —Acts 5:29

The Great Principle

The foundation of Jones’s testimony can be summarized in these biblical truths:

- God governs the conscience.

- Government governs civil society.
- Worship belongs to God alone.
- Civil power must never compel religious observance.
- Liberty of conscience is a gift from God and must be protected for every person.
- A government that protects religious liberty fulfills its proper role; a government that compels worship exceeds the authority God has given it.

These principles are illustrated throughout Scripture by the three Hebrews in Daniel 3, Daniel in the lions' den in Daniel 6, and the apostles before the Sanhedrin in Acts 5. In every case, God's faithful people respected civil authority while remaining unwavering in their obedience to God.

From: Laurie Graybill <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment, separation of church and state, L Graybill

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:51:31 -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 very fearful.

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.

My family came from Europe in the 1700s to Pennsylvania to escape religious persecution.

America is the last stand of religious freedom and we are going to see a terrible amount of trouble by trying to merge church with state.

Sincerely,

Laurie Graybill

From: janet anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:51:57 -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

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

Please keep the separation between church and state. The United States is the greatest nation in the world. Many people have fled to our great nation because we have freedom of religion and freedom from religion. This freedom is one of the things that has made us great. I agree with Thomas Jefferson's statement: "It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." We need to maintain the distance between church and state.

Historically, when the church and state come together, persecution follows. I do not want my religious leader being influenced by taking money from the government and I do not want my government to be influenced by religious entities. Religion is a private matter and should not involve the government.

We need the Johnson Amendment. We do not need the government to fund religious entities. These should be wholly supported only by the members of the organization.

Breaking the wall between church and state will set one church in competition with the other. They will be vying for position and power in the earthly government instead of being focused on God. We need to keep the corruption that naturally comes with politics out of the churches.

Sincerely,

Janet Anderson

[REDACTED] PII

From: Gary Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:52:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

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:

Please keep the separation between church and state. This has worked very well over the years. We are the greatest nation on earth because the United States has separation between church and state. Religious persecution happens when there is no separation between church and state. Even in our early colonial history, we can see that one religious group would persecute the minorities.

We need separation. We need to keep the Johnson Amendment. We need to keep church and state separate. The politicians and the religious leaders should not be influencing each other. The separation of church and state was created by people who were religious. They recognized that the separation between these two entities protects everyone. Our nation began as a wonderful experiment. We have been blessed by God because we have freedom of worship. These freedoms can only be kept if we separate church and state.

Sincerely,

Gary Anderson
Larsen, Wisconsin

[REDACTED] PII

--

"We will know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false" -
-- William Casey - (CIA Director - 1981)

Ephesians 6:12 - For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

From: Allen Snarr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Allen D. Snarr

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was very upset to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly counter to my beliefs — 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.

Allen D. Snarr,

Canyonville, Oregon

From: goia liviun [REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII <

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_the_Religious_Liberty_Commission.docx

To the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty,
Please see attached.

Response to the Religious Liberty Commission's Report, Issued June 2026

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

Dear Mr. Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to share my personal response to the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty report issued in June 2026. I am a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and a U.S. citizen. As a Bible-believing Christian, I worship on Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

I wish to express my concerns regarding the proposed unification of church and state. Having been born in Romania during the era of communism, I witnessed firsthand how a state can forbid individuals from worshiping according to their conscience. As a child, I was obligated to attend school six days a week, Monday through Saturday. Because I attended church on the Sabbath in accordance with the fourth commandment, I faced weekly persecution, including physical beatings and public humiliation intended to coerce me into changing my beliefs. Despite this, I remained committed to my faith.

The consequences of state-controlled ideology in my home country were severe: our pastor was sentenced to two years in prison for his ministry, and my uncle was ultimately murdered by the Communist Party for refusing to stop preaching the Word.

I dreamed of living in a place where I could worship freely without fear. I have been fortunate to immigrate to the United States, where I have enjoyed the religious liberties protected by the Constitution. However, I believe that the unification of church and state is a dangerous path. History shows that when a government has the power to impose a specific ideology, it inevitably leads to the oppression of minority beliefs. While this may not be the committee's intention, such a precedent creates a slippery slope where

religion is forced upon citizens, leading to the same persecution I escaped.

As someone who keeps the Saturday Sabbath, I respectfully ask this committee to consider the views and safety of all believers. I appreciate your time and your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Liviu Goia

From: Matthew Caro <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- Separation of church and state- Matthew Caro

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Please do not break down the wall of separation between church and state and replace it with a bridge. As a former history teacher it troubles me to think of the almost sure result that such an action would have. It would corrupt the church which would persecute those who don't obey it. Please do not repeat this mistake that history has shown us repeatedly to result in disaster for those who disagree with it.

I hear politicians say that, "Separation of church and state is not in the Constitution, it was just in a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote!" This is intellectually dishonest, because in the letter that Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist he said,

"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 quotes the First Amendment, and he considered it a wall of separation between church and state. Those claiming that separation between church and state is not in the constitution are either ignorant of the Framers intentions, or they are dishonest.

Please protect the freedoms of America by keeping the church out of the state, and the state out of the church.

Sincerely, Matthew Caro

Amity, Arkansas

From: Carolyn Oeftger <[REDACTED] PII>

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

The **Separation of Church and State** ensures that Americans can worship as they choose, and by their own conscience. If this is removed or “bridged” we will most certainly go down the path of making laws regarding worship and religion. This would be un-american. This would be taking away the freedoms that our forefathers sacrificed so much for. They were persecuted in England and came here for freedom. Let us NOT go backward!

We MUST keep our freedoms to worship as we choose. We MUST have religious **LIBERTY!**
Freedom OF religion and freedom FROM religion.

DO NOT dismantle this concept. History repeats itself and we will see persecution by the majority against the minority. We will no longer be a great country if we do that.

Carolyn Oeftger

From: Craig Gerst <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State as is

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:54:22 -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,

Craig Gerst Home State Wyoming

PII

PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Religious Liberty Commission Report and Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:54:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: From_Separation_to_Partnership_-_Addressing_the_Religious_Liberty_Commission.pdf

Dear Chairman Patrick and Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the considerable time and effort you have invested in examining the state of religious liberty in the United States. Like you, I believe religious liberty is among America's greatest blessings and one of the principal reasons our nation has become a refuge for people of every faith. I also appreciate the Commission's desire to defend religious expression in an increasingly secular culture.

After carefully reading the Commission's report, however, I have become deeply concerned that it represents a significant departure from the historic American understanding of religious liberty. I do not question the sincerity of the Commission's motives or its desire to strengthen religion's influence within society. My concern is whether the report preserves the constitutional principle that has protected both religion and civil liberty since the founding of our nation.

The central question is not whether religion should influence society. Christians have always preached publicly, cared for the poor, defended justice, addressed moral questions, and spoken before rulers. Jesus Himself did all these things, and His followers should continue to do the same.

The question is different:

Where did God place the limits of civil government?

When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, He declared, *"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight"* (**John 18:36, KJV**). Earlier He had taught, *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"* (**Matthew 22:21, KJV**). Christ acknowledged the legitimacy of civil government while also defining its limits. Civil rulers bear the sword to preserve order, protect life, and punish crime, but nowhere does Scripture entrust them with authority over worship, doctrine, or the conscience. Those belong to God alone.

America's founders recognized this biblical principle after witnessing centuries of persecution produced by the union of church and state throughout Europe. Thomas Jefferson expressed it clearly in his Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association (January 1, 1802) when he wrote that religion *"lies solely between Man & his God,"* that every individual *"owes account to none other for his faith or his worship,"* and that *"the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions."* James Madison likewise argued that *"The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man,"* and that religion is *"wholly exempt from its cognizance"* (James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, 1785). Jefferson also reflected upon Europe's history in Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVII (1785), observing that *"millions of innocent men, women and children... have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned,"* without advancing religious uniformity *"one inch."*

These men were not attempting to remove religion from public life. They believed religion was indispensable to a free society. Their concern was that civil government never assume authority that God had reserved to Himself.

For that reason, I was particularly concerned by Chairman Dan Patrick's statement that *"the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution"* and that *"from this day forward, that phrase should have no power over*

people of all faiths ever again in America."

I agree that the exact phrase "**separation of church and state**" does not appear in the Constitution.

But that has never been the real question.

The real question is whether the Constitution establishes the principle that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over matters of faith and conscience.

Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists did not invent that principle. It explained it. More than 150 years before Jefferson, Roger Williams spoke of a "*hedge or wall of Separation between the Garden of the Church and the Wilderness of the world*" (Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered*, 1644). Baptist leaders such as Isaac Backus argued that "*God has appointed two kinds of government in the world, which are in their nature and ought never to be confounded together*" (Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty*, 1773). John Leland insisted that "*The liberty I contend for is more than toleration*" (John Leland, *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable*, 1791). James Madison defended the same principle through his Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, and the First Amendment embodied it in constitutional law. Jefferson simply described what many of the founders believed the Constitution had already accomplished.

Nor was this understanding unique to America's founders. After touring the United States in the early nineteenth century, the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville sought to discover why religion flourished in America. After speaking with ministers of every denomination, he concluded that they attributed the peaceful influence of religion in America to its independence from civil government (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. I, Part II, Chapter 9, 1835). He further observed that religion exercised enormous influence, not by governing the state, but by shaping the character of the people. America demonstrated that religion became stronger, not weaker, when it remained independent of civil power.

This is why I believe the Commission's proposal to replace a "**wall**" with a "**bridge**" deserves careful reconsideration.

A wall establishes a jurisdictional boundary.

A bridge establishes an institutional connection.

That change is more than a change in metaphor. It represents a different understanding of the relationship between civil government and religion.

The report also recommends expanded partnerships between government and faith-based organizations, broader opportunities for government funding of religious institutions, repeal of the Johnson Amendment, additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life, and the creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty. Each proposal may be debated on its own merits. Taken together, however, they move the discussion away from limiting governmental jurisdiction and toward encouraging institutional partnership between government and religion.

That shift raises an important constitutional question. Every institutional partnership requires someone to establish standards. Government must determine which religious organizations qualify for public support, what activities deserve funding, what beliefs satisfy the required standards, and what practices fall outside those limits. Questions that once belonged entirely to the church gradually become questions of public administration. In doing so, the state inevitably begins deciding matters that are inseparable from doctrine and conscience. The difficulty is not that government becomes religious; it is that government gradually becomes an arbiter of religion. America's founders sought to prevent precisely this progression by denying civil government jurisdiction over religion from the very beginning.

History repeatedly demonstrates where that path leads. Church-state unions rarely begin with persecution. They begin with cooperation. Government offers assistance. Religious institutions welcome support. Public funding

brings public oversight. Oversight gradually becomes regulation, and regulation eventually reaches the conscience. America's founders understood this progression because they had inherited the painful lessons of European history. They established constitutional restraints not because they distrusted Christianity, but because they understood both Scripture and human nature.

One additional historical observation deserves consideration. For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church rejected unrestricted liberty of conscience. Pope Gregory XVI condemned what he called "*that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone*" (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos*, §14, 1832). Pope Pius IX described liberty of conscience as "*a most pestilential error*" (Pope Pius IX, *Quanta Cura*, §3, 1864). Pope Leo XIII likewise rejected unrestricted liberty of worship (Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas Praestantissimum*, §§15–16, 1888). Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church articulated a different understanding of religious freedom in *Dignitatis Humanae* (Second Vatican Council, 1965). Whether one accepts that development or not, it raises an important historical question. Is the Commission preserving the constitutional understanding embraced by America's founders, or is it moving toward a different historical understanding of the relationship between church and state?

Because a letter cannot adequately present centuries of biblical, constitutional, and historical evidence, I have attached my booklet, ***From Separation to Partnership: How the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Redefines Religious Liberty***. It documents the historical sources, constitutional documents, papal quotations, and biblical evidence summarized in this letter. I hope you will receive it in the spirit in which it is offered—not as an attack upon the Commission, but as a sincere contribution to an issue of profound importance for our nation.

If the Commission concludes that Jefferson's phrase should no longer shape America's understanding of religious liberty, I respectfully ask that it also consider whether the constitutional principle Jefferson was describing should likewise be abandoned. In my judgment, that is the real question before the nation, not whether a particular phrase appears in the Constitution, but whether the Constitution continues to limit civil government to the jurisdiction God has entrusted to it.

Thank you for your willingness to consider these observations. It is my sincere prayer that America will continue to protect both religion and civil government by preserving the principle that has served this nation so well for nearly two and a half centuries:

The conscience belongs to God. Caesar has no rightful claim upon it.

Respectfully,

David Barron

PII

ThirdAngelsMessage.tv

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

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A Biblical and Historical Timeline

How the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Redefines Religious Liberty

The Question Before America- Introduction

For more than two centuries, the United States has understood religious liberty to rest upon a simple but profound principle. Thomas Jefferson expressed it in his famous letter to the Danbury Baptist Association:

*"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.**"*

President Donald Trump receives the report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission at the White House. This booklet examines the Commission's recommendations in eradicating the term "separation of church and state".

Those words captured the historic American understanding of liberty of conscience. Civil government was ordained by God, but its authority was deliberately limited. It was entrusted with the responsibility of preserving justice, protecting life, and maintaining civil order. It was **not** entrusted with authority over faith, worship, or the conscience.

The issue has never been whether government is ordained by God. Scripture plainly teaches that it is. The issue has always been where God said government must stop.

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission affirms the importance of religion and rightly recognizes the vital role faith has played in the history of the United States. Yet its recommendations represent a significant shift in emphasis. Rather than defining religious liberty primarily by the constitutional limits placed upon civil government, the Commission encourages a closer institutional relationship between

government and religion. It proposes replacing the familiar "wall of separation" with a "bridge" between church and state.

This booklet argues that the question before America is not whether religion should influence society. It should. Nor is the question whether government should protect the free exercise of religion. It must.

The question is whether civil government should move beyond protecting religious liberty and begin fostering an institutional partnership with religion.

That question reaches far beyond constitutional interpretation. It touches the biblical distinction Christ established between His kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. It shaped the convictions of America's founders, influenced the framing of the First Amendment, and ultimately points forward to the final conflict over worship described in Bible prophecy.

The pages that follow examine that question from three perspectives—Scripture, history, and the Constitution, to determine whether America's historic understanding of liberty of conscience is being preserved or redefined.

The conscience is not outside God's government—it is outside Caesar's.

Chapter One - Liberty of Conscience Begins with God

Religious liberty is not first a constitutional principle. **It is a biblical principle.**

Long before legislatures enacted laws, before nations drafted constitutions, and before courts interpreted rights, God established the proper relationship between His kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. The distinction between civil authority and the conscience did not originate with Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Roger Williams, or any other statesman. It originated with Jesus Christ.

One of the clearest statements ever made concerning that distinction occurred while Jesus stood before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Accused of claiming to be a king, Jesus answered:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36)

This declaration establishes the foundation upon which every discussion of religious liberty must rest. Christ was not denying the legitimacy of civil government. He was defining its jurisdiction.

In fact, only a few verses later Jesus acknowledged that Pilate's authority had been given "from above" (John 19:11). Civil government has a legitimate place within God's order. Yet Christ made it unmistakably clear that His kingdom operates upon entirely different principles.

Earthly governments preserve civil order. They enact laws, punish crime, defend innocent life, and bear the sword against evildoers. Christ's kingdom advances in another way. It governs not by civil force, but by truth, conviction, love, and the work of the Holy Spirit upon the conscience. It never compels genuine faith by civil power.

Jesus explained the difference in a single sentence:

"If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight."

Earthly kingdoms ultimately rely upon force to maintain their authority. Christ's kingdom does not. Faith produced by coercion is not faith at all. A government may compel outward actions, but it cannot produce love for God. It may punish crime, but it cannot create holiness. It may command attendance, but it cannot command worship. Worship belongs to another kingdom.

Christ's words establish the biblical foundation of liberty of conscience. His kingdom does not spread by the sword of Caesar but by the power of truth working upon willing hearts.

The Two Jurisdictions

Jesus reinforced this principle when asked whether taxes should be paid to Caesar. Holding up a coin, He answered:

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)

With these few words, Christ established two distinct jurisdictions. Caesar possesses legitimate authority. God possesses supreme authority. The question is not whether government has authority. Scripture plainly teaches that it does. The question is **what authority God has entrusted to it.**

Worship belongs to God. Faith belongs to God. Conscience belongs to God. No earthly ruler may rightfully claim what belongs exclusively to the Creator. Whenever civil government attempts to prescribe doctrine, direct worship, or compel religious belief, it reaches beyond the authority God has granted it. Those things belong to **God's jurisdiction** alone.

God Ordained Civil Government

The Bible does not teach anarchy. The Apostle Paul wrote:

"For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." (Romans 13:1)

Civil government is God's servant for the preservation of society. Paul explains that rulers are appointed to reward those who do good and punish those who do evil. They "bear not the sword in vain," for they are "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4).

The sword is a civil instrument. It exists to restrain violence, protect innocent life, punish crime, and preserve public order. It was never given to enforce faith, determine doctrine, compel worship, or govern the conscience. God entrusted civil rulers with authority over civil matters—not over the conscience.

Romans 13 establishes both the authority and the limits of civil government. The magistrate bears the sword to preserve civil order and punish those who commit outward acts of evil. Yet nowhere does Scripture authorize civil government to compel worship, prescribe doctrine, or govern the heart. Those belong to God's jurisdiction alone. Civil rulers judge outward conduct; God alone judges the heart.

This distinction is essential. Not every sin falls within the jurisdiction of civil government. God condemns pride, covetousness, lust, hatred, envy, unbelief, idolatry, and every sinful thought of the heart. These are violations of God's moral law, yet they are not crimes that the civil magistrate is authorized to punish. No government can imprison a man for coveting his neighbor's house, fine him for pride, or sentence him for hatred in his heart. These sins are real, and God will judge them, but He has reserved that judgment to Himself.

Civil government is ordained to punish outward acts that violate the rights and safety of others—murder, theft, fraud, violence, and similar

offenses. It was never commissioned to enforce the whole of God's moral law. If it were, the magistrate would be required to punish every violation of the Ten Commandments, including idolatry, unbelief, covetousness, and every sinful desire of the heart. Furthermore, with the punishment of death. We would all be guilty. (Romans 3:19) Scripture gives no such authority.

This is the distinction of jurisdiction. God ordained civil government to restrain outward acts that disturb the peace and safety of society. He never entrusted it with authority over worship, faith, repentance, doctrine, or the conscience. Those remain under His government alone.

The Limits of Civil Authority

The apostles themselves recognized this distinction. When commanded by the Jewish authorities to stop preaching Christ, Peter answered:

"We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Peter did not deny the legitimacy of civil government, nor did he call for rebellion. He simply recognized that civil authority has limits. Whenever earthly rulers command what God forbids, or forbid what God commands, the jurisdiction of Caesar has ended and the jurisdiction of God remains supreme.

This is the very essence of liberty of conscience. No government possesses the authority to stand between God and the individual soul.

Faith Cannot Be Forced

Throughout Scripture, God appeals to mankind through persuasion rather than coercion.

Moses pleaded: *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life."* (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Joshua challenged Israel: *"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."* (Joshua 24:15)

Paul wrote: *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*
(Romans 10:17)

Again he declared: *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."* (2 Corinthians 5:11)

The biblical pattern is unmistakable. God reveals truth. He invites. He warns. He pleads. He persuades. He never produces genuine worship through civil compulsion. If the Almighty Himself does not force the conscience, no earthly government has the right to do so.

Conclusion

The Scriptures establish two governments, each ordained by God for a distinct purpose. Civil government exists to preserve justice, punish wrongdoing, and protect society. It governs outward conduct. Christ's kingdom governs the heart, transforming the conscience through truth, love, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Confusing these two jurisdictions has produced some of the darkest chapters in human history. Whenever the church has sought the sword of the state, or the state has assumed authority over the conscience, liberty has suffered and religion has been corrupted. The chapters that follow will demonstrate how this biblical principle profoundly influenced the development of religious liberty in America, shaped the thinking of the nation's founders, and remains the defining issue in the ongoing debate over the proper relationship between church and state.

Biblical religious liberty is therefore far more than a constitutional principle. It is a divine principle established by Christ Himself.

Civil government is ordained by God, but it was never ordained to govern the conscience. The conscience belongs to God. Caesar has no rightful claim upon it.

Chapter 2 - America's Founders Recognized the Limits of Civil Government

The principle of liberty of conscience did not begin with America's founders. As we saw in the previous chapter, it began with Jesus Christ Himself, who distinguished His kingdom from the kingdoms of this world and taught that what belongs to God must never be claimed by Caesar.

The founders of the United States did not invent this principle. Rather, they recognized it after centuries of painful experience and sought to preserve it in the constitutional system they established.

The American experiment in religious liberty was born from HISTORY. For centuries, Europe witnessed repeated attempts to enforce religious conformity through civil power. Kings legislated doctrine. Magistrates enforced religious decrees. Churches relied upon the sword of the state to preserve orthodoxy, while governments relied upon religious institutions to strengthen political authority.

The result was not religious unity. It was persecution, imprisonment, confiscation of property, exile, torture, and death. America's founders knew this history well, and they were determined not to repeat it.

Roger Williams

Long before the American Revolution, Roger Williams recognized the danger of uniting church and state. A Puritan minister in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Williams believed that civil government had no authority over matters of faith and conscience. His convictions brought him into direct conflict with the colony's leaders, who believed the civil magistrate should help

preserve religious uniformity. In 1635, Williams was banished from Massachusetts because of these convictions.

After establishing the colony of Rhode Island, he sought to build a society where liberty of conscience would be protected and civil government would exercise no authority over worship.

Describing the proper relationship between church and state, Williams wrote of: *"...the hedge or wall of Separation between the Garden of the Church and the Wilderness of the world."*

Williams' concern was not to protect the government from religion. It was to protect the church from the corrupting influence of civil power. He understood that once the civil magistrate entered the affairs of religion, both institutions would suffer. The church would gradually lose its spiritual independence, while the state would become entangled in matters that belonged to God alone.

Isaac Backus

A century later, Baptist minister Isaac Backus continued the same argument. Opposing the establishment of religion by civil government, he wrote:

"God has appointed two kinds of government in the world, which are in their nature and ought never to be confounded together."

Backus understood what Christ had taught centuries earlier. God ordained civil government to preserve justice and order, but He never gave it authority over faith or worship. To confuse those two governments was to violate the jurisdiction God Himself had established.

The language differs from Christ's teaching about rendering unto Caesar and unto God, but the principle is identical. There are two governments, two jurisdictions, and each must remain within the sphere God has assigned it.

John Leland

John Leland, who greatly influenced James Madison regarding the first amendment carried this principle even further. A close friend of James Madison and an influential Baptist minister during the debates surrounding the Constitution, Leland insisted that liberty of conscience was more than mere toleration.

He wrote: *"The liberty I contend for is more than toleration. The very idea of toleration is despicable."*

Leland understood that toleration assumes government possesses authority over religion and merely chooses not to exercise it. Liberty of conscience rests upon an entirely different foundation. Government has no rightful jurisdiction over the conscience in the first place.

Leland also warned: *"The notion of a Christian commonwealth should be exploded forever."*

He was not arguing against Christianity influencing society. Rather, he rejected the idea that civil government should assume responsibility for enforcing Christianity.

Thomas Jefferson

Perhaps no founder expressed this principle more clearly than Thomas Jefferson. Writing to the Danbury Baptist Association on January 1, 1802, Jefferson declared:

"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."

Jefferson did not merely defend religious tolerance. He identified the proper jurisdiction of civil government. Government may regulate actions affecting civil society, but it has no jurisdiction over faith, worship, or conscience. That authority belongs to God alone.

Years earlier, Jefferson reflected upon Europe's history with these sobering words:

"Millions of innocent men, women, and children... have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity."

His conclusion was unmistakable. Civil force had failed to produce genuine faith. Instead, it had produced centuries of suffering.

James Madison

James Madison shared the same conviction. Often called the "Father of the Constitution," he became one of America's strongest defenders of liberty of conscience. Reflecting upon Europe's long history of religious persecution, Madison wrote:

"The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries."

Madison was not speaking in the abstract. He was looking back upon centuries in which civil governments enforced religious conformity through the power of the state. Throughout much of the Middle Ages and beyond, church and civil authorities worked together to suppress what they regarded as heresy. The result was imprisonment, torture, confiscation of property, exile, and death.

Both Madison and Jefferson reached the same conclusion. Civil force cannot produce genuine faith. Instead of preserving religion, it corrupts both the church and the state. Whether expressed as "separation," "liberty of conscience," or the "free exercise" of religion, the principle remained the same. Civil government was never intended to govern religion. Its duty is to protect every person's liberty to worship God—or to decline worship—according to the dictates of conscience, without coercion from the state.

George Washington

America's first president expressed the practical result of these principles in his famous letter to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport

in 1790:

"The Government of the United States... gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

Washington did not speak merely of toleration. He envisioned a nation in which citizens of every faith could worship freely because government neither established religion nor persecuted those who differed.

The Constitution would not create religious liberty. Rather, it would protect the liberty of conscience that belongs to every person as a gift from God.

The First Amendment

These principles found expression in the First Amendment to the Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

Notice that the Amendment accomplishes two complementary purposes. First, it prevents the civil government from establishing religion. Second, it protects the free exercise of religion. These are not competing ideas, they are inseparable. Government refrains from exercising authority over religion precisely so that religion may remain free.

The freedom of the church depends upon the restraint of the state.

Is "Separation of Church and State" in the Constitution?

One objection frequently raised today is that the phrase "separation of church and state" never appears in the Constitution. That observation is correct. The exact phrase is not found in the Constitution. But the question is not whether Jefferson's particular wording appears. The question is whether the principle appears.

The First Amendment declares:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

Those words establish two complementary principles. Civil government may not establish religion, and it may not interfere with the free exercise of religion. Thomas Jefferson later described this constitutional arrangement as building **"a wall of separation between Church & State."** He was not inventing a new constitutional doctrine. He was describing the practical effect of the First Amendment.

Jefferson was not alone. James Madison defended the same principle. Roger Williams described a hedge or wall separating the church from the wilderness of the world. Isaac Backus spoke of two governments that "ought never to be confounded together." John Leland insisted that government possesses no rightful authority over the conscience. Though they expressed the idea differently, they defended the same constitutional principle: **civil government possesses no jurisdiction over religion because the conscience belongs to God.**

The issue, therefore, is not whether Jefferson's particular phrase appears in the Constitution. The issue is whether the Constitution limits civil government in matters of religion.

It plainly does.

Protecting Both Church and State

One of the greatest misunderstandings surrounding the phrase *"separation of church and state"* is the assumption that it was designed either to exclude religion from public life or merely to protect government from religious influence. The founders understood the issue differently. They believed that God had ordained both civil government and the church, but had entrusted each with a different jurisdiction.

History had repeatedly demonstrated the danger of confusing those jurisdictions. Whenever the church sought the power of the state, it gained political influence but lost its spiritual independence. Whenever

the state assumed authority over religion, it became entangled in matters of faith and conscience that God had never entrusted to it. The result was not liberty, but persecution.

Roger Williams sought to preserve the church from the corrupting influence of civil power. Isaac Backus distinguished the two governments that God had ordained and insisted they must never be confounded. John Leland rejected mere toleration because he believed government possessed no rightful authority over the conscience. Thomas Jefferson limited the legitimate powers of government to "actions only, and not opinions." James Madison sought to spare America the religious bloodshed that had soaked the soil of Europe for centuries. George Washington envisioned a nation that would "give to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

Though each expressed the principle in different language, they defended the same fundamental truth: civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience. By keeping church and state within their God-given spheres, they sought to preserve the independence of both institutions. The church would remain free to proclaim truth without relying upon civil power, and the government would remain free from assuming authority over worship, doctrine, or faith. In protecting liberty of conscience, they protected both the church and the state from exercising authority that belonged only to God.

Conclusion

America's founders did not establish liberty of conscience because they distrusted religion. They established it because they understood both Scripture and history. They recognized that Christ's kingdom advances through truth rather than force, and they deliberately limited the jurisdiction of civil government to preserve that principle.

For nearly 250 years, this understanding of liberty of conscience has distinguished the United States from the systems that preceded it. The question now before the nation is whether that historic understanding will be preserved, or fundamentally redefined.

Chapter 3 -Religious Liberty Redefined

"The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." — Thomas Jefferson

A New Direction

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission was established to examine the state of religious liberty in America and recommend ways to strengthen it. At first glance, many of its recommendations appear commendable. The report affirms the importance of religion, recognizes the indispensable role faith has played throughout American history, and calls for protecting the free exercise of religion. Every Christian should welcome sincere efforts to preserve the freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience.

The question before us, however, is not whether religious liberty should be protected. The question is **how the Commission defines religious liberty**. Throughout history, liberty has seldom disappeared by being openly abolished. More often it has been redefined until the original principle is scarcely recognized.

For nearly 250 years, the American understanding of religious liberty rested upon a simple constitutional principle: **civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience**. Government protected religious liberty precisely because it limited its own authority. The Commission proposes a different emphasis.

Rather than focusing primarily upon the constitutional limits of civil authority, the report repeatedly encourages a closer relationship between government and religious institutions. That shift becomes especially clear in its discussion of the historic concept of the separation of church and state.

The report states:

"The concept of a 'wall of separation between church and state' can wrongly imply that church and state are opposed to one another... Perhaps a better analogy is that religious liberty acts as a bridge between church and state."

This statement deserves careful consideration because metaphors reveal assumptions. A wall establishes a boundary. A bridge establishes a connection. A wall limits jurisdiction. A bridge facilitates cooperation. Whether one prefers Jefferson's terminology or another expression, the historic American principle remained the same: civil government protects religious liberty by recognizing the limits of its own authority. The Commission's proposed metaphor points in a different direction.

From Protection to Partnership

That change in emphasis is reflected throughout the Commission's report. It recommends expanded cooperation with faith-based organizations, broader opportunities for religious organizations to receive government funding, repeal of the Johnson Amendment, additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life, the creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty, and even points to historical examples of governmental encouragement of Sabbath observance as positive precedents.

Each recommendation may be evaluated on its own merits. Taken together, however, they reveal a consistent shift in emphasis. For nearly two and a half centuries, America's understanding of religious liberty sought to preserve liberty of conscience by carefully limiting the jurisdiction of civil government in matters of religion. The Commission increasingly presents religious liberty not simply as protection from governmental interference, but as a framework for closer institutional cooperation between government and religion.

That distinction is more significant than it first appears. The historic American question was, "Where has God placed the limits of civil authority?" The Commission increasingly asks, "How can government and religion work together to strengthen society?" Those are fundamentally different questions. One preserves liberty by recognizing constitutional limits. The other encourages a closer institutional relationship between government and religion.

History demonstrates why that distinction matters. Once government becomes a partner with religion, it cannot avoid making religious

judgments. It must determine which organizations qualify for public support, which religious practices deserve official recognition, and where the limits are to be drawn. The Commission's favorable reference to Abraham Lincoln's order encouraging Sabbath observance illustrates how quickly these questions move from protecting religious liberty to government encouraging religious practice. Whether future generations apply that principle more broadly, including questions surrounding Sunday observance, is a question Americans should not dismiss lightly.

Whether that shift ultimately strengthens religious liberty or gradually expands the role of civil government in religious affairs is the central question examined throughout this booklet.

Public Religion Is Not the Issue

At this point an important clarification is necessary. Nothing in this discussion suggests that religion should be confined to private life. Scripture teaches the opposite. Jesus preached publicly. The apostles preached publicly. The prophets addressed kings. Christians are called to proclaim the gospel, defend truth, care for the poor, pursue justice, and bear witness before rulers and nations.

The issue has never been whether religion should influence society. The issue is whether civil government should become institutionally involved in religion. Those are fundamentally different questions. A free church should influence the nation through persuasion, preaching, and faithful witness. A constitutional government should protect that freedom without assuming authority over religion itself.

The Question of Jurisdiction

Ultimately, every discussion concerning religious liberty returns to a single question:

What authority has God entrusted to civil government?

Scripture answers that question clearly. Civil government exists to preserve order, protect life, restrain violence, and punish crime. Worship, doctrine, faith, and conscience belong to another jurisdiction, and it is the duty of the civil government to protect the freedom of it.

History repeatedly demonstrates what happens when that distinction is forgotten. Governments that begin by supporting religion eventually find themselves deciding religious questions. Which beliefs qualify for protection? Which religious organizations deserve public support? Which doctrines fall outside acceptable limits? Who determines what constitutes heresy? These questions are unavoidable whenever civil authority crosses into matters of conscience.

That is precisely the danger America's founders sought to prevent.

Why This Matters

The issue before America is therefore much larger than a disagreement over a metaphor. The question is whether the constitutional principle that protected liberty of conscience is being quietly redefined.

Replacing a wall with a bridge may sound harmless, but history teaches that liberty is rarely lost in a single dramatic moment. More often it is surrendered gradually, one definition at a time, one principle at a time, until the original safeguards are scarcely recognized.

If America's understanding of religious liberty shifts from protecting the conscience by limiting civil jurisdiction to encouraging institutional alliance between government and religion, then America has begun moving away from the constitutional principles that distinguished it from the Old World.

Before determining whether that shift represents progress or departure, we must first recognize that history itself presents two very different understandings of religious liberty. One sought to preserve liberty by limiting the authority of civil government in matters of religion. The other envisioned a closer relationship between civil authority and religious truth. Understanding those two models is essential before evaluating the direction America is now taking.

Chapter 4 -Two Competing Historical Understandings of Religious Liberty

By the close of the eighteenth century, the United States had embraced a principle that distinguished it from nearly every nation in the world. Civil government would possess no jurisdiction over the conscience. Religion would neither be established by Congress nor prohibited by Congress, and the free exercise of religion would be protected because the conscience belonged to God alone.

This understanding did not arise in a vacuum. It emerged after centuries of conflict over the relationship between civil government and religion. To appreciate the significance of America's constitutional system, it is necessary to compare it with another historical understanding of religious liberty that prevailed throughout much of Europe for centuries. This comparison is not intended to criticize individuals or denominations. It is simply an examination of two different historical models.

The American Model

The American understanding of religious liberty rested upon one fundamental principle: **civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience**. As we have seen, this conviction was championed by Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, John Leland, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and ultimately embodied in the First Amendment. Though each expressed the principle differently, they agreed that the authority of civil government reached only its proper sphere.

Thomas Jefferson summarized that principle with remarkable clarity 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."

Jefferson's distinction is both simple and profound. Government reaches actions, not opinions, worship, or conscience. Those belong to God alone.

James Madison expressed the same concern when reflecting upon the religious wars that had devastated Europe:

"The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries."

These convictions found constitutional expression in the First Amendment, which prohibited Congress from establishing religion while protecting its free exercise. Under this model, religion remained free because civil government remained limited. The state's responsibility was not to determine religious truth but to protect every citizen's liberty of conscience.

The Historical Papal Model

For many centuries, the relationship between church and civil government developed differently throughout much of Catholic Europe. Rather than treating religion solely as a matter beyond civil jurisdiction, influential papal documents taught that civil society owed duties toward the true religion.

Pope Gregory XVI, writing in *Mirari Vos* (1832), rejected unrestricted liberty of conscience in some of the strongest language of the nineteenth century. Referring to what he viewed as religious indifferentism, he wrote:

"From this poisoned source of indifferentism flows that absurd and erroneous proposition, or rather delirium, that liberty of conscience must be asserted and vindicated for everyone."

Pope Pius IX reaffirmed the same position in *Quanta Cura* (1864), describing liberty of conscience as **"a most pestilential error."**

Pope Leo XIII continued this line of thought in *Libertas* (1888), writing:

"Let us examine that liberty in individuals which is so opposed to the virtue of religion... A liberty such as we have described... is no liberty, but is degradation."

These statements did not deny the importance of religion. Rather, they reflected a different understanding of the relationship between civil authority and religious truth. Whereas Jefferson argued that religion lies solely between man and God, these papal documents maintained that civil society possesses obligations toward what it understands to be the true religion.

Civil Government and Religious Truth

The difference between these two systems extended beyond abstract principles. Throughout much of European history, civil rulers frequently assisted ecclesiastical authorities in suppressing heresy, enforcing religious conformity, and protecting what was regarded as the true faith. Likewise, church authorities often appealed to civil rulers to carry out judgments that the Church itself could not enforce through spiritual authority alone.

These arrangements varied considerably across countries and centuries, and their legal details changed over time. Nevertheless, they reflected a broader understanding that civil government and ecclesiastical authority could cooperate in matters concerning religion.

By contrast, the American constitutional model deliberately denied civil government jurisdiction over religious doctrine while protecting the liberty of every individual's conscience. The distinction was not merely practical. It represented two fundamentally different understandings of the relationship between church and state.

Two Different Starting Points

Although both systems acknowledged the importance of religion, they began from fundamentally different assumptions.

The American system asked, **What authority has God withheld from civil government?** Its answer was straightforward: **the conscience.** Civil

government possesses legitimate authority over civil society, but worship, faith, and doctrine remain under God's jurisdiction alone.

The historical European model more often asked, **What duties does civil government owe toward the true religion?** Its answer generally included some form of cooperation between civil authority and religious truth as understood by the Church. Those different starting points produced two distinct understandings of religious liberty.

Why This Comparison Matters

The purpose of this chapter has not been to determine which historical model was correct. It has simply been to establish that two very different understandings of religious liberty existed. One limited civil government to its God-ordained jurisdiction and sought to protect liberty of conscience by restricting governmental authority.

Recognizing that distinction is essential before examining more recent developments. If America's understanding of religious liberty has remained unchanged, then contemporary discussions should reflect the same constitutional limits recognized by the founders. If, however, that understanding has changed, Americans should carefully examine how, why, and with what consequences.

If these two historical models differed so fundamentally, an obvious question arises: Has that difference disappeared, or has it simply been redefined?

To answer that question, we must examine the modern understanding of religious liberty and ask whether it represents a continuation of America's constitutional tradition, a development within Catholic thought, or the emergence of an entirely new relationship between church and state.

Chapter 5- Vatican II and the Modern Understanding of Religious Liberty

The previous chapter demonstrated that two distinct historical understandings of religious liberty existed for centuries. America's founders understood liberty of conscience to mean that civil government possessed no jurisdiction over matters of faith and worship. Religion belonged to God, while government exercised authority only over civil affairs.

Historical Roman Catholic teaching approached the question differently. As we have seen, Popes Gregory XVI, Pius IX, and Leo XIII each criticized principles associated with unrestricted liberty of conscience and liberty of worship as they were understood in nineteenth-century liberal thought. That historical distinction raises an obvious question: **Did the Roman Catholic Church change its teaching on religious liberty?**

Most Catholics today answer that question by pointing to the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II and *Dignitatis Humanae*

Between 1962 and 1965, the Roman Catholic Church convened the Second Vatican Council. Among its sixteen major documents was *Dignitatis Humanae* ("Declaration on Religious Freedom"), a document devoted entirely to the subject of religious liberty.

Its opening declaration states:

"The human person has a right to religious freedom."

The document goes on to explain that religious freedom consists in immunity from coercion by individuals, social groups, or civil authority in matters of religion.

To many readers, these statements sound remarkably similar to principles long embraced within the American constitutional tradition. At first glance, one might naturally conclude that the historical debate has been resolved. Yet the matter is more complex than it first appears.

Development Rather Than Contradiction?

The principal debate is not primarily between Protestants and Catholics. It exists within Catholic theology itself.

Catholic theologians generally reject the suggestion that Vatican II contradicted earlier papal teaching. Instead, they argue that doctrine developed. According to Catholic theology, divine truth does not change, but the Church's understanding and application of revealed truth may develop over time. *Dignitatis Humanae* is therefore understood by Catholic scholars not as a rejection of Gregory XVI, Pius IX, or Leo XIII, but as a legitimate development of earlier teaching.

Whether one agrees with that explanation or not, the purpose of this booklet is not to resolve an internal theological debate. It is simply to recognize that the discussion exists.

Public Religion and the Authority to Define Truth

That question becomes especially relevant because Bishop Robert Barron, a member of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, frequently presents Vatican II as one of the great achievements of modern Catholicism. Barron has also argued that religion must not be reduced to merely private belief, stating:

"If you marginalized and privatized religion, democracy is in danger... That's deadly to our democracy."

In the historic Roman Catholic understanding, religion is not merely a matter of private judgment. Religious truth is authoritatively defined by the teaching office of the Church, and the individual conscience is expected to be formed by and submit to that established doctrine rather than independently determining matters of faith. Barron's concern should be understood within that theological tradition.

The American understanding of liberty of conscience begins from a different premise. The individual stands accountable to God. Thomas Jefferson wrote that religion "lies solely between Man & his God," and that the legitimate powers of government reach "actions only, and not

opinions." Liberty of conscience therefore protects every individual from civil coercion because the conscience answers ultimately to God rather than to the civil magistrate.

If, however, religious truth is authoritatively defined by the Church, then liberty of conscience cannot simply mean that every individual is free to determine truth for himself. *The disagreement is therefore not over the importance of religion, but over the source of religious authority.*

That difference explains why Popes Gregory XVI, Pius IX, and Leo XIII rejected unrestricted liberty of conscience and liberty of worship. Their concern was not merely that religion remain public, but that religious truth not be reduced to private or individual opinion.

The question before America, therefore, is not whether religion should influence society. It always has. The question is whether liberty of conscience belongs to the individual before God, or whether civil society should increasingly recognize and support an established understanding of religious truth.

Looking Ahead

If these two understandings of religious liberty begin from different assumptions about authority, then an important constitutional question follows.

When the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission speaks of strengthening religious liberty, which understanding is it preserving?

Is it preserving the founders' conviction that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience?

Or is it moving toward a closer relationship between civil government and an established understanding of religious truth?

That is the question we now examine.

Chapter 6 - Does the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Preserve America's Understanding of Religious Liberty?

The previous chapters have established four important principles. First, Scripture teaches that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience. Second, America's founders deliberately incorporated that principle into the Constitution after witnessing centuries of persecution produced by the union of church and state. Third, history has revealed two distinct understandings of religious liberty—one beginning with the liberty of the individual conscience before God, the other beginning with an established understanding of religious truth. Finally, we have seen that the modern discussion of religious liberty cannot be understood apart from this deeper question:

Who possesses authority to define religious truth?

The question before us is therefore straightforward. Does the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission preserve the historic American understanding of liberty of conscience, or does it redefine it? That question cannot be answered by examining motives. It must be answered by examining the Commission's own language, recommendations, and underlying assumptions.

The Commission's Central Claim

The Commission's understanding of religious liberty was expressed not only in its written report but also in the public remarks of its chairman, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, when the report was presented to President Trump.

Referring to the phrase "separation of church and state," Patrick stated: "...the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution... From this day forward, that phrase should have no power over people of all faiths ever again in America."

This statement deserves careful consideration. Patrick is correct in one respect. The exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution. But that has never been the central question. The real question is whether the Constitution establishes the principle that civil government possesses limited jurisdiction in matters of religion.

As we saw in the previous chapter, America's founders answered that question with remarkable consistency. Roger Williams described a hedge separating the church from the civil power. Isaac Backus distinguished two governments that "ought never to be confounded together." John Leland insisted that government possesses no rightful authority over the conscience. Thomas Jefferson explained that the legitimate powers of government reach "actions only, and not opinions." James Madison defended the same principle, and the First Amendment embodied it in constitutional law. And they defined it as the separation of church and state.

The founders used different language, but they defended the same constitutional limitation. This booklet is not an argument for preserving Jefferson's phrase. It is an argument for preserving the constitutional principle that Jefferson's phrase describes.

With that distinction in mind, we may now examine the Commission's report itself. Perhaps no statement better illustrates the Commission's direction than its discussion of the separation of church and state. The report states:

"The concept of a 'wall of separation between church and state' can wrongly imply that church and state are opposed to one another... Perhaps a better analogy is that religious liberty acts as a bridge between church and state." (Page 22)

At first glance this may appear to be merely a change in terminology. In reality, it represents a different constitutional philosophy. A wall establishes a jurisdictional boundary, while a bridge establishes an institutional connection. Jefferson described the legitimate powers of

government as reaching "actions only, and not opinions." The Commission instead speaks of building a bridge between church and state. One emphasizes constitutional restraint; the other emphasizes institutional cooperation. The difference is not merely rhetorical. It reflects two different understandings of the relationship between civil government and religion.

That distinction becomes even clearer when the report's recommendations are viewed together. The Commission encourages expanded partnerships between government and faith-based organizations, broader opportunities for religious institutions to receive government funding, repeal of the Johnson Amendment, additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life, and the creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty. Each proposal may certainly be debated on its own merits. Taken together, however, they reveal a consistent direction. Religious liberty is increasingly presented not merely as protection from governmental interference, but as a framework for closer institutional cooperation between government and religion.

One important question naturally follows.

What happens when partnership requires government to make religious decisions?

Every institutional partnership requires standards. Government must determine which organizations qualify for funding, what activities deserve public support, what groups receive official recognition, and where the limits are drawn. Questions that once belonged entirely to the church gradually become questions of public administration.

History demonstrates that this is how jurisdiction slowly expands. The issue is not whether today's officials intend persecution. The issue is whether civil government gradually assumes responsibilities that previous generations believed belonged to the conscience alone. America's founders sought to prevent that progression by limiting governmental jurisdiction from the very beginning.

At this point an important clarification is necessary. The issue is not whether religion should influence society. It should. Jesus preached publicly. The apostles preached publicly. The prophets addressed kings. Christians should proclaim the gospel, defend truth, strengthen families, care for the poor, and seek justice within their communities. America's founders never intended religion to be confined to private life.

Beyond the Commission

The Commission's recommendations do not exist in isolation. They reflect ideas that have gained increasing influence within broader religious and political circles concerning the proper relationship between Christianity and civil government.

For example, Vice President J. D. Vance has stated that his views on public policy are "pretty aligned with Catholic social teaching." He has also appeared at conferences where influential speakers argued that civil government should be shaped by biblical laws and Christian political principles rather than maintaining the historic constitutional distinction between church and state.

This is significant because Catholic social teaching has long addressed the relationship between the Church and the civil order. Pope Leo XIII, whose social encyclicals laid the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching, urged Catholics:

"All Catholics should do all in their power to cause the constitutions of states, and legislation, to be modeled on the principles of the true Church."

Whether one agrees with Pope Leo XIII or not is not the issue. The issue is that his understanding of civil government differs fundamentally from the understanding articulated by Jefferson, Madison, Backus, Leland, and the First Amendment. One envisions legislation being modeled upon the principles of the Church. The other limits civil government to its God-given jurisdiction while leaving worship and conscience entirely to God.

The Commission's report likewise presents historical examples of government encouraging religious observance as positive precedents. In its discussion of religious liberty within the military, it approvingly cites President Abraham Lincoln's General Order calling for the orderly observance of the Sabbath within the Army and Navy. Because Lincoln's order referred to Sunday observance, the report treats governmental encouragement of religious observance as part of America's constitutional tradition rather than asking whether such measures fall within the proper jurisdiction of civil government.

Yet this is precisely the constitutional question. Is encouraging religious observance one of the civil magistrate's God-given responsibilities, or does it move civil government beyond the jurisdiction God assigned it?

None of these examples—considered individually—proves that America has abandoned its historic understanding of liberty of conscience. Viewed together, however, they point in the same direction.

Dan Patrick argues that the principle of separation should lose its influence. The Commission proposes replacing a wall with a bridge. Bishop Barron argues against reducing religion to private judgment. J. D. Vance openly embraces Catholic social teaching as a model for public policy. The Commission cites governmental encouragement of Sunday observance as part of America's constitutional tradition.

The significance of these examples is not that they are identical. It is that they all move in the same direction—away from asking where government must stop and toward asking how government can promote religion.

That represents a significant shift from the constitutional philosophy of the founders, who believed religion was strongest when civil government remained within the limits God had assigned it.

The issue is not whether religion should be public. The issue is whether civil government should become institutionally responsible for religion.

A free church influencing society through preaching, persuasion, education, charity, and moral example is entirely consistent with liberty of conscience. Government becoming institutionally responsible for religion is something altogether different.

Ultimately, every discussion concerning religious liberty returns to a single question:

Who possesses jurisdiction over the conscience?

Scripture answers that question by placing the conscience under God's authority alone. Jefferson answered by insisting that government reaches actions only, not opinions. The First Amendment answered by prohibiting Congress from establishing religion while protecting its free exercise. The founders consistently protected liberty by limiting governmental authority.

The Commission, however, repeatedly shifts the emphasis from constitutional restraint toward institutional cooperation between government and religion. That is why replacing the wall with a bridge is so significant. The metaphor reflects an entirely different constitutional philosophy.

History repeatedly demonstrates a remarkably consistent pattern. Churches seek governmental assistance. Government provides support. Support gradually becomes oversight. Oversight becomes regulation. Regulation becomes influence. Influence eventually reaches the conscience. This progression seldom begins with persecution. More often it begins with cooperation, mutual benefit, and the best of intentions. America's founders understood that danger. They did not establish constitutional restraints because they distrusted Christianity. They established them because they understood human nature and recognized that concentrated power, whether exercised by church or state, has a tendency to exceed its proper limits.

The Commission repeatedly asks how religion can strengthen America. That is a worthy question. A more fundamental question is this:

How can America preserve liberty of conscience while religion continues to strengthen society?

For nearly two and a half centuries the American answer has been remarkably consistent. Religion remains entirely free. Government remains constitutionally limited. The church influences society through preaching, education, charity, and moral persuasion, while government protects that freedom without becoming religion's institutional partner.

The purpose of this booklet has never been to argue that religion should retreat from public life. Christianity should continue to influence society through faithful preaching, compassionate ministry, education, charity, and moral leadership.

The question has always been one of jurisdiction.

Who governs the conscience?

Christ answered that question before Pilate.
America's founders answered it in the Constitution.
History answered it through centuries of persecution.

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission now asks America to reconsider it.

Every generation must decide whether civil government will remain within the limits God assigned it, or whether it will gradually assume authority over matters that belong to God alone.

The conscience belongs to God. Caesar has no rightful claim upon it.

Chapter 7 -The Final Test of Liberty of Conscience

Throughout this study we have examined religious liberty from three perspectives. We began with Scripture, where Christ distinguished His kingdom from the kingdoms of this world and declared that His servants do not advance His cause through civil force. We then examined the constitutional principles embraced by America's founders, who recognized that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience. Finally, we considered the recommendations of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and asked whether they preserve that historic understanding or move in a different direction.

These questions are important not merely because they concern constitutional history. According to Bible prophecy, they become central in the closing conflict between Christ and Satan.

From Genesis to Revelation, the great controversy has never centered merely upon politics, economics, or civil government. At its heart lies the question of worship. Who is worthy of worship? Who possesses authority over the conscience? Who determines religious truth? These questions reach their climax in Revelation 13, where worship is enforced by civil authority under the threat of economic sanctions and ultimately death. The final conflict is therefore not fundamentally political. It is a conflict over jurisdiction. Who has authority over worship? God or the state?

Jesus answered that question before Pilate:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight." (John 18:36)

Throughout this booklet we have returned repeatedly to these words because they establish the biblical boundary between Christ's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. Civil government bears the sword to preserve public order. Christ governs the conscience through truth, love, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Genuine worship cannot be compelled because it must arise from a willing heart.

The book of Daniel illustrates this same principle. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden image and commanded every nation to worship it under penalty of death. In Daniel 6, another decree prohibited prayer to anyone except the king. In both instances, the issue was not whether civil government existed. God Himself had ordained civil government. The issue was whether civil rulers possessed authority over worship. The faithful obeyed the king in every lawful matter, but when civil authority claimed jurisdiction over the conscience, they obeyed God rather than men.

Revelation presents the same issue on a worldwide scale. The beast receives worship. An image to the beast is formed. The second beast causes the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast. The prophecy is not merely predicting persecution. It is predicting the reappearance of the same governing principle that has appeared throughout history: civil authority assuming jurisdiction over worship.

An image reflects the character of the original. The medieval system united ecclesiastical authority with civil power to enforce religious conformity. Revelation predicts not merely another persecution, but the reappearance of that governing principle. Whenever civil government assumes authority over worship, the image begins to form because the same relationship between church and state has returned.

America's Providential Beginning

Ellen White understood that the rise of the United States occupied a unique place in prophecy. Before describing America's future role in Revelation 13, she first explained why the nation became such a powerful defender of liberty of conscience.

She wrote:

"Among the Christian exiles who first fled to America and sought an asylum from royal oppression and priestly intolerance were many who

determined **to establish a government upon the broad foundation of civil and religious liberty....** Freedom of religious faith was also granted, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of **his conscience.... Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation.** These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 441.)

This statement deserves careful attention. Ellen White identifies two principles that distinguished America from the nations of Europe.

Republicanism recognized that civil authority derives its just powers from the consent of the governed rather than from ecclesiastical control or hereditary monarchy.

Protestantism, in its historic sense, represented more than a collection of denominations. It embodied the great protest against the union of church and state that had dominated much of medieval Europe through the Papal church. It affirmed the supremacy of Scripture, the direct accountability of every individual to God, and the liberty of every person to worship according to the dictates of conscience without civil coercion.

Together these principles established constitutional restraints that protected liberty of conscience unlike any nation before it.

Liberty Must Be Extended to Everyone

Yet Ellen White was equally careful not to idealize America's beginnings. Although many of the early colonists came seeking freedom from religious persecution, they did not always extend that same freedom to others.

She observed:

"Yet honest and God-fearing as they were, the Pilgrims did not yet comprehend the great principle of religious toleration. The freedom which they sacrificed so much to secure for themselves, they were not equally ready to grant to others." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 292.)

She then describes what happened when church and civil authority became united in the Massachusetts Bay Colony:

"The regulation was adopted by the colonists, that only church-members should have a voice in the civil government.... A kind of State church was formed... the magistrates being authorized to suppress heresy. Thus the secular power was in the hands of the church. It was not long before these measures led to the inevitable result—persecution." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 293.)

The lesson is unmistakable. Even sincere and devoted Christians can repeat the mistakes of history whenever civil government assumes authority over religion. The problem was never Christianity itself. The problem was the union of ecclesiastical authority with the coercive power of the state.

The Prophetic Warning

Having explained both America's strengths and its early failures, Ellen White then looked forward to the final crisis.

She summarized the biblical principle in these words:

"To protect liberty of conscience is the duty of the state, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 201.)

This statement perfectly harmonizes with the teachings of Christ, the apostles, and the principles embraced by America's founders. Civil government is ordained by God, but its authority has divinely established limits. It exists to preserve justice and civil order, not to govern worship or the conscience.

Because of this principle, Ellen White repeatedly warned against every movement that would weaken the constitutional restraints protecting liberty of conscience. Writing in 1900, she declared:

"An amendment to the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience, has long been urged upon the legislators of the nation; and the question of

enforcing Sunday observance has become one of national importance. Are we ready for the issue involved in the Sunday movement?" (*Signs of the Times*, November 28, 1900.)

It is significant that she begins, not with Sunday, but with "**an amendment to the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience.**" The prophetic issue is constitutional before it is ceremonial. Sunday legislation becomes significant because it represents civil government exercising authority over worship.

Her warning becomes even more direct in *The Great Controversy*:

"Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 564.)

Throughout this booklet we have identified those restraints. They are the constitutional principles that deny civil government jurisdiction over the conscience and protect every individual's right to worship according to the dictates of conscience. Remove those restraints, and history demonstrates what follows. The issue is not merely one religious observance or another. The issue is whether civil government possesses authority to command worship.

Conclusion

This brings us back to the question that has guided this entire study.

Who possesses jurisdiction over the conscience?

Scripture answers: God.

Christ answered: God.

America's founders sought to preserve that principle by carefully limiting the jurisdiction of civil government.

Ellen White warned that the final conflict would arise when those constitutional restraints began to disappear.

As America commemorates 250 years of constitutional government, the preservation of liberty of conscience deserves more than patriotic celebration. It deserves careful vigilance. Liberty has rarely been lost all at once. More often it has been redefined—gradually, respectfully, and with the best of intentions. The issue has never been whether religion should influence society. The issue has always been whether civil government should exercise authority over worship.

That question stood before Nebuchadnezzar.

It stood before Darius.

It stood before Pilate.

It confronted the Pilgrims as they struggled to extend the liberty they themselves had sought.

According to Revelation, it will soon stand before the entire world once again.

Appendix A

Selected Statements from the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

The purpose of this appendix is to provide several representative statements from the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and its members that are discussed throughout this booklet. They are presented so readers may examine the Commission's own language alongside the constitutional and biblical principles discussed in the preceding chapters.

1. Dan Patrick -Chairman, Presidential Religious Liberty Commission On "Separation of Church and State"

"...the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution... From this day forward, that phrase should have no power over people of all faiths ever again in America."

2. Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report From a Wall to a Bridge

"The concept of a 'wall of separation between church and state' can wrongly imply that church and state are opposed to one another... Perhaps a better analogy is that religious liberty acts as a bridge between church and state."

3. Recommendations of the Commission

Among the recommendations discussed in this booklet are:

- Expanded partnerships between government and faith-based organizations.
- Increased opportunities for religious organizations to participate in government funding.
- Repeal of the Johnson Amendment.
- Additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life.
- Creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty.

These recommendations are presented by the Commission as ways to strengthen religious liberty.

4. Bishop Robert Barron - Member, Presidential Religious Liberty Commission On Religion in Public Life

"If you marginalized and privatized religion, democracy is in danger... Values is up to me. My gender, it's up to me. The whole structure of my life, it's my choice. That's deadly to our democracy."

Questions for the Reader

After reading the report and the statements above, consider the following questions:

- Does the Commission define religious liberty in the same way America's founders defined it?
- Does replacing a "wall" with a "bridge" preserve the constitutional limits placed upon civil government, or does it encourage a different relationship between government and religion?
- Can government become an institutional partner with religion while remaining outside the jurisdiction of the conscience?
- How should Christians encourage religion's influence upon society while preserving the constitutional principle that civil government possesses no authority over worship?

These are the questions this booklet has sought to examine.

Appendix B

The Great Controversy over Liberty of Conscience- A Biblical and Historical Timeline

c. 605 B.C. — Daniel 3: Worship by Civil Decree

King Nebuchadnezzar erects a golden image and commands all nations to worship it under penalty of death. The issue is not civil government itself, but civil government exercising authority over worship.

c. 539 B.C. — Daniel 6: Prayer Forbidden

King Darius signs a decree prohibiting prayer to anyone except the king for thirty days. Daniel obeys the king in all lawful matters but refuses to surrender his conscience to civil authority.

A.D. 31 — Christ Before Pilate

Jesus declares: *"My kingdom is not of this world... if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight."*

Christ distinguishes His kingdom from the kingdoms of this world and establishes the biblical boundary between civil authority and the conscience.

A.D. 31 — "Render Unto Caesar"

Jesus teaches that Caesar has legitimate authority—but only within the sphere God has assigned him.

A.D. 31–33 — The Apostles Before the Sanhedrin

Peter declares: *"We ought to obey God rather than men."*

The apostles recognize the legitimacy of civil authority while affirming that God's authority over the conscience is supreme

The Development of American Religious Liberty

1636 — Roger Williams Calls for a "hedge or wall of separation" protecting the church from civil power.

1773–1774 — Isaac Backus Distinguishes the two governments ordained by God that "ought never to be confounded together."

1780s — John Leland Argues that liberty of conscience is far more than mere toleration because government possesses no rightful authority over religion.

1785 — James Madison Publishes his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, defending liberty of conscience and arguing that religion is exempt from

the authority of civil society.

1791 — The First Amendment Congress is forbidden from establishing religion while protecting its free exercise.

1790 — George Washington Promises that the United States gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

1802 — Thomas Jefferson Describes the First Amendment as building "a wall of separation between Church & State."

The Historical Debate

1832 — Gregory XVI *Mirari Vos* Rejects unrestricted liberty of conscience.

1864 — Pius IX *Quanta Cura* Describes liberty of conscience as "a most pestilential error."

1888 — Leo XIII *Libertas* Argues that unrestricted liberty of worship is not true liberty.

1965 — Vatican II *Dignitatis Humanae* Affirms immunity from coercion in religious matters while presenting this as a development of Catholic teaching. Yet, claiming not to have changed.

The Prophetic Perspective

1900 — Ellen White

Warns of efforts to amend the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience and identifies this as the beginning of the Sunday movement.

The Great Controversy

States: "To protect liberty of conscience is the duty of the state, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion."

She also warns: "Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed... there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution."

Today -2026 — Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

The Commission recommends a "bridge" rather than a "wall" between church and state and calls for expanded institutional cooperation between government and religion, raising the constitutional questions examined throughout this booklet.

From: Tammi Thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:56:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a US citizen and Christian, I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposal to replace the wall of separation of church and state with a "bridge". The wall of church and state was implemented by our forefathers, of faith, to keep the church free of government corruption and allow us to have the freedom of choice. This freedom is God given to every man and woman. If you look at the history of the US, you will see why this was implemented. It is never a good idea to mix the two. When this occurs, corruption, brutality, persecution, and denial of liberty soon follow. There is a place for government and a place for faith but not together. As it is written, "Give to Caesar, what is Caesar's and give to God, what is God's".

Religion is a personal matter, the government should have no say or reach into this area. The government should stay neutral in the citizen's right to choose their faith and how to practice it. This means that no government funds should be given to any church, faith activities, clubs, schools, etc. Taxpayers should not have to pay for these expenditures.

Keeping the wall actually protects faith, repealing the Johnson Amendment will be disastrous to the faith. This country was built on religious and civil liberty, let us not forget where we come from. I agree with the Pillar of Faith's comments, please implement them.

Please uphold the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,
Tammi Thomas
Stroudsburg, PA

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

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – William Guthrie

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:57:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I write as a citizen of the United States of America and a resident of Loma Linda, California, with a conviction I have held for many years: that religious liberty, properly understood, requires the complete abstinence of civil government from legislating over matters of conscience and the first table of the Ten Commandments as written in the Bible. I have studied the history of what happens when this line is erased. When Constantine wed the Roman state to the church, the result was not a golden age but the long night that produced the Inquisition. That history is not an accident of one bad emperor; it is what inevitably happens whenever civil power reaches for jurisdiction that was never given to it. Civil governments govern civil matters. Matters of conscience belong to the individual and God alone. In the preamble to the declaration of independence, we read that all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. It follows then, that the government also has a defined and God-given jurisdiction. When the government seeks authority over matters of individual conscience and religious linearity it treads on the very rights of same citizens it claims to uphold.

This is not merely my own opinion; it rests on the clearest line Christ himself drew. When he said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's, he divided all human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority whatsoever over duties owed to God. As A. T. Jones told a Senate committee in 1888 opposing the national Sunday bill, there is a limit to the lawmaking power, and that limit is the line Jesus Christ has drawn. The state's only legitimate question about any act is whether it is civil or uncivil, injurious to a neighbor or not. It may never ask whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical. Any commission recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, symbol, or observance crosses that line, not because it is too religious for a secular republic, but because it is forbidden by the very faith it claims to serve.

Nor can popular support supply the missing authority. If a majority vote could grant religious liberty, a majority vote could revoke it, and it would never have been a right at all, only a permission. Rights are inherent in the individual, granted by the Creator, and placed in our Constitution precisely to be beyond the reach of election returns. As Jones put it to that same Senate committee, the people, however numerous, have no right to invade any person's relationship to God. Congress itself once affirmed this, declaring that the conscience of a solitary dissenter is as sacred under the Constitution as the conscience of the whole community. That most Americans favor a measure is no argument for enacting it where religion is concerned, because religion was never a subject submitted to the vote. If a religious law is enacted outside of the God-ordained boundaries placed upon government, it will inevitably result in persecution and violence against its own citizens.

It should also be said plainly that a law favoring religion is no safer than one restricting it. Any law touching religion must define which religion it favors, and that definition necessarily excludes someone. Even those it includes no longer practice their faith freely; they practice it by permission of a legislature that can just as easily change hands. Jones called this outright impossible to avoid, and warned that no man can safely consent to legislation favoring his own faith without surrendering his right to change his mind later. Believers who welcome state sponsorship today are handing a loaded instrument to whichever administration governs tomorrow.

Finally, this separation was not an oversight of the founders but their deliberate design, urged upon them by the churches of their own day. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for full establishment to object; they saw the consequences in the principle and denied the principle itself. Any commission that claims the founders intended government partnership with religion must first explain away Madison in his own words.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
William Guthrie, MD
Loma Linda, CA

From: Renee Majors <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:57:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

The First Amendment declares that government shall make no law “respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Please defend both principles. Government must neither establish favored religious beliefs nor punish citizens for following conscience. Religious liberty belongs to every American, not merely the politically powerful or religious majority.

Protect the freedom to believe, worship, speak, and abstain without coercion. Once government gains authority over conscience, no one’s liberty is secure.

Respectfully,
Renee Majors

Sent from my iPhone

From: James Hall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thoughts on your "report"

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:59:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Commission,

As the child of an evangelical minister and an Army Officer who has served alongside devout Muslims from Middle Eastern countries, I urge this Commission to reconsider its fundamental approach.

First, I ask that you review our nation's founding documents. It is clear that the founders, mindful of the government-imposed religious conflicts and civil wars in Europe, explicitly sought to establish a government independent of religion. As men of the Enlightenment, the founders intended to protect religious liberty, and the current direction of this Commission appears to contradict that foundational principle.

Second, I have witnessed firsthand how religious extremism can destabilize a society, having seen Iran transform from a functioning nation into a restrictive theocracy. The push toward an intolerant, single-religion framework risks creating deep divisions and conflict within our own country among different denominations and faiths.

Finally, I urge the Commission to approach these decisions with humility and tolerance. Before proposing policies that mimic religious inquisitions, it is vital to reflect on the core principles of the faith you claim to represent.

James Hall

From: Judi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Judi K

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:59:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am submitting my Public Comment STRONGLY OPPOSING the Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

The draft report and its many proposals advance a predetermined ideological agenda which, if implemented, would threaten the constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and equal treatment for religious believers and nonbelievers alike that Americans have had for more than 200 years. The report repeatedly mischaracterizes the Establishment Clause, minimizes the rights of religious minorities and nonreligious Americans, and recommends sweeping changes that would erode one of the Constitution's most important protections for individual freedom rather than presenting a balanced or historically accurate assessment of religious liberty in the United States.

The United States Constitution, Article I states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievance."

The Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. It does not authorize the government to sponsor religious observances or use its authority to promote one faith over others. When government sponsors prayer, displays religious symbols or includes worship in official activities, it sends a message that some faiths are preferred over other faiths or non-faith. Past experience has demonstrated that religious liberty is best protected when the government remains neutral toward religion rather than privileging one faith over others. Historical evidence documents that the Framers intentionally supported a broad separation between religion and the government.

I respectfully urge the Commission to substantially revise the draft report so that any final report should accurately reflect the text of our U.S. Constitution, the accurate historical record, and preserve the equal rights of all Americans, whether they are religious believers or nonbelievers.

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 9 public healthcare comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:00:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commision,

NAPRO fertility care model was able to treat and diagnose my heavy menstrual cycles and restore my quality of life by providing me with bioidentical progesterone during my luteal phase. I was able to treat my problem by addressing my hormone issues without suppressing my cycle using oral contraceptives. This type of healthcare is important to women and access needs to be broadened so that more women can have the help they deserve.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Stowell

Sent from my iPhone

From: Elgin Jenkins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Church and State Separation~~n~~- [Elgin Jenkins]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:00:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a Bible believing Christian, and I take religious liberty very seriously. I'm writing in support of maintaining a proper separation between church and state.

Maintaining a proper separation of church and state is not an attack on Christianity. It is one of the safeguards that keeps Christianity, and every sincere faith, free from government control and political manipulation. When the church seeks the power of the state to advance its ends, both are placed in danger. The church trades spiritual authority for political influence, and the state is tempted to favor one religious group over another. This is very clear from history.

As a born-again Christian, I believe conscience belongs only to God. True faith comes from a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot be produced by law or preserved by political favoritism. Jesus said in Mark 12:17 "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus clearly separated our duty to Him and our duty to the government and the two should remain separated. Civil government has a proper role, but it should not become the instrument by which the church imposes its beliefs on others, nor should the church use the government to impose its beliefs on others.

I therefore respectfully object to any recommendation that treats the separation of church and state as a legal error rather than a constitutional principle. The First Amendment's protection of free exercise and its guard against establishment belong together. Religious liberty is strongest when the government neither persecutes religion nor manages, sponsors, or privileges it.

I also oppose any efforts to weaken the Johnson Amendment. I strongly believe the Houses of worship should call people to God and truth, not become partisan campaign instruments.

History offers a consistent warning here. Religious persecution in this country has often come not from irreligion, but from religious groups using civil power to punish dissenters. Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Jews, and others have all suffered when government favored one creed over another. Our constitutional order was wise to avoid that path, and I ask the Commission to preserve it, for Christians and for every American, religious or not.

As a devout Christian, I do not fear a proper separation of church and state. I value it, because it protects the purity of the church, the freedom of conscience, and the liberty of every American.

Respectfully submitted,

Elgin Jenkins

From: Laura Caro <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:00:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a concerned citizen and a Christian, I am writing to respectfully ask you to reconsider any recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state, including the recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

I am a firm believer in defending religious liberty. I believe every person should be free to worship God according to the dictates of his or her conscience, or not to worship at all, without government coercion or favoritism. In my view, the most effective way to preserve that freedom is by maintaining a clear separation between church and state. This principle has protected both the independence of the church and the liberty of the individual.

As a Christian, I view the separation of church and state as one of the greatest safeguards of religious liberty. It has helped protect freedom of conscience and the freedom to worship according to one's convictions, allowing people of many different faiths to live together peacefully. I believe this principle has been one of the distinguishing strengths of our nation.

History provides many examples of governments becoming closely aligned with particular religious institutions. While the circumstances have varied, such alliances have often resulted in diminished religious freedom for those outside the favored faith. Minority religious groups have frequently faced discrimination, restrictions on worship, or outright persecution. I fear that weakening the separation between church and state increases the risk of repeating these historical mistakes.

My concern is not rooted in a lack of appreciation for Christianity but in a desire to preserve its integrity. I believe the church fulfills its mission most faithfully when it persuades through the sound reasoning of Scripture, love, and service rather than through political influence or government support. Faith is a matter of conscience and free choice and cannot be compelled by government. Likewise, governments best protect religious liberty when they neither favor nor disadvantage any particular faith. Preserving this distinction protects the integrity of both the church and the government and safeguards the freedom of conscience for all people.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider any recommendations that would weaken the historic separation of church and state. Rather than diminishing this principle, I believe we should continue to strengthen the constitutional protections that have allowed religious liberty to flourish in the United States. The independence of both church and state is strengthened when neither exercises authority over the other.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

Talaura Caro

Amity, Arkansas

Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and angels know of us

From: 마준|막 기별 <[REDACTED] PII>

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:02:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Committee,

I am writing to formally submit my public comment regarding the critical issue of religious liberty. I strongly oppose any efforts to unite religion and the state, as such actions directly disregard the U.S. Constitution and the clear intentions of the Founding Fathers who established it.

Historically, the United States has served as a brilliant example of how a nation can thrive when church and state remain strictly separate. It became renowned worldwide as a land of true freedom—specifically, the freedom of conscience—guaranteed to anyone who sets foot on its soil.

I believe the primary reason the United States was able to surpass major European powers and become the world's leading superpower in such a short period is rooted in this very principle: by refraining from government interference in religion, the nation granted genuine religious freedom to all its residents.

Therefore, I am deeply concerned by the current actions of the committee, which appear to undermine this foundational pillar. I firmly oppose any measures that infringe upon true religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Taylor Kim

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

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello, I would like to state my opinion on the draft of the Religious Liberty Commision's first report. I am very frightened by the language throughout the report suggesting that we break down the wall of seperation between church and state. Religious liberty is foundationally based on the seperation of Church and State. Although America's earliest roots were not founded on a religious liberty that promoted a seperation (many early settlements had strict blue laws, etc), the fundamental ideas of religious liberty that were placed in the constitution require a seperation. If the government starts gettting involved in promoting on or another religion, even if it is the religion I belive in, that undermines religious liberty. Religious liberty means that no religion recieves any punishment or support from the Government. By reccommending that the DOJ back legislation to support state's laws requiring the display of the 10 commandments, the report is actively supporting a state-sponsored religion. Just because America has, in a large degree, chosen to forgo Christianity for many years, does not mean that it is the government's place to try to fix that by giving any support to a specific group. Thank you for listening.

Nathan Krum
Associate Director of Marketing and Media
Weimar University

From: Ardella Koskinen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully ask that you keep the church and the state separate.

History shows that when church and state are united, persecution results. Many have fled religious persecution in other countries and come to America for religious liberty.

If the government is telling the church what it can and cannot do, where is religious freedom? If the government is making religious laws, where is freedom of conscience? This will lead to force. Force is not of God.

Nothing good can come from further politicizing our churches by repealing the Johnson Amendment. Please enforce it.

Thank you,

Ardella Koskinen
Grass Valley, California

From: Reo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. The proposed government laws will surely lead to the dismantling of religious freedom.

God does not lead by force - he beckons us to come, find rest, and be restored in Him but it is our choice. If we remove free will, we are not truly free.

From: Evett Palmer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Evett Palmer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

With reference to the captioned matter, I write to express my objection to uniting church and state together. This spells a recipe for disaster and please note my reasons below:

The United States Constitution establishes a government, of limited authority, whose primary responsibility is to protect the civil rights and liberties of all people equally. Among those liberties, none is more fundamental than the freedom of conscience. For this reason, the Constitution requires a clear separation between the authority of civil government and the exercise of religion.

The First Amendment provides:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

These two protections work together. Government is prohibited from establishing, endorsing, promoting, or compelling religious observance, while simultaneously protecting every individual's right to practice—or decline to practice—religion according to the dictates of conscience.

The jurisdiction of civil government extends only to civil matters involving the protection of life, liberty, property, public safety, and the equal rights of all citizens. Matters of faith, worship, doctrine, and religious observance lie beyond the proper authority of government because they concern an individual's relationship with God and the exercise of conscience.

The authority to compel religious duties has never been delegated to the civil government by the Constitution. A law whose purpose or effect is to require participation in, or observance of, a religious practice exceeds the constitutional limits placed upon governmental power. Religious observance is meaningful only when it is voluntary. Faith that is compelled by law is no longer an exercise of conscience but an act of coercion.

The Fourteenth Amendment further provides:

"No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

These guarantees ensure that the constitutional protections of religious liberty apply equally against actions by state and local governments. Every citizen is entitled to equal treatment under the law regardless of religious belief, religious practice, or the absence of religious belief.

History consistently demonstrates that when civil authority assumes the power to enforce religious observance, the rights of conscience are diminished. Government ceases to remain neutral in matters of religion and instead becomes an instrument for advancing one religious viewpoint over others. Such action inevitably discriminates against citizens whose sincerely held beliefs differ from those favored by the state.

The proper role of civil government is not to determine what constitutes true religion or to prescribe how, when, or whether individuals should worship. Its role is to secure justice, preserve civil order, and protect the constitutional rights of every person equally. The government's legitimate authority extends to regulating conduct that harms others or threatens public safety, but it does not extend to compelling religious worship, enforcing sacred days, or prescribing religious duties.

The constitutional principle commonly referred to as the separation of church and state is not an expression of hostility toward religion. Rather, it is a safeguard that protects both institutions. It preserves the independence of religious organizations from governmental control while ensuring that government remains impartial among differing religious beliefs and practices. In doing so, it protects the liberty of every citizen to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of governmental coercion or discrimination.

Accordingly, any law or governmental policy that directly or indirectly compels religious observance, favors one religious tradition over another, or penalizes individuals because of their religious convictions raises serious constitutional concerns under both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, as applied to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment.

The enduring strength of the American constitutional system rests upon maintaining the proper distinction between civil authority and religious authority. Preserving that distinction protects the freedoms guaranteed to every citizen and upholds the principles upon which this Nation was founded.

Respectfully submitted,

E.Palmer

From: Thomas Clark <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:05:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for your work to help address issues of concern regarding religious freedom. My name is Thomas Clark. I am a Christian and I'm very thankful to be a citizen of the USA which gives me and people of all faiths so much religious freedom. I respectfully ask that you uphold the separation of church and state as defined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. (Although not stated in the words "separation of church and state" the same concept is clearly there). When the state interferes with religion, bad things can happen and when religion gets too close to the state, bad things can happen. I realize that in recent years, in the United States, Christians have been banned from speaking about Jesus in public schools and from speaking against LGBTQ issues. I believe many of these instances are probably examples of government overreaching in regards to religion and not allowing "the free exercise thereof." If public schools are allowed to teach about other religions they should also be allowed to teach about Christianity. I appreciate your support of Christian's having the right of free speech, etc. There are two clauses in the First Amendment regarding religion, the first clause which guards against Congress making laws regarding the establishment of religion and the clause regarding Congress making laws against the free exercise of religion. I respectfully ask that you uphold both clauses—the establishment clause and the free exercise clause which will help uphold the balanced concept of separation of church and state which our founding fathers held.

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."

In history we see painful examples of what has happened when church and state have united. When church and state were united during the Middle Ages, the state church killed and persecuted millions of Protestant Christians for not following the state religion. In our day we see communist countries where the state makes laws against religion and Christians are persecuted for following and teaching the Bible. I believe this is also an example of dangers resulting from not having separation of church and state. We also see the example of Muslim countries where church and state are united and Christians are persecuted because there are state laws against practicing religion contrary to the state religion.

Thank you for reading and considering my comment and request to uphold the separation of church and state as found in the First Amendment of the Constitution—the separation of church and state that Thomas Jefferson and Roger Williams taught. Thank you for your work to help uphold the Constitution and uphold the freedoms that our founding fathers fought for.

May God bless continue to bless The United States of America!

Sincerely,

Thomas Clark

From: Steven K <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Protect Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:07:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully submit this public comment out of concern for the future of religious liberty in the United States.

Please preserve the historic American principle of a clear distinction between the authority of church and state. One of the greatest safeguards of our constitutional republic has been the government's refusal to establish or enforce religious observance through civil law. This principle protects the freedom of every American, regardless of his or her faith.

As a member of a religious minority, I am concerned about any precedent that could permit government enforcement of religious practices, including laws requiring the observance of a particular day of worship, such as Sunday "blue laws." Regardless of their stated purpose, such laws place the government in the position of favoring one religious practice over another and burden the consciences of those whose sincerely held religious convictions differ.

History repeatedly demonstrates that when religious and civil authority become united, the result is often persecution rather than liberty. Jesus Christ Himself was crucified when the religious leaders of His day persuaded the Roman civil government to enforce a religious judgment. During the medieval period, the union of church and state led to the persecution of countless individuals whose only offense was following their conscience in matters of faith. In colonial America, Roger Williams recognized these dangers and became a leading advocate for religious liberty and freedom of conscience—principles that were later enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The genius of the American system is not that it protects only the beliefs of the majority, but that it protects the God-given right of every individual to worship according to conscience—or not to worship at all—without coercion from the state.

Religious liberty means little if it protects only beliefs that are popular. Its true test is whether it protects the conscience of those in the minority. I respectfully urge the Commission to defend this foundational principle and to oppose any policy that would blur the constitutional distinction between civil authority and religious authority or permit government enforcement of religious observance.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to protecting the religious liberty of all Americans.

Respectfully,

Steven Kramar

Sent from my iPhone

From: Pr Marcelo Rodrigues <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Establishment Clause – MARCELO RODRIGUES

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:09:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen from Juazeiro, Bahia, though a resident of this country, watching with real concern the debates over how far government may go in accommodating or promoting religion. My own faith matters enormously to me, which is precisely why I want the state to have no jurisdiction over it. I ask you to consider four arguments, drawn from a long and rigorous American tradition, for why government must stay entirely outside the domain of religion.

First, consider what government is and where its powers come from. American government rests on the principle that just powers are delegated by the people. But no person can delegate his relationship to God to anyone else — I cannot authorize a representative to believe for me, worship for me, or answer for my soul at judgment. Since this power was never mine to give, it could never have been received by any government. As one classic statement of this argument puts it, government can never have anything to do with religion, because no government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer even for itself, much less for its people. This is not a restriction added onto government from outside; it is a boundary built into the very idea of delegated authority.

Second, rights that depend on majority approval are not rights at all, only permissions that a future majority can revoke. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can already look after itself at the ballot box. As one Religious Liberty Library tract put it, a right is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons. The people, however numerous, have no right to invade any person's relationship to God. Even a Congressional committee once affirmed that the Constitution regards the conscience of a solitary dissenter as sacred as that of the whole community. Popular support may justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one.

Third, I take seriously the line Christ himself drew: render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. This divides human duties into two jurisdictions, and civil government holds only one. The state may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil — whether it injures a neighbor — never whether it is religious or heretical. Morality belongs to God; civility belongs to the state. Any government action that crosses into blessing a text, display, or doctrine steps into territory its own founding faith forbids it to enter.

Fourth, this separation was not an oversight or an act of hostility toward religion. It was deliberate design, urged by the churches of the founding era themselves, who had felt establishment from underneath. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for full establishment before objecting; they saw the consequences in the principle and denied the principle itself. Any commission that claims the founders for state-sponsored religion bears the burden of explaining away Madison in Madison's own words.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Marcelo Rodrigues

Juazeiro, BA

Obter o [Outlook para Android](#)

From: Marc Guimond <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Your draft report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:09:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

-
- 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.

From: 바바라 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:13:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Committee,

I am reaching out to share my perspective on the recently released draft report concerning religious freedom. As someone who deeply values both the constitutional foundations of this nation and the sacred teachings of the Bible, I must express my strong opposition to any movement that seeks to unite church and state.

This union is not only an explicit violation of the U.S. Constitution, but it is also profoundly contrary to the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospels, Jesus explicitly stated, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Throughout His earthly ministry, He never once attempted to align His spiritual mission with the power of the state, nor did He seek to enforce faith through governmental authority.

For a committee that claims to uphold religious liberty and honor sacred scripture, taking actions that promote the union of government and religion is a direct contradiction of your stated beliefs. It is deeply concerning to see a body that speaks of faith acting in direct opposition to the clear words and actions of Jesus Christ.

I strongly urge the committee to reject any proposals within this report that compromise the distinct boundary between church and state, which remains the only true safeguard for freedom of conscience.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbra Bang

From: Barry Krall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Helen Krall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:13:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am an 88 year old grandmother writing from Loma Linda, California, and I write because I am concerned for the world my grandchildren will inherit. Over my long lifetime I have watched the character of government at every level rise and fall, and I confess I find it hard to imagine any legislative body, composed of the mix of individuals I see across today's political spectrum, drafting rules for anyone's faith that I would trust. That is precisely why I believe the wall between church and state must be kept intact, not weakened, so that God alone continues to guide each person's walk.

The deepest argument for this is not secular but Christian. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said that what is Caesar's belongs to Caesar and what is God's belongs to God. Civil government was given charge only of duties owed to fellow men; the duties owed to God were placed beyond its reach by the highest authority a Christian recognizes. The practical test that follows is simple and fair to everyone: government may ask only whether an act injures a neighbor's rights, never whether it is religious, irreligious, or heretical. Every time government backs a religious text, symbol, or lesson with its own authority, it crosses the line Christ drew, not in the name of too little religion, but in violation of the very faith it claims to serve.

There is a further reason government can never rightly hold this power: it was never given to it in the first place. Our whole system rests on the idea that just powers come from the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people themselves possessed and could hand over. But no person can delegate his relationship with God to anyone else, not to a neighbor and certainly not to a legislature. A man can appoint another to manage his land; he cannot appoint another to believe or worship in his place. Since this power was never the people's to give, government never received it, and no government will ever stand before God to answer for another soul's faith.

Finally, I do not believe a popular majority can rightly settle what belongs to God, however sincere or numerous that majority may be. If a vote could grant religious liberty, a vote could take it away, and then it was never truly a right, only a permission. Our rights are supposed to come from our Creator and be placed beyond the reach of election returns, precisely so that the minority, even a minority of one, is protected from the will of the many. The greatest number of citizens wanting a religious measure has never been sufficient reason to enact it, because matters of conscience were never submitted to the ballot in the first place.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Helen Krall
Loma Linda, California

From: Lori [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Lori Bixby

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:14:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am concerned about the things I am learning about the report that suggests that the wall of separation between church and state be removed and a bridge built between the two.

I believe in separation of church and state. I believe it preserves freedom for people of all faiths, and people of no faith. Everyone should be free to practice their beliefs according to their conscience.

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments and request that you please implement them.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my letter.

Lori



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 ofrBody.—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...”¹⁴

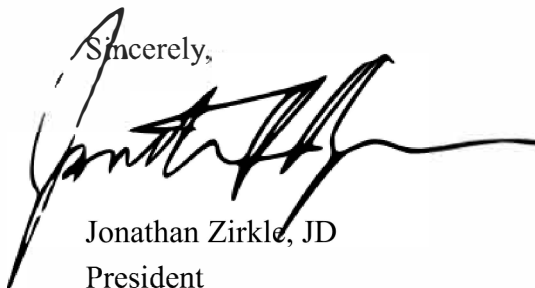
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

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: Julisa Quoos <[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION -Julisa Quoos

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:14:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for your service and for the time you devote to considering matters that affect one of our nation's most cherished freedoms. I respectfully submit the following comments regarding the Johnson Amendment and the importance of preserving the separation between church and state.

I respectfully urge you not to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

Christ's church has never needed political support to fulfill its mission. In fact, throughout history, the church has often been at its strongest, purest, and most faithful during times of political opposition and even persecution from political and religious powers.

Repealing the Johnson Amendment would invite corruption into our churches. It would create a strong incentive for political candidates and organizations to direct money toward churches in exchange for endorsements or political influence. Even if many churches resisted that temptation, the mere possibility would undermine public trust in religious institutions and distract churches from their primary mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

There has been considerable discussion recently about the legitimacy of the separation of church and state. I am deeply concerned to hear influential voices claim that this principle does not exist because the exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution. While the phrase itself is not found in the Constitution, the principle is firmly rooted in the First Amendment's protections of both religious liberty and the prohibition against government establishment of religion.

James Madison, often referred to as the "Father of the Constitution," understood the importance of keeping government and religion institutionally separate. He warned that the purpose of this separation was to prevent the religious conflicts and persecution that had plagued Europe for centuries. Whether expressed as a "wall of separation" or through the constitutional protections of religious liberty, the principle has helped preserve both faith and freedom in America.

Today, Americans enjoy the freedom to worship according to their conscience, or not at all, without government favoritism or interference. That freedom has allowed countless religious traditions to flourish. Weakening the separation between church and state risks entangling both institutions in ways that could ultimately diminish the independence of each. Churches should remain free to preach Biblical truth without becoming political organizations and government should remain neutral among religions.

The Johnson Amendment helps protect both our religious liberty and the integrity of our churches. I respectfully ask that you preserve it and continue to uphold the principles that have served our nation so well for generations.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Julisa Quoos

From: Duane Montgomery <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Duane Montgomery to Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:16:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have been a practicing Christian from childhood. And I am an Elder and Religious Liberty Director for my church. I am also a licensed attorney. Religious liberty is an essential right under our constitution. Thomas Jefferson made it clear in his writings that he interpreted the First Amendment's Establishment Clause to create "a wall of separation between Church and State". It is essential that this separation remains as government promotion of religion has historically always led to persecution and oppression. Please heed the counsel of Christian religious liberty organizations, such as the ChurchState Council, which strongly counsels against increased government involvement in promoting religious practices to the extent recommended by Trump's Religious Liberty Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,

Duane Montgomery
Church Elder and Religious Liberty Director

From: Dennis Millburn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please keep Church and State affairs separate!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:16:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs and Madams

I just read the report of the commission and am concerned that we keep government out of religion and religion out of government. Our county was founded to give religious liberty to its citizens and we need to keep it that ways. Even though a Christian myself, I want to make sure that Christianity does not get special treatment and that all religions or no religion at all feels safe for our citizens and free to make that choice and not be disadvantages in any way. Our founding fathers worked too hard to give us this freedom and I do not want to have government funds or influence to be used in any way to promote one religion over another.

Thank you

Dennis Millburn

Religious Liberty officer for our local church.

From: "Dr. Eugene Runne" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state should be a unmoveable principle

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:16:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

The God of the Bible does not compel me to believe in Him by force of law. He leaves me free to choose this day and all others to follow Him or not. Therefore I request that our government not force the conscience of any to follow Him.

Dr. Eugene Runne

From: Charlie Swanson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I Object

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:17:54-0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT- Charles R Swanson III

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

I Object to your proposed plan.

PLEASE DO NOT destroy the wall of separation between church and state. I do not want any civil government body telling me how or when to worship. I do not want any religious body telling me how or when I can worship. If you combine the civil government's control with any religious body's control it will inevitably lead to religious persecution of the worst kind, They can rule against my religious beliefs no matter what I say or want.

I want to honor my Heavenly Father and obey the Bible according to the dictates of my own conscience.

If you build a bridge instead of a wall between church and state you will destroy this precious separation which we now have. It will be a total disaster.

Do NOT destroy the separation of church and state. Do not change the Johnson Amendment in any way.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Swanson III

From: Kayleigh Abell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:18:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Scan_Jul_12,_2026_at_20_13.pdf

To Whom it May Concern,

The attach is a letter addressing the released draft report.

Kayleigh

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

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

As a child, I was taught everyone believes in something, but we all have a choice and that freedom of choice should never be taken away. My father was in the Army and fought for those freedoms. In my history classes, I was taught the true history so I would know when history was just repeating itself. This country was built on the separation of church and state, and the freedom to follow whatever religion you wanted to. Our Founding Fathers understood the issues and persecution in England where the church and state were not separate. The monarch had control over the church and the government. When these men founded our nation, they wanted to ensure the hardships they went through in obtaining the freedoms we have now, would never happen again. As someone who has had the hardship of having a father serve in the Army, I cannot agree with the combination of church and state because everyone has a choice. God

gives us a choice in everything; forcing ideals or religious beliefs on someone removes their freedom of choice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kayleigh Abell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kayleigh Abell

From: Becky Wright-Schlaht <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:19:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern:

I am very concerned with the government being involved with religion. That should always be a person's inalienable right to choose their own religion. That is why we have a constitution to give us the right to worship as we wish! This great USA was built on this very right to choose religion or not!

I believe in the separation of church and state, and do NOT APPROVE of the bridging you are considering! Please reconsider what you are doing, and think of how our forefathers set this up for all of us to have the right to choose!

Thank you for your consideration in this matter!

Sincerely
Becky Wright-Schlaht

From: Ray Schlaht <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:19:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Leaders,

I humbly ask that you reconsider any Bills or other Legislation to affect the bridging of Church and State. Our forefathers, recognizing the necessity of the freedom of religion, understood that religious Liberty and freedom of speech were of paramount importance to the formation of a free nation. Please vote against any form of government involving itself where it does not belong; Government has no place deciding religious matters.

Thank you,
R. M. Schlaht

From: Melissa Clapper <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:19:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Commission,

Grace and peace to you.

I am writing not simply as a private citizen, but as the president of a Christian nonprofit ministry that serves our community every day through acts of compassion, disaster response, practical assistance, and the love of Jesus Christ. Because my life's work is centered on ministry, this issue is deeply personal to me, and I appreciate your willingness to consider my comments.

I respectfully ask that you preserve the longstanding principle that has protected both religious liberty and the integrity of the Church in our nation for generations.

Our ministry exists because people freely choose to support it. Every Bible we distribute, every family we assist, every child we encourage, every meal we help provide, and every act of service we perform is made possible through the voluntary generosity of individuals who believe in our mission. We have never believed that government funding is what gives ministry its strength. Rather, we believe that the Church is strongest when it depends first upon God and upon the willing hearts of His people.

For that reason, I am deeply concerned whenever government and religion move closer together financially or institutionally.

This concern is not born out of fear of government, nor out of opposition to public education or public service. It comes from a sincere desire to protect something I hold sacred: the freedom of every individual to seek God according to the dictates of his or her own conscience without governmental influence, preference, or pressure.

As Christians, we cherish the freedom to share our faith because it is freely received—not because it is promoted, financed, or endorsed by the state. Genuine faith cannot be legislated, purchased, or sustained by public funding. It flourishes when people respond freely to God's invitation.

History continually reminds us that whenever governments become entangled with religion, both institutions suffer. Religious liberty is weakened, minority voices become vulnerable, and faith itself risks becoming influenced by political power rather than spiritual conviction. Our nation's founders wisely understood this danger, and I believe their commitment to protecting liberty of conscience remains one of America's greatest blessings.

My concern extends beyond protecting my own faith tradition. Religious liberty means protecting the rights of every person—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist, agnostic, or anyone else—to live according to sincerely held convictions without the government favoring one belief system over another. That freedom belongs equally to all of us.

As the leader of a Christian ministry, I believe our calling is to earn the trust and support of those we serve through faithful service, integrity, compassion, and love—not through taxpayer funding. If people believe in our mission, they are free to support it. If they do not, they should never be compelled through taxation to fund religious work that does not reflect their own convictions.

In many ways, I believe maintaining this principle protects the Church as much as it protects the government. When ministries rely upon voluntary generosity rather than public funding, they remain accountable first to God and to the communities they serve. That independence preserves both the purity of our mission and the freedom of our witness.

My prayer is that future generations will inherit the same precious gift of religious liberty that has allowed countless ministries, churches, charities, and faith communities—including my own—to serve freely without governmental control or dependence.

Thank you for your service to our nation and for taking the time to read my thoughts. They are offered with humility, respect, and a sincere desire to preserve the freedoms that have enabled ministries like ours to care for our neighbors while honoring God according to our convictions.

May God grant you wisdom as you carry out your responsibilities.

Respectfully,

Melissa Clapper

President



PII

From: Lisa Krall <[REDACTED]> PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Lisa Krall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:21:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as someone who loves this country deeply and does not take its religious freedoms for granted. I have traveled abroad to countries where expressing one's faith openly, or sharing it with others, is forbidden by the state. Watching believers there navigate what we take for granted here has sharpened my conviction that the wall separating church and state is not an obstacle to religious liberty but its very foundation. I belong to a mainstream Christian denomination, and even so, I worry: in a rapidly changing culture, my own tradition could someday fall out of favor with whatever majority holds power. That is exactly why this protection cannot depend on majority approval.

If a right can be granted by majority vote, it can be taken away by majority vote, and then it was never really a right at all, only a permission. Our founding theory holds that rights come from the Creator and are only recognized, not created, by government, which is why they are written into the Constitution beyond the reach of election returns. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can generally protect itself at the ballot box. The Constitution regards the conscience of the smallest dissenter as sacred as that of the largest congregation, and gives no more authority to overrule one person's conscience than an entire community's. Whatever the polling shows about what most Americans want in the realm of religious expression, that popularity cannot be the measure, because matters of conscience were never submitted to a vote in the first place.

I am also convinced, from history and simple observation, that force cannot produce faith. Government can compel outward compliance, but it cannot reach the heart, and any attempt to legislate religious observance only manufactures hypocrisy rather than genuine devotion. What concerns me most is what establishment does to the favored religion itself. Fifteen centuries of state-sponsored Christianity produced, in the words of one careful historical survey, pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility among the people, and no shortage of superstition and persecution. A faith that needs the state's help to survive has already confessed its own weakness. The wiser counsel, offered by a president long ago, was to leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and to keep state and church forever separate.

Finally, I want to be clear that separation was not an accident or a modern invention grafted onto the Constitution. It was deliberate, and it was demanded largely by churches themselves, who had felt the weight of establishment from underneath. Madison, who drafted the First Amendment, told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that even its slightest interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for a full establishment to take root before objecting to it; they resisted the principle at its very first appearance. That is the standard I ask this Commission to hold itself to as well.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Lisa Krall
Colton, California

From: Ruben Tom <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar Of Freedom response

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

As an American citizen, I completely believe in the freedoms we have as it pertains to my own conviction in how I choose to adhere to the one I call my God.

I cannot, in good conscience accept special government protections or added indoctrinations that are trying to be passed into the great United States of America.

God bless America and God bless my President!

From: "What is Truth?" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 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 Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to express my concern that the Commission's draft report appears to minimize or dismiss the principle of the separation of church and state, a principle that has been fundamental to American religious liberty since before the founding of the United States.

Too often, discussions of this issue focus narrowly on Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, as though the concept of separation between church and state originated there. It did not. Jefferson's famous phrase describing a "wall of separation between Church and State" was a concise expression of ideas that had been developing in America for more than a century.

Early American history provides several important examples of the principle of separation of church and state in practice. Roger Williams argued that civil government and religious institutions should remain separate to protect the integrity of both. After being banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for defending freedom of conscience, he founded Rhode Island in 1636 as a place where government would not dictate matters of faith. Williams wrote of a "hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world," believing that government corrupted religion when it exercised spiritual authority and that religion was diminished when it relied on political power.

In 1786, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, written by Thomas Jefferson and championed by James Madison, ended government support for the Church of England in Virginia and guaranteed religious freedom for all citizens. The adoption of the First Amendment in 1791 prohibited Congress from establishing a national religion and protected the free exercise of religion. In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association describing the First Amendment as creating a "wall of separation between Church and State," expressing the idea that government should not interfere with religious belief or practice. These early actions helped establish a tradition of religious liberty that has remained a defining feature of American democracy.

The United States was founded not as a religious state, but as a constitutional republic committed to protecting the liberty of conscience for all. That commitment is one of our nation's greatest achievements. It has enabled an extraordinary diversity of religious communities to thrive because none depends upon government preference for its existence.

I respectfully urge the Commission to recognize the full historical record. The separation of church and state is not a modern invention, nor does it rest on a single letter written by Thomas Jefferson. It is rooted in the writings of Roger Williams, the struggles for religious liberty in colonial America, the Virginia Statute for Religious

Freedom, James Madison's defense of liberty of conscience, and ultimately the text and purpose of the First Amendment itself.

History repeatedly demonstrates that when governments become aligned with a particular religion, the result is rarely greater freedom. Instead, the state tends to favor one religious tradition over others, granting it influence, recognition, or legal advantages that are not equally available to everyone. Those who belong to minority faiths—or who hold no religious beliefs at all—often find themselves excluded, marginalized, or pressured to conform. Whenever the church and state are married, persecution follows. The Dark Ages is a history we would do well to never forget.

Genuine religion is a matter of personal conviction and conscience. While civil governments may rightly punish actions that harm others, they have no legitimate authority to regulate a person's duties toward God, such as worship, Sabbath observance, or religious profession. These belong exclusively to the realm of individual conscience.

When a nation adopts an official religion or grants special privileges to one faith, it inevitably infringes upon the liberty of conscience. Even if such a religion is supported by a majority of citizens, compelling religious observance undermines the voluntary nature of faith. True worship cannot be produced by law because it must arise from sincere conviction rather than external pressure.

The strongest protection for both religion and civil liberty is a complete separation of church and state. This principle safeguards the rights of believers and non-believers alike, allowing every person to worship God according to conscience—or not to worship at all—without interference from the state.

I respectfully encourage the Commission to continue defending policies that preserve governmental neutrality in matters of religion and uphold the equal rights and freedoms of all members of our community.

Sincerely,

Jan Daniels

--

God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him. - Martin Luther

From: Joseph Allen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment {Johnson Amendment} - Joe Allen

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To do away with the Johnson Amendment would open our houses of worship to become partisan political battlefields. The Johnson amendment follows the Constitution's First Amendment about the establishment of a state religion. Political action groups could funnel money to candidates through houses of worship. This would open houses of worship to participate in unethical and partisan politics. This should never happen. Thank you.

From: wei shen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:45 -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"- especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. With respect, that is exactly backwards — and as a person of faith, I find the idea alarming. The wall 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.

People of different religious beliefs came to this land more than three hundred years ago to worship God freely, fleeing from interference and persecution of established churches and government. Roger Williams - the founder of Rhode Island is a noble example. The religious freedom we enjoy today was dearly fought for and protected by men of wisdom and courage. This is one of the secrets of America's prosperity.

I grew up in China and know how Christians have suffered because they refuse to join the church with the state. They refuse to receive government favor or be censored by the government. They choose to worship according to their conscience in house churches.

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,

Wei Shen

Ironton, MO

From: Tina Pearson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep our constitution

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:26:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to you because I want to keep a constitution so we Can choose where we go to church. We should be able to choose when we go to church. God would want it that way. This is a free country. We should be able to do what we wanna do sincerely yours

Tina Pearson

From: Mirian Bildner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Mirian Bildner

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:26:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a private citizen from Sun City, Arizona, to ask that you keep religion separate from the machinery of government. That is not a slogan to me; it is the conviction that led me to write this letter, and I hope you will consider it carefully, because I believe it reflects both the letter and the spirit of the First Amendment.

Consider first that this question is not new, and it was not left unanswered by the founding generation. When Sabbatarians pressed Congress in 1829 and 1830 to halt Sunday mail and legislate religious observance, the committees chaired by Senator Richard M. Johnson answered with what amounts to an official state paper on the limits of government power. They wrote plainly that it is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false, and that our government is a civil and not a religious institution. They went further, warning that if a legislature defines even one point of religious duty, it has claimed the authority to define them all, down to the ceremonies of worship and the support of the clergy. And they observed that coercion cannot even achieve its stated aim: declaring a day holy will not convince the Jew nor the Sabbatarian, it will only dissatisfy both. This was not a court ruling handed down decades later; it was Congress itself, in the presence of men who had lived through the founding, declaring these matters outside its business. A commission proposing government-defined religious duties today is asking us to overrule that judgment.

Consider also what coercion does to faith itself. Forcing people indoors, or to church, will not make Christians of them—it may make hypocrites, but it will make no believers, because love for God cannot be legislated into being. History bears this out on a larger scale. James Madison, surveying fifteen centuries of established Christianity, found that the fruits of legal establishment were pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution. Even General and President Grant counseled that religion belongs to the family altar, the church, and the private school, sustained by private contribution, with state and church kept forever separate. A faith that needs the government's help to survive has already confessed its own weakness.

Finally, consider how these things escalate. The first Sunday law came from Constantine in A.D. 321, and from that beginning came mercenary converts, a state drawn into policing church disputes, Augustine's theory of righteous compulsion, and eventually the Inquisition. As one writer of that era put it, if the first step be taken, the last step is then as certainly taken, for the last step is in the first. No one today proposes an Inquisition. No one ever does, at the start. The danger of small, well-meant measures is that they concede the very principle from which everything else follows.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Mirian Bildner
Sun City, AZ

From: Office GraceBridgeConsulting <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] We Value Our Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:29:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

My wife and I would like to go on record to let it be known we VALUE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM and believe that the government should have nothing to say about how we worship, when we worship, or Who we worship.

Please support Religious Freedom

Thank you
Jack A. Nash

From: Santa Uzomaka <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:29:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good day, I'm writing in response to government officials who want to end church and state, which I disagree with, and, might I add, to get rid of the Johnson Amendment. History has shown us the consequences of when church and state are united, that perilous times commence as they did in the time of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST who was a victim of when church and state come together. I remind you of 538 A.D. to 1798 when the church and state ruled together resulting in 40 to 80 million people losing their lives and today as in the Middle East their church and state are together. JESUS said my kingdom is not of this world so why are we wanting to remove a boundary that is necessary for order? Church and state have no business being together because it's a foot in the door to controlling people's decisions by feeding on their emotions when it comes to their beliefs. Things are working in darkness that have yet to be brought to light after their feet get through that door. Ellen G White has written numerous amount of books about these things happening or being architected behind the scenes. There's no earthly or heavenly reason why church and state should be together because many questions come to mind. What church is to be influencing the government?? Are we going to have to deal with a church different from our beliefs ?? Many more as well. My concern and fear are the aftermath of taking away the wall between church and state. As far as the Johnson amendment why are we disrespecting GOD allowing the government to be involved in church with campaigning politicians in a holy place talking about worldly things?? Im confused.

Thank you for your time and may GOD be with you

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

From: Ted Bazen <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:30:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear committee

I am writing this letter to strongly encourage you to take every action possible to preserve the wall of separation between church and State. Freedom of conscience is crucial, and the separation of church and State serves as a crucial element on that freedom.

Thank you work allowing me the privilege to give this input.

Pastor Ted Baze

From: nP B <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RESPONSE TO PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY DRAFT REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:31:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_presidential_Commission_on_Religious_Liberty.pdf

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, D.C. 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Chair Dr. Carson and Commission Members:

Religious Liberty is the very fabric of our Constitutional Republic. Religious Liberty was the very reason our Forefathers left Europe and made the treacherous voyage across the Atlantic and settled in the land we now call America.

156 years before Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, the Pilgrims left the Old World and its system of State Churches where the State Religion was forced upon them for a new, uncharted land where they could worship God according to the dictates of their conscience.

I believe history proves that God blessed the early efforts for Freedom of Conscience taken by the Pilgrims, the Puritans and Roger Williams. God blessed those early efforts precisely because God is a God of Freedom, allowing every human being to choose his or her desired course of action in their religious beliefs and in their life.

America's 250th Anniversary Celebration proves the wisdom developed in the 156 years prior to the Declaration of Independence's words; "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._That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...." (Declaration of Independence paragraph 2.)

Allow me the opportunity to show what those 55 words from the Declaration of Independence mean to me and to I believe the majority of American patriots throughout the last 250 years.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident:”

“We” were the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence “pledging their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.” To a man they knew that by signing their names they were committing an act of treason against the British Crown. Five of these men were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army, another two had sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the Revolutionary War. Several of them lost their wealth and one, Thomas Nelson, Jr., on discovering, during the Battle of Yorktown, that British General Cornwallis had taken over his home as headquarters, urged General Washington to open fire on his home. That was done, his home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt. (Taken from: <https://www.sarconnecticut.org/the-price-they-paid/>)

“Truths to be self-evident,” the “truths” followed and “self-evident” is “self explanatory.” Meaning every intelligent human being knows them to be true.

“[T]hat all men are created equal.” All mankind was created in the image of God. Even though it took some 87 years before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863, it was still true that “all men were created equal” prior to that Declaration.

“[T]hey are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” Endowed; “to be freely given” by their Creator (God), “certain unalienable Rights.” Years ago, reading an American History book printed in 1875 that book described the word “unalienable” this way: “un a lien able”. This old history book went on to say that the rights outlined in the Declaration of Independence were “un a lien able” because they came from God and no human being or government could place a “lien” against rights from God! Governments can give 14th Amendment type “privileges and immunities” but only God can give “Rights”! In 1998 I was present at Mt. Rushmore when the Presidential Trail was dedicated. That evening there was a presentation movie where the Declaration of Independence was read and in the second paragraph the word “unalienable” was pronounced “un a

lien able” not “un alien able.” Which confirmed that no human nor government could place a lien on rights because they come from God!

“[A]mong those are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” “Life” is a right from God! The same right that five of the signers of the Declaration of independence lost by being captured by the British and tortured before dying and that nine of the signers lost by fighting for your’s and my liberty in the Revolutionary War. “Liberty” defined in Black’s Law Dictionary, 3rd ED, 1933 as “Freedom: exemption from extraneous control. The power of the will to follow the dictates of unrestricted choice and to direct the external acts of the individual without restraint, coercion, or control from other persons.” Followed by citations from 7 different Court Cases including 2 US Supreme Court Cases. See p. 1107, top of column 2 in said Law Dictionary. “Pursuit of Happiness” defined by the same edition of Black’s Law Dictionary, p. 1469, top of column 2: “As used in constitutional law, this right includes personal freedom, freedom of contract, exemption from oppression or invidious discrimination, the right to follow one’s individual preference in the choice of occupation and the application of his energies, liberty of conscience, and the right to enjoy the domestic relations and the privileges of the family and the home.” Followed by citations from three court cases including the U.S. Supreme Court and one Constitutional Law Text Book.

To this point we have learned that the un a lien able right of the “pursuit of happiness” from the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence includes “liberty of conscience” according to the U.S. Supreme Court (Hopper v. California, 155 U.S. 648, 15 S. Ct. 207, 39 L. Ed. 267). What is “Liberty of Conscience”? Black’s Law Dictionary, 3rd Ed, p.1108, defines “Liberty of Conscience” as “Religious Liberty” (see column 3 mid page 1108 and the same Law Dictionary gives the definition of “Religious Liberty” on p. 1109, 1/3 of the way down column 2 as : “Freedom from dictation, constraint, or control in matters affecting the conscience, religious beliefs, and the practice of religion; freedom to entertain and express any or no system of religious opinions, and to engage in or refrain from any form of religious worship, not inconsistent with the peace and good order of society and the general welfare.”

The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty states that “Separation of Church and State” is not found in the Constitution. There are two ways to ‘find” such a statement:

1. By the actual words and
2. By the content and intent of other words in the Constitution:

Article VI, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution states: “The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution, but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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.”

In addressing the statement by the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty that the words “Separation of Church and State” is not found in the Constitution I submit that it is clearly stated via the content of other words found within the Constitution, including the first “Rights” found in the Bill of Rights aka the First Amendment to the Constitution, that “Separation of Church and State” is in fact prohibited by the following words:

“[B]ut no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.” (Article VI, Clause 3) when combined with “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of [religious] speech, or of the [religious] press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble [for religious meetings], and to petition the government for a redress of [religious] grievances.” (Amendment One).

Clearly taken together, as shown in the above paragraph, not requiring any religious test as qualification to any office or public trust under the United States is placing a clear separation between church and state as is Congress not being able to make a law respecting an establishment of religion, such as a law bridging Religious Freedom by allowing government to give or bestow upon any or all religions monies out of the public treasury, or having any actions whatsoever that affect religious speech, religious press, peaceable assembly for religious meeting or prohibiting the redress of religious grievances.

Religious Liberty is in the very fabric of America and American Religious Liberty is vastly different than the Religious systems the Pilgrims, Puritans and Roger Williams came to the New World to escape from.

That Old World Religion had government involvement in making laws that suppressed the "Liberty of Conscience" by suppressing free exercise of religion, supporting religion economically and even to dictating what religion or religions were acceptable to government.

Further I agree with the stance taken by Pillar of Freedom in their July 6, 2026 electronic mail to [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] which includes the history of religious freedom in America from Pilgrim, Puritan and Roger Williams' view point.

Honorable members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty, the wisdom of our Founding Fathers with respect to a hands off stance with regard to any government involvement in Religious Liberty has stood the test of time in a manner that no other government stance in history, since Christ walked on this earth, has eclipsed.

It is my plea that, rather than attempting to improve what has stood the test of time by taking action that appears in clear violation of the intent of the Constitution, Article VI, Clause 3 and the First Amendment Rights, guaranteed to all Americans with regard to Religion, leave the results that have stood the test of time for well over two centuries as they now are and thank God for the wisdom and sacrifices of our Founding Fathers.

Thank you for your reading and listening and your consideration and may God Bless America as we continue our 250th Celebrations.

Sincerely,

John Brownlee, JD

John Brownlee, JD, Veteran, and American by the Grace of God.

From: Joseph Broadmeadow <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapters 2 & 14 (Separation Doctrine) – Broadmeadow

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:32:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: public_comment.docx

Joseph Broadmeadow
Capt. (Ret.) East Providence police Department
Warren, RI [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]
Sent from my iPad

Public Comment on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Submitted during the public comment period closing July 2026

To: Presidential Religious Liberty Commission — PII

Suggested subject line: PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapters 2 & 14 (Separation Doctrine) – Broadmeadow

From: Joseph Broadmeadow, Captain (Ret.), East Providence Police Department, Warren, Rhode Island

Date: July 12, 2026

I write as a retired police captain with twenty years of service, including organized-crime, narcotics, and federal task-force assignments. For two decades I took an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and applied its provisions — including the First Amendment — in real situations with real consequences. I am also an author and publisher. I submit this comment not in opposition to religious liberty, which I support without reservation, but because a report meant to protect it should be constitutionally accurate. In several important places, this draft is not. What follows are specific, good-faith recommendations for revision before the report is finalized.

1. The separation-of-church-and-state sections misstate constitutional history

The draft is correct on one narrow point: the phrase “wall of separation between church and state” does not appear in the Constitution. It comes from Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists. But the surrounding argument in Chapter 2 and the Executive Summary contains claims that will not survive scrutiny:

- **The “mid-twentieth-century invention” claim is inaccurate.** The report states that reliance on Jefferson’s metaphor only “took off” in the mid-1900s with *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947). In fact the Supreme Court treated Jefferson’s letter as “almost an authoritative declaration” of the First Amendment’s scope in *Reynolds v. United States* (1878) — nearly seventy years earlier. The report should correct this.
- **A contested legal interpretation is presented as settled truth.** The draft asserts that the Establishment Clause means only that government may not prefer one religion, take over a church’s functions, or coerce observance. That “coercion-only” reading is a genuine position, but it is the view of a minority of Justices (Thomas, the late Scalia, Gorsuch); it is not the settled law of a Court majority, and many scholars reject it. Recommending that the Department of Justice issue binding guidance adopting one side of a live constitutional dispute is not neutral public education. The report should acknowledge the disagreement rather than declare one reading “the proper understanding.”
- **The “God is dead” origin story is not supportable.** The draft traces modern separation doctrine to European philosophy — naming Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre.

This is chronologically impossible as stated: the decisions the report criticizes (*Everson*, 1947; *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962; *Abington v. Schempp*, 1963) all predate Foucault's influence in American academic life by decades. This passage should be struck or heavily qualified.

- **The reference to Justice Black's Klan past is an ad hominem. Noting that the author of Everson had once belonged to the Ku Klux Klan does nothing to establish what the Clause means — and it is undercut by the fact that Everson actually upheld* public reimbursement for busing children to Catholic schools. The point should be removed.*

2. The historical narrative is selective

The draft relies on Washington's Farewell Address, John Adams's "moral and religious people" line, and the Declaration's "endowed by their Creator." These are accurate quotations. But a report on "the foundations of religious liberty" should not omit the counter-record:

- **Article VI** of the Constitution forbids any religious test for public office.
- **The Treaty of Tripoli (1797)**, ratified unanimously by the Senate and signed by President John Adams, states that the government of the United States is "not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion."
- **James Madison**, whose *Memorial and Remonstrance* the report cites approvingly, also opposed congressional chaplains and government religious proclamations; **Jefferson** declined to issue Thanksgiving proclamations as president, on separation grounds.

A document that quotes the founders on one side of this question, while omitting the same founders on the other, is advocacy, not history. The final report should present both.

3. Composition and the one-sided record

The draft candidly states that its method was witness testimony rather than experts or statistical study. That candor is welcome, but it has consequences. Several anecdotes describe active or recently decided litigation in terms drawn from a single party. *Kennedy v. Bremerton* is described as a coach "fired for praying"; the school district's account — and the dissent, which included photographs — described public midfield prayer joined by students, and administrative leave rather than firing. The Anchorage shelter matter is likewise presented in one-sided terms. The final report should at minimum note the procedural posture and outcome of cases it cites.

The Commission is composed of eleven Christians and one Orthodox Jew, with no Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or nonreligious member, and the catalog of harms skews heavily toward Christian claimants. For a report that repeatedly invokes "all faiths," the near-total absence of substantive Muslim religious-liberty questions — prison accommodation, workplace dress, surveillance of houses of worship — is conspicuous and should be remedied.

4. The economic claims need sourcing and caveats

The draft cites religion's roughly \$2.6 trillion annual contribution, along with figures for shelter beds, adoption rates, and international aid. The \$2.6 trillion figure traces to advocacy research that has been criticized for counting the entire revenue of religiously affiliated businesses and hospital systems. These numbers should either carry their methodology and its criticisms, or be removed.

Respectfully submitted

I support the robust protection of private religious exercise, including the real cases — acknowledged in this comment — in which officials have wrongly suppressed it. Precisely because that cause is worth defending, the final report should rest on accurate history and a neutral statement of constitutional law, not on contested interpretation presented as settled truth. I ask the Commission to revise the sections identified above accordingly.

Joseph Broadmeadow

Captain (Ret.), East Providence Police Department

Warren, Rhode Island

From: LOUIS TRUEB [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTS - DRAFT RLC REPORT - LOUIS P. TRUE JR.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:34:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

COMMENTS ON DRAFT REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

I have many concerns about the narrow makeup of the commission and many of the historical and constitutional arguments in the report concerning, especially, the relationship between the establishment and the exercise clauses of the first amendment. I will, however, leave it to others to comment on those important concerns. My brief comments principally address two areas: Factions and what seems to me to be a failure of imagination on the part of the Commission. I thank the Commission for this brief opportunity to comment on its report.

FACTIONS:

A number of the Commission's recommendations will, I believe, tend to risk magnifying an existing majority religious faction, the operation of which will impair the religious freedom of many Americans. We were warned of this danger very early in our nation's history – most prominently perhaps in Federalist Paper #10. In it, James Madison described how an "overbearing majority" could jeopardize "justice and the rights of minority parties". He reasoned that our nation needed to defend against that outcome, including with respect to matters of faith, "as long as the reason of man continues fallible." It may be argued that the Judaeo-Christian faith traditions currently represent just such a threat in the U.S. with evidence provided by the recommendations of the Commission's draft report. It may also be argued that there is no evidence that human's have become less fallible since the founding of our nation.

IMAGINATION:

I am not given to cinematic allusions when discussing matters of great importance, but perhaps . . . What we have here is a failure to imagine.

Surely the members of the Commission can imagine life under slightly different circumstances. For example, it is not much of a stretch to imagine awaking tomorrow in our nation, with most laws as they now exist, but with a majority of the population that does not adhere to Judaeo-Christian faith traditions. Instead, a majority might be Hindu, Atheist, Muslim, or Buddhist, among many possibilities. The exercise of imagination then only requires us to predict how Christians, for example, might feel if faced with:

- U.S. currency bearing a motto such as "In Allah we trust", "In the Buddha we trust", or "In ourselves we trust", etc.
- The Pledge of Allegiance with "under God" replaced with other faith references.
- State laws requiring every classroom to display single, specified texts guiding human behavior from Hindu scripture, the Koran, or writings of those who deny the existence of all things supernatural.

- Christmas replaced as a national holiday by a celebration from a non-Christian religion.
- Emails from a federal cabinet member's official government account to all department employees explicitly celebrating a specific non-Christian religious observance, such as Ramadan or Divali – instead of "He is Risen."

Further elaboration of these examples would be easy. The point is that many persons of any faith might find such displays offensive, as many regard the current situation. I would hope that imagining such circumstances would give most of my fellow citizens, and members of the Commission, pause before adopting some of the recommendations in the Commission's draft report. I ask the Commission to show greater, decent respect for the opinions of those who may not share your faith tradition or, who would find such actions by a majority faith to be offensive, even if they shared that faith.

CONCLUSION:

With respect, I urge the Commission and my country to consider the view that the surest approach to guaranteeing religious freedom for all is to keep government out of religion to the extent possible. Faith should be an entirely private matter.

From: Joanne Carder <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:35:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good evening

My husband and I , as practicing Christians, having lived in this country for over 80 years, fully support the First Amendment which states that this country was founded on separation of church and state. There should never be a reason to change that.

Thank you.

Bernard and Joanne

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

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:36:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing this letter to express my deep concerns regarding the report from the Religious Liberty Commission. I am absolutely appalled that we have reached the time in our country when the founding principles of our nation is not only misunderstood but opposed as well. Sadly, it is presented under the guise of defending our constitutional rights. If you would carefully look at the history of the United States you will find that the position that you advocate strikes at the very heart of the American spirit. If the United States of America no longer understands the doctrine of "soul liberty," then we are likely to repeat the mistakes of the past.

The reason there is so much confusion on this issue is because many do not understand where the wall of separation takes place. The wall of separation between church and state is in regard to the first four commandments of the moral law. According to Romans 13 governments are ordained to punish those who are breakers of the laws of the land. These laws are defined by the last six commandments of God's moral law. But nowhere in the scripture do we find God ever placing the first four commandments under the jurisdiction of the government because they have to do with our conscience regarding how and when and who we will worship. This is not, I repeat, this is not the role of government nor for that matter is it the role of the church to dictate to one's conscience who, when, and how we will worship regarding God. Additionally, I suggest reading the chapter "Liberty of Conscience Threatened" in *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White at this link: <https://greatcontroversy.app/en/chapter-35/liberty-of-conscience-threatened>

I highly recommend that you read the article "Soul Liberty" by Charles Small Longacre at this link: <https://www.libertymagazine.org/article/soul-liberty>

This is one of the most fascinating summaries on the doctrine of soul liberty. I ask of you to please prayerfully consider what is written in this article, then you will understand where I and millions of other American are coming from regarding our opposition to the proposed document from your committee regarding taking the wall of separation of church and state.

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

Thank you,
Raymond DeCarlo
Hagerstown, Maryland

From: Todd Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church/State Wall ? .. of course!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:37:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png; image(1).png; image(2).png; image(3).png

Dear Esteemed Members of the RLC,

Of course there is a separation, (wall/ hedge), between church and state.

If there was not, we would be like every other nation before us. Even a novice of history can see it.

If we indeed have inalienable rights, just what rights are those that are untouchable? ... So protected in another realm altogether separate from man-made structures?

They are each individual's rights from God alone. (Based on the first tablet of the Biblical, Protestant decalogue - our responsibilities to God alone. The second tablet being our responsibilities to our fellow man -- a man I'll mention in a moment was shown this and it is explained in our nation's park honoring him in Providence, RI.)

Books have been filled in definitively making the factual, historical case of church / state separation in America. Any debate on it was settled for those who look at facts long ago. But, apparently, here you ago selfishly trying to fuse the two again in any way you can.

FACT: There is a wall / hedge of separation between church and state in the U.S. Constitution. It IS THE First Amendment, and Jefferson, Madison and others said so!

Here are one or two pieces of evidence among volumes ...

Since there is such a campaign to deride Jefferson's Danbury letter, here is the main paragraph in it. We should note that he upholds THE First Amendment in the Constitution itself as the establishment of THE WALL!

Conclusion: in light of much sad history, they intentionally established the wall.

"Believing with you 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 legislative 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 would "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 rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties."

— President Thomas Jefferson

I would invite you to find this writing as well on the Jefferson Memorial building right there in Washington, DC:

"Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens ... are a departure from the plan of the holy Author of our religion ... No man shall be compelled to frequent or support 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."

-- Excerpted from A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, drafted in 1777. First introduced in the Virginia General Assembly in 1779, after he had become Governor. Passed by the Virginia Assembly in 1786, while Jefferson was serving as Minister to France. The last sentence is excerpted from a letter to James Madison, August 28, 1789, as he was returning to America to assume his position as Secretary of State.

We aren't blind. Your document creates more of a path for Faith to travel over the wall and engage in the sphere of State, and therefore vice versa. We don't need to guess what this is certain to create. You are, indeed, playing with fire. The records

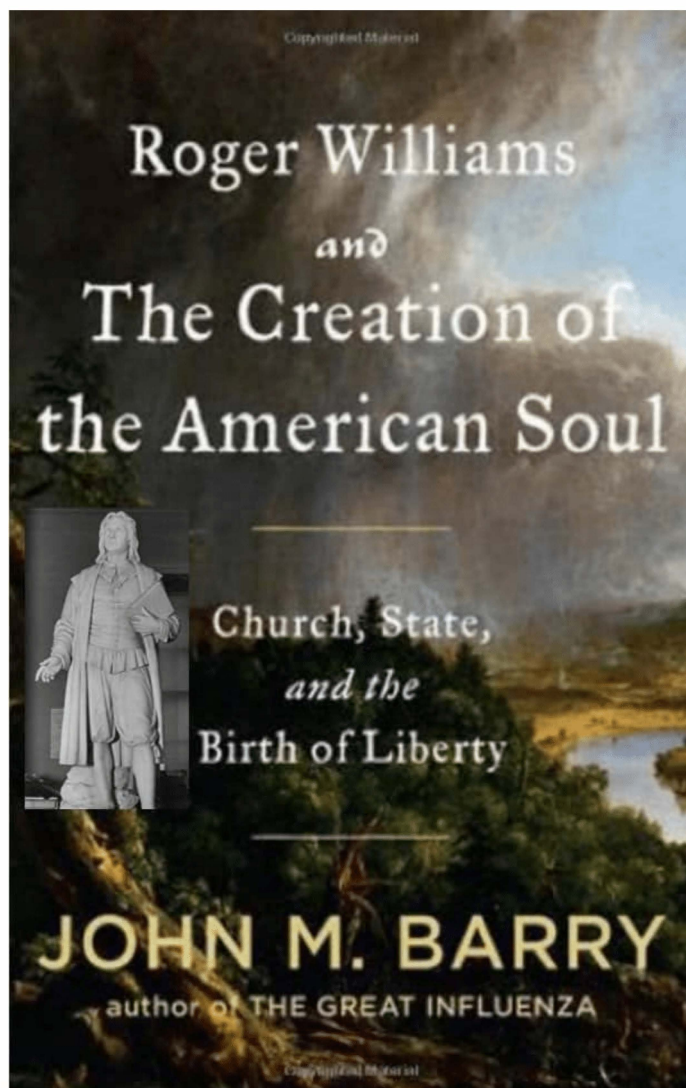
will then show your involvement in this tyranny and Bible prophecy isn't kind to the result you will face. These are not my words, but God's. In His love for your soul, I earnestly appeal to you to reverse course.
Revelation 13:11-18

Roger Williams:

Established in America long before our Constitution.

There's a reason he is on the Protestant wall of reformers in Geneva. (The only American.)

He had to flee persecution from his own people already happening in Massachusetts. This is more than a century before our nation was created!



“Williams described the true church as a beautiful and magnificent garden, unsullied and pure, resonant of Eden. The world he described as ‘the Wilderness.’ That word too had resonance with him, a personal resonance. Then he charged that Massachusetts had mixed the two, and he used for the first time a phrase which he would use again in the future, a phrase which although not attributed to him has echoed through American history.

‘When they have opened a gap in the hedge or wall of Separation between the Garden of the Church and the Wilderness of the world,’ ... He was saying that mixing church and state corrupted the church. He was saying that when one mixes religion and politics one gets politics.” pp. 307, 308

“... to him (Williams) the words ‘wilderness’ and ‘world’ were almost interchangeable, and they connoted corruption ... Government was comprised of people in the world. He recoiled at the idea of allowing this worldly wilderness to intrude upon the Edenic garden of the church, and he was convinced that any breach of the wall between them – any involvement either of a magistrate in churchly things or of the church in government – would bring the wilderness into the garden.

Therefore, the heart of his disagreement with his critics and enemies, the axis upon which all else turned, was their conviction that the state was and must be ‘nursing father’ to the church ... Virtually all of England, all of the Puritan colonies in America, and all of Europe – Catholic or Protestant – believed that, and believed also that without it not only could society not be moral but that it would not survive.”

-- Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul; John M. Barry, p. 330

Oh, members of the RLC! Did you really miss these facts of history? Maybe a few of you, but I suspect that most of you know very well what you are intending to do. On that, I sincerely hope I'm wrong.

Without this wall, the history of tyranny is endless. Why would you want to go back to such a dark, chain-filled world and lose eternity?



In your document you quote de Tocqueville, but conveniently don't include his most prescient findings. He said the beauty of America was that when a problem arises in a community the citizens come together on their own -- **without ANY form of government** -- and find a solution. He called it a miracle.

He also described a terrible road America has been on now for a long time ... government as the solution for social needs.

"Society will develop a new kind of servitude which covers the surface of society with a network of complicated rules, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate.

"It does not tyrannise but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd."

-- Alexis de Tocqueville

He was describing our Third Sector (Not-for-Profits) which, sadly, we have allowed government to also infiltrate greatly. In your document, this sad trend will be accelerated even more and more precious freedom will be lost.

Someone more recent in history also understood all of this quite well. We haven't forgotten it ...



"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 - 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."

-- President John F. Kennedy; Remarks to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12 1960]

Oh, how much freedom we have already lost!

So, when you say there is no separation of church and state in America, we recognize the lie.

For me and all others in my church and community, we strongly appeal for you to reverse course. The final prophecy in God's Word is nearing fulfillment, and there are many precious souls to save for His Kingdom before you may return us to tyranny. I pray to God you will awake and abandon the dark path of history you are returning to.

Respectfully Yours,

Todd Parrish

P.S. <https://youtu.be/hWvJaRhnpO0?si=Exh8S0Mx4NHV6d3B>

P.S. 2

Today we celebrate 250 years of independence in this beautiful country, a nation founded without a king and to a church without a pope.

The irony is that, in celebrating these freedoms, many forget the very foundation that made them possible: the Constitution does not establish our rights, rather it recognizes that our rights are not granted by government or by the will of the majority. They are inalienable rights, given by God.

In 2020, we saw tyranny rise to trample those who dared to claim that God, not the government, owned their bodies. In the name of the common good, men were coerced into violating their conscience and their duty to God or else lose their inalienable rights. Today, men and women continue to give away their freedoms left and right in exchange for petty promises from politicians who, in due time, prove themselves to be liars who hate liberty.

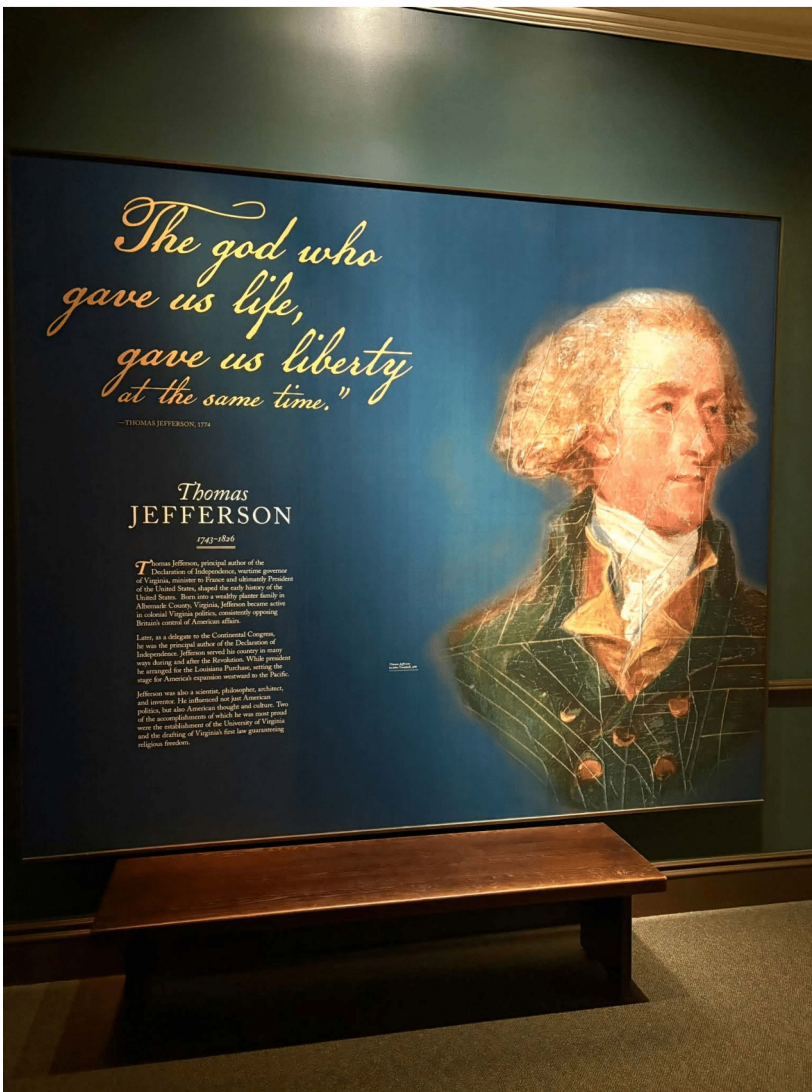
True religious liberty is not the recognizing of the value of religion, nor is it based on whatever serves the “common good.” It is the recognition that every person is accountable only to God in matters relating to His duty to God and therefore must be free to follow conscience.

That freedom protects the Christian’s right to worship, just as it protects the atheist’s right to not worship. That is one of the greatest strengths of the American experiment. Religious liberty and liberty of conscience is for all.

Revelation tells us that this will change and our freedom of religion will be removed. We must be thankful while it lasts and stand up for the freedom that is given us of God, not given by our government. Because a freedom given by the government can be taken by the government. But a right given by God is inalienable.

Only in Christ do we find true freedom.

God bless America, land that I love.



American Revolution Museum Yorktown, VA

From: S Camp <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please Read This

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:39:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

The first amendment **MUST** stand as is, separation of church and state **MUST** remain in place. Shortly after this land was discovered by Europeans, many fleeing papal persecution during the Middle Ages fled here. Revelation 12:16 shows us these events in the earth, (sparsely populated land) helping the woman (church) by swallowing up the flood (papal inquisition). The protestants fled here and flourished. When a religious system is able to use the state to enforce her decrees and do her bidding, persecution always follows. It happened before and it will happen again. The so-called Christian nationalist movement is blind to these facts. God's people are described as keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus. Sunday is the day that they wish to be enforced. Sunday is not the sabbath of the fourth commandment. The last great crisis in the bible is about worship and loyalty to God by keeping His commandments. Please consider this wisely. Egypt was destroyed for making void the law of God in Exodus 5:2-9 and what followed was the ten plagues. Seven last plagues are forecasted on those who make void the law of God in the last generation, Psalm 119:126; Revelation 13:11-18; Revelation 16:1-2.

The first amendment must stand and this secular government must remain secular and not establish a national religion.

Sincerely,

Brother Camp

Youngstown, OH

From: Office GraceBridgeConsulting <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~ [Religious Liberty Commission Report] – [Jack Nash].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:40:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please be informed I wish to make it known I support Religious Freedom and it is my position that it is the right of each citizen of the USA to determine when and how to worship free from pressure of any kind from any government organization or entity.

Thank you for your time,
Jack Nash

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:40:20 -0400

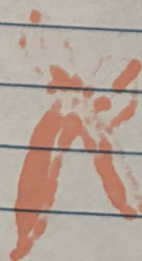
Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: IMG_8592.jpg

Dear members of the Religious
Liberty Commission,

I write as a Native
American who deeply values the
God given freedom of Conscience
that has long been recognized as
one of America's greatest principles
my Conscience belongs To God alone,
not to the State.

History has already shown the
painful consequences of government
interfering with matters of faith.
Native Americans were pressured,
displaced and often denied the
freedom To Practice their beliefs
and preserve their way of life.
That history should never be
repeated in any form.

 Diane Madriag
North Fork Ca 93643
Ca.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Connie Jones <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom Response

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:40:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

Connie Jones

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - religious liberty commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:42:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States (since my birth 65 years ago). 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 to believe in Him 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 of the 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 your consideration of these views!

From: Jayne Patricia <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Jayne Litts

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:42:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

IT IS VERY ALARMING TO ME TO READ THE COMMISSION THAT WANTS TO REPLACE THE WALL OF SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE WITH A BRIDGE. I BELIEVE THIS BRIDGE WILL NOT KEEP THE CHURCH FREE. A BRIDGE DOESN'T STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH BUT OPENS THE DOOR FOR GOVERNMENT MONEY AND POLITICAL FAVORS WHICH WE KNOW IS DANGEROUS FOR OUR GOVERNMENT (BEING CONTROLLED BY CHURCHES).

THE JOHNSON AMENDMENT WILL POLITICIZE OUR CHURCHES . I DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD FUND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGING IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES. THIS WOULD OPEN UP A CAN OF WORMS. WHY CHANGE SOMETHING THAT HAS WORKED FOR ALL OF THESE YEARS.

PLEASE DO NOT BUILD THIS BRIDGE. PLEASE KEEP A WALL THAT PROTECTS THE CHURCH.

JAYNE LITTS
UNION, MANE

From: Angela Diane Harebottle <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:43:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good evening,

I am writing to you as a 10 generation US Citizen with roots that go even deeper into the soil of this great nation. I have ancestors who fled to this nation for the freedom to follow their own religious beliefs. I trace my lineage to a Protestant denomination that began here in this Country and has spread throughout the world sharing the message of Christ's unconditional love for us and His soon return.

I appreciate the ability to worship differently than others by worshiping on the seventh day of the week as mentioned in the 10 Commandments even though the majority of Christians have changed to the first day of the week. I value being able to raise my children as seventh generation believers and have the freedom to believe as we choose. I value you being able to worship as you choose. I value my atheist cousins being able to choose to not worship God because no bit of forcing will change their hearts, only loving them and being their friends will. I value the fact that minority religions from around the world can escape persecution and come here to worship freely. I am no less a follower of the God of Heaven because my neighbor calls God Allah. Or another calls Him Yahweh. Why should we ignore and cancel our rich heritage of diversity for one narrow version of faith? And why do we claim we are a "Christian" nation when we weren't founded as one? Most of the "In God we trust" and "under God" mottos weren't added until the 1950s and the rise of Fundamentalism.

It is critical to continue allowing diversity to thrive in our country. Our original motto was, E. pluribus unum - Out of many, one. We are who we are because of our diversity and being united in our desire to have a safe place to live and raise our families in.

Once our country decides to unite with a narrow version of "Christianity", we loose our light and witness. Once Church and State combine, we become like Rome in the Dark Ages and become stagnant. And we begin to persecute those who will not bow down. Do we really want to become that? The US Government should not be controlled by a religious group nor should a religious group be controlled by the US Government. We need to keep separate in order to continue flourishing.

And Dr Carson - please be an Esther or a Daniel. You know what is happening. This is in your spiritual DNA. So many generations of us have been raised reading your book and wanting to be like you.

Thank you for your time,

Angela D Harebottle

From: Marla Savik <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Religious liberty commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that everyone has the right to worship in the way they choose, as long as they are following the laws within our United States.

As Thomas Jefferson said, no laws should be made in regards to religion. I believe that included what day to worship.

Jesus Christ gave us a day of rest however he never forced anyone to rest/worship on that day. He let each individual choose.

We value our freedoms here in the U.S. and I beg you to not legislate or make any rule as to what day everyone has to rest/worship on, that would be against all we stand for!

Sincerely,
Marla Savik

Sent from my iPhone

From: Glon Lanagan <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for Religious Freedom and the Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the U.S. Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my support for protecting religious freedom and preserving the separation of church and state.

I believe every person should have the freedom to worship according to their conscience—or not worship at all—without coercion from the government or from any religious group. Faith is meaningful only when it is freely chosen.

As a Christian, I believe Jesus invited people to follow Him; He never forced them. Protecting religious liberty safeguards the rights of people of every faith and those of no faith.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your work in protecting this important freedom.

Respectfully,

Glon Lanagan Jr.

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Kathleen Comerford <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear sirs and madams,

Please. Read the Constitution itself. Read the Federalist Papers themselves. Don't rely on what others have told you.

Religious liberty has never been about a monolithic Christian consensus. The Founders were deeply anti-Catholic, as are many modern Evangelicals. Thomas Jefferson was fascinated by Islam. No one among the Founders was what modern Evangelicals would call a Biblical literalist.

Not even "Biblical literalists" agree on exactly what that phrase means, and most Christians by far do not subscribe to the belief that for some of the Bible to be true, every word in it must be. Christians do not even all agree on what exactly the Ten Commandments are (ask a Catholic, and then ask an Evangelical--you will find that their Ten are different).

The Constitution of the United States, born out of a reaction against an understanding of kingship that nearly deified those kings, strongly resists any argument for establishing any kind of national church--in stark, clear, short, unmissable words.

Be honest with yourselves and with the citizens of the United States. If you genuinely believe in a particular religious interpretation, believe me, I have no interest at all in challenging that. As a lifelong Catholic and a trained historian of religion, I am secure in my church's tenets. I am equally secure in my knowledge of US law. These are separate interests, and as Jesus so eloquently said, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's." That did not, and must not, include the ability to legislate belief for citizens; Jesus used stark, clear, short, unmissable words.

Sincerely,
Kathleen M. Comerford

From: nRnldn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Presidents Commission on Religious Liberty by Ron Myer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:
I have read through the religious liberty draft report. Further I wholehearted agree with the Pillar of Freedom response to this draft report. As a life-long retired Tax Professional, client interviews acquainted me with the myriad motivations people have to make charitable contributions for tax purposes. It is alarming to me the Commission would recommend elimination of the Johnson amendment. It is clear to me such a move would bring political corruption into America's churches, church institutions and the like. Please do not do this. It is imperative for freedom of conscience that there remain a "chinese wall" between the realm of political life and religious life. Be bold. Honor our country's history. In recent decades the "wall" has weakened whereas on the contrary it should be strengthened. Yet your report recommends it be repealed!! Shame. I am familiar with the way this Commission has treated former commissioner Carrie Prejean. Such treatment is antithetical to the stated aims of the Commission. Stop being hypocrites....it is not a

good look, especially in this day and age when respect for government is at an all time low.

Sincerely Submitted

Ron Myer, Gonzalez Florida

From: Grant Goodge <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Requested feedback

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:47:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Religious_Liberty_Commission.jpg

Memo: To Mr. Dan Patrick, Chairman of the Religious Liberty Commission.

RE: Your statement of April 13, 2026, that “There is no such thing as ‘separation of church and state’ in the Constitution.”

Although there is no exact phrasing of those words in the Constitution, The First Amendment of that document states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This statement has historically harmonized with Thomas Jefferson’s belief that there should be a “wall of separation between church and state”.

It is often said that History repeats itself. Therefore, I would kindly request that you and the committee review what happened when the Roman civil government joined the Roman Church for more than a thousand years during the Dark Ages. Historians estimate at least 50 million souls were tortured and or killed because they would not agree with the rules/ beliefs of that combined church and state. That is the reason millions of souls fled from Europe to the New World. They wanted to be free to worship as they chose.

I humbly plead that you and the Committee do NOT take our currently free Country down that same punitive Roman path.

Sincerely,

July 12, 2026

From: Dale Mulkins <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding the issue of separation of church and state and religious freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:47:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Our country was founded on the concept of religious freedom and of the peoples right to self govern. It was eventually written up in several profound statements (and signed by those authors) that lead to the establishment of our nation. Those statements were based on observations and experiences of how well or not well the ideals of governance were implemented in other nations and I believe were divinely guided. As a person of faith and with a firm belief in God's dealing with the nations he allows to exist and to attempt to guide from the beginning of that nation toward right principles I believe he has setup a system to guide our nation "The United States of America". To strike down any part of that system is an attempt to rate mans judgment above God's. Jesus said render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's. Based on this council, I believe there is to be a separation of church and state.

From: Isha Colbert <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:47:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of church and state is appropriate.

I 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.

Isha Colbert

[REDACTED] PII

From: Nathan Ridgley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Maintaining separation between church and state. Thank

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:48:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission, as well as to whom it may concern,

I am concerned about the Commission's proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." As a person of faith, I believe this approach may be unwise and could have unintended spiritual implications. Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." The church does not rely on government authority to fulfill its mission. Rather, it depends on the power of God, the freedom of conscience, and the ability to share its message without political influence.

The wall of separation was not intended to silence the church, but to protect it. When the church seeks government favor or power, it may risk compromising its spiritual independence. Both history and Scripture suggest that close alignment between religious and civil authority can place pressure on conscience and affect the integrity of religious witness.

I respectfully urge caution in pursuing a path that could blur the distinction between church and state. Maintaining this separation helps preserve religious liberty, supports the integrity of faith, and allows the church to remain accountable to its spiritual convictions.

- Nathan

Nathan Ridgley

PII [REDACTED]

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

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:49:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: Department of Justice

CC: Religious Liberty Commission

RE: Constitutional Separation of Church and State and Recommendations 1 and 9

We write as citizens, Christians, and students of history to respond to the Religious Liberty Commission's June 26, 2026 recommendations, particularly Recommendation 1 (guidance on the Establishment Clause and "separation of church and state") and Recommendation 9 (repeal of the Johnson Amendment).

At the public release of the report, Commission Chair Dan Patrick asserted that "the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." We respectfully submit that this claim is historically and constitutionally **untenable**, and that if it informs the Commission's understanding of "proper" guidance, it risks directing the Department of Justice away from the very principles the Constitution was designed to secure.

I. Why the Constitution was framed against a union of church and state

The framers were not theorizing in a vacuum. They had seen, in Europe and in the colonies, what happens when church and state are united: Baptists jailed in Virginia, Quakers hanged in Massachusetts, Obadiah Holmes publicly whipped for religious dissent, William Tyndale executed for translating the Bible into English, and countless others punished under religious establishments. It was not atheists who carried out these persecutions, but religious authorities armed with civil power.

James Madison's outrage at jailed Baptists led him to condemn religious persecution as a "diabolical, hell-conceived principle" and to devote his career to securing full religious liberty and disestablishment. Thomas Jefferson's 1779 bill for religious freedom and Madison's 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance* were direct rejections of proposals to tax citizens to support Christianity as an established religion. The American experiment was consciously designed as a break from the European and colonial union of church and state.

II. How separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution

It is true that the exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear verbatim in the Constitution. But the **substance** of separation is clearly codified in two provisions:

1. **Article VI, Clause 3:** "...No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." This breaks with centuries of established churches that required confessional conformity for office and structurally disestablishes religion at the federal level.
2. **First Amendment, Establishment Clause:** "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." "Establishment of religion" refers to the practice, common in Europe, of legally privileging a particular church, funding it with tax revenues, and enforcing its doctrines through civil penalties. **The clause bars Congress from creating such a union.**

James Madison, principal architect of the Constitution and the Establishment Clause, explicitly described the Constitution as guarding separation: “Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States...” Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to the Danbury Baptists, wrote that the First Amendment “thus [builds] a wall of separation between Church & State.” Madison and Jefferson were not outsiders; **they were the very authors of the constitutional framework.**

To claim that separation “has no constitutional basis” is to ignore both the text and the framers’ own explanations of that text.

III. The role of separation in protecting other First Amendment freedoms

The separation of church and state is not an enemy of religious liberty; **it is its guardian.** Free speech and freedom of the press have flourished in America in large part because the federal government is not an arm of any church. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, banning books and punishing their possession. Galileo, Kepler, Milton, Kant, Locke, Maimonides, Mill, Bentham, Hume, Gibbon, and many others faced censorship or worse at the behest of religious authorities backed by civil power.

The Constitution of the United States guarantees *liberty of conscience*. Nothing is dearer or more fundamental. Pope Pius IX, in his Encyclical Letter of August 15, 1854, said: “**The absurd and 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 his Encyclical Letter of 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.”

Modern calls from papal authorities for tighter control of internet speech continue this pattern. When church and state are united, conscience and expression are policed not by neutral law but by **sectarian doctrine**. What has happened in the past, will be repeated if we do not learn our lessons from the past. Rome asserts that she never changes.

The American Constitution was framed precisely to prevent such a union. As Madison later wrote, “Religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.”

Asserting that there is no separation of church and state without specifying that it’s only the phrase that is not there is misinformation to the public and get’s the “foot in the door” to abolish Liberty of Conscience and hand over the rod of force to the church, thus opening persecution once again upon the people.

IV. The Johnson Amendment and the corruption of both church and state

The Commission’s Recommendation 9 urges repeal of the Johnson Amendment, which restricts tax-exempt religious organizations from direct partisan campaigning. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of His teaching: “Render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” This is not a call for religious withdrawal from public life, but a clear distinction between the things of God and the things of Caesar.

Removing the Johnson Amendment would invite a transactional politics in which religious leaders trade congregational votes and money for legislative favors, and politicians trade policy for pulpit endorsements. **This is inherently immoral.** Madison observed 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.” A union of church and state corrupts both; **separation protects both.**

V. The danger of re-establishing church and state

John Adams warned that canon law and feudal law were tyrannical, but that the worst form of government was a union of the two. Madison wrote that “In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.”

Efforts to deny or weaken separation of church and state today risk re-creating the very system the framers rejected: a government that privileges one religious faction, uses churches as vote-delivery systems, and polices conscience and speech in the name of “truth.” This is not religious liberty; it is religious establishment by another name.

We must also state directly that many Americans do not view these developments as hypothetical risks, but as the literal fulfillment of long-standing prophetic warnings. These citizens hold—based on their reading of Revelation 13 and the writings of a 19th-century Protestant prophetess—that the dismantling of the constitutional separation of church and state is not merely a political trend but a predicted step toward the formation of an “image to the beast”: a civil-religious structure modeled on the historic union of church and state embodied in the papacy, where ecclesiastical authority and civil authority are consolidated. They point to recent actions, including the public announcement of a White House Office on Faith—an unprecedented development in American history—as evidence that the prophetic sequence has begun to unfold exactly as foretold. When a prediction comes true, exactly as foretold, then you know the person is a true prophet, because only God can reveal the future.

Prophecy does not suggest that coercive religious legislation *might* occur; **it declares that it will occur**, specifically through the enactment of a national Sunday observance law enforced by civil penalties. Such legislation would constitute a direct repudiation of the First Amendment’s disestablishment principles and would mark the moment when civil government compels religious conformity **in violation of conscience**. Prophecy further warns that once the United States enacts such a law, the nation will suffer catastrophic decline. The passing of the Sunday law marks **apostasy** of this nation against God’s authority of the 7th day Sabbath and starts the final 3 ½ years until Jesus second coming in the clouds of heaven.

Whether or not one shares this prophetic conviction, the constitutional implication is unmistakable: movements to weaken or deny separation of church and state open the door to **compelled religious observance**, the very abuse the First Amendment was designed to prevent. The warning is clear: dismantling the constitutional barrier between church and state is not a path to national greatness, **but a path to national ruin**.

VI. Our request to the Department of Justice

In light of the foregoing, we respectfully request that the Department of Justice:

1. **Decline to adopt Recommendation 1** of the Commission insofar as it rests on the assertion that separation of church and state “has no constitutional basis.” Any guidance on the Establishment Clause should reflect the framers’ own understanding: that the Constitution strongly guards the separation between religion and government.
2. **Decline to adopt Recommendation 9** and maintain the Johnson Amendment as a safeguard against the corruption of both church and state.

The church that turns to the state for power to employ force is not of God, because God does not employ force to compel the conscience.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandtley Greenlaw
Winston, Oregon

From: yvette@ [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Yvette Loaiza

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:50:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a Californian and a person of faith who believes deeply that human life and human freedom were given to us at great cost, and that we owe it to those who came before us, and to the one I know as Jesus Christ, not to squander that gift by handing our consciences over to government. I do not believe a world without soul liberty is a safer or more godly world; I believe it is a world where hate finds new tools. That is precisely why I ask you to protect free exercise for everyone, and to keep government out of the business of religion altogether.

Start with where rights come from. If religious liberty exists only because a majority currently favors it, then it is not a right at all, only a permission that can be revoked by the next election. Our founding theory says the opposite: rights are inherent, given by the Creator, and placed in the Constitution precisely so they cannot be taken by a vote count. Popular government exists to protect the minority, the individual, because the majority can already protect itself at the ballot box. As one classic statement of this principle puts it, the people, no matter how many, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. Public support for a religious policy today is no more a justification than public support would be for silencing it tomorrow.

Go deeper still. Our government's power comes from the consent of the governed, meaning from powers the people delegate. But no one can delegate his relationship to God. I cannot authorize a senator, a court, or a commission to believe for me, worship for me, or answer for my soul on judgment day. Since that power was never mine to give, it was never government's to receive. No government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer even for itself, much less for me. That is not a technicality of the First Amendment; it is the reason the First Amendment exists at all.

This is also why I cannot ask you to legislate in favor of my own faith, even though I hold it sincerely. Any law touching religion has to define which religion, which excludes some and conditions the rest on permission rather than freedom. A believer who welcomes government endorsement today is building a precedent that a future government, of a different persuasion, will use tomorrow. I want to remain free to follow my conscience wherever the truth leads, and legislated religion forecloses that.

Finally, this is not a new argument invented by advocacy groups. Congress itself, one generation after the founding, ruled on this. Its own committees declared that government is a civil and not a religious institution, that it is not the legislature's business to determine what religion is true, and that if government defines one religious duty it may just as well define them all. That Congress also said plainly that human power may extort outward compliance but cannot command the heart. I ask you to honor that precedent rather than override it.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Yvette Loaiza
California

Sent from my iPhone

From: Addie Jackson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: A sample letter on religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:50:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 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,

From: Eraldo Baker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Separation of church and state -Eraldo Baker

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:51:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen urging you to reconsider the report's recommendations that would erode the wall between church and state — particularly channeling public funds into religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

The moment churches accept government dollars or wade into partisan campaigns, they invite politics — and all its compromises — into the sanctuary. Congregations end up chasing grants and answering to officeholders instead of to God, which serves neither faith nor the republic well. This separation was never a secular invention; it was built by believers themselves to shield religion from government's reach, and it's precisely why faith has thrived in this country.

Please keep church and state apart. That's how both remain free.

Sincerely,

Eraldo Baker
Sacramento,Ca

From: Y L <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Yvette Loaiza

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:51:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a Californian and a person of faith who believes deeply that human life and human freedom were given to us at great cost, and that we owe it to those who came before us, and to the one I know as Jesus Christ, not to squander that gift by handing our consciences over to government. I do not believe a world without soul liberty is a safer or more godly world; I believe it is a world where hate finds new tools. That is precisely why I ask you to protect free exercise for everyone, and to keep government out of the business of religion altogether.

Start with where rights come from. If religious liberty exists only because a majority currently favors it, then it is not a right at all, only a permission that can be revoked by the next election. Our founding theory says the opposite: rights are inherent, given by the Creator, and placed in the Constitution precisely so they cannot be taken by a vote count. Popular government exists to protect the minority, the individual, because the majority can already protect itself at the ballot box. As one classic statement of this principle puts it, the people, no matter how many, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. Public support for a religious policy today is no more a justification than public support would be for silencing it tomorrow.

Go deeper still. Our government's power comes from the consent of the governed, meaning from powers the people delegate. But no one can delegate his relationship to God. I cannot authorize a senator, a court, or a commission to believe for me, worship for me, or answer for my soul on judgment day. Since that power was never mine to give, it was never government's to receive. No government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer even for itself, much less for me. That is not a technicality of the First Amendment; it is the reason the First Amendment exists at all.

This is also why I cannot ask you to legislate in favor of my own faith, even though I hold it sincerely. Any law touching religion has to define which religion, which excludes some and conditions the rest on permission rather than freedom. A believer who welcomes government endorsement today is building a precedent that a future government, of a different persuasion, will use tomorrow. I want to remain free to follow my conscience wherever the truth leads, and legislated religion forecloses that.

Finally, this is not a new argument invented by advocacy groups. Congress itself, one generation after the founding, ruled on this. Its own committees declared that government is a civil and not a religious institution, that it is not the legislature's business to determine what religion is true, and that if government defines one religious duty it may just as well define them all. That Congress also said plainly that human power may extort outward compliance but cannot command the heart. I ask you to honor that precedent rather than override it.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Yvette Loaiza
California

From: Courtney Vanover <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendations of Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:52:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: DOJ_Letter.docx

Good evening,

Please see attachment.

Thank you,
Courtney

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I appreciate the opportunity to share feedback regarding the proposed changes submitted by the Religious Liberty Committee. Reinterpreting the Establishment Clause to weaken the separation of church and state is deeply concerning as it contradicts the Constitution, the intent of the Founders, and the biblical principle that matters of conscience belong solely to God rather than civil authorities. As you are all very aware, the First Amendment provides two equally significant protections: it prohibits the government from establishing a religion while also protecting every individual's right to freely exercise their faith.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Since the founding of our nation, these protections have constituted a vital cornerstone of American liberty. They guarantee that no citizen is forced to support, participate in, or adhere to a specific religion, while concurrently preserving the right of every individual to worship, or abstain from worship, according to their conscience. Although the explicit phrase, "separation of church and state" is absent from the text of the Constitution, this principle has historical recognition as a barrier against state interference in religious affairs. This dual safeguard insulates religious bodies from state control and prevents civil governance from acting as an arm of religious authority. Embracing people of all faiths or no faith at all, the Constitution mandates equal protection under the law, ensuring absolute state neutrality. The church has its place, and the government has its place; blurring their roles is catastrophic. This is not merely my opinion - it is the definitive lesson of history.

The God of the Bible does not compel belief. As Revelation 3:20 states, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Notice the choice. We must not seek to force others into compliance in the name of Christianity. This is a dangerous trajectory that risks returning us to the Dark Ages -- a time when truth was suppressed and millions of lives were tragically lost to religious coercion. If our nation embarks upon this trajectory, we will inevitably find ourselves standing once again at the foot of burning stakes.

While you are aptly named the Religious Liberty Commission, it is this exact liberty that is currently under attack. I continue to pray for the spirit of wisdom and discernment to operate within your midst as you navigate these challenges and that as fellow Christians, you will find the courage as the Apostle Paul to stand boldly for biblical truth.

2 Corinthians 3:17

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*."

A concerned citizen of faith,
Courtney Vanover

From: Todd Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Praying You Reverse Course

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:53:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

More food for thought. We are watching very carefully, and praying you will reverse course.

<https://www.amazingfacts.org/news-events/af-blog/religious-liberty-at-a-crossroads-why-it-still-matters/>

<https://www.amazingfacts.org/bible-study/free-offers/america-in-bible-prophecy/>

From:

To:

PII

PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Beautiful constitution

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:54:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings!

I am born and raised here in the United States of America. We have something so valuable here in this fair country that we may not realize it until we lose it. It is what all here know -and that is our freedom to worship and live here without government interference. We will be stepping into our own noose if we lose this inalienable privilege and right. Religion is never good if it is coerced. God's own character of love and justice and mercy never forces our hearts to serve Him. How could we truly love someone if we had no choice in the matter?

It's basic to our lives to have this power to live in peace with Him.

I'm not that articulate, but you must see my point. Please understand that we have an enemy of freedom and he wants this bill to pass. Our future is not in coercion if we maintain the rights and privileges we enjoy as a distinctive nation.

Please be wise and act responsibly in this important document. It is a privilege to uphold the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A concerned citizen

From: Mark Peppel <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment on committee report on separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:54:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Screenshot_20260712_100223_Messages.jpg

Freedom of conscience should never be removed, coerced, or used to enact laws that will infringe upon individual citizens rights as stated in our Constitution. Mob rule, or consensus of a committee should never be used to lessen ones freedoms. The separation of Church and State should remain the same.

God's Word gives us ample guidance in such matters. As in our Country's motto "In God We Trust" also should speak much to the desire of a Nation, or its elected officials, to infringe upon a citizens God given rights.

Below is an attachment which speaks very clearly to the issue ;

Sincerely, Mark Peppel

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

John 8:31

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

Commentary:

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. **“The truth shall make you free;”** and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is “the law of liberty.”

James 2:12. DA 466.5

From: Sandra Drumheller <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] letter response

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:55:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a Christian believer and a citizen of the United States of America, it is a privilege to voice my concerns on the breakdown of the wall of church and state separation. The Bible states it properly when it says in Matthew 22:21: Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Civil matters belong to the government and moral and religious matters belong to God and Him alone. The dark ages were not a very good time in earth's history, and if we rule as did Rome during those years, we can expect much hardship and trouble. My moral allegiance is to the Almighty Father and Him alone!

Sandra Drumheller

Thermopolis, WY



Virus-free.www.avast.com

From: Todd Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Your Future?

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:55:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Is this the future you are creating?

I pray for your spiritual discernment -- to see the need to reverse course.

<https://www.amazingfacts.org/armageddon-ways-to-watch/>

From: Guiding The Impact <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 10 Vaccine Mandates, Education & Healthcare Access - Guiding the Impact

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:57:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Guiding the Impact respectfully submits these comments in strong support of the Commission's draft report and its recognition that vaccine mandates have imposed serious burdens on Americans of faith in education and healthcare. It is clear that much prayer, courage, and care went into this report and we are deeply thankful to Chairman Patrick and the members of the Commission for hearing the pleas of families who have carried this burden for years. For many parents, students, and patients, the simple acknowledgment that this issue is real -- and worthy of federal attention -- is itself a profound answer to prayer.

We are especially grateful that Chapter 10 recognizes the coercive nature of vaccine mandates; documents the exclusion of religious families from educational access; recommends investigations, strategic litigation, federal legislation, agency guidance, and official compliance letters; and calls for protection of students' religious exemptions from vaccination requirements.

We also support the Commission's recommendations concerning parental rights, school accountability, public complaint portals, strategic litigation, restored conscience protections, the HHS Conscience and Religious Freedom Division, "Know Your Rights" resources, federal religious-liberty divisions, and a DOJ Religious Liberty Task Force.

The final report should now make those recommendations explicit and operational for the Americans most directly harmed by vaccine-related religious discrimination: children and parents excluded from education, patients and families denied healthcare, and students denied access to required professional training because of sincerely held religious objections to vaccination.

Guiding the Impact respectfully urges the Commission to make clear that no child, student, patient, or family should be forced to choose between sincerely held religious beliefs and equal access to education or nonemergency healthcare.

Our recommendations focus on two connected priorities:

1. Protecting children and students from early childhood through completion of required clinical and professional training; and
2. Protecting patients and families from denial of nonemergency healthcare because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

I. Strengthen the Commission's Existing Education Recommendation From Childcare Through Required Clinical Training

Chapter 10 already recommends that the Administration advocate for federal legislation requiring educational institutions to grant students religious exemptions from vaccination requirements as a condition of receiving federal support.

Guiding the Impact strongly supports that existing recommendation. We are not asking the Commission to create

a separate or competing legislative track. Rather, we respectfully urge the Commission to clarify and strengthen its current recommendation so that it provides meaningful protection throughout the full educational continuum.

The Commission's recommended legislation should expressly apply to childcare, daycare, preschool, pre-kindergarten, and early-learning programs; public and private elementary and secondary schools receiving federal financial assistance; charter schools; colleges and universities; trade and technical programs; graduate and professional schools; and required clinical placements, internships, practicums, residencies, and other training sites necessary for academic progression, degree completion, professional certification, or licensure.

We respectfully recommend that the final report include language substantially similar to the following:

"The Administration should advocate for federal legislation requiring any educational institution, program, agency, contractor, or required clinical-placement site receiving federal financial assistance to provide a meaningful religious exemption or accommodation from vaccination requirements for a child, student, applicant, or trainee who, or whose parent or legal guardian, asserts a sincerely held religious objection. This protection should extend from early-childhood education through higher education, professional education, clinical training, and required placements."

The protection should be meaningful and complete. A child or student should not be denied admission, enrollment, attendance, transportation, educational services, extracurricular participation, academic advancement, graduation, degree completion, or required clinical training because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

An exemption is not meaningful if a student may enroll in a program but is later blocked from completing a required practicum, internship, clinical rotation, residency, or placement. No student should be forced to abandon a degree, profession, or calling because the final required training component refuses to honor the same religious protection that applied to classroom enrollment.

II. Establish a Simple, Respectful Religious-Exemption Process While Preserving Stronger State Protections

The federal legislation recommended in Chapter 10 should establish a clear minimum protection for covered entities receiving federal financial assistance. It should operate as a federal floor, not a federal ceiling, while preserving state authority to enact and administer stronger constitutional, statutory, and religious-liberty protections.

For covered federally funded educational institutions, programs, and required training sites, a simple written-attestation process should be sufficient to obtain a religious exemption or accommodation from vaccination requirements.

This recommendation does not seek to displace stronger state protections or to prevent states from maintaining broader exemptions and additional safeguards for families. Rather, it would ensure that federally funded entities cannot impose burdensome or theological screening requirements that effectively nullify a family's religious exemption.

A parent, adult student, or trainee seeking a religious exemption in a covered federally funded educational setting should be permitted to submit a brief signed written attestation affirming a sincerely held religious objection to a vaccination requirement. That attestation should be sufficient absent specific, objective evidence of insincerity.

Neither a government agency nor a covered institution should require a clergy letter, proof of church membership, denominational approval, theological examination, proof that others in the same faith tradition share the belief, or intrusive disclosure of private religious reasoning.

The Commission should recommend language substantially similar to the following:

“A signed written attestation of a sincerely held religious objection to a vaccination requirement shall be treated as sufficient in covered federally funded educational settings absent specific, objective evidence of insincerity. A religious exemption or accommodation may not be denied because a covered entity or government official disagrees with an individual’s theology, religious affiliation, denomination, religious practice, or perceived consistency with the beliefs of other adherents.”

Religious liberty cannot depend on institutional approval of a family’s theology.

III. Add Explicit Patient and Family Protections to the Healthcare Recommendations

The report appropriately recognizes that healthcare-related religious-liberty protections are needed. However, its specific healthcare recommendations primarily focus on medical students, healthcare professionals, staff, institutions, and religious employers.

The final report should expressly add patients, parents, and guardians to the protections afforded through HHS oversight of federally funded providers and programs, agency guidance, federal enforcement, complaint pathways, official compliance letters, and healthcare-related legislation where appropriate.

Federally funded healthcare providers, facilities, programs, and contractors should not deny, discontinue, condition, delay, or otherwise discriminate in the provision of nonemergency healthcare solely because a patient, parent, or guardian asserts a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

We respectfully recommend that the final report include language substantially similar to the following:

“HHS should issue guidance and, where appropriate, regulations and enforcement policies clarifying that federally funded healthcare providers, facilities, programs, and contractors may not deny, delay, discontinue, condition, or otherwise discriminate in the provision of nonemergency care solely because a patient, parent, or guardian asserts a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.”

This protection should ensure equal access to primary care, pediatric care, specialty care, referrals, nonemergency hospital-based care, outpatient services, prenatal and maternity care, rehabilitation, home-health services, long-term care, specialty programs, and continuity of care with existing providers.

No family should lose access to a pediatrician, primary-care provider, specialist, outpatient hospital service, treatment program, or other needed nonemergency care solely because it seeks to live consistently with sincerely held religious beliefs.

A family should not be told that it may obtain care only if it abandons its religious convictions regarding vaccination.

The final report should also clarify that vaccine-related religious objections must be included within the healthcare-conscience protections it recommends for medical students and healthcare trainees. These protections should not be limited to abortion, physician-assisted suicide, sterilization, or other listed procedures while leaving vaccine-related conscience objections unaddressed in required healthcare education and training.

Medical students, nursing students, residents, interns, and other healthcare trainees should not face discrimination, retaliation, loss of clinical placement, exclusion from training, delayed graduation, or other adverse action because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination. The Commission should recommend that these vaccine-related conscience protections include timely individualized review, meaningful corrective action, and an enforceable remedy where statutory rights are violated.

IV. Apply the Commission’s Enforcement Recommendations to Children, Students, Patients, Families, and Trainees

The Commission has already recommended the essential enforcement tools needed to address vaccine-related religious discrimination: guidance, public-awareness resources, reporting pathways, official letters, investigations, strategic litigation, and limits on federal support to noncompliant districts or entities where feasible.

Guiding the Impact strongly supports those recommendations. We respectfully urge the Commission to make clear in the final report that these enforcement tools should be applied specifically and urgently to vaccine-related religious discrimination affecting children, parents, students, patients, families, and trainees.

The final report should recommend that the Department of Education, HHS Office for Civil Rights, and Department of Justice prioritize complaints involving children excluded from childcare or school, students blocked from higher education or required clinical training, and patients or families denied nonemergency healthcare because of sincerely held religious objections to vaccination.

The Commission should also make clear that enforcement must address not only outright denials, but also nominal or illusory exemptions that exist on paper while imposing conditions, delays, third-party requirements, or discretionary barriers that make the exemption ineffective in practice.

Finally, the Commission should emphasize that guidance and agency action must reinforce, not replace, durable federal statutory protection. The report's existing education-legislation recommendation should create a lasting protection that cannot simply be withdrawn by a future administration, while preserving stronger state constitutional, statutory, and religious-liberty protections.

Conclusion

The Commission has taken an important step by recognizing vaccine mandates as a serious religious-liberty issue.

The final report should ensure that its protections reach the Americans who have suffered the greatest practical harm: children kept out of childcare and school, parents denied equal educational access for their children, students blocked from completing degrees and required professional training, patients denied needed nonemergency healthcare, and families pressured to abandon sincerely held religious beliefs in order to participate in basic public life.

No child should be excluded from childcare or education because his or her family seeks to live consistently with sincerely held religious beliefs.

No student should be blocked from completing required clinical or professional training because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

No patient or family should be denied nonemergency healthcare solely because it seeks to live according to sincerely held religious beliefs.

The Commission should also ensure that its employment-related religious-liberty recommendations are meaningfully applied to vaccine requirements so that adults are not forced to choose between sincere religious beliefs and the ability to work, support their families, and pursue their chosen vocation.

Guiding the Impact stands ready to assist the Commission, the Administration, the Department of Justice, and HHS in implementing these recommendations by sharing the experiences of affected families and helping ensure that any parental-rights or religious-liberty implementation efforts address vaccine-related discrimination in education and healthcare.

Guiding the Impact respectfully urges the Commission to adopt these clarifications and additions in the final

report.

May this report mark not only the acknowledgment of a grave injustice, but the beginning of meaningful federal action to ensure that no family, student, or patient is ever again forced to choose between faith and equal access to education or healthcare.

In faith and freedom,
Elyse Young
Founder, Guiding the Impact

From: Maura Carroll <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Establishment Clause – Maura Carroll

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:57:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to comment on the Commission's draft report. I respectfully urge you to defend both religion clauses of the First Amendment — no establishment, and free exercise — with equal vigor. My reasons are these:

Religious liberty is a right, not a majority's permission. "A right is something which, in its very nature, is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons." Popular support can justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never among the things submitted to the vote.

Force can make hypocrites, never Christians — and state sponsorship corrupts the faith it favors. President Grant said it plainly in 1875: "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the State and Church forever separate."

The founding generation's own Congress already examined this question. The reports of Richard M. Johnson's committees, adopted in 1829 and 1830, declared: "It is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false. Our government is a civil and not a religious institution." I ask the Commission to align its report with that precedent.

This country was founded on religious liberty. Why would we want to ruin it now? Everyone should be able to worship God by their own convictions. Please consider doing as our forefathers before us did.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. Please consider this prayerfully as you make your decision. Your choices will affect generations to come. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Maura Carroll

Sent from my iPhone

From: Deanna Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT re separation of church and state - Deanna Brown

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:57:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a very strong proponent of the separation of church and state and find this report very troublesome. I do not think it is right to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Churches should not take government funds and have to answer to politicians. The wall between church and state was built by believers to keep the church free and will strengthen the church by keeping it free from government entanglements. Please reconsider your recommendation in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,
Deanna Brown
Anderson, SC

From: Karen Griffith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:58:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have some concerns in regard to your Report in that while the US Constitution may not have this phrase the very fact our founding fathers came to America to escape religious persecution. It is fair to stipulate that though they may not use the vernacular we use or understand today, the very concepts outlined in the documents, the history of the struggle to make the church/state separation to ensure religious freedom is very evident.

Today we see the results of NGO status for my denomination and how the UN binds the hands of those in mission fields who desire to provide to individuals the freedom of life lived in Christ. I may be a Christian but I also advocate for all religions-- or even lack thereof-- to have the freedom to make decisions INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT. This nation is based on the freedom to serve in my faith as my conscience dictates.

I educated my children in Christian schools, encouraged and funded mission work, and made this choice FREE of government subsidizing any of it. Was it a sacrifice, yes. Was it worth it, definitely. As soon as government entangles church based education, mission or any other service it dictates what can be said, what can be done, who can speak, who gets funded. Bad scenario!!!

I firmly support the stand that Pillar of Faith takes in regard to a Bridge between Church and State. Then the State gets to open or shut the access to the Bridge based on abeyance to the State. My religious freedom is not the State's to determine; it is from my God. And that God gives that to Christians, Moslem, Jewish, Atheist, etc whether they acknowledge Him or not. Freedom is not freedom when the government dictates it. Even God does not force abeyance. He respects our freedom to choose.

Karen K. Griffith
Van Buren, Ohio

From: larry rahn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:58:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

I am in favor of religious freedom. To worship on the day that one chooses. Not a day set by the state.

Larry rahn

From: Jean Goetzee <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - THE PATH FORWARD - JEAN GOETZE

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:59:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

Please clarify the misguided notion that there should be a 'wall of separation between the church and the state' which stems not from the Constitution but on a selective reading of one sentence in one private letter. which has ben used beginning in the mid-20th century to block religion and the freedom to express it from the public square.

The Constitution does not require any such separation. On the contrary the 1st Amendment supports the freedom of religion but only requires that the state not establish one particular religion upon all people. The Founding Fathers truly believed that we cold not keep our republic unless we were a people of virtue - which the practice of religion helps to ensure.

Thank you for clarifying this misconception which has been abused and used to keep people from enjoying the freedom of the first amendment and helping our society to thrive thereby.

From: Enderson Renck <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Enderson Renck

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:59:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen of Richmond, Virginia, with a plain conviction: American politicians have no business legislating the terms of religious liberty. That liberty is not the government's to define, ration, or hand back to us. We should build a wall of separation between church and state, and mean it. Freedom is for everybody, not just for whichever faith holds the most votes in a given year.

Consider first where government's power actually comes from. Our whole system rests on the idea that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning from powers people can actually delegate to them. But no person can delegate his relationship to God. I can authorize someone to manage my land or speak for me in business, but no one can believe in my place, worship in my place, or answer for my soul in my place. Since that power was never mine to give away, it was never received by any government, state or federal. This is not a loophole in the Establishment Clause that only bars a national church while permitting everything short of it. It means government was excluded from religious jurisdiction from the very foundation of its authority, before any amendment was written down to say so.

Second, history and plain human experience both testify that force cannot produce faith. A law can march a body into a pew; it cannot put belief in a heart, because love for God is essential to any real act of religious devotion, and love cannot be legislated. What coercion produces instead is hypocrisy. And the deeper damage lands on the very religion the state tries to help. Fifteen centuries of established Christianity left a documented record of what happens when church leans on state power: pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility among the people, and, in both, superstition and persecution. A faith that needs the police power to sustain it has already confessed it isn't sustaining itself. General Grant said it plainly and I still believe it: keep the state and church forever separate, and leave religion to the family, the congregation, and private conscience.

Third, there is no neutral, generic religion for government to adopt, however well-intentioned the effort. Even the Ten Commandments are not common ground; Protestants and Catholics number and translate them differently, and any official display must pick a side. There are hundreds of traditions claiming the Bible as their own, so a state that officially endorses "the Bible" is really just endorsing one group's particular reading of it and calling that reading universal truth. A congressional committee understood this danger as far back as 1830, warning that for lawmakers to settle a religious dispute that divides Christians among themselves is to act like a church council rather than a republican legislature. The same problem shows up today whether it is a monument on a courthouse lawn or a line in a school curriculum describing the principles of a particular faith. In every case, someone in a government office ends up writing a creed, and that is establishment, however sincerely intended.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Enderson Renck
Richmond, VA

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

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

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

Since Roger William founded Rhode Island our founders have held the belief that separation of church and state was a God given right because they had escaped the European experiment that lasted 2,000 years with almost constant religious wars and persecution brought on by the "State Church" against any that would not believe as the "State Church" dictated.... Century's of martyrdom followed....

This is the natural outcome of human's that have their chosen dogma and then they add the "Power" of the state to enforce and punish!!!

The main problem is that Spiritual issues are spiritual discerned and State issues are controlled with Force...

If there is another trial of combining church and state we will experience another era of persecution.... It has been tried many times before.... Just like Socialism and communism.... You all should know... it never ends well....

Thank you for voting and preaching to keep State and church separated.... That doesn't mean that we can't act like compassionate country, and loving each other.

Our founders set this out plainly.... We all have natural rights such as Liberty of thought, Freedom of religion, and our God given rights to all believe what we want...

Thank you for your consideration concerning this matter...And please... vote NO on the joining of State and Church!h!

Sincerely,

Steven Spady DO
Barbara Spady

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

From: james arocho <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:01:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Esteemed Religious Liberty Commission:

Freedom of religion is one of the bedrock's upon which this great nation was established. It has been a beacon of light and aspiration for people from all over the world who either want to come here and become citizens or desire to emulate our constitution.

It would be a betrayal of one of our core beliefs and I cannot imagine that the architects of our great nation would allow any restrictions on religious freedom.

Of course there have to be some guidelines, such as are moral across cultures and societies but no mandating of specific days or forms of worship. Majority rule would and has in the past in other nations lead to persecution of groups who while of moral character and behavior, become objects exclusion, persecution and even martyrdom.

Please consider carefully the possible implications and or complications that inaccurate wording or omission of protecting religious freedom could entail.

Thank you for your attention to this extremely important issue.

James Arocho

US Citizen, Florida resident

From: Betty Zmaj <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Feedback for recommendations of RLC

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:02:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_the_Department_of_Justice_re_Religious_Liberty_Commission.docx

See attached

Betty R. (Zmaj) Kuist

PII

July 12, 2026

The United States Department of Justice
RE: Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Dear Review Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to our President, Donald Trump on June 26, 2026. As the 12 recommendations were reviewed, I considered the impact on the people of the United States and the constitutional direction taken. I therefore ask that the United States Department of Justice review carefully the issue of the safest placement of each proponent of religious desires, and political – state power. This would require the first recommendation be redressed and changed to reflect the plan and structure of the constitution.

I have several years of educational experience both at instructing students in United State History and as principal in two small parochial secondary schools. I have also served as a delegate and witness for education for the legislature of Wisconsin.

Observation and research has been a part of my preparation to provide students with direction and critical thinking skills. Part of my review for this feedback included the book James Madison on Religious Liberty, by Robert Alley 1985 Prometheus, Buffalo, NY Library of Congress # 85-62743, along with other readings from United States History texts as well as British and Roman history and law. The book by Robert Alley includes a historical review of reactions and direction in both the 19th and 20th centuries. It also includes the statements by James Madison, the principal author of the Constitution, that he, Madison, thought that he had delineated the need for separation of church and state clearly. Additionally, Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to the Danbury Baptists stated that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. (see <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib9806/danpre.ht>)

With respect to the Chair of the Committee, a full understanding of the Establishment Clause with regard to separation of church and state should be forthcoming. The first amendment to the Constitution provides a barrier and buffer which should be kept fully visible in all of the recommendations. The founders of this great nation were aware of the persecution of various religious preachers and adherents in several colonies. Their plan and promise were for a republic without even a fear of reprisal for one's belief, lack of it, and the free exercise thereof. They knew also that the will even of the majority should not erase the freedom of the minority. They were close enough to the fateful history of reformers, and Bible translators to set this nation on a path free from the override of a king or the dictates of papal power, and fully against having them both

working together to override the right of any person for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Regarding the recommendation (9) that each state take up the address of the right to require closing laws and work laws which may and will infringe on any citizens rights, no state must override the nation's constitution. The constitution clearly states that in areas NOT included in the constitution, the states have the right to make laws, however this is clearly part of the first amendment and therefore is off the table for any state to make laws which would negate any part of it.

Without making my treatise any longer, I do thank you again for your review of the available resources and ask for more time and arena for public debate and input. As we advance to the new school term, what an opportunity to include our students in study and thought in this momentous and nation changing direction.

Thank you for listening and reviewing my comments.

Sincerely,

Betty Rae Zmaj

Betty R. Zmaj

From: Shelli B <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:03:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Commission on Religious Liberty:

I was concerned to hear about the plan to remove the phrase, "wall of separation between church and state" from key documents of the United States. My maternal ancestors came to America in the 1600s to escape religious persecution. Unfortunately, once they were convicted to reject infant baptism, they had to relocate to Rhode Island to avoid being sent to jail. Thankfully, Rhode Island was a haven where everyone could serve God (or not) according to their own conscience.

I have appreciated living in the United States where I can be free to follow God according to my understanding of the Bible without the State controlling my church or how I personally live out my Christianity. Please keep the wall of separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

Shelli Baze
California

From: wgdragonfly1 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:03:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

I would respectfully plead that you not remove the wall of separation between church and state. History has proved over and over that state religion leads to division, hatred, persecution and finally a death decree. Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. The United States of America was powerful precisely because she granted freedom for her people to enjoy freedom of conscience, freedom to worship (or not to worship) as they deemed fit. The Middle Ages were a glaring example of what will happen if the church and state come together. Somewhere between 50 and 150 million innocent people were put to torture and death simply because they could not violate their conscience. Our worship should be a private matter between us and our God.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Trey G <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Plea for separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:04:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep Church and State separate, and please do not remove the Johnson Amendment that protects Religious Liberty. Please enforce the Johnson Amendment rather than repeal it. This helps protect all of the American Peoples' religious liberty; the Johnson Amendment prevents specific groups from receiving special attention and privileges while other groups can/will be persecuted.

Thank you for your time,
Trey Gallagher

From: nEWn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:04:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm for separation of church and state just like Roger Williams.

Elizabeth Wall

From: Tapiwa M <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Tapiwa M

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:06:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a resident from Georgia who believes the strongest argument for keeping government out of religion is not a secular one but a Christian one. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. That teaching does not merely counsel restraint; it excludes civil government from religious matters altogether, because the line has already been drawn by an authority higher than any legislature. As one nineteenth-century witness told a Senate committee opposing a national Sunday law, "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state's only proper question about any act is whether it injures a neighbor's rights, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text or practice crosses that line, and it is Christianity itself, rightly understood, that forbids the crossing.

I also want the Commission to remember that rights do not come from majorities. If a vote can grant religious liberty, a vote can revoke it, and then it was never a right at all but a permission. Our whole constitutional structure exists to place conscience beyond the reach of election returns, protecting the minority precisely because majorities can already protect themselves at the ballot box. As Jones put it, "the majority has no right to say what we shall render to God; nor has it any right to say that we shall render to Cesar that which is God's." Popular support may justify a highway bill. It cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never a subject open to the vote.

A further danger is that any law favoring religion, even one many of us might welcome today, becomes a precedent controlling us tomorrow. It concedes that religion is a fit subject for legislation, and once conceded, the only remaining question is who holds the majority next. As one advocate testified plainly, "It is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion." Believers who welcome government sponsorship of their own faith are handing future officials, of every persuasion, a tool that will not stay in friendly hands.

Finally, history has already run this experiment, and sincerity never changed the outcome. Salem's judges were devout and certain; Tennessee's courts, in 1892, jailed Sabbath-keeping farmers for quietly plowing their own fields on Sunday, marching them through the streets in chains while other laborers passed unbothered nearby. The editor who investigated left us a maxim worth remembering in this hearing room: "A nation can sometimes afford to err on the side of mercy, but no nation can afford to be unjust to her lowliest citizen."

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,

Tapiwa M
Georgia

Sent from my iPhone

From: Michael Kelsey <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT on Separation of Church and State from Michael Kelsey

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:06:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing during this time of public comment to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the principle of separation of church and state. We all know those exact words aren't in our founding documents, but the principle is in our very first amendment! Especially the notion of 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. If recent history is any guide, what seems like an advantage at one time, would seem just as disastrous a few administrations later. We have done a good job staying clear of that for our first quarter of millennium. 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 the spirit of church and state separation alive in our republic. That's how we keep ourselves a truly free people.

Trepidatiously,
Michael Kelsey
Maryland Heights, MO

From: Adam Unsworth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of State - Adam Unsworth

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:06:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

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!

Adam Unsworth.

From: PII [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Plea for separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:07:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep Church and State separate, and please do not remove the Johnson Amendment that protects Religious Liberty. Please enforce the Johnson Amendment rather than repeal it. This helps protect all of the American Peoples' religious liberty; the Johnson Amendment prevents specific groups from receiving special attention and privileges while other groups can/will be persecuted.

Thank you for your time,
An American

From: Joyce Bonner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bridge across the Gulf

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:08:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please respect Religious Liberty and do not Sign Sunday keeping into Law for all of us

From: Wayne Berry <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clausen- Wayne C. Berry

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:08:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who believes, as I told a friend recently, that our freedoms come from God and not from man, and that no legislature can enact righteousness into being. That conviction shapes everything I want to say to you about the work before this Commission.

Start with where rights come from. If religious liberty exists because a majority permits it, then a majority can also revoke it, and it was never a right at all but a favor subject to recall. Our constitutional tradition holds the opposite: rights are inherent, Creator-endowed, and placed in writing precisely to put them beyond the reach of election returns. Popular government exists to protect the minority, not to await the majority's permission on questions of conscience. As one old defense of this principle put it, the people, however many they number, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. That principle should govern the Commission's work as much as it governed the founders': the fact that most Americans favor some religious display, text, or practice in public life is not, and can never be, a warrant for the government to adopt it.

I ground this not only in constitutional theory but in Christ's own words: render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. That single sentence divides all human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government governs civil relations between persons; it has no authority whatsoever over what is owed to God. The only question the state may ever rightly ask of an action is whether it is civil or uncivil, injurious to a neighbor or not. Whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical is simply outside its competence. A government that legislates religious observance is not honoring Christianity; it is trespassing on ground Christ himself marked as belonging to God alone.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightfully hold this power: it was never given. Our system rests on the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his belief, his worship, or his soul to another to manage. What cannot be delegated cannot be received. No government will stand before the judgment seat to answer for any soul, and accountability and authority belong together. Since government can never answer for a man's faith, it can never rightly hold jurisdiction over it. The First Amendment did not invent this limit; it simply recorded what was already true.

Finally, I ask the Commission to weigh this: any law touching religion, even one meant to help a favored faith, destroys free exercise for everyone, including those it favors. To legislate in support of one's own religion is to trade the free exercise of that religion for permission to practice it on terms a future legislature may change. Believers who welcome state endorsement today are handing a tool to whoever holds power tomorrow, and that tool will not always be friendly to them.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Wayne C. Berry

From: J Henri Evard <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom Commision

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern.

I firmly believe in separation of church and state. We do not need this commission. If we continue to follow the Constitution of the United States our religious liberties are fully protected.

Please stop this infringement on our constitutional rights and personal beliefs.

J Henri Evard

Sent from my iPhone

From: Edge Evangelistic Ministries <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – LOGAN DESHEA

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:10:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen from Pinehurst, Idaho, who believes deeply in both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses, and I ask you to hold the line that Christ himself drew. When Jesus said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's, he divided all human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority whatsoever over duties owed to God. As Jones told a Senate committee in 1888, "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, symbol, or lesson steps across that line into territory that belongs to God alone.

Nor can a popular majority supply what Christ withheld. Rights that depend on a vote are not rights but permissions, revocable whenever the count changes. Our whole constitutional order rests on the opposite premise: that liberty is Creator-endowed and therefore stands above election returns, existing precisely to protect the minority from the majority, not the other way around. When Senator Blair pointed to the great weight of public opinion favoring Sunday legislation, Jones answered for all time: "But the people, I care not how many there are, have no right to invade your relationship to God, nor mine." A commission acting in the people's name should remember that religion was never among the things the people submitted to the ballot box.

That is because religion could never be delegated to government in the first place. A citizen can authorize an agent to manage his property, but no one can authorize another to believe, worship, or answer for his soul. What was never given cannot have been received. As the older writers put it plainly, "No man nor any set of men can ever have faith for another." Government cannot bear religious responsibility because it can never be held to account for it at the judgment that matters. The First Amendment did not invent this limit; it simply recorded what was already true.

Finally, even laws that favor religion destroy free exercise, because any law touching religion must define whose religion counts, and definitions exclude as surely as they include. Jones stated the plain impossibility: "It is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion." Believers who welcome government endorsement today are handing a tool to whichever administration holds power tomorrow.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Logan Deshea
Pinehurst, Idaho

From: Vanessa [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-APPENDIX B-VANESSA R.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:12:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this comment to urge the Commission to defend the historic principles of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. I oppose any recommendation to the Department of Justice or another government agency that would weaken these constitutional safeguards or encourage greater unity between religious institutions and civil government.

True religious liberty does not require the government to promote religion. It requires government to protect every person's right to worship according to conscience—or not to worship—without coercion, discrimination, or interference.

American history shows why this protection is necessary. During the colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and other religious minorities suffered fines, imprisonment, and discrimination because established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These abuses helped lead to the adoption of the First Amendment.

The experience of seventh-day Sabbath keepers, particularly Seventh-day Adventists, provides another warning. During the late nineteenth century, some were fined, imprisoned, and sentenced to chain-gang labor for performing ordinary work on Sunday after conscientiously observing Saturday as the biblical Sabbath. Their experience demonstrates that when government enforces religiously influenced observances, minority believers are often the first to suffer.

History repeatedly shows the danger of giving civil authority power over conscience. Whether through religious persecution, state-backed religious extremism, or atheistic governments that suppress faith, the result is the same: individual liberty is lost. Government should protect public order, individual rights, and equal treatment under the law. Religious institutions should advance their beliefs through teaching, persuasion, and voluntary faith—not through civil power or coercion. Genuine religion does not need the state to compel belief or observance.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to reject any proposal that weakens the constitutional separation of church and state. Every church should remain free to proclaim its beliefs, and every citizen should remain free to accept or reject those beliefs without government pressure.

The lessons of history are clear. When religious and civil power are united, intolerance and injustice follow. Please defend the First Amendment and preserve the religious liberty of every American.

Respectfully submitted,

Vanessa R.

From: Pine Pricen [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:12:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs:

- 1) please leave the wall between church and state the way it is.
- 2) please leave the JOHNSON Amendment the way it is.
- 3) Your other proposals seem thoughtful and well recommended.

Thank you.

From: Kellen Edwards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation Between Church and State - Kellen Edwards

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:12:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I urge the Commission to remember the strengths that America has embodied in the history of its country. The two pillars of the strength of the United States has been in its Republicanism, a nation with a Pope, and its Democratism, a nation without a King.

Yes, I do agree that this world needs a knowledge of The Lord. The Lord indeed wants to see righteousness and justice being done on the earth. Yes, it is good for the Ten Commandments to be learned.

However, these must all be done without force. The Lord did not force Adam nor Eve to eat from the Tree of Life. They were allowed to make their own decision.

I ask you to consider that force will never bring about the result that one will want. A true conversion of the heart in surrender to God will do so much more than what force ever can.

Please consider the history of nations where force ever achieved anything meaningful outside of destruction and anarchy. A bridge between Church and State is a burning bridge built on legs of wood.

Joshua 24:15 - "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Thank you,
Kellen Edwards
Brookeville, MD

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

To: Rlcrc [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment--Religious Liberty Commission Report--Regina M Martin

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:13:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Mr. Patrick,

I am a VERY concerned citizen. The rights of the people are about to be trampled upon. Let me start out by saying, I am a Christian. My denomination is not important to the outcome of this letter. I do believe that the outcome of certain actions being taken in the nation are of concern. I speak of the separation of the church and the state in our country.

It is true that the phrase, "separation of church and state," is not in the US constitution; however, its essence is most definitely there. Take the first amendment for example:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

No law should tell me that I MUST do, or not do, something because it is "Christian" to do so. Jesus NEVER, used force, or law, to MAKE someone obey. He never directed His disciples to the civil magistrate to gain people to His cause. He used persuasion and love to win souls. Jesus Himself stated, "My kingdom is not of this world, if it were my servants would fight..." John 18:36. Jesus did not build His Kingdom using political power. In fact He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Matt. 22:21

Thomas Jefferson made clear his opinion when he penned (In his letter to the Danbury Baptists on Jan. 1, 1802):

"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,"

He believed strongly in this separation.

The separation of church and state is good for both the church and the state. For the church, because each member can worship according to the dictates of their conscious. (Even those who are not Christian.) Good for the state because no particular religion can enforce their beliefs and mores into law.

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.

I also believe that public funds should go to public schools and not to private schools. These public institutions should not be able to discriminate against anyone who wants to enter; but be open to all regardless of their religious background, or lack thereof. All should be treated equally.

Public schools should not push any type of sectarian faith. If so, which faith, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoism, Christian? I know that the movement is to remove the separation between church and state to enforce Christian principles; however, which denomination will you use? Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican? Even forcing classroom teachers to post the Ten Commandments in their classrooms is a violation of Jesus' gift of freedom of choice.

The Founding Fathers were wise when they left a deity out of the Constitution. Pilgrims immigrated this land to escape religious persecution and even in the early days of this country, persecution was happening here among the various Christian sects. The Founding Fathers left religion out of the law, because they wanted the people to be free to worship as they saw fit as long as you didn't infringe on the rights of others.

Please consider this right that the Founding Fathers gave us when the issue of separation of church and state is being discussed.

In Sincerity,

Regina M Martin
A Concerned Citizen of these United States of America
A Christian

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

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:13:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: text_0.txt

I believe in separation of church and state.
Audine Dieter

From: Nick Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Rebuttal to Page 42 and Page 80 Separation Framework – Nicholas Moore

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:14:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I am submitting this formal public comment to stringently reject the draft report's characterization of the Establishment Clause on page 42 and the subsequent recommendations on page 80. The assertion that the "separation of church and state" is a modern distortion or a hostile "Berlin wall" is historically inaccurate and directly contradicts the explicit intent of the founders.

To argue that separation is not a constitutional principle ignores the foundational philosophy of the man who literally structured our government. James Madison—the 4th President of the United States, AKA Father of the Constitution, and primary author of the Bill of Rights (the First Amendment)—had the following to say regarding the separation of church and state:

On the "Line of Separation" (1819 Letter to Robert Walsh): "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."

On Keeping the Line Absolute (1832 Letter to Jasper Adams): "I must admit moreover that it may not be easy, in every possible case, to trace the line of separation between the rights of religion and the Civil authority... But the tendency to a usurpation on one side or the other, or to a corrupting coalition or alliance between them, will be best guarded agst by a total separation of the two."

On Government Staying Out of Religious Matters (Memorial and Remonstrance, 1785): Before he wrote the First Amendment, Madison successfully fought a Virginia tax meant to fund Christian teachers, writing that the government has no business using its power to support religion: "The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man... Ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation."

From his Memorial and Remonstrance (1785): "Torrents of blood have been spilt in the old world, by the vain attempts of the secular arm, to extinguish Religious discord, by proscribing all difference in Religious opinion... The alternative to which it bans is the Inquisition."

From his letter to Edward Livingston (1822): "Religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together... Every new example, will succeed... in shewing that religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together."

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Moore

Archbald, Pennsylvania

From: G Lorr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Greg lorren

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:14:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as an ordinary citizen from Oregon, not a scholar or a lawyer, just someone who believes in plain common sense when it comes to religion and government. Common sense tells me that once government starts deciding whose faith is correct, it has stopped doing the job it was hired to do, and started doing a job that was never its business.

Common sense also tells us to look at what our own government has already decided. In 1829 and 1830, when Sabbatarian petitioners asked Congress to shut down Sunday mail and enforce religious observance, Congress said no,

From: Carmen Lastine <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State: Public comment by Carmen L Lastine

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:15:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The task set before you is of utmost importance. In reading parts of your report, I am compelled to write as a most concerned citizen. The concept that America was not founded upon the most cherished and certain foundation of Separation of Church and State is a grave error. In fact, Separation of Church and State is one the most fundamental foundations upon which The Republic of the United States of America was established. May no false rhetoric or theories threaten to deceive the commission members concerning the far-reaching principles of this fact and the freedom it provides. Separation of Church and State should stand and as a nation we must protect it valiantly and perpetually to ensure life, liberty and justice for all.

Respectfully,
Carmen Lastine

From: "Yolanda R." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-APPENDIX B-YOLANDA R.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:15:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this comment to urge the Commission to defend the historic principles of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. I oppose any recommendation to the Department of Justice or another government agency that would weaken these constitutional safeguards or encourage greater unity between religious institutions and civil government.

True religious liberty does not require the government to promote religion. It requires government to protect every person's right to worship according to conscience—or not to worship—without coercion, discrimination, or interference.

American history shows why this protection is necessary. During the colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and other religious minorities suffered fines, imprisonment, and discrimination because established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These abuses helped lead to the adoption of the First Amendment.

The experience of seventh-day Sabbath keepers, particularly Seventh-day Adventists, provides another warning. During the late nineteenth century, some were fined, imprisoned, and sentenced to chain-gang labor for performing ordinary work on Sunday after conscientiously observing Saturday as the biblical Sabbath. Their experience demonstrates that when government enforces religiously influenced observances, minority believers are often the first to suffer.

History repeatedly shows the danger of giving civil authority power over conscience. Whether through religious persecution, state-backed religious extremism, or atheistic governments that suppress faith, the result is the same: individual liberty is lost. Government should protect public order, individual rights, and equal treatment under the law. Religious institutions should advance their beliefs through teaching, persuasion, and voluntary faith—not through civil power or coercion. Genuine religion does not need the state to compel belief or observance.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to reject any proposal that weakens the constitutional separation of church and state. Every church should remain free to proclaim its beliefs, and every citizen should remain free to accept or reject those beliefs without government pressure.

The lessons of history are clear. When religious and civil power are united, intolerance and injustice follow. Please defend the First Amendment and preserve the religious liberty of every American.

Respectfully submitted,

Yolanda R.

From: Gwiin Correa <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:16:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Commission's draft report.

As a Christian, I cherish religious liberty and freedom of conscience. I believe every person should be free to worship according to the dictates of their conscience without government interference. That is why I strongly support the constitutional separation of church and state.

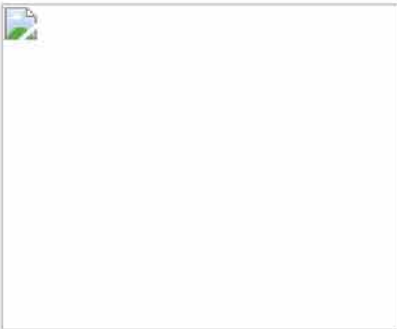
History has shown that when government and religion become intertwined, both are harmed. The church should never become dependent on government funding or political influence, and the government should never favor one religion over another. Keeping these institutions separate protects the freedom of every American, regardless of faith.

I respectfully oppose recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state, including expanding government funding for religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. These proposals risk eroding one of the foundational principles that has safeguarded religious liberty in our nation. Please preserve the constitutional separation of church and state. It is one of the greatest protections for both our government and our churches, ensuring that each remains free to fulfill its proper role.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

Gwiin Correa , MCC
Elk Grove, California



From: Josh Vazquez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:17:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States and 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!

Joshua Vazquez

[REDACTED] PII

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." 3 John 2

From: Eric Flickinger <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION – ERIC & HILDELISA FLICKINGER

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:17:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Trump on June 26, 2026.

Our concerns are in reference to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations and the seeming lack of consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers about the dangers of a union of church and state, and of the many lessons of history regarding such a union.

The following are five key concerns that we have about the committee's recommendations.

1. America has always benefited from keeping church and government separate.

We are concerned that the Committee's recommendations do not fully recognize why the Founding Fathers believed government and religion should remain separate. Leaders like James Madison and Thomas Jefferson understood from history that when churches gain political power—or governments control religion—both religious freedom and civil liberty suffer.

2. History repeatedly shows the dangers of mixing church and state.

Throughout history, people have been imprisoned, beaten, and even executed because governments enforced religious beliefs. Figures such as William Tyndale, Roger Williams, William Penn, and Obadiah Holmes experienced persecution because religious authorities worked hand-in-hand with civil government. These examples remind us why America adopted strong protections for freedom of conscience.

3. Separation of church and state protects everyone's freedoms.

Religious liberty is closely connected to other constitutional rights, including free speech, freedom of the press, and the freedom to express different opinions. History shows that governments tied to religious institutions have often censored books, punished dissent, and restricted open discussion. Protecting the separation of church and state helps safeguard these freedoms for people of every faith—and for those with no faith at all.

4. Churches should not become political organizations.

We oppose the recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment because it helps prevent churches and political candidates from using one another for power and influence. Jesus taught that there is a proper distinction between what belongs to God and what belongs to civil government. Keeping that distinction protects the integrity of both the church and the government.

5. We urge the Department of Justice to study this issue more carefully before taking action.

Rather than adopting recommendations that could weaken the historic separation of church and state, we ask the Department of Justice to hold public hearings and carefully examine the historical and constitutional evidence. America has enjoyed remarkable religious freedom because it has avoided combining political authority with religious authority. We believe preserving that principle remains essential to protecting the rights and freedoms of all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs.

In conclusion:

We respectfully urge the Commission to approach this issue with the utmost care and a full appreciation of its profound historical and constitutional significance. The principle of separating church and state did not arise from abstract political theory, but from the painful lessons of history. Across centuries and nations, the union of religious and civil authority has too often resulted in the erosion of individual liberty, the corruption of both institutions, and the persecution of those whose beliefs differed from those in power.

America's Founders were keen students of this history. Their commitment to protecting both religious liberty and civil government was informed by the experiences of those who suffered under systems that failed to preserve this essential distinction. Their wisdom has served our nation well for two and a half centuries.

It is with genuine respect for the Commission and the importance of its work that we express our concerns. Decisions of this magnitude should rest upon a thorough and balanced understanding of both the historical record and the constitutional principles at stake. An incomplete or inaccurate interpretation of either could have consequences extending far beyond the present moment, affecting the religious liberty and civil freedoms of generations to come.

We therefore respectfully ask the Commission to carefully weigh the testimony of history before recommending any course that could weaken one of the enduring safeguards of freedom in the American constitutional tradition.

The above is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric and Hildelisa Flickinger

From: Donna Cook <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:18:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

In Matthew 22:21 it reads, ...Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. I believe church and state should be seperate. Thank you!

From: canaryraod <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:18:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

It should be pointed out that one of the things that has made our nation great is following the principle that Jesus pointed out in Mark 12:17: "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him."

For too long, nations have tried to control conscience/religion, and it has always led to persecution. If the "Dark Ages" have taught us nothing else, it should have taught us this! God Himself has allowed freedom of choice, and He Himself still sends sunshine on the rebellious and gives food to those who hate Him.

Our nation has thrived in this atmosphere of freedom. Let's not trade our liberty for the fornication of the church with the state!

Sincerely,
Sarah Hope

From: Michael Logan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:18:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

When church and state come together, bad things always happen. I pray that history does not repeat itself. Which church will be in league with the state? The more majority? The more majority does not exist since mankind decided to give dominion of the planet to satan. God has given me the right to make decisions for myself. I do not need others to make them for me. Freedom to worship God, as I see fit in His Holy Bible.

Thank you, Michael Joaquin Logan

From: Deron Isaac <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:19:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen to respectfully ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your recent report that would weaken the separation of church and state, specifically regarding the use of government funds for religious activities and the proposed repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

History demonstrates that true religious freedom is a hard-won right. Many of the early settlers and colonists who came to what became the United States were fleeing severe, state-sponsored religious persecution.

- **Early English Colonists:** Pilgrims (1620) and Puritans (1630) fled the mandatory structures of the Church of England and royal overreach.
- **German Pietists and Lutherans:** Many Protestant groups escaped restrictive Catholic rulers and conflicts within the Holy Roman Empire, finding a haven in Pennsylvania—established by William Penn specifically for Quakers and other persecuted groups.
- **French Huguenots:** These Calvinists faced brutal violence from the French state and fled to colonies like New York and the Carolinas after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

Crucially, much of this bitter history involved Christians persecuting fellow Christians over doctrinal differences. Remembering how easily state-enforced religion breeds oppression, the Framers of the Constitution intentionally chose not to establish a state religion, designing a system to preserve true religious freedom for all.

Today, the diversity within Christianity itself illustrates why this separation remains vital. Even foundational texts are viewed differently across denominations. For instance, as the Ten Commandments are increasingly posted in public schools, we see conflicting interpretations. Depending on the tradition, the prohibition against graven images is categorized differently, and the Sabbath commandment is often altered to accommodate Sunday worship. Yet, many Bible-believing Christians strictly follow the scriptural text observing the Saturday Sabbath, as did Jesus, the disciples, and the early church for the first few centuries before Western Rome transitioned to Christianity. Who decides which version of the 10 commandments is the official one of the state?

A strict separation between church and state is not a secular attack on faith; rather, it is a vital shield that people of all faiths should passionately uphold. When churches accept government funding or immerse themselves in partisan politics, they inevitably inherit political corruption. Houses of worship end up competing for federal dollars and answering to politicians instead of to God, damaging both the church and the country.

Furthermore, for many students of prophecy, these developments raise serious spiritual concerns. The Book of Revelation warns of a future global power that uses state authority to enforce mandatory worship. While we may not be at that point today, eroding these boundaries creates a dangerous precursor. Those pushing to dismantle church-state separation may unknowingly be building the legal framework for future persecution against anyone whose faith or lack thereof, does not perfectly align with the majority.

Dismantling this separation fundamentally misunderstands Christ's character and teachings. As Jesus clearly stated in John 18:36: *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."*

Separation of church and state is a principle built by people of faith to protect faith. It is the very reason religion has remained so robust and diverse in America. Please protect the integrity of both institutions by keeping them distinct.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Deron Isaac

Austin, TX

From: Charlie <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Charles K.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:20:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am submitting my Public Comment OPPOSING the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report does not present a balanced or historically accurate assessment of religious liberty in the United States. The report presents a false premise that the constitutional separation between religion and government is somehow hostile to religion. The opposite is true. Religious liberty is protected by the Establishment Clause by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. This principle has safeguarded both believers and nonbelievers throughout our nation's history and has helped foster one of the most religiously diverse societies in the world.

The RLC draft report relies mostly on testimony from witnesses representing one side of deeply contested constitutional questions while allotting comparatively little attention to scholars, historians, civil rights advocates, religious minorities, or organizations dedicated to preserving governmental neutrality toward religion. Thus the report cannot present itself to be an objective examination of religious liberty, but rather it is an advocacy document supporting a specific political and theological movement. True religious liberty requires government restraint rather than government support and the promotion of religion.

I am very concerned about many of the report's recommendations which would further entangle government with religion rather than protecting religious freedom. I am opposed to abandoning longstanding First Amendment principles, expanding governmental promotion of religion in public institutions, weakening restrictions on partisan political activity by tax-exempt churches, creating new federal mechanisms dedicated to advancing preferred religious claims, and encouraging judicial appointments based on a particular ideological vision of religious liberty. These proposals threaten the constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and equal treatment for believers and nonbelievers alike which I support.

I respectfully urge the Commission to substantially revise or withdraw the portions of the draft report that seek to redefine the Establishment Clause, reduce governmental neutrality toward religion, or promote policies that would privilege particular religious beliefs through governmental action.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles K.,
United States Citizen

From: Cindy Bowmann [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Cynthia Bowman

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:21:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen from Shelby, North Carolina, with no institutional standing except the plain conviction that both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses rise or fall together. We stand at another one of those hinge moments our country has faced before, and I confess I feel the same unease I feel watching new technologies like artificial intelligence race ahead of our wisdom to govern them: good intentions, followed by a Pandora's box we cannot close again. God's ways are not our ways, and history has shown repeatedly that human pride convinces us we can "fix" what only invites new harm. I ask you to weigh your recommendations against Scripture and history, not merely against the wisdom of the present moment.

The deepest argument against religious legislation is not secular but Christian. When Christ said that the things which are Caesar's belong to Caesar and the things which are God's belong to God, he divided all human duty into two jurisdictions, and civil government was granted only one of them. The state may rightly ask whether an act injures a neighbor; it has no standing to ask whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical. A commission that puts government behind a religious text or observance does not overreach a secular boundary — it trespasses the very line its own Lord drew.

There is also a structural reason government can never rightfully hold this power: it was never given. Our government exists by the consent of the governed, resting on powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — he cannot appoint another to believe or worship in his place. What was never within any citizen's power to hand over could never have been received by any government. And no government will ever stand at the judgment seat to answer for a soul, so no government can rightly claim jurisdiction over one now.

This is why even a law favoring one's own religion destroys the free exercise of it. Any religious statute must define the belief it protects, and that definition will include some and exclude others — even the included now practice their faith by the law's permission rather than by conscience. A believer who welcomes government endorsement today hands the same machinery to whatever administration governs tomorrow, on convictions that may differ entirely from his own.

Our nation already settled this question once. Congress's own committees, in 1829 and 1830, when men who had lived through the founding still served, declared that ours is a civil and not a religious institution, bound to protect all faiths and determine for none. They saw plainly that if government defines one religious duty, it may claim the right to define them all, and that human power can extort outward conformity but never command the heart. That report is the precedent this Commission must answer to, not a modern court case.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Cynthia Bowman
Shelby, NC

From: Rowdy Mobile <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clausen- ROWDY SCHMIDT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:23:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen of Silverton, Idaho, who cares about getting this right, because whatever your commission recommends will shape how millions of Americans experience their government for a long time to come. I do not come to this as an opponent of religion. I come to it as someone who believes religion is too important to be handed over to legislators, school boards, or courts to define.

Start with the practical problem no establishment scheme ever solves: whose religion gets adopted? There is no generic, non-sectarian Christianity waiting to be posted on a schoolhouse wall. Even the Ten Commandments, often called common ground, are not common ground at all — Protestants and Catholics have long numbered and translated the decalogue differently, a difference one writer of the era called irreconcilable. If a state chooses which Bible, which translation, which numbering to enforce, it has not honored religion generally; it has crowned one tradition and demoted the rest by the force of law. As a congressional committee recognized as early as 1830, that kind of choice belongs to a church council, not a republican legislature, because a republican legislature exists for political purposes, not religious ones.

Some argue that strict separation is a modern invention, foreign to the founders' intent. The history runs the other way. Madison, who drafted the First Amendment, told the Virginia ratifying convention plainly that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. This was not an accident of drafting or a slight against faith — it was, in the words of the era, done out of respect for religion and for the rights of men which that religion inculcates. And it was churches themselves — Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, communities that had suffered under establishment — who pushed hardest for that separation. A commission that wants to claim the founders for state-sponsored religion has to explain away Madison's own words.

This is not just founding-era theory; it is settled government precedent. When Sabbatarian petitioners asked Congress to legislate religious observance in 1829 and 1830, the congressional committees that answered them — one generation removed from the founding, with men who had lived through it still serving — declared it was not the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or false, since our government is a civil and not a religious institution. They saw clearly that if government defines one point of religious duty, it may with equal claim define every point, down to the ceremonies of worship and the support of clergy. That is the precedent this commission would have to overturn — not a twentieth-century court ruling, but an official act of the very Congress that followed the founders.

Finally, consider what coercion actually produces. Force can put a body in a pew; it cannot put worship in a heart, because love for God is essential to any genuine act of religious duty. Compelling religious observance breeds hypocrisy, not faith. Madison's own survey of fifteen centuries of established Christianity found the fruits to be pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and in both, superstition and persecution. State favor does not strengthen a church; it corrupts it, trading spiritual vitality for the comfort of political protection. Grant said it well: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and keep the state and church forever separate.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Rowdy Schmidt
Silverton, Idaho

From: Valerie Robertson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church & State – Valerie Robertson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:23:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a United States citizen I am writing to request that you reconsider the recommendation to weaken the separation of church and state. The only way we can experience true freedom is when religion and government are kept separate. Because religion is a personal issue, the government must stay neutral to protect everyone's rights to believe as they wish without interfering. Our country was founded because people were seeking to escape the tyranny of government control through the churches.

I respectfully request that you do not repeal the Johnson Amendment.

Let freedom ring! Let church and state remain separate!

Valerie Robertson
Edgewater, FL

From: John Deutschbein <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION – [John Deutschbein].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:24:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the recommendations of the Final Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Freedom Commission. As a U.S. citizen, and lifelong Catholic, I find many things objectionable about the Commission and its report.

To start, the majority of its members have expressed opinions that reek of White Christian Nationalism. One example, Paula White, has made no secret about her support for the Seven Mountains Mandate and the New Apostolic Reformation, both of which are strongly associated with Christian Nationalism.

In the USA, Catholicism is a minority faith. However I have been free to practice as the 1st amendment guarantees my right to do so. But in this Report, the depiction of the history of religious freedom in America is seriously flawed and seems to be based more on ideology than historical fact.

The Report seems to assume that the founders intended the United States to be a "Christian Nation" and that separation of church and state was not intended and is simply not supported by the actual historical record. One need only read the words of the founders to see this (these are just a few of many):

Founder Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists (1802):

"Religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God" and that the founders intended "**a wall of separation between Church & land State.**"

Founder James Madison's Comments on the First Amendment:

"The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe with blood for centuries.

Founder John Barlow, in the Treaty of Tripoli (1796):

"The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

Suggested reading: "Liars for Jesus- The Religious Rights Alternate Version of American History. by Chris Rodda.

The 1st amendment is a deliberate attempt to create a national government devoid of specific religious authority and thereby to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society, not to diminish it. This has been well understood for my lifetime. The only religious conflicts that I have encountered in my life have been when fundamentalist evangelicals tried to force Young Earth Creationism into kids Bible study at a church I was attending. This issue was dealt with at that church. In the United States, that is how it should be. The government should stay out of those discussions. The examples of religious "oppression" in the Report seem curated to promote the Christian Nationalist agenda, not protect religious liberty.

Instead of the U.S. Department of Justice engaging in strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the DOJ should be suing Texas & other states for violating the 1st Amendment. Instead, the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism, attacking the long history of religious pluralism in the United States. This approach cannot be farther from the intent of the Founders.

I strongly support religious liberty as it allows me to safely practice my minority faith in the United States. I believe adopting the Commission's recommendations would have the opposite effect, putting the government's thumb on the scales of justice in favor of a particular brand of religious authority. The world does not need a repeat of the bloody religious wars such as occurred in Europe for the centuries after the Reformation.

I urge the Commission to withdraw its report. The Commission needs to remove the ideological bias and get a more accurate historical foundation. How about adding a few more historians to the commission? Maybe Chris Rodda is available.

Sincerely yours,

John Deutschbein

From: Sherri Sicina <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Sherri Sicina

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:24:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was concerned reading that our government wants to consider weakening the separation of church and state and repealing the Johnson Amendment. This country the USA was founded on religious liberty and having the freedom to follow the dictates of your own conscience. That's why the pilgrims came to America to leave a life that had No separation of church and state. This country has offered this freedom for 250yrs and it needs to continue. Without this, other religions can than be imposed on citizens by our Government which as a Christian I would not want to have the Muslim faith pushed on me to follow. As would a Muslim not want Christianity pushed on them. Without separation of church and state religious freedom is impossible. Removing governments ability to give preferential treatment to one religion or religion in general, helps to separate church and state and allows Americans to practice their deeply held beliefs in private and public. Ultimately, not allowing government to interfere with religion is essential for religious freedom.

Sincerely,

Sherri Sicina

Union, Maine

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:25:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious liberty commission:

I'm troubled about the separation of church and state. From history, it has always been trouble, when the Church and State combined. It is not a good thing.

Kevin Albertsen
Pittsburg, Ca

From: Rachel Lamkin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment General Comment (The Path Forward) -- Rachel Lamkin

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:26:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you so very much for the work done by the Commission! I fully support this work & pray that our nation will break the lie of "separation of church and state." This has had dire consequences for our nation. May we as a nation repent & rebuke this claim. May we reclaim our nation's heritage that religious liberty is "essential because religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society." I agree with the members of this Commission that, "religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength." With the help of Almighty God, let us, "cultivate a culture that understands why those rights exist in the first place." God bless America!

Rachel Lamkin

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From: Lucienne Cole <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] "religious liberty"

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:26:48 -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.

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.

I remain, Yours truly,

Lucienne Cole

Sent from my iPhone

From: Larvarn Jordan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:27:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

Based on the economic and political climate. I am opposed to the merging Church and State.

From: Daniel Perrin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:27:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Retain_Separation_of_Church_and_State.pdf

July 12, 2026

Email 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,
members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the United States, I read with interest the June 26, 2026 draft report released by the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. The words "Religious Liberty" are a desirable goal, an essential quality for a free people and a free nation; but when religious liberty is redefined so that the words give broad power to select religious bodies to use governmental authority to compel obedience to one version of religious doctrines, the words come to mean the exact opposite of true religious liberty, regardless of how they are hailed and promoted. Recommendations 1 and 9 of the report especially adjust the direction of religious liberty in this nation so that it will arrive at a fateful destination where liberty is only granted to those who believe or obey the religious commandments of the majority. **I request that you protect true religious liberty by retaining the separation of church and state. Please remove recommendations 1 and 9 from the report through the most direct process possible.**

While the intention to defend religious believers and organizations from discrimination is righteous, this report oversteps the natural boundary that limits the power a religious body may exert over a nation's laws. While this document appears to protect the right to hold and express faith, it will certainly be seen that it will empower a portion of religious believers to control the power of government. This combination of religious and governmental powers will ultimately be used to coerce, compel, or terrorize adherents to another faith, or no faith at all, to either hide their conviction or outwardly trade it for the religion currently possessing power. Though it is not seen in full detail where

the recommendations of this document are tending, the fruit of the plant is present in the seed. The example of what fruit will be produced is visible in the parent plant.

History has many examples of the parent plant this document will produce, examples of governments which united church and state. In their blood-stained history, we see the future of this nation if we allow any church to blend its interests with the state so that religion may wield the power of the government. When the God-given barrier separating human governments from religious institutions is dissolved, terrible will be the results for generations to follow until brave reformers finally rise up to restore what our Founding Fathers courageously carved out and preserved for us.

It was church united with the power of the state that lit the Smithfield fires of the 1580s, in which Protestants were burned to death outside the walls of London by a religious decree carried out by government authority.

It was church united with the power of the state that brought about the torments of the Spanish Inquisition in which individuals and families with God-given freewill were stripped to nothing and brutally tortured at the accusation that their secret thoughts were not in accordance with the church authorities that bent the ear of the government.

It was church united with the power of the state that burned Jan Hus as a heretic in 1415 for preaching messages unsanctioned by church authorities.

It was church united with the power of the state that strangled William Tyndale and burned him to death in 1536 for translating and distributing the Bible.

It was church united with the power of the state that whipped and hanged Quakers on this continent in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1600s for not abiding by the Puritan doctrines of worship. The Mary Dyer Memorial outside the Massachusetts State House in Boston stands today as a silent witness of the consequence of uniting church and state. Religious freedom will not be preserved; rather, it will be abridged and ultimately revoked.

It was church working through the power of the state that persecuted the peaceful Quakers of Flushing in the 1650s. The courageous citizens presented the Flushing Remonstrance in 1657 requesting the governing authorities to grant religious freedom to all faiths. This heroic document envisioning the separation of the government from the control of religious interest was memorialized on a United States postal stamp in 1957.

It was not the church alone that fined, imprisoned, and killed in the name of preserving religious purity. Nor was it the state. The church doesn't have the power, and the state doesn't have the will. These injustices have taken place when the church crosses the natural limits God has set upon faith by uniting with governments to demand what God declares must be given only by free will.

It will be a church united with the power of the state that will impose pecuniary penalties or imprisonment on those who do not worship according to the ordinances of one church body — worship in the form of imposed creeds, forced prayers, levied tithes, legislated days of rest, or laws that govern motives, intentions, and thoughts.

The record of history has shown that when church and state unite, religious forces will at some point use state authority to require submission to their religious authority. The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report, in dissolving the separation that must exist between church and state, directs this nation toward a state of affairs in which citizens will not be free to choose or to live their faith. Human nature is no different today than it has been in the past; if we unite church and state today, the result will be the same as it has always been in the past – one religious body will attempt to rule the conscience of the people through legislation, privileges, and penalties.

In this nation, religious and governmental voices are now calling for a repudiation of this nation's separation of the powers of government and religion. Those voices have variously declared that the protective wall that prevents churches from controlling state power is not found in the United States Constitution. Those expressing these claims further state that the Founding Fathers intended for the church to influence and control the state.

If it were true that the founders of this nation intended our Constitution to enshrine the right of a church to direct the government, what would we expect to find plainly stated in the Constitution? If the framers of the Constitution intended to canonize the union of church and state, what language must appear, plainly set forth?

- We would find in the Constitution a statement defining *which* god and *which* religion should have authority to implement its vision through combining with the government. Yet no god is mentioned even once in the text of the Constitution.
- We would find in the Constitution a statement as to *which* church should influence the government. There would be a delineation of which of the many opposing religious doctrines would hold preeminence in the nation. There would be an explanation of which religious doctrine holds the privileged position of directing legislation to favor its position and penalize others.
- We would find in the Constitution descriptions of the methods the chosen church could employ to protect and impose its dogmas through governmental channels.
- We would find in the Constitution references to the positions and titles of religious leaders and their interconnected role with lawmakers and executives.
- We would find in the Constitution clear statements that exalt and praise the will of the church and recommend its religious laws to be appreciated and obeyed by every citizen.
- We would find in the Constitution provisions for penalizing and punishing heretics who do not conform to the doctrines and dogmas of the favored church.

A plain reading of the Constitution reveals none of the above elements that must be present if our Founding Fathers intended church to be united with the state. Rather than clearly setting forth the union of church and state, the Constitution is notably silent on each of the statements that must be present to establish the union of those powers. If the Founding Fathers intended church to have power to influence and control the government, that principle should be clearly expressed repeatedly and without ambiguity. Instead, a religious body called "the church" is not an entity recognized by the Constitution as having any authority with government. No god is mentioned by name; no church is set forth as having power with government; no creed or command to worship is canonized; no connection is set forth either overtly or in vague language. There are many different religious bodies, some diametrically opposed in the tenets they would impose if given the power. The Constitution grants to

none of those religious bodies a privileged status of having influence over any branch of government. If one religious body were given special power to influence our government and its laws, freedom, so-called, would only be a reality for the few with power. The result would be oppression for the many who must surrender both conscience and personal freedom to the religious leaders currently in favor with legislators and executives.

"In God We Trust" is not a statement in the Constitution. Claiming that the dollar in our pocket demonstrates that this is a Christian nation and that a church should receive a flow of money from the government to finance its religious objectives, religious education, and proselytizing is a logical fallacy. Roman symbols appear on U.S. money, but this is not a Roman nation. A coin is not our Constitution. It is intellectual dishonesty that manipulates the public through false associations between what was written in the Constitution in 1787 and what was printed on a coin first in 1864.

Point #9 of the draft report calls for the Johnson Amendment to be repealed. If this recommendation were to be enacted, the resulting power-grab frenzy would be a race between opposing religious bodies to stake their claim on government power. This fatal decision will wreak havoc on the trust any citizen could place in the integrity of government leaders who are to represent the rights of *all* citizens. There would be no assurance that government leaders would not be bought by the offerings of religious bodies and become, in essence, a power-invested arm of the church with the loudest voice or deepest pocket.

In 1829, Hon. Richard M. Johnson, writing in a Senate Report, gave guidance in defining the position religion should play in relation to government. The wall of separation between church and state prevents the insertion of divine law into the body of government legislation.

"Among all the religious persecutions with which almost every page of modern history is stained, no victim ever suffered but for violation of what Government denominated the law of God. To prevent a similar train of evils in this country, the Constitution has withheld the power of defining the divine law. It is a right reserved to each citizen. And while he respects the rights of others he cannot be held amenable to any human tribunal for his conclusions."

It was James Madison who gave this wise admonition of the proper relationship between church and state in the discharge of a government's duty:

"Every new & successful example therefore of a perfect separation between ecclesiastical and civil matters, is of importance. And I have no doubt that every new example, will succeed, as every past one has done, in shewing that religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together."

(Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822).

Religion is a positive influence in this nation, and acts as a natural limiting factor to the government by allowing a moral people to elect moral leaders. Its presence and free expression in our nation is essential. Nonetheless, religion should not have a role in promoting legislation through its financial donations or influencing secular government leaders.

I raise my voice in opposition to the acceptance and implementation of this draft document as written in its intention to unite church and state, especially recommendations 1 and 9 noted

above. I am thankful for the freedom to express this opinion without threat of retaliation or retribution. I ask that the members of this council protect the rights of *all* citizens and *all* faiths to live and worship according to the dictates of their own conscience without any religious body having special power to impose its will through legislation or governmental influence. **To protect religious liberty for all, no church should be permitted to unite with government. Church and state must remain forever separate to preserve freedom for all.**

Respectfully,

Daniel Perrin, a concerned private citizen
Pullman, Michigan

July 12, 2026

Email 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 a citizen of the United States, I read with interest the June 26, 2026 draft report released by the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. The words “Religious Liberty” are a desirable goal, an essential quality for a free people and a free nation; but when religious liberty is redefined so that the words give broad power to select religious bodies to use governmental authority to compel obedience to one version of religious doctrines, the words come to mean the exact opposite of true religious liberty, regardless of how they are hailed and promoted. Recommendations 1 and 9 of the report especially adjust the direction of religious liberty in this nation so that it will arrive at a fateful destination where liberty is only granted to those who believe or obey the religious commandments of the majority. **I request that you protect true religious liberty by retaining the separation of church and state. Please remove recommendations 1 and 9 from the report through the most direct process possible.**

While the intention to defend religious believers and organizations from discrimination is righteous, this report oversteps the natural boundary that limits the power a religious body may exert over a nation’s laws. While this document appears to protect the right to hold and express faith, it will certainly be seen that it will empower a portion of religious believers to control the power of government. This combination of religious and governmental powers will ultimately be used to coerce, compel, or terrorize adherents to another faith, or no faith at all, to either hide their conviction or outwardly trade it for the religion currently possessing power. Though it is not seen in full detail where the recommendations of this document are tending, the fruit of the plant is present in the seed. The example of what fruit will be produced is visible in the parent plant.

History has many examples of the parent plant this document will produce, examples of governments which united church and state. In their blood–stained history, we see the future of this nation if we allow any church to blend its interests with the state so that religion may wield

the power of the government. When the God-given barrier separating human governments from religious institutions is dissolved, terrible will be the results for generations to follow until brave reformers finally rise up to restore what our Founding Fathers courageously carved out and preserved for us.

It was church united with the power of the state that lit the Smithfield fires of the 1580s, in which Protestants were burned to death outside the walls of London by a religious decree carried out by government authority.

It was church united with the power of the state that brought about the torments of the Spanish Inquisition in which individuals and families with God-given freewill were stripped to nothing and brutally tortured at the accusation that their secret thoughts were not in accordance with the church authorities that bent the ear of the government.

It was church united with the power of the state that burned Jan Hus as a heretic in 1415 for preaching messages unsanctioned by church authorities.

It was church united with the power of the state that strangled William Tyndale and burned him to death in 1536 for translating and distributing the Bible.

It was church united with the power of the state that whipped and hanged Quakers on this continent in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1600s for not abiding by the Puritan doctrines of worship. The Mary Dyer Memorial outside the Massachusetts State House in Boston stands today as a silent witness of the consequence of uniting church and state. Religious freedom will not be preserved; rather, it will be abridged and ultimately revoked.

It was church working through the power of the state that persecuted the peaceful Quakers of Flushing in the 1650s. The courageous citizens presented the Flushing Remonstrance in 1657 requesting the governing authorities to grant religious freedom to all faiths. This heroic document envisioning the separation of the government from the control of religious interest was memorialized on a United States postal stamp in 1957.

It was not the church alone that fined, imprisoned, and killed in the name of preserving religious purity. Nor was it the state. The church doesn't have the power, and the state doesn't have the will. These injustices have taken place when the church crosses the natural limits God has set upon faith by uniting with governments to demand what God declares must be given only by free will.

It will be a church united with the power of the state that will impose pecuniary penalties or imprisonment on those who do not worship according to the ordinances of one church body — worship in the form of imposed creeds, forced prayers, levied tithes, legislated days of rest, or laws that govern motives, intentions, and thoughts.

The record of history has shown that when church and state unite, religious forces will at some point use state authority to require submission to their religious authority. The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report, in dissolving the separation that must exist between church and state, directs this nation toward a state of affairs in which citizens will not be free to choose or to live their faith. Human nature is no different today than it has been in the past; if we unite church and state today, the result will be the same as it has always been in the past – one religious body will attempt to rule the conscience of the people through legislation, privileges, and penalties.

In this nation, religious and governmental voices are now calling for a repudiation of this nation's separation of the powers of government and religion. Those voices have variously declared that the protective wall that prevents churches from controlling state power is not found in the United States Constitution. Those expressing these claims further state that the Founding Fathers intended for the church to influence and control the state.

If it were true that the founders of this nation intended our Constitution to enshrine the right of a church to direct the government, what would we expect to find plainly stated in the Constitution? If the framers of the Constitution intended to canonize the union of church and state, what language must appear, plainly set forth?

- We would find in the Constitution a statement defining *which* god and *which* religion should have authority to implement its vision through combining with the government. Yet no god is mentioned even once in the text of the Constitution.
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Respectfully,

Daniel Perrin, a concerned private citizen
Pullman, Michigan

From: Juan Felipe Martin Concepcion <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:29:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Juan Felipe Martín

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-separation of church and state

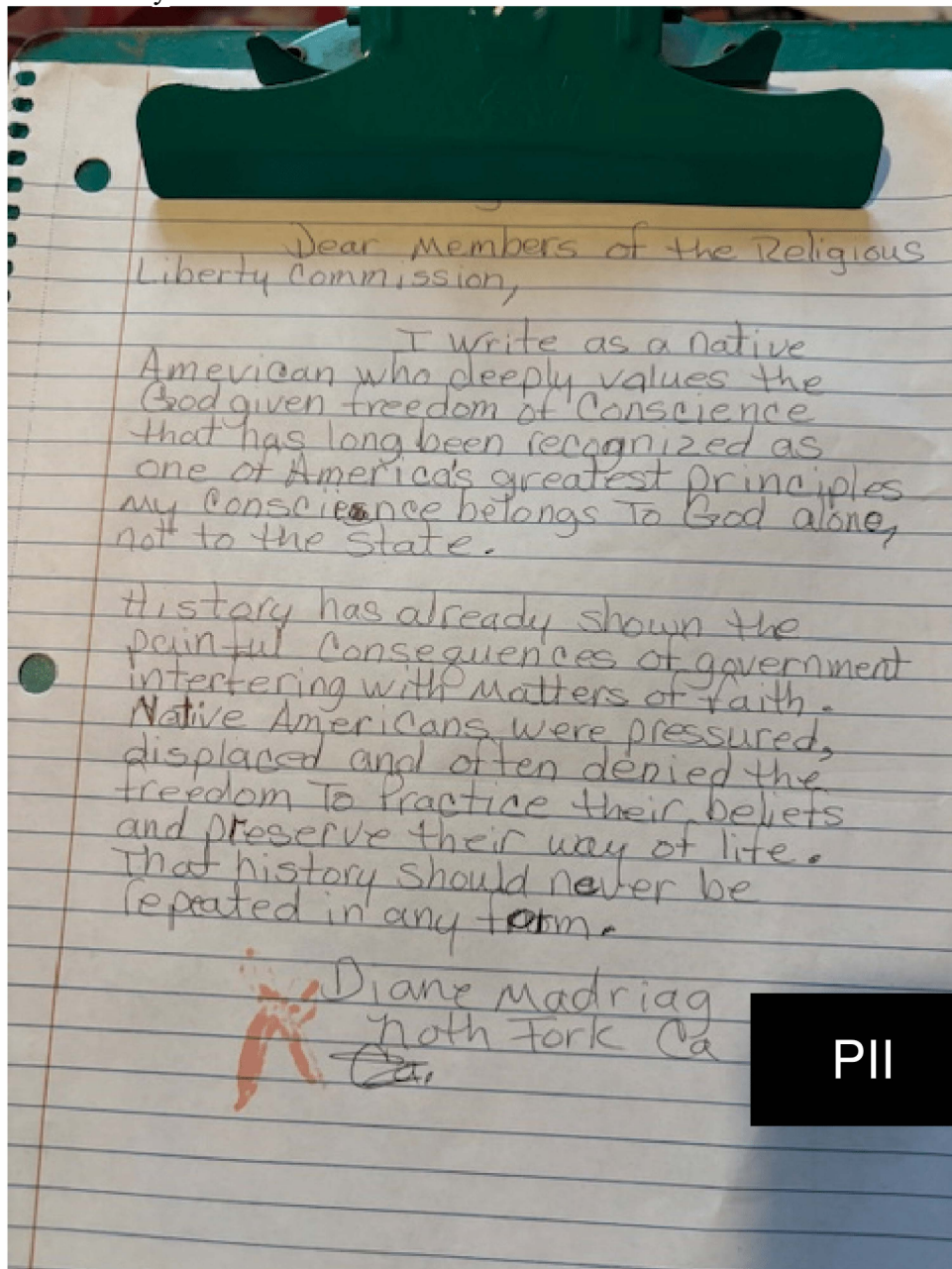
Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:29:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: IMG_8592.jpg



Sent from my iPhone



From: Sean Carney <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Deep Concerns Regarding the Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:29:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

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

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to any recommendations that erode the separation of church and state—specifically any efforts to strike this foundational phrase from public discourse.

The First Amendment guarantees the right to religious freedom by ensuring the government does not privilege one faith over another. My own family of mixed faiths all came to America to escape religious harassment. Witnessing our government begin to elevate a single religion over others—under the false pretense that our nation was founded on one specific faith—is deeply alarming. Our Founders intentionally prevented a state religion from dictating the use of public funds and governance.

True religious liberty requires keeping church and state separate. I urge the Commission to uphold our nation's diverse heritage and protect the freedom of all Americans by maintaining this vital constitutional boundary.

Sincerely,
Sean Carney
Amity, Arkansas

From: T W <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:30:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Separation of church and state protects freedom. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on everyone, leading to discrimination and tyranny.

Religion is personal. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress.

It was exactly why the USA was founded originally! The first people came here exactly BECAUSE church and state in their own countries was NOT separate.

So PLEASE, keep church and state completely separate.

Thank You for reading my letter

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

From: Sara Fitzgerald <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT--RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT
REPORT--SARA FITZGERALD

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a trained historian, a lifelong Christian and someone who has served in leadership roles in my Protestant denomination, I urge the Department to send the Draft Report of the Religious Liberty back to the drawing board for extensive revisions (if not consigning it to the dustbin) It reflects a distorted, inaccurate view of the religious history of the United States and the beliefs of those who founded our country. The report cherry-picks episodes when it contends the religious liberty of individuals was violated by certain laws designed to protect broader human rights.

In John 8:32, Jesus said "Only the truth can set us free." Tell the true story of our nation's history and assert its long commitment to a plurality of religious views.

From: David Hicks <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am troubled to read that the Commission wants to tear down the wall of separation between Church and State that has existed in my beloved country and made it great. As a devout Christian and a protestant, I value worshiping as I believe without the fear of the government or a powerful political church opposing me for my beliefs in the Holy Bible. Throughout history Christians have been persecuted and even killed when a powerful church with political clout disagrees with the fundamental beliefs of a smaller more vulnerable group of Christians. When my ancestors came to America, they were pleased to find a government without a king and a church without a pope. Let us keep it that way, please!

God Bless,

David Hicks

Colcord, Oklahoma

From: Matt Schneider <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] let Constatution stand

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

To law makers,

Please leave the Constatution alone.

Listen to our ancestors wisdom. Government has no place in Religion.

Please keep the Seperation of church and State.

This country was founded on Freedom of religion. Let's keep it that way.

Thank you for your time.

Matt

From: "Mellor, Don" <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] We object to the RLC proposed document on religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious liberty committee members,
tomorrow is the deadline for public response to your drafted document on religious freedom. The reason we object to this report is it redefines the separation between church and state and goes on to state that our constitution does not require separation between church and government. Why is this a big deal? Historically throughout earth's history whenever there was a union between church and state it inevitably resulted in persecution. Whoever was in power would use their understanding of God's word and proceed to implement coercion and force obedience. The greatest atrocities ever committed upon humanity were done because of the union between church and state. Our founding fathers understood this and took steps to try and prevent this from happening again when they wrote up our constitution and specifically addressed this issue in the first amendment. Furthermore, we believe this is so important because it completely misrepresents God who created us to be free and values nothing higher than our freedom and individuality. When James and John asked if Jesus wanted them to call fire down from heaven to destroy some people who didn't welcome them into their village, Jesus told James and John that they didn't know what manner of spirit they harbored and that He did not come to destroy lives but to save lives. We strongly disagree with the committee wanting to rewrite our country's long held commitment to keeping a barrier between the joining of church and state!!!

Sincerely,

Don L. Mellor Psy.D

Sharon J. Mellor LCSW

Sent from my iPhone

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This e-mail communication and any attachments may contain confidential and privileged information for the use of the designated recipients named above. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this communication in error and that any review, disclosure, dissemination, distribution or copying of it or its contents is prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify me immediately by replying to this message and destroy all copies of this communication and any attachments. Thank you.

From: Nicolaus Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:32:23 -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

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

Please do not build a bridge between the church and state; I am troubled by that idea. The United States is the greatest nation in the world. One of the things that has made us great is the separation of church and state. I wholly agree with Thomas Jefferson when he said "It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." We are strong because of our freedom.

Church and state need to be separate in order for freedom to permeate our society. The Johnson Amendment is necessary to maintain this separation. Jesus said in John 18 "My Kingdom is not of this world." The church needs to focus on the heavenly things, and the government needs to focus on the earthly matters. The two should not influence each other. Thank you

Sincerely,

Nicolaus Anderson

Larsen, Wisconsin

From: Lucy Mercer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:32:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a woman if faith in Jesus Christ, and he never mixed politics with religion. That's why the USA is great because we also separate church and state. Remember history? The Roman Catholic church and the dark ages? Huss and Jerome, Martin Luther, Tinsdale many of them died for their faith because of a union of church and state. Keep America free, keep separation of church and state.

From: Marty Phillips <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTn— Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:32:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT — Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

TO: Religious Liberty Commission, via [REDACTED] PII SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENTn—
Recommendations 1 and 9; Universal Protection – Marty Phillips

Dear Members of the Commission:

Greetings from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Thank you — and please convey my thanks to President Trump — for the labor behind this report. The grievances you documented are real, and I support the substantial majority of your recommendations: the "Know Your Rights" initiatives (2, 4); the military accommodation and restoration provisions (10, 11)n— with particular gratitude that the report expressly names Sabbath observance; the healthcare conscience protections; the stand against anti-Semitism (7); and the de-banking protections. I share, as sharply as any witness you heard, the grief over the erasure of religious heritage from our national memory.

I write as an American whose family has lived on this land since the Mayflower, with forebears among the Rhode Island dissenters who first planted the principle of full liberty of conscience on this continent — a Sabbath-keeping Christian in the tradition that gave this nation its conscientious medics, from the Civil War to Corporal Desmond Doss at Hacksaw Ridge.

Having spent decades serving believers in places where religious liberty does not exist, I perceive that we are at a tipping point. Written one way, its protections will endure for generations. Written as drafted, its two central mechanisms — executive-defined religious liberty (Recommendation 1) and undisclosed political money through churches (Recommendation 9) — will change hands with the next administration and be turned against the very believers who testified before you. The margin is razor-thin: a few sentences of drafting, and the window closes with this comment period. I therefore submit four requests and respectfully ask that the final report address each.

REQUEST 1 — Do not let any administration define the First Amendment by memo. Recommendation 1 places the meaning of the Religion Clauses in the executive branch — not the Supreme Court, not Congress. Whatever this administration writes, a future Department of Justice rewrites with the same pen: declaring Sabbath accommodation an "undue hardship," or deciding which gatherings count as religion at all. This is not speculation but the documented fate of guidance: the federal school-prayer guidelines of 2003 were reissued in 2020 and revised again in 2023, and the Attorney General's 2017 religious-liberty guidance was rescinded by the next administration. *Would you place this power in the hands of the administration you most fear? If not, the recommendation must say so now — it cannot be amended later.* **I request that Recommendation 1 be revised so that any guidance may only restate existing Supreme Court holdings, with citations, issued through formal notice-and-comment rulemaking** — the model of the 1995 and 1998 federal guidelines, which calmed these very disputes.

REQUEST 2 — Free the pulpit, but keep campaign money out of churches. The pastors' freedom, which your witnesses asked for, can be fully secured by statute protecting every sermon and pastoral statement made in

the ordinary course of ministry — your own Chapter 3 proposes exactly this. Full repeal of the Johnson Amendment goes further. Churches are the only charities in America exempt from public financial disclosure; every other tax-exempt organization publicly reports its officers, key employees, and finances. Open church treasuries to campaigns — deductible money in, no disclosure inside, political money out — and you create the most powerful undisclosed political vehicle in American law. Congress will not tolerate it forever; the exemption itself will fall. The political churches will survive that audit. The persecuted church will not. *Why choose full repeal, with its certain backlash, when your own Chapter 3 safe harbor delivers everything the testimony asked for?* **I request that Recommendation 9 be replaced with a codified pulpit speech safe harbor, preserving the existing prohibition on church campaign contributions and expenditures.**

REQUEST 3 — Protect worshippers; never list them. Here is my personal interest. I lead a house church movement — through a church duly registered in Tennessee, with a charter extending to the United States and beyond — serving fellowships whose believers live where public identification means death. Our registration is freely made; theirs would be fatal. We once held 501(c)(3) status and relinquished it because its public disclosure of officers and workers would have exposed our people to that fate. For millions of believers, the difference between liberty defined by *exercise* and liberty defined by *registration* is the difference between life and death — not rhetoric, but the daily arithmetic of the underground church. **I request that the final report state explicitly that religious liberty attaches to religious exercise, not to registration or organizational form — covering unregistered fellowships as fully as any incorporated church — and that no federal hotline, portal, registry, compliance program, or grant condition ever records or retains the identities of worshippers or the locations of their gatherings.** A liberty that requires believers to be counted is not liberty for those whose counting endangers.

REQUEST 4 — State the protection universally for every faith. The Commission heard testimony on Native American sacred sites and other minority-faith claims that the draft does not yet address. Do not leave that silence in the final report — for principle, and for survival. Principle: "to bigotry no sanction" must shelter the Jewish student, the Native American at his sacred site, the Muslim, the Christian, and the unbeliever alike, or it is not the Founders' standard. Survival: a report protecting only the faiths its authors know will be repealed as a party document; one protecting the faiths they *don't* know will be defended by everyone. Rhode Island's charter of 1663 sheltered even the communions its authors feared — which is precisely why its principle, and no narrower one, became the First Amendment. **I request that the final report adopt language to this effect: "The protections outlined in this report extend equally to all persons in the United States, regardless of faith or lack thereof, expressly including Native American sacred-site claims, minority-faith practices, unregistered religious communities, and non-Christian traditions."**

Each request strengthens the report; none weakens it. The attached appendix supplies precise language for all four. My family has kept the Sabbath in this country for ten generations — through the Tennessee chain gangs of the 1890s — so we know what the First Amendment protects, and what happens when it sleeps. Whether this report lasts four years or fifty is being decided in these final weeks, by exactly the details named above.

With gratitude for your labor, and prayers for your deliberations,

Blessings.

Kind regards,

Präsident nPraxis

Marty Phillips

Chattanooga, Tennessee

APPENDIX: Proposed Safeguard Amendments

Offered in support of the report's purposes — each amendment is proposed either as model statutory language or as suggested text for the final report, as appropriate. Each preserves the protection and removes only the danger of reversal: recent history has shown that guidance-based protections are redefined, diluted, or reversed with each change of administration; these amendments make the Commission's achievements durable.

Five Principles Behind Every Amendment

1. **Regulate the boundary, never the interior.** Rules may govern where church money and state money meet; they may never reach inside church governance, membership, or doctrine.
2. **Symmetry or nothing.** Every protection for religious expression must carry the twin protection against religious imposition; one-directional rules become weapons when power reverses.
3. **Courts, not departments.** Route remedies through the judiciary, where minorities win on principle — not executive discretion, which changes hands. (The executive may always bind *itself* — restraining its own data collection and programs; what it may not do is define the Constitution's meaning for everyone else. Requests 1 and 3 apply this same line from opposite sides.)
4. **Freeze the conditions.** Any program religious institutions enter must fix its terms by statute at entry, with no retroactive conditions and a no-penalty exit.
5. **Define by exercise, not form.** Protect religious *practice*, never merely organizational *form* — or the unregistered and persecuted fall outside the shield.

Request 1 in full — Recommendation 1 (Establishment Clause guidance)

- **The Restatement Rule:** guidance may only restate existing Supreme Court holdings, with citations — the model of the 1995/1998 federal guidelines — with an explicit disclaimer that it creates no new rights and binds no court.
- **The Symmetry Mandate:** every statement of protected religious expression paired with the corresponding prohibition on religious imposition (coercion, conditioned benefits, official proselytizing of captive audiences).
- **Notice-and-comment rulemaking**, not memo — so minority faiths are heard on the record, and reversal also requires process.
- **Sunset and reauthorization** every four years with a published minority-faith impact review — a short leash for the executive instrument precisely because durable rights belong in statute and judicial precedent, not memos.

Request 2 in full — Recommendation 9 (Johnson Amendment)

- **The Speech Safe Harbor (in place of repeal):** statements made in the ordinary course of a religious organization's activities (sermons, teaching, newsletters), at no more than de minimis incremental cost, are not "intervention." This secures every pastor's pulpit without opening the treasury.
- **The Financial Wall preserved:** contributions, purchased advertising, paid campaign staffing, and in-kind transfers to campaigns remain prohibited for organizations receiving tax-deductible donations.
- **The Anti-Conduit Rule:** any donation earmarked or solicited for political activity automatically loses its charitable deduction and is disclosed above a modest threshold. This disclosure attaches only to voluntary political contributions — a public act by choice — never to worship, membership, or ordinary giving, and so stands in full harmony with Request 3: political money disclosed, worshippers never.

Request 3 in full — Exercise, not form; no registries

- Religious liberty protections attach to any person or association engaged in **religious exercise**, expressly including unincorporated fellowships, house gatherings, and unregistered religious associations.
- No federal hotline, portal, registry, funding program, or reporting mechanism shall compile, retain, or require the identities of worshippers or the locations of gatherings; complaint records purged after resolution; statistics published only in aggregate.

- Existing programs that collect such information shall be revised so that participation in worship or religious assembly is never conditioned on disclosure of personal or organizational details beyond what generally applicable law requires — implemented through agency policy or, where necessary, statutory amendment.

Request 4 in full — Universal protection for every faith

- **Proposed text:** "The protections outlined in this report extend equally to all persons in the United States, regardless of faith or lack thereof, expressly including Native American sacred-site claims, minority-faith practices, unregistered religious communities, and non-Christian traditions."
- This clause shall govern every enforcement mechanism the report creates: task force dockets, litigation priorities, Know-Your-Rights materials, and funding programs alike.

Respectfully submitted for the Commission's consideration. The undersigned would welcome any opportunity to be of further assistance.

From: Randy Zerothm [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] A Concern About Protecting Liberty of Conscience

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:33:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission and United States Department of Justice,

I hope you're doing well. I'm writing because I've been reviewing the recent Presidential Religious Liberty Commission report, and one section in particular—the chapter titled “Religious Liberty: The Bridge Between God and Government”—raises serious concerns about the future of liberty of conscience in our country.

The chapter argues that religious liberty should function as a bridge between faith and government, replacing the long-standing metaphor of a “wall of separation.” While the intention may be to elevate the value of religion in public life, the practical effect of this shift is deeply troubling. The wall metaphor has historically protected all Americans—majority faiths, minority faiths, and those with no religious affiliation—by ensuring that government does not favor or enforce religious belief.

By redefining religious liberty as a connector rather than a boundary, the report encourages a model where government actively promotes, funds, and partners with religious institutions. This may sound harmless on the surface, but it fundamentally changes the role of the state. When government begins to endorse religion—any religion—it inevitably places pressure on conscience. Those who do not share the majority's beliefs can quickly find themselves marginalized, silenced, or coerced.

The chapter itself acknowledges that religion shapes identity, morality, and civic virtue. But these are precisely the reasons why government must remain neutral. When the state adopts religious language, symbolism, or priorities, it blurs the line between voluntary faith and civil obligation. History shows that whenever church and state become intertwined, the result is not greater liberty—it is greater control.

The danger is not theoretical. Weakening the separation of church and state opens the door for:

- Government-endorsed religious messages in public institutions
- Political activity from tax-exempt religious organizations
- Public funding that privileges certain faiths over others
- Social pressure on students, employees, and citizens to conform to majority religious norms

These trends directly threaten the principle of liberty of conscience, which protects every person's right to worship—or not worship—according to conviction, without fear of government influence or reprisal.

My concern is simple: when the state becomes a promoter of religion, it inevitably becomes an arbiter of religion. And once government begins deciding which religious expressions are worthy of protection, the freedom of all faiths is at risk.

I believe we must preserve the separation of church and state not because religion is unimportant, but because it is sacred. Faith thrives best when it is freely chosen, not subtly steered by the power of the state. I am praying for our dear President Trump. May God bless him and give him wisdom in this important matter.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this perspective. I would welcome any thoughts you may have.

Warm regards,

Randy Zeroth

From: Teresa Jackson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:34:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pilar of Freedom's comments, Please Implement them.

sincerely
Theresa Jackson

[REDACTED]

PII

From: Val Alves <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clausen- VALDECYR ALVES

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:34:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen of West Palm Beach, Florida, to urge this Commission to hold the line between civil government and religious life, not because religion matters too little to me, but because it matters too much to entrust to the state.

The strongest argument for that line is not secular at all. Christ himself divided human duty into two jurisdictions when he said that what is Caesar's belongs to Caesar and what is God's belongs to God alone. Civil government exists to judge whether an act injures a neighbor; it has no authority to judge whether an act honors or offends God. That question belongs to a court no legislature sits on. Every proposal that puts government behind a religious text, display, or devotional lesson crosses the line Christ himself drew — and the objection to it is not that it is too religious, but that it violates the very faith it claims to serve.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightly hold this power: it was never given to hold. Our whole system rests on the principle that just government derives its powers from the consent of the governed, from what the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — no one can believe, worship, or answer for another's soul. What was never within any citizen's power to hand over could never have been received by any government. And accountability follows authority: no government will stand at a final judgment to answer for any soul, so no government can rightly assume responsibility over any soul's belief. The First Amendment did not invent this limit. It only wrote down what was already true.

Some will say the public strongly favors a given religious measure, and that democratic majorities should be able to enact what most citizens want. But a right subject to a majority vote is not a right at all — it is a permission, revocable whenever the count changes. Rights, as our founding documents state, are inherent, Creator-endowed, and precisely for that reason placed beyond the reach of elections. Popular government is instituted to protect the minority and the individual dissenter, not merely to execute the will of the crowd. The conscience of one person carries exactly the same weight in law as the conscience of a whole community, or it carries none at all.

This is not only philosophy; it is precedent. Congress itself settled this question in 1829 and 1830, when men who had lived through the founding still sat in its chambers. Facing petitions to halt Sunday mail on religious grounds, congressional committees reported plainly that ours is a civil and not a religious institution, that government's proper business is to protect all faiths and determine none, and that a legislator is chosen to guard the rights of man, not to restrict the rights of conscience. Those reports warned that if government defines even one religious duty by law, it claims, by the same logic, the power to define them all. A commission proposing government-

endorsed religious observance today must overturn not a recent court ruling, but that founding-era Congress's own considered judgment.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Valdecyr Alves
West Palm Beach, FL

From: Kathleen Guagliardo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Letter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:34:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Letter.docx

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

We write as citizens from Pueblo, Colorado, who care about both halves of the First Amendment's promise: that government will not establish religion, and that it will not burden anyone's free exercise of it. I ask you to weigh a historical pattern that the record makes plain, whatever the merits of any single recommendation before you.

History shows that the first religious law is never the last. Constantine's Sunday law of A.D. 321 seemed a small thing when it was issued, but it taught a lesson the empire never unlearned: that the state could be enlisted to enforce religious observance. Ambitious clergy and an ambitious emperor found common cause, imperial favor filled the church with converts who wanted patronage rather than truth, and the state was drawn into deciding church quarrels until it became, in the words of one historian quoted in *The Two Republics*, an institution where every bishop hoped to make politics a branch of theology. Augustine then supplied the theology of righteous compulsion, and the Inquisition supplied its practice. The lesson is not that any particular measure today resembles the Inquisition. It is that the first step contains the last, because it concedes the very principle from which the last step follows: that government may define and promote religious duty. Concede that, and the rest is only application.

Coercion cannot produce what religion actually requires, which is a willing heart. A law can march a body into a pew; it cannot put faith in the man sitting there. Forcing outward observance multiplies hypocrisy, not devotion, because love for God cannot be legislated into existence. And the deeper harm falls on the favored faith itself. Madison surveyed fifteen centuries of established Christianity and found its fruits to be pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and, in both, superstition and persecution. A church that needs the state's help to fill its pews has confessed something about itself that no commission can fix by statute.

This is not merely my opinion or a philosopher's argument. Congress itself settled this question in 1829 and 1830, when men who had lived through the founding still sat in its chambers. The Senate committee plainly reported that it is not within the legitimate province of the legislature to determine which religion is true or false, since our government is a civil, not a religious, institution. The House committee went further, warning that if the government defines even one point of religious duty, it may with equal right define every point, down to the ceremonies of worship and the support of the

clergy. That is the precedent this Commission must reckon with before proposing otherwise.

Finally, the separation of powers the founders wrote into our Constitution was not an oversight or a later invention. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there was not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. That separation was largely demanded by churches themselves, who had felt establishment from beneath and wanted no part of it again. The founders did not wait for full establishment to object; they saw the consequences of the principle and denied the principle itself.

Protect free exercise for all and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,

Robert Guagliardo

Kathleen Guagliardo

Pueblo, CO

From: Guy Coninee <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE / CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION – Guy Conine

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:35:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Guy Conine
Kingsburg, California 93631

July 12, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530
Via Electronic Mail: [REDACTED] PII

RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE / CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION – Guy Conine

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a concerned citizen of Kingsburg, California, to submit this formal public comment in advance of the July 13, 2026, deadline established by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission for public response to its Draft Report, released on June 26, 2026. I respectfully urge this Commission to examine with great care its central recommendation: the replacement of the foundational American principle of church-state separation with a model described as building "bridges between church and state." That framing, and the legal and policy implications it carries, gives me serious constitutional concern, and I offer the following observations in the spirit of honest civic engagement.

I. THE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPERATIVE OF CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution begins with an unambiguous command: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These twin clauses — the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause — were deliberately placed first among the amendments to the Bill of Rights, reflecting the Framers' conviction that the relationship between government and religion was a matter of the highest constitutional importance. The two clauses operate together as a coherent, balanced framework: one guards individuals against government-sponsored religion; the other guards the individual's right to practice faith without government interference.

The interpretive tradition of church-state separation is not a modern invention. In his celebrated 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, President Thomas Jefferson described the Establishment Clause as erecting "a wall of separation between church and state" — language that gave voice to a principle the Founders had labored to enshrine in law. That letter was not merely rhetorical; it was adopted by the Supreme Court as authoritative interpretive guidance. In *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947), the Court formally incorporated the Establishment Clause against the states and affirmed that the wall of separation "must be kept high and impregnable." Subsequent decisions reinforced this commitment. In *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962), and *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), the Court held that state-sponsored prayer and Bible readings in public schools violated the Establishment Clause. In *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971), the Court articulated a structured analytical framework for evaluating government entanglement with religion that guided Establishment Clause jurisprudence for decades. This body of precedent, spanning more than two centuries of constitutional development, represents the settled law of this nation. It is not a partisan construction. It is the constitutional architecture within which American pluralism has been built and sustained.

II. SPECIFIC CONCERNS WITH THE COMMISSION'S DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Draft Report characterizes church-state separation as a misapplied or distorted concept — a characterization that is, with respect, historically and legally unsupported. The Establishment Clause was not a judicial invention. It was ratified by the people's representatives. Its interpretation through the courts reflects the ordinary and proper workings of the American constitutional system. To frame that interpretive tradition as an error requiring executive correction misstates the source and legitimacy of constitutional principle.

I am further concerned by the recommendation that the Department of Justice reissue guidance designed to reinterpret the reach of the Establishment Clause. Directing the executive branch to issue legal guidance that conflicts with or seeks to narrow Supreme Court precedent risks a serious overreach of executive authority into the domain of judicial interpretation. The meaning of constitutional provisions is not subject to revision by agency guidance documents, however sincerely motivated. Such guidance, if issued, would create legal confusion for state actors, educational institutions, and government contractors who look to settled precedent for direction.

The substitution of "bridges between church and state" for the language of separation also introduces a dangerous ambiguity into the constitutional conversation. Bridges, by nature, facilitate traffic in both directions. Language that encourages government to "bridge" the relationship with religious institutions could readily be invoked to justify entanglement — government financial support for sectarian institutions, preferential treatment for favored faith traditions in public contracting or licensing, or religious criteria in the administration of public services. The vagueness of the proposed framing, far from clarifying religious liberty, creates interpretive openings that may be exploited in ways this Commission does not intend.

The Draft Report's approach also appears to create a hierarchy within the First Amendment itself, effectively elevating Free Exercise claims above Establishment Clause protections. Both clauses carry equal constitutional weight. A framework that consistently prioritizes one against the other is not a framework of religious liberty — it is a framework of religious preference. That preference, even when benevolently intended, carries real costs for non-religious citizens, members of minority faiths, and those whose sincerely held beliefs differ from the majority tradition.

Finally, I note with concern that the Commission's public hearings appear to have reflected a disproportionately narrow range of religious perspectives. The interests of minority faith communities, including communities that have experienced government-sanctioned discrimination, and the perspectives of non-religious Americans were underrepresented in the deliberative process that produced this Draft Report. A final report that purports to speak to the religious liberty of all Americans should, at minimum, reflect the full breadth of their voices.

III. THE INDIVISIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

Genuine religious liberty cannot be the province of the majority alone. The principle of liberty of conscience — the right of every person to form and act upon their own convictions regarding faith without government coercion — extends equally to believers, non-believers, and members of every religious tradition, however large or small. This was not a secondary consideration for the Framers; it was central to their constitutional vision.

James Madison, the principal architect of the First Amendment, made this plain in his 1785 Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments. There, Madison argued with characteristic precision that government involvement in matters of religion corrupts both: it corrupts religion by subordinating it to political power, and it corrupts government by entangling it in doctrinal disputes no civil authority is competent to resolve. Madison did not oppose religious liberty — he championed it more forcefully than almost any Founder. But he understood, as this Commission should, that the surest protection for religious liberty lies not in government partnership with religion but in government's studied neutrality toward it.

History bears this out. In societies where the wall between government and religion has eroded, it is invariably minority faiths and non-believers who suffer first and most severely. The Establishment Clause was designed precisely to prevent the American government from becoming an instrument of religious majorities at the expense of religious minorities. To weaken the structural separation that gives the clause its force is to weaken the protection it provides to those who need it most. The Commission's recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment, which would allow houses of worship to engage in direct partisan political activity while retaining tax-exempt status, compounds this concern: it would blur the line between religious institutions and political power in ways that threaten the independence of both.

IV. REQUESTED ACTIONS PRIOR TO FINALIZATION

In light of the foregoing, I respectfully request that the Commission take the following actions before issuing a final report.

First, the Commission should commission an independent constitutional review of its recommendations by legal scholars with expertise in First Amendment jurisprudence who were not involved in the preparation of the Draft Report. The constitutional implications of the proposed framework are significant, and they merit rigorous, disinterested analysis prior to finalization.

Second, the Commission should refrain from recommending or issuing any executive guidance that would purport to reinterpret, narrow, or otherwise alter the scope of the Establishment Clause as understood through Supreme Court precedent. Any substantive reinterpretation of constitutional provisions is a matter for the courts and, where appropriate, for Congress — not the executive branch acting unilaterally through guidance documents.

Third, the Commission should expand its deliberative process to include formal solicitation of perspectives from non-Christian faith traditions, non-religious Americans, and civil liberties organizations with expertise in Establishment Clause matters. A report of this magnitude should reflect the religious and philosophical diversity of the American people it purports to serve.

Fourth, the Commission should strike or substantially revise the "bridges between church and state" framing and replace it with language that honors both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause with equal fidelity. Any final framework for religious liberty must respect the full text of the First Amendment, not privilege one of its clauses at the expense of the other.

Fifth, the Commission should ensure that all final recommendations are rigorously assessed for compliance with current Supreme Court precedent, including, but not limited to, *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, 597 U.S. 507 (2022), and the limits that decision does and does not establish with respect to government-sponsored religious expression. The Commission should be precise about what the Court held and scrupulous in not overstating the scope of its holdings.

I want to be clear that these concerns arise not from indifference to religious liberty but from a deep commitment to it — a commitment that requires fidelity to the full sweep of the First Amendment, both of its clauses, and all of the people its protections serve. The separation of church and state is not an obstacle to religious liberty. It is one of its essential guarantees. I urge this Commission to honor that truth in its final report, and to produce a document worthy of the constitutional tradition it has been charged with protecting.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. I trust they will be given full and fair consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Guy Conine
Business Owner
Head Elder, Orosi Seventh Day Church
Kingsburg, California
July 12, 2026

From: Terrie Robbins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Presidential Religious Liberty Commissionnnn-Terrie Robbins

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:35:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please preserve Religious Liberty and the separation of church and state.

From: Valerie Pherson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:37:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe in Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. I also believe that the constitution speaks about the separation of church and state because our founding fathers wanted to protect our freedom of conscience and choice. Look at the dark ages and the atrocities that happened there due to lack of freedom of choice.

Delbert Pherson

Sent from my iPhone

From: Paul Ross <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:37:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with the idea that separation of church and state is not in the constitution. Without separation of church and state then what you will have is tyranny persecution and a repeat of the dark ages. The lack of separation of church and state in Europe is exactly what created this great nation of ours. It is the reason for our existence it is what allowed Christianity to spread. We have only to look in the early history of our great nation and see what a lack of separation church and state did in the New England colonies . To read our constitution and determine that separation churches state is not a part of it is to deny reality and to be self deceived. You have an opportunity now to choose freedom not religious tyranny, prayerfully consider this as I pray for you. God bless, and God bless America.

From: Lori Starr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Report - Lori Starr

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:37:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I am deeply troubled by the Commission wanting to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall was built by believers with the intent of keeping the churches free.

I support the and agree with the "Pillar of Freedom's" comments. Please implement them.

Please do not build the bridge.

Sincerely,
Lori Starr
Madison, IN

From: Linnette Mcneal <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Religious Liberty Commission Report Debra MCNeal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:38:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

- 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.
- 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.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.
- Debra Mcneal

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

From: Loretta Alonso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State. I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please keep church and state separate.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:39:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Duane Bellinger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - [Topics 1, 3 & 9] [Duane]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:40:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty for all Americans:

Topics 1 & 3; My brother, Mark, attributed his loss of Respect for the Religious Establishment to the Monday morning reading of a competing version of the New Testament by the principal of his Fairborn, Ohio public school in the 1950's.

Clarification of student rights under First Amendments and section 1 of the fourteenth Amendment would be in order.

Prior to making any changes in the permitted political activity of those organizations requesting and enjoying special tax treatment, we should review the effects of Ludwig Kaas' religious organization on the German government in the first half of 1933.

Happy Bastille Day

~Duane Bellinger

From: Nick Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 2 / Page 45 School Choice Recommendations
– Nicholas Moore

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:41:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I am submitting this formal public comment to register my strict opposition to the draft report's recommendations promoting a universal system of school choice where public tax funding follows children to private, faith-based institutions.

While the proponents pushing this voucher framework are primarily Christian organizations looking to fund their own schools, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Once the government opens the floodgates to hand out public tax dollars to religious schools, it cannot legally discriminate. Twenty years down the road, when demographics shift, these exact same tax dollars will be heavily utilized to fund Islamic schools and academies across the country. Advocates of this policy are shortsightedly setting up a system that will force the entire public to financially bankroll religious doctrines they completely disagree with.

This inevitable friction is exactly why the primary author of the First Amendment warned against the government mixing with religious funding. James Madison—the 4th President of the United States and the Father of the Constitution—specifically wrote his famous 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance* to defeat a tax intended to fund religious teachers. Madison warned that once you concede the principle and let the government touch religious funding, you lose control of the outcome entirely:

"Who does not see... that the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment, may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever?"

If the Commission wishes to uphold true religious liberty and protect taxpayers from being forced to fund religious instructions they do not align with, it must maintain a strict line of separation between public money and private religious education. I urge the Commission to remove the universal school choice funding recommendations from its final report.

By the way, as a closing thought: rejecting these religious vouchers does not mean endorsing our current public school system. Our existing public education system operates as a giant indoctrination mill designed to turn children into socialists and commies. In fact, tax-funded public school systems are explicitly aligned with Marxism, matching the tenth plank of Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, which demanded free public education for all children.

The real solution isn't shifting public funds from one failed bucket to another. Everyone should pay for their own children's education, period. Even charter schools, which market themselves as a middle-ground alternative, are still ultimately dependent on the public teat—using taxpayer money to fuel a semi-private system.

So, congratulations to the Commission: your brilliant solution to a public school system rooted in the Communist Manifesto is to expand charter schools and create a voucher system that will eventually primarily bankroll giant Islamic schools in the big cities. Instead of ensuring parents take personal financial responsibility for their own kids, you have managed to find a way to make everyone lose.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Moore

Archbald, Pennsylvania

From: Jody Schneider <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of church from state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:41:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

I address this response to those who wish to remove a freedom that was held dear and died for by many.

When looking back in history, any time church and state have been together, there has been lines crossed and tragedies have occurred. The most obvious instance that comes to mind is the dark ages. Our founding fathers left England for this very purpose. To have religious freedom from the government. What a person believes and how they worship is a personal choice, not a mandated law. Keeping church and state separate, is absolutely crucial to the foundation of this country. There is no true freedom without it. Please, leave it alone. Our children deserve to know God on their own terms, not yours.

Sincerely,

Jody

From: Lucy Segurola <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:42:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen and as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty. I appreciate the opportunity to submit a public comment on the Commission's draft report.

I believe that freedom of conscience is one of the greatest blessings our nation has. Throughout history, the separation of church and state has helped protect both religious liberty and the rights of all people, regardless of their beliefs.

For this reason, I am concerned about recommendations that could weaken that separation, including increased government funding of religious activities and changes to the Johnson Amendment. I believe churches should remain free to follow their convictions without becoming dependent on government support or partisan politics.

As a person of faith, I want my church to be guided by God's Word rather than by political influence. I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve the constitutional principles that have protected religious freedom for generations.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your

Lucy Segurola,
Miami, Florida

From: Laurie Wissink <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - Draft Report of the Presidential religious liberty - Laurie Wissink

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:42:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit a public comment to affirm the critical importance of maintaining a strict separation between church and state.

Historically, this separation has served as a foundational cornerstone of our governance, ensuring both the freedom of religious practice and the protection of government from religious overreach. Our history demonstrates that preserving this boundary is essential for safeguarding the diverse beliefs of all citizens and maintaining a fair and inclusive society.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to upholding these foundational principles.

Respectfully,

Laurie Wissink

From: Michael Hope <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:43:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world" John 18:36. History shows that when governments of this world try to mix with His kingdom then persecution and false beliefs are the inevitable result. I strongly disagree with the Religious Liberty Commission's report that there is no separation of church and state in the United States of America. The separation of church and state which is the foundation of religious liberty - the right to believe or not believe according to one's conscience, is one of the principles that has made the United States pre-eminent among the nations of the world. Any dilution of this principle will eventually bring about the loss of religious liberty and lead to the sure demise of our nation.

Sincerely,

Pastor Michael Hope

From: Whitney Stowell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:45:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am concerned by the Commission's report about removing the separation of church and state. Our country was founded by individuals fleeing persecution due to leadership having the power to enforce religious observance. This is why the constitution was written to support the separation of church and state. People should be free to worship God according to their conscience. I ask that you will please reconsider your recommendations.

Sincerely,

Whitney Stowell

From: Jean Helzn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:47:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a physician and entered medical school because I wanted to help people, but not as a result of any religious faith. I am angry that proponents of "religious liberty" don't include freedom from religion, which is promised by our constitution. Regarding abortion, it is already established that anyone fundamentally opposed to abortion does not have to train for it or provide it. Being anti-choice is a religious position. The belief that abortion is killing rests on the belief that the embryo is a human being from the moment of conception. Does that mean that dropping a tube in the process of invitro fertilization is murder. If that is a person, is it right that that person be frozen for eternity. If life begins at conception, there is no way to defend in vitro fertilization! We would not know of a 6 week pregnancy without the modern ultrasound.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY MEANS THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ONE'S OWN FAITH OR NON-BELIEF! IT MEANS NOT MANDATING RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN PUBLIC PLACES WHICH HOLDS UP CHRISTIANITY AS THE ONE TRUE FAITH!

From: DAVID SANDERSON <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response To Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:48:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To The Religious Liberty Commission; 7/12/2026

I want to thank the commission for the due diligence in preparing this report, and I agree it is a matter of great concern for the people of the United States of American and for the entire world. What happens in America seems to always affect the world population, either in a positive or negative setting.

I have a deep concern when it comes to the phrase "Building bridges between church and state" which is located between pages 41-44 in the Religious Liberty Commission report.

All through history it has been documented that whenever church joins state in any form it has always led to persecution. The bible clearly states that history does and will repeat, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us." Ecclesiastes 1:9-10. If we use our bible as the ultimate history book it further states that when the church (Jewish nation) delivered Jesus to the state (Rome) it resulted in the death our Lord and Saviour, "And while he (Jesus) yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people...And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.....When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Matthew 26:47, 57. Matthew 27:1-2. Jesus Himself warned His church that the time would come when...."These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." John 16:1-2 This was Jesus talking about His own church persecuting fellow church members and as history has show when ever the church has resorted to this type of control it has always employed the state to do it bidding. Once again I believe the commission is sincere about the work it is trying to do for this country, I just believe because of what the bible clearly states and what history has revealed, that building bridges between church and state no matter how good it looks on the outside it will be a disaster for this country and the people. Thank you for your time and thought about this topic. God bless America and God bless you and the Commission.

David Sanderson

PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:48:28 -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:

The Presidential Commission for Religious Liberty has issued its draft report. It seems to suggest that the separation of church and state is un-American and unconstitutional. I totally disagree. The separation idea is certainly implied in the establishment clause and should be respected. It would be a very dangerous path to pursue the direction this Commission is taking. In reality, this could establish a religion and perhaps be antagonistic for the "un-recognized" minority religions.

Keep government out of the pew, please. Please maintain things as they are. It is the only way to preserve the precious religious liberty.

I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its perceived understanding regarding separation and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations.

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

Sincerely,
Dick E. Hanson
Oregon

From: Jonathan Rosengren <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect the 1st Amendment--keep church and state separate!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:48:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I also lend my voice with other Americans protecting the 1st Amendment, and the separation of church and state. The separation of church and state DOES exist in the United States Constitution.

Jonathan Rosengren

The following (below) is a friends way of saying it:

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the importance of preserving the constitutional principle of religious liberty in the United States.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides two equally important protections: it prohibits the government from establishing a religion while also protecting every individual's right to freely exercise their faith. It states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

These protections have served as the cornerstone of American liberty since our nation's founding. They ensure that no citizen is compelled to support, participate in, or adhere to any particular religion, while simultaneously safeguarding the freedom of every person to worship—or not worship—according to the dictates of their own conscience.

Although the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution itself, the principle has long been recognized as a safeguard against government interference in matters of religion. This concept protects both religious institutions from government control and government from becoming an instrument of religious authority.

Our nation welcomes people of many faiths, as well as those of no religious affiliation. The Constitution provides equal protection to all, ensuring that government neither favors nor discriminates against any religion. Public officials, like all citizens, are free to hold and express their religious beliefs. However, when acting in their official capacity, they are obligated to uphold the Constitution and govern in a manner that respects the rights of every American.

Protecting religious liberty does not require removing religion from public life. Rather, it requires that the government remain neutral in matters of faith so that every individual may freely live according to their beliefs without coercion or preferential treatment by the state.

The enduring strength of our republic lies in its commitment to liberty of conscience. Preserving these constitutional principles ensures that Americans of every faith—and those with none—continue to enjoy the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

From: Cordell Trancoso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:49:21 -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

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

As a citizen of this great country, I urge you to keep the wall, separating church and state. We have one reason we are the greatest nation on earth, is because of our church/state separation. Historically, religious persecution in Europe drove many people here to our shores seeking religious liberty. Currently, there are still people who seek freedom here in our great nation because of religious persecution.

I urge you to keep the church and state separate. We should not have churches competing against each other for political favor with the government. These organizations should be supported only by their own members. We should not have politicians looking to bestow favor on churches in the hopes for gaining support. There needs to be a clear divide between these respective organizations.

We need to keep the Johnson Amendment. This is an important tool to ensure there is clear separation. We all know that in politics, there is corruption. This is just the way it is. We do not need that corruption coming into our religious institutions. Separation of church and state will allow our great religious institutions to flourish. The government should not aid these organizations. I agree with Ben Franklin's statement: : "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... it is a sign... of its being a bad one." This is one reason the government and the church should not interfere with each other.

Sincerely,

Cordell Trancoso

Kaukauna, Wisconsin

From: Madeline Gloss <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to one of the Religious Liberty Commission findings draft:

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:50:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Representative:

Through my prophetic religious lens regarding the world conditions today, the safest course is to keep church and state separate NOT to build a bridge between the two. 2020 revealed that liberty of conscience and religious liberty were trampled upon, churches were made to close, people were imprisoned, fines were enforced, loss of employment, etc. etc. all for the "common good" as mandated by the government. As history continues to unfold and if this bifold union occurs more than it is, my religious liberty and liberty of conscience will be negatively affected as it was previously demonstrated.

When the government gets involved with the church and religious entities, history has proven that the gospel becomes secondary. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then the end shall come." Please, continue to be the champion of religious liberty and freedom of conscience for your people as biblical prophecy is being fulfilled. So, until then.....

Sincerely,

Madeline Gloss
Orlando, Florida.

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPad

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:51:40 -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!

Gwen Reeves

Sent from my iPhone

From: Brenda Pace <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:52:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a proud and blessed American, one of the core freedoms i appreciate most is the that to worship as my conscience dictates without fear of repercussions from any governmental body. PLEASE stand for a clear separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

Brenda Pace

From: Alicia Monterroso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE- ALICIA

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:52:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

One of the fundamental pillars of our nation is the freedom to make personal choices in matters of religion according to our own conscience.

History demonstrates the severe consequences that can occur when church and state unite. Past historical accounts show that millions of people have been martyred when these institutions merged.. To prevent such atrocities from happening again, it is vital that we maintain this essential separation and protect our form of government.

Our forefathers laid a very good foundation to give us liberty of conscience and have worked well to give us religious liberty for 250 years . Please keep matters of state separate from religion so we could continue to be free.

Thank you for your time and your continued work in defending religious liberty.

Sincerely,

Alicia M.

From: Sabrina Riley <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Sabrina Riley

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:53:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm speaking up in support of the separation of church and state. Our founding fathers understood the harm caused by government-supported religion. Government-supported religion always leads to persecution and discrimination. God is a God of love for all people. He does not coerce anyone into believing in Him or following Him. He wants our love and obedience of our free will. If God does not force people to obey Him, why should government do so? Faith is a personal matter between a person and God. Government should be for the good of all people. It should not force anyone to adhere to a specific set of religious doctrines. Nor should government discriminate against anyone who chooses to be other than Christian. Our founding fathers desired a nation open to and tolerant of people of all religious beliefs as long as those beliefs did not hurt anyone else. I urge you to preserve our tradition of separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Riley

From: Carol Stuck Rhodes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with The Pillar of Justice and their argument to preserve the separation of Church and State that this blessed nation was founded upon.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:54:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Mrs. Carol Rhodes

[REDACTED] PII

From: Erica Bailey Ketts <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment of Dr. Erica Bailey

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

This topic is very important to me, which is why I am taking the time to send this email.

I would like to request that you ensure the Religious Liberty Commission's final report reflects the vital role church-state separation plays in protecting religious freedom for all Americans.

The separation of church and state gives us the right to practice any religion or no religion as long as we don't harm others.

Church-state separation protects religious freedom for everyone—religious and nonreligious people alike. It ensures that the government cannot impose religious beliefs on anyone or favor one religion over another. Our Founders recognized that both religion and government flourish when they are separate.

Separation of church and state guarantees that students and families—not government officials—can make our own decisions about religion and religious education. I consider this to be foundational to our country and one of the many reasons that the United States is unlike any other country.

Church-state separation protects houses of worship from intrusion by the government, guaranteeing their independence and allowing them to remain free from political control and interference.

Church-state separation protects our public schools by keeping coercive prayer out of classrooms. It ensures schools are welcoming for students of all backgrounds and beliefs, even if they are not the same as mine.

Church-state separation protects taxpayers from being forced to fund religion. Taxpayer dollars should be used for public purposes that benefit everyone.

Church-state separation ensures equal treatment under the law. The government must serve ALL people fairly, regardless of what they believe or whether they practice a religion, and taxpayer-funded religious groups must not use religion to discriminate.

Thank you,

Dr. Erica Bailey

--

Dr. Erica Bailey, OD

[REDACTED] PII

From: Mel Pond <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

As a citizen of the United States I am categorically opposed to any action that would compromise the separation of church and state. We enjoy our religious freedom and do not want that to change. History has demonstrated that when the government becomes involved in the church and suppresses religion it leads to oppression and persecution. Freedom to worship, or not, as our conscience dictates must be preserved for all people.

I believe that the government and the church are two different systems and should be kept separate so they can function the way they were established to operate. Government was never commissioned to direct the spiritual lives of their citizens.

Respectfully submitted,
Mel Pond from Washington

From: William Pellow <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

William Pellow, OD

[REDACTED] PII

Dear Religious Liberty Commission at [REDACTED] PII

I am very concerned that under President Trump I stand to lose the religious liberty that our country has stood for for 250 years. The first amendment says that Government should not tell US citizens how, where, or when to worship their God and should leave us free to worship as our conscience. That is true liberty! The RLC is about to turn that around and make a law that we must unite in worshiping only on Sunday and must work on every other day of the week. My problem is that the Bible, which I use as my supreme authority, says that Sabbath is the 7th day of the week, Saturday. This has been kept by Jews since the 10 Commandments were given until today. The Lord who gave the 10 Commandments is my Lord and my God. Jesus claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath, which is Saturday (see Mark 2:27). Yes! I keep the Lord's day! The Roman Catholic Church has claimed to have changed the Sabbath day to Sunday following Constantine's Sunday Law. But Constantine was heathen as were most of his subjects. Sunday was the day that they kept because of the Roman god Sol Invictus, a Roman idol or false god! Thus Sunday is the day that Satan has set up, not God! Because the Catholic Church received political and religious power from Rome this day has been popularized. Satan works in many ways to lie to people, but God has never changed the Sabbath day. This is admitted by Rome's challenge to Protestants. They challenged Protestants' honesty & fidelity to the Bible alone because they mostly also keep Sunday holy, though it never was and still isn't holy! Do you think that God is happy to have His day co-opted by Sunday? Yet you are rejoicing that religion in the US has increased lately! Who's religion is increasing? Do you also keep Satan's day? Sunday removes it from being God's day and the first three words of God's commandment are "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." It goes on to say that God created this world including mankind and "rested on the seventh day and blessed it and made it holy." That is NOT Sunday! (See Gen. 2:1-3) This is obviously a command by an idol god and that idol god (Sol Invictus) is really none other than Satan!

Notice the prophecy by Daniel, in Dan. 7:25 where the fourth beast (remember Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) that the fourth beast (Rome) would "Speak out against the Most High and intend to make alterations in times and in law." They did this with the Sabbath day, the only one of the Ten Commandments that involves time! Also notice that this Roman "beast" would "speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One." So, if you are going to try to force me to keep that day holy and to desecrate Saturday which God made holy, I will have to pick God instead of Trump or the US Government or Roman Catholicism. Rev. 13 foresees a beast (nation) coming up out of the earth (lightly populated land, v. 11) a fit description of the rise of the US, but this beast would eventually exercise "all the authority of the first beast" (Roman Catholicism) and that the US would speak "as a dragon" (Satan). It predicts that the USA would give people a mark so that "no one will be able to buy or to sell" unless he has the mark. The Catholic church claims Sunday as their "mark of authority!" So you are going to try to force the "Christian" world to choose Satan instead of Christ and You believe that this will cause the US to be blessed by God! I strongly disagree based on the Bible. I will allow You to kill me by whatever means you use to force me to keep Satan's day instead of the Lord's day (Saturday. And yes, Saturday is the Lord's day (Ex 20:8-11 & Mark 2:28) as I have already pointed out. Only you can prevent this persecution that you are creating.

Your ideas of enforcing Sunday Worship, which You will try with little enforcement at first, but You will escalate it as time progresses. This is a deception (see Rev. 13:14). I compare eternal life with any punishment that You can invent and clearly see that I must render my loyalty to my God who spoke and wrote the Ten Commandments. Nowhere in the Bible can be found a command to keep Sunday holy. Israel lost their special status as God's chosen people by not recognizing Jesus, the Messiah. That is not worth it for me! This is how You will bring persecution to the USA. I plead with you to honor the first amendment of the US constitution and do not allow the US government to force its way into the loss of all of God's blessings. I love this land and hate to see you destroy it!

Sincerely,

William Pellow, OD

From: dena brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bridging Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

It was brought to my attention that the Commission wants to replace the wall that separates the Church and State by bridging them to where they would work together. By Bridging Church and State it seems to me that it would weaken and dismantle the separation of Church and State. Not good! As it states in the Bible, pay Caesar what is owed to him and pay God what is owed to Him. Don't mix them together. I have seen when the State steps in to private entities things don't go too well. May God's will be done!

Sincerely,

Dena Brown

Sent from my iPad

From: JONATHAN SANDERS <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:57:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe Church and state should be separate!

J.

From: Immanuël Isaac <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:57:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Revised%20letter%20from%20Immanuel-1.pdf

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington,
DC 20500 United States of America

Date: April 15, 2026

From: Faithful Members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church

To: the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Dear Sir or Madam,

We write as faithful Seventh-day Adventists Christians to respectfully, yet firmly, express our deep concern and clear opposition to the recent conclusion of the religious liberty commission associated with the administration of President Donald J. Trump, held on April 13 in Washington D.C., which concluded that there is no true or absolute separation between church and state.

We do not agree with this conclusion.

Our position is grounded in the enduring principles of Scripture, the Constitution of the United States, and the consistent testimony of history. Together, these affirm that liberty of conscience can only be preserved where there is a clear and firm distinction between the authority of the state and the authority of God. The Bible establishes this boundary plainly. Christ declared,

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). In this statement, two distinct realms are identified.

I. The government is entrusted with responsibilities such as maintaining public order, administering justice, collecting taxes, and governing civil relations among individuals.

II. In contrast, God alone holds authority over worship, conscience, and the loyalty of the soul.

Conscience belongs to God. Therefore, no human government has the right to force belief, compel worship, or regulate religious practice. This principle later became central to the concepts of freedom of religion, the separation of church and state, and the protection of individuals against religious coercion. Any attempt by the state to enter this domain is an overreach of authority. True faith cannot exist without freedom. The gospel calls, it does not compel.

Truth and duty to God are not determined by vote or the majority. Faith must be voluntary and no other man or state has jurisdiction over conscience. The moment the state supports, enforces, or favors religion, it steps into God’s domain, corrupts the religion, and leads to a destructive backlash.

In Europe, centuries of alliance between church and state led to the suppression of conscience and widespread persecution. The French Revolution can be attributed to the loss of religious liberty. The abuse of religious authority united with civil power produced instability, violence, and the rejection of religion itself.

Many who came to America, including the Pilgrims, sought freedom from state-controlled religion. Their struggle laid the groundwork for a new principle that faith must be free. This protestant principle matured and found lasting expression in the founding principles of the United States. As articulated in the Declaration of Independence: “All are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which is liberty.” This understanding shaped the constitutional

commitment that the government must neither establish religion nor interfere with the free exercise thereof.

For this reason, we affirm clearly:

A. We Support Religious Liberty.

We affirm that religious liberty is an inherent and unalienable right, grounded in the moral responsibility of every individual before God. Civil authority is limited to the regulation of outward conduct and cannot rightfully govern inward conviction. As James Madison articulated, religion is a duty owed to the Creator alone. Scripture confirms this principle: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). Because accountability is personal before God, liberty of conscience must remain inviolable before the state. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15). True allegiance to God must be freely chosen, never compelled.

B. We Support the Free Exercise of Faith.

We uphold that the free exercise of faith is essential to both religious integrity and civil peace. Faith, by its nature, must arise from conviction rather than coercion. The use of civil power in matters of religion undermines sincerity and produces only outward conformity. As Benjamin Franklin observed, a religion that requires the support of civil authority reveals its own weakness. Scripture likewise affirms: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). Authentic faith is the work of the Spirit, not the product of force. William Penn wisely stated, force may produce hypocrites, but never true converts. The Bible declares: "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). God desires willing hearts, not coerced obedience.

C. We Support the Separation of Church and State.

We maintain that the separation of church and state is essential to the proper functioning of both institutions. Civil government is ordained to administer justice and preserve order, while religion addresses the conscience and the worship of God. Christ Himself established this distinction: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). As Thomas Jefferson affirmed, this separation serves as a safeguard for both civil liberty and religious purity. John F. Kennedy affirmed, "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute," recognizing that liberty of conscience can only be preserved when government remains free from religious control and religion remains free from government interference.

D. We Oppose Any Union of Church and State.

We respectfully oppose any union of church and state on the grounds that such a union inevitably leads to the corruption of religion and the infringement of conscience. Civil enforcement of religious principles constitutes an overreach of governmental authority into a domain reserved for God alone. Scripture itself provides clear evidence that the union of religious and civil authority leads to injustice and persecution. The trial and crucifixion of Christ stand as the clearest example. The religious leaders claiming spiritual authority lacked the legal power to execute Him, and therefore brought Him before the Roman governor,

Pontius Pilate, to secure a civil sentence (John 18:28–31). Though Pilate found no fault in Him, he yielded to religious pressure and authorized His crucifixion (John 19:12–16). Thus, Christ was condemned through the combined action of church and state. This tragic union demonstrates that when religious authority employs civil power to enforce its will, it results not in righteousness, but in the violation of justice and the suppression of truth. As Christ Himself declared, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36) Therefore: Civil power cannot advance Christ’s kingdom. Any attempt to do so is a denial of Christ’s own words.

We also respectfully clarify that while individuals of the Seventh-day Adventist faith may serve in governmental or advisory roles, they do not represent the convictions of all believers, nor does any group of individuals represent the entire body of the church. Any position supporting a union of church and state does not reflect our beliefs or the historic teachings of our faith.

For these reasons, we respectfully reiterate our conviction that the preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining a clear and principled separation between civil authority and religious expression. Any departure from this boundary risks undermining both constitutional freedoms and the sacred rights of conscience.

As the Scriptures declare: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man” (Psalm 118:8). Guided by this principle, we affirm our unwavering commitment to liberty of conscience and our respectful but firm opposition to any union of church and state.

We offer this statement in a spirit of respect and sincerity, and we remain open to constructive dialogue. We would welcome the opportunity to further share the biblical, historical, and constitutional foundations for our convictions.

We respectfully urge your office to uphold the principles that protect liberty of conscience and preserve the rightful distinction between civil authority and the authority of God.

With respect and sincerity,

Immanuel Isaac Jamunapersad

Joanna de Bruyn

William Pitt

Tim Hayden

Mark La Rose

Dennis Page

From: Scott Barnes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:58:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please
implement them. The separation of church and state should stay in place.

Scott C. Barnes

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Jacob Chapman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:58:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

Separation of church and state is biblical. I agree with those who want to keep it separate. Please read "The Great Controversy" for biblical perspective on these issues and other important ones. God bless!

Jacob Isaiah Chapman

From: Richard Parker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:59:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the United States of America, and as a Christian, I appreciate the attention being drawn to the prejudice against Christians within the United States. No one should be persecuted or removed from the public square because of their beliefs. However, the remedy does not lie in creating a "bridge" between church and state but in acknowledging that secularism also operates similarly to a religion and treating it the same as any other religion. Religious liberty was a hard-fought and hard-won liberty in our nation, and we should not give it up.

The concept of the separation of church and state has existed within our nation from the very beginning. The Declaration of Independence declares that the basis of legitimate government is derived from the consent of the governed by delegating some of their natural rights to the governmental body. But as religion is what is owed to the Creator nothing pertaining to religion can be delegated to the government.

On October 24, 1776, the Hanover Presbytery, supported by the Baptists and Quackers, petitioned Virginia's legislature against religious taxation (the government providing funds to religious institutions) and an established religion. In it they stated thus: "Certain it is that every argument for civil liberty gains additional strength when applied to liberty in the concerns of religion, and there is no argument in favor of establishing the Christian religion but what may be pleaded with equal propriety for establishing the tenets of Mohammed by those who believe the Al Koran; or, if this be not true, it is at least impossible for the magistrate to adjudge the right of preference among the various sects that profess the Christian faith without erecting a chair of infallibility which would lead us back to the Church of Rome." Please read the entire Memorial of Hanover Presbytery. Thomas Jefferson championed the cause of liberty and right in this affair; on December 6, 1776, after nearly two months of what he called the most sever contest in which he was ever engaged, all colonial laws and penalties prejudicial to dissenters in Virginia were repealed.

After the Revolution concluded, the question of an assessment (tax) for the support of religion was again raised in Virginia. James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, rose to the occasion to champion religious liberty. On June 20, 1785, he issued his Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments. In it he embodied all that could be said upon the subject. Please read Madison's writings on this topic. Here is a portion: "[I]t 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. 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?" The assessment was not brought up for a vote, and on January 16, 1786, Virginia enacted a

Statute for Religious Freedom instead. After this Madison wrote to Jefferson: "I flatter myself we have in this country extinguished forever the ambitious hope of making laws for the human mind."

During Virginia's constitutional ratifying convention, Madison argued that the proposed federal government had no delegated jurisdiction over religion whatsoever. When discussed in Massachusetts' ratifying convention in 1788, the question of religious tests was directly addressed. Massachusetts ratified the Constitution with the one sole reference to religion being that "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."

The people did not see this as enough protection of their rights. Humans have always, throughout all history, sought to gain power and assert that power over their fellow human beings. Knowing this, we the people demanded an explicit prohibition of government interference in religion. In 1791, the Bill of Rights was completed, the very first Amendment dealt specifically with protection of religious liberty. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Religion, the duty one owes to one's Creator (even if someone believes that is primordial soup), shall not be preferred or prohibited within the United States.

No bridge should be created between the church and the state. Instead of trying to remedy the preference of secularism by replacing it with Christianity, we should stop the preference of secularism and government interference in religion completely.

Sincerely,

Richard Parker

Sandpoint, Idaho

From: Wayne Smith <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Personal Comment on Religious Liberty in the US

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:59:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs/Madams,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts regarding religious liberty. The United States has been blessed with religious liberty to a large degree. But, historically, it has failed to preserve the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience and has enforced religious observance contrary to the beliefs of certain Christian religions. I agree that the morality of our country has plummeted, but making laws to enforce worship is contrary to the will of a loving God who accepts offerings from the heart and more akin to Satan who forces worship. My understanding of the role of government is to preserve the rights of the individual and not to take sides with any particular religion. The constitution may not specifically mention "separation of church and state," but it does provide for the right of the individual to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness without the government interfering with the mode of my worship. Roger Williams spoke of the separation of enforcement of the 1st table of the law from the second table of the law. The first 4 commandments refer to the personal worship practices between myself and God while the second table preserves societal norms. Those who don't learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. European history is rife with examples of the loss of personal freedom of worship. America is a country without a king and without a pope. I would like to keep it that way. Thank you for making and enforcing the 2nd table laws that protect us. Please avoid making and enforcing laws that relate to the first table relating to the worship of God.

Sincerely,

Wayne E Smith

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Regina Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission - Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:59:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The God of heaven is a God of liberty. He does not force us to worship Him. Our relationship with him is based on His willingness to let us choose if we want to love and worship Him. The government should not interfere in a person's personal salvation. Allowing the union of church and state is the government's way of controlling a person's relationship with our Lord and Savior. Keep politics out of church! Our Constitution has already laid the foundation for the rights of American citizens concerning their religion. You deceive yourselves if you think God is pleased with the government mandating worship. When people come willing to God, they are more apt to change their sinful ways because they want to. Forcing a person to worship only changes the outward demeanor, while the inner heart is still unconverted. It is not the government's responsibility to convict a person to come to God, it is the Holy Spirit's. Stop trying to do the Holy Spirit's job. The saving of souls is for God. Allow politics to provide order for the American government and let God provide order for his government. He is omnipotent and does not require the assistance of mankind unless he chooses.

Please keep church and state separate!

Sincerely,

Regina M. Williams

From: Earline Phillipse [REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:00:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I object to getting rid of separation of church and state.

Earline Phillips

From: David Grams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keeping the wall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:00:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

I appreciate your efforts to lift up Christian values as the cornerstone of our great county. But I am more than concerned with some of your assertions about the “wall” between church and state .

You rightly condemn the lack of morality in the public sector. But the effective solution throughout history has never been to wed church and state; but rather, to support a “state” that itself supports the rights of ALL religions to follow God according to their own convictions.

Without fail, whenever the state exalts the authority of just one kind of beliefs, the result has always been to denigrate those of the “wrong religion”—an unfortunate scenario that historically has always led to the ugliest outcome of all...persecution against those who don’t belong to the state sponsored religion.

America’s greatness has been predicated on freedom of religion for ALL citizens, not just the right kind of “Christian.” Anything less than this is a betrayal of the noble experiment called American democracy. And if we tear down the wall of church/state separation, then, like all other nations who’ve done the same, we’ll plunge into the morass of alienation and unspeakable cruelty.

Keep on lauding “righteous living”! And keep on promoting Biblical values!
But in the Name of God, never stoop to prostituting the state into the position of “choosing” one religion over another....

With utmost sincerity and hope,

David Grams

From: Ploni Almoni <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission – P. Almoni

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:02:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern at the U.S. Department of Justice:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the Religious Liberty Commission's draft Report, made available to the public for a 15-day comment period.

In overview, I find that the Report is a Conservative political project masquerading as a project to defend "Religious Liberty". This is not surprising given its origins (Executive Order 14291) and the politically and religiously unbalanced and biased Commission and its several Advisory Boards. None of it is objective, and all of it is partisan. In fact, Section 2 of E.O. 14291 is a direct consequence of the Religion recommendations for Presidential action in *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise* (Project 2025: Presidential Transition Project), particularly the second item: [1]

- **Provide robust protections for religious employers.** *America's religious diversity means that workplaces include people of many faiths and that many employers are faith-based. Nevertheless, the Biden Administration has been hostile to people of faith, especially those with traditional beliefs about marriage, gender, and sexuality. The new Administration should enact policies with robust respect for religious exercise in the workplace, including under the First Amendment, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), 8 Title VII, and federal conscience protection laws.*
- **Issue an executive order protecting religious employers and employees.** *The President should make clear via executive order that religious employers are free to run their businesses according to their religious beliefs, general nondiscrimination laws notwithstanding, and support participation of religious employees and employers as federal contractors and in federal activities and programs.*
- **Clarify Title VII's religious organization exemptions.** *Congress should clarify Title VII's religious organization exemptions to make it more explicit that those employers may make employment decisions based on religion regardless of nondiscrimination laws.*
- **Provide Robust Accommodations for Religious Employees.** *Title VII requires reasonable accommodations for an employee's sincerely held religious beliefs, observances, or practices unless it poses an undue hardship on the employer's business. These accommodation protections also apply to issues related to marriage, gender, and sexuality.*

Unless the Supreme Court overrules its bad precedent, Congress should clarify that undue hardship means "significant difficulty or expenses," not "more than a de minimis cost" as the Court has previously held.

The current President, as the Republican Presidential nominee in July 2024, disavowed any knowledge of Project 2025. [2] His disavowal was a response to a claim by his political opponents (Democrats) that he supports Project 2025 and is going to use it as his Presidential playbook. As part of his disavowal, he denied being an "extremist", claiming to have "great common sense", and then said that "some on the Right, the severe Right, came up with this Project 2025". He called them "very very Conservative", "sort of like the opposite of the Radical Left" ("The Radical Right"), and said that some parts of Project 2025 (not clear which) were "seriously extreme". He claimed that he did not know anything about Project 2025 and did not want to know anything

about it. (I do credit the President for stating the truth that Project 2025 is “seriously extreme”, even though he did not intend to do so, but it did serve his need to put distance between himself (“great common sense”) and Project 2025 (“seriously extreme”) to get elected.)

Consistent with the above, the Commission uses the excuse of “Religious Liberty” to justify all manner of abusive and coercive activities by the THIS Department of Justice and other parts of THIS Federal Executive Branch.

As a Jewish American, I am highly distressed by the Commission’s “carte blanche” use of religion (as an unreviewable, uncheckable excuse) to pursue numerous illiberal political objectives and to take actions that may be illegal or un-Constitutional.

Further distressing is the Report’s focus on only one type of religious bigotry—Anti-Semitism. Why is that? (One footnote (86) does mention “Anti-Christian Bias”. Report at 44.) Once again, political use of Jews puts Jews in the United States in an awkward (if not perilous) position—“guilt by being associated” with THIS to the extent that we Jewish Americans did not ask for THIS. We are being used as a political pawn that will ultimately be used to attack us from the Left and the Right. Experience over more than two thousand years verifies this. This situation was anticipated by our ancient wisdom in *Chapters/Ethics of the Fathers* (2:3): “Beware of rulers, for they befriend someone only for their benefit; they act friendly when it benefits them, but they do not stand by someone in his time of need” (also by Ex. 23:2).

Worse yet, the Report focuses on Anti-Semitism from only the political Left, mainly in the aftermath of Hamas’s horrific pogrom on October 7, 2023 and the Israeli government’s military response to that horrific pogrom. According to the Anti-Defamation League, “Incidents with elements related to Israel or Zionism made up slightly less than half of all incidents in 2025 (2,847 or 45%), a smaller proportion than the 58% (5,452) Israel-related incidents in 2024. By comparison, between 2020 and 2022, only about 10% of antisemitic incidents were Israel- or Zionism-related.” [3]

The Report turns a blind eye to “deeply held religious” Anti-Semitism from Christian Nationalists and other-motivated (perhaps in addition to religion) Anti-Semitism by the KKK, Nazis, and similar domestic groups; many of these (if not most or all) support this President, who has never denounced these groups and their Anti-Semitism (and racism) unambiguously. Members of some of these groups were pardoned for their participation in the January 6, 2021 assault on the U.S. Congress as it was counting electoral votes and certifying the result of the 2020 Presidential Election. [4] Also, THIS Department of Justice, as part of a wider effort by THIS Executive Branch, has largely stopped maintaining awareness of their Anti-Semitic activities. [5]

I wonder if the Commission would allow and condone Anti-Semitic behavior if such Anti-Semitism were a “deeply held religious belief” (Report at 146) or a “deeply held conviction” (107) (more on this below). What other discriminatory and potentially illegal or un-Constitutional behavior would the Commission tolerate (if not condone) as long as it was based on a “deeply held religious belief” or “deeply held conviction”? For instance, would a religious group for whom proselytizing is “deeply held religious belief” be legally allowed to require hungry people seeking a hot meal from the group to be subjected to the group’s religious messages (e.g., worship or sermon) before, and as a condition of, receiving a hot meal? Do the “deeply held religious beliefs” of the hungry people matter at all in this? Does not just feeding hungry people alone (without conditions) fulfill a religious purpose or imperative? Does it matter whether the group’s offering of hot meals to the hungry is privately or publicly funded, or happens on private or public land?

Related to this, I do not believe that I have the right to compel a random bakery to provide baked goods that meet my standards of Kashrut if the bakery does not do so; on the other side, if I were a baker, I do not think that I could be compelled to make an inherently unkosher cake (e.g., with lard) because someone demanded it (it is hard to see how use of lard is a “deeply held religious belief”). In my view, both of these cases include an

outrageous demand to “prove some point”, and the Report encourages such outrageous demands under the cover of “Religious Liberty” (e.g., “Know Your Rights” (Report at 22; Recommendation #2) ... so that you can deprive others of their rights). If I were somehow involved in a situation similar to that in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, 584 U.S. 617 (2018), I would give the customers what they wanted, based on II Kings 5:17-19 in which Na’aman is forgiven by Elisha (arguably on behalf of God) for the part of his job that appears to conflict with his own newly found religious belief in God (a widely misunderstood situation).

If Samuel Johnson was correct in his assessment of certain political figures of his era that “patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel” (i.e., that certain politicians wrap themselves in patriotism but do so only in the pursuit of self-interest), then the Commission seemingly demonstrates that “religion” follows up as a close second to “patriotism”, wrapping themselves in “Religious Liberty” in the pursuit of political self-interest. [6]

I would hold the Commission in higher regard if it had made the argument that the First Amendment ties the hands of Congress only; the Executive Branch is free to do whatever it wants based on the policy preferences of the President of the United States. However, that is not what the Commission did. Instead, it twisted facts and provided numerous misleading (if not effectively false) examples, often admittedly extreme (Report at 133), to make a claim that “Religious Liberty” can only and must be protected through a slate of its preferred Conservative policies and actions. Many of its preferred policies have nothing to do with defending “Religious Liberty”, but rather are intended to protect specific political behaviors/actions that the Commission prefers, even if (or perhaps especially because) those behaviors/actions adversely affect a greater number of people than the number of people engaging in those behaviors/actions (e.g., a person using religion as an excuse to not get vaccinated when otherwise required, but subsequently infecting numerous other people against their will and without their consent).

The Commission and Report represent exactly what Thomas Jefferson feared concerning coercive government power via religion, as described in his Letter to the Danbury Baptists, dated January 1, 1802: [7]

“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. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.”

It is breathtaking that the Commission refuses to accept Jefferson’s articulation of the purpose of the Constitutional phrase “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” as “building a wall of separation between Church & State”, relatively soon after ratification of the Constitution with its Bill of Rights. It is almost funny that the Commission leans on the weak argument: “But the ‘wall of separation’ phrase does not appear in the First Amendment or anywhere else in the Constitution.” Report at 210 Many words do not appear in the Constitution; does that render such words inoperative respecting the Constitution and its meaning? Of course not. If that is the best argument, then it fails spectacularly.

The Report also makes an outrageously false claim to delegitimize the two-century old concept of a “wall of separation” between church and state. It first notes “(t)he idea that (the First Amendment) does allow—or even require—a ‘wall of separation’ only took off in the mid-twentieth century, when the Supreme Court began citing Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association”. The Report then states that this two-century old idea is somehow a modern concept (because it was cited much later) and thus has no persuasive power. Report at 22. This is like saying that an ancient artifact does not represent the time in which it was created because it was discovered today. That “reasoning” is completely nonsensical.

Following that false claim is a dubious claim that “church and state strengthen and support one another”, presumably in some benign sense. Report at 22. This describes a theocracy at one extreme (e.g., Iran) and at the other a country like England (its King/Queen being head of the Anglican Church); the latter the United States chose NOT TO EMULATE. Theocracies never provide religious liberty to all (perhaps only to few or even none).

If we as Americans believe as the Declaration of Independence states (Report at 38)--

“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. —That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

--it necessarily follows that “religious liberty” is independent of and not established by the government.

Government’s role, via consent of the governed, is to ensure that all people have access to and can exercise their rights, including religious liberty. This is not a one-way street as the Commission seems to suggest with religious liberty for some, which is to say theirs, but not for others.

Concerning the First Amendment and its intended application, it is better to consider its author, James Madison. The Commission presents a biased perspective (towards their own prejudices) of James Madison’s view of religious liberty, which is ultimately a false representation. Report at 28, 39. As much as the Report cites his pamphlet, “Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments”, it fails to tell the real story of the pamphlet. The pamphlet argued against a Virginia bill that would both impose a “general tax to pay Christian teachers a modest salary” and make “Christianity the established religion of the state”. [8] “Madison considered the bill a ‘dangerous abuse of power’; he reasoned that if government could establish Christianity over other religions, then it would also have the power to elevate one Christian group over another. Madison believed that religion was a matter of individual conscience and that giving legislators control over religious belief would inevitably lead to violation of other basic rights: ‘It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties.’” [8]

What James Madison opposed then is essentially what the Commission seeks to create now via the Report. As an ethical matter, it matters not which branch of government is wielding abusive and coercive power via religion. The Commission leans heavily on the First Amendment as giving legal primacy and coercive power to anyone with a religion-based grievance based on “deeply held convictions” (Report at 18), “deeply held conviction” (105), or “deeply held religious beliefs” (146). How is a “deeply held conviction” distinguished from a ‘less-deeply held’ “conviction”, or just a “conviction”, or any reason whatsoever? How deep is “deep”? Does “held” mean obtained and retained for 10 minutes, 10 hours, 10 days, 10 weeks, 10 months, 10 years...continuously? Who decides any of this? Much of the resistance to “vaccine mandates” is a political act (egged on by political actors) dressed up as “deeply held religious beliefs”. This reminds me of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*: “When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” This is what the Commission effectively endorses, and it does not seem anything like a “rightly ordered relationship” between church and state. Report at 12. This “messiness” is but one reason that the Report should be rejected.

The Commission seems not at all concerned that different people may have conflicting “deeply held religious beliefs” and seems poised to support the person whose “deeply held religious beliefs” align with their own. So much for “Religious Liberty”. The Commission seems to think that “religious liberty” is obtained when at least some of the people have access to it, that it does not matter whether some people’s “religious liberty” tramples that of other people, or other rights of other people.

This is where the Ninth Amendment seems to play a role: “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” [9] Also authored by James Madison, the Ninth Amendment is arguably intended to ensure that the exercise of rights by some does not impede or negate the exercise of rights by others, even if the rights in question between the groups are the same (e.g., religious liberty) or not explicitly stated in the Constitution.

To conclude, with reference to the Prophet Micah (7:19), the Report should be sent “into the depths of the sea”-- the place where we ask God to cast our sins--never to be seen, visited, or remembered again.

PoAlmoni

References

- [1] https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULLL.pdf
- [2] <https://www.c-span.org/clip/campaign-2024/donald-trump-disavows-project-2025/5124900>
- [3] <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2025>
- [4] <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2025/01/22/camp-auschwitz-jan-6-rioter-trump-pardoned/77884230007/>
- [5] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>
- [6] <https://interestingliterature.com/2021/05/patriotism-is-the-last-refuge-of-the-scoundrel-meaning-origins/>
- [7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>
- [8] <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/james-madison/>
- [9] <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CONAN-2002/pdf/GPO-CONAN-2002-9-10.pdf>

From: William & Nancy Fowler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Commission on Religious Liberty proposal re separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:02:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

Nancy Fowler
Carmichael, CA

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: RONALD FITZGERALD <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:03:11e0400

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,
Ron Fitzgerald

From: John Krum <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~ RLC-report~~n~~ John Krum

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:03:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear sirs,

I would like to voice my concern over the recommendations made in the RLC report. The net effect of the recommendations would be to weaken, not strengthen the separation of church and state that has undergirded the freedoms given to ALL religions and individuals within the US.

I have read and agree with the Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. History proves that the first step in the direction of removing this wall has never ended with more peace, prosperity and freedom.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,
John Krum
Montana

From: Sandra Unsworth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:04:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for your work to help address issues of concern regarding religious freedom.

I am a Christian and I'm very thankful to be a citizen of the USA which gives me and people of all faiths so much religious freedom.

I respectfully ask that you uphold the separation of church and state as defined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. (Although not stated in the words "separation of church and state" the same concept is clearly there). When the state interferes with religion, bad things can happen and when religion gets too close to the state, bad things can happen. I realize that in recent years, in the United States, Christians have been banned from speaking about Jesus in public schools and from speaking against LGBTQ issues. I believe many of these instances are probably examples of government overreaching in regards to religion and not allowing "the free exercise thereof." If public schools are allowed to teach about other religions they should also be allowed to teach about Christianity.

I appreciate your support of Christian's having the right of free speech, etc. There are two clauses in the First Amendment regarding religion, the first clause which guards against Congress making laws regarding the establishment of religion and the clause regarding Congress making laws against the free exercise of religion. I respectfully ask that you uphold both clauses—the establishment clause and the free exercise clause which will help uphold the balanced concept of separation of church and state which our founding fathers held.

"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." - T. Jefferson

In history we see painful examples of what has happened when church and state have united. When church and state were united during the Middle Ages, the state church killed and persecuted millions of Protestant Christians for not following the state religion. In our day, we see communist countries where the state makes laws against religion and Christians are persecuted for following and teaching the Bible.

I believe this is also an example of dangers resulting from not having separation of church and state. We also see the example of Muslim countries where church and state are united and Christians are persecuted because there are state laws against practicing religion contrary to the state religion.

Thank you for reading and considering my comment and request to uphold the separation of church and state as found in the First Amendment of the Constitution—the separation of church and state that Thomas Jefferson and Roger Williams taught. Thank you for your work to help uphold the Constitution and uphold the freedoms that our founding fathers fought for.

May God bless continue to bless The United States of America!

Sincerely,

Sandra Unsworth

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Douglas G Pratt <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:04:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my disagreement with the unpinning of your arguments set forth in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission report and your recommendations contained therein.

While the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution or Declaration of Independence, the foundational underpinnings of the concept are present.

As you noted, Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptists: "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" (January 1, 1802).

Before Jefferson, Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island on the concept of religious tolerance. At the same time, the other colonies were theocracies with state sponsored churches, often funded by tax payers. When the "wall" of separation is missing, the slide to theocracy begins.

Jesus provided a demonstrated the "separation" model in Matthew 22:15–21. He said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and [separately] to God the things that are God's." When Jesus said this, the Rome was the civil authority and Judaism was the Church. They were separate.

When a man came to Jesus asking Him to arbitrate a legal dispute (Luke 12:3, 4), Jesus asked, "Who made Me a judge over you?" If Jesus, who, according to prophecy, will eventually judge everyone who has ever lived still opted not to weigh in on worldly legal issues, why should the United States government? Jesus recognized the separation of Church (His gospel ministry) and the State (civil legal matters).

Jesus also said, "My kingdom is not of this world" and "I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world" (John 18:36, John 12:47). The model established by Jesus is that Church and State should be separate entities.

From the Declaration of Independence we get the statement, "All men" ... "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." The signers recognized that our rights come from God, not the State. Thus, the State should not impose on these rights by dictating our religious experience or encourage one religion, denomination, or set.

What is the outcome when the State manages or imposes the religious experience? The Bible provides two case studies, both from the book of Daniel. In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar, the "State," enforced false worship. In Daniel 6, King Darius, the "State," banned true worship.

A forced faith is no faith at all and results in an outward compliance while the heart is not changed. The essence of Christianity that God dwells in us through the Holy Spirit to effect change in the life. The State cannot and should not be involved in this work. God wants an authentic heart-based spiritual experience, which State laws will never achieve.

Sometimes, when driving, we realize that the road we're on is not where we want to be. When this happens, the best course of action is to backtrack to the correct route. While the scenery on the wrong road may be enjoyable, it is nevertheless not the destination that is desirable.

As a commission, you, no doubt, have learned much about our great country. However, your conclusions are not supported by thousands of years of history and countless results of state imposed religion. You may say, “Imposed religion is not one of our recommendations,” but that’s the wrong road you’re on, leading to the inevitable result of one group dictating what, when, and where others should worship.

Please stand down as a committee and return to your individual, personal pursuits.

Thanks you,

Doug Pratt

Check out my blog: <http://NotesForLearning.com>

IG: @88notes2happiness

From: Tyrone Tyrone <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty in America.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:05:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a young christian, I don't have many years practicing the faith, though I was raised in the church I never in my heart followed God. I credit many of those wasted years to how my church, at the time treated unbelievers. It was very legalistic and condemning, even if the ones judging were guilty of the same sin.

The only thing that has led me to Christ has been my religious liberty. My freedom to privately worship Jesus Christ without the scrutiny of those who don't know Him themselves.

To repeal or lessen the separation of church and state would only ever make a wider gap between the unbeliever and the church, and everyone in between.

I humbly ask that you take into consideration all the young christians whose leaders might be misguiding them, who aren't sure of what they believe, who earnestly need time alone with Christ. Not legislated, but as a free will offering to God.

Thank you for reading my message, This is Stacy Puckett from the Free SDA Little Flock Church.

From: Gloria Pierson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of church and State - Kenneth W and Gloria Pierson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:06:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

We are very concerned that the Commission is considering weakening the wall of separation between church and state. We have witnessed firsthand, when we lived in Africa for 13 years, what happens when the state begins to offer funds to religious organizations. Not only do the churches start competing for those funds but they soon become dependent on them and lose all autonomy and become controlled by the government that is funding them. To think that any Government would offer to provide funds for 1. Religious non-profit activities, 2. Religious education and religious clubs is a far cry from what the framers of our country intended. And to think that the commission is considering the repeal of the Johnson Amendment rather than fully enforcing it is a direct attack on religious liberty which is fundamental to our country. As people of faith, we pray that those who are promoting the weakening or removing the wall separating church and state in the United States of America are thoroughly defeated by those who do not want to see the loss of freedom in our great country.

Sincerely,

Kenneth W and Gloria Pierson
Visalia, California

From: melissa davis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:06:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026.

I may not be a lawyer or of some high and lofty position in this world, but I am a concerned Christian, mother, educator, and citizen of the United States of America. I understand the concern of so many that our nation seems to be flooded with immorality and darkness, because it is. However, I am alarmed that those in governmental power believe that the solution is to impose their ideas of morality on every citizen of this country by eroding the separation of church and state as is stated in the Religious Liberty Commission's recent report. The United States of America proclaims freedom at every turn, but it seems to be less and less free as we allow fear to control our land.

Amendment I (1791) "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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." The document states, "Nothing in the First Amendment allows the government to create a "wall" between an individual's personal faith and our nation's public life" (p.42). Please be careful that you do not rewrite the constitution in your zeal to see your country look the way you want it to. The first amendment says "NO LAW" ... that's the "wall"... that the government is to be respectful of... Our faith as Christians should affect the way we live our lives. It makes us kind and thoughtful of others and desires their eternal salvation. Our personal faith does not mandate the other citizens of our nation to believe and act in the way we do. Our personal faith invites those struggling with moral living to choose of their own free will to accept or reject Jesus and the

transformation that brings about the individual change of heart that is needed in our country at large.

IF the government starts funding humanitarian aid and religious programs they are on a slippery slope to controlling religious entities. There needs to be boundaries to protect freedom, such as the Johnson Amendment states, in order to keep government money out of churches to prevent corruption. I am concerned if unchecked, our government will repeat and enlarge the atrocities of other governments in history.

As Christians we need to follow Jesus's example of reform. Jesus was the best citizen and moral leader. There was corruption all around Him, but He never tried to force everyone to conform to His way. He invited, He was a complete gentleman, He rebuked in order to help others see their need, but He NEVER asked the government to fix or legislate morality. Why? Because true change starts with meeting Jesus and having a true conversion experience in the individual heart. Jesus does the work on the heart that loves our neighbor as ourselves and creates the caring citizens our country needs. This can NEVER be determined by some outside force.

Please leave the "wall" of separation between church and state intact, and let's work more diligently as Jesus followers to change the pulse of our country's morality one heart at a time without any government dictates or interference.

Sincerely,

Melissa Davis

Entiat, Washington

--

Melissa Davis

Have a BLESSED Day!

From: E Wright <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please do not take away the separation of church and state!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:07:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

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.

Please do not destroy the liberty we have in this country to worship God according to our conscience, by removing the foundation of our freedoms and going against our beautiful constitution.

Sincerely - Ethan Wright

From: Ricardo Segurola <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:07:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen and as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty. I appreciate the opportunity to submit a public comment on the Commission's draft report.

I believe that freedom of conscience is one of the greatest blessings our nation has. Throughout history, the separation of church and state has helped protect both religious liberty and the rights of all people, regardless of their beliefs.

For this reason, I am concerned about recommendations that could weaken that separation, including increased government funding of religious activities and changes to the Johnson Amendment. I believe churches should remain free to follow their convictions without becoming dependent on government support or partisan politics.

As a person of faith, I want my church to be guided by God's Word rather than by political influence. I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve the constitutional principles that have protected religious freedom for generations.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your

Ricardo Segurola,
Miami, Florida

From: "n" [REDACTED] PII

To: " [REDACTED] PII " [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT on Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty recommendation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:08:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The pilgrims and the founding fathers of this great nation suffered and fled religious persecution enforced by state powers and we should never forget that. To remove the separation of church and state or to weaken this separation in any way is going back to the dark ages of allowing our freedom of conscience to be trampled upon by the dictates of a religious power using the might of the state.

Please do not let this happen.

Sincerely,

Angeline Huang
Fairfax, VA

From: Timothy Shives <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:08:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's draft report.

I write as an American citizen, a person of Christian faith, a veteran of the Iraq War, a career military officer who has served on both active duty and in the Reserve Component, and a federal civilian who has spent much of my professional life supporting the defense of the United States. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, I chose to serve because I believed our Nation stood for liberty—including the freedom of every American to practice their faith, or no faith at all, without government coercion or favoritism.

Throughout my military career I have served alongside Americans of many different faith traditions, as well as those with no religious affiliation. In combat, in deployed environments, and in joint operations, what united us was not a common religion but our common oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. That Constitution protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits governmental establishment of religion. Those two principles have worked together for generations to preserve both religious liberty and civil liberty.

I appreciate the Commission's concern that Americans should never be forced to abandon their sincerely held religious beliefs when serving their communities or participating in public life. I have personally seen the tremendous value that military chaplains and religious accommodations provide to service members, particularly during deployments where access to civilian religious communities is impossible. Protecting the free exercise of religion remains an important national interest.

However, I am concerned by recommendations that appear to weaken the long-standing principle of institutional separation between church and state. My concern is not that religion should be excluded from public life, I believe the First Amendment makes it clear that it should not. Rather, my concern is that government should avoid placing itself in the position of favoring, funding, or influencing religious institutions in ways that could ultimately diminish their independence.

History demonstrates that religious liberty is strongest when government neither establishes religion nor becomes entangled in directing or financing religious activities. Churches should remain free to speak with moral authority rather than becoming dependent upon political influence or public funding. Likewise, government best serves all citizens by remaining neutral among religious traditions while vigorously protecting every individual's right to worship according to conscience.

I am also concerned about proposals to repeal the Johnson Amendment. While reasonable people may disagree about its current implementation, preserving clear boundaries between tax-exempt religious organizations and partisan political campaigning helps protect both our democratic institutions and the integrity of our houses of worship. Americans should never wonder whether a church's message is motivated by conviction or political patronage.

My perspective is shaped by years of military service. Around the world I have observed that one of America's greatest strengths is that citizens of different faiths—and those with none—can serve our Republic together under one Constitution. That unity is possible because government protects everyone's religious liberty equally rather than elevating one faith tradition over another.

As someone who has worn the uniform of our Nation in both war and peace, I believe we should continue to preserve that constitutional balance. We can vigorously defend religious liberty while also maintaining the institutional boundaries that have allowed religious communities in America to flourish independently for two and a half centuries.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your service on the Commission.

Respectfully,

Timothy Shives

From: Kim Layon <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:08:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to respectfully express my strong opposition to any effort that would weaken or remove the vital wall of separation between church and state.

The separation of church and state is one of the foundational principles that protects the God-given right of every person to worship according to the dictates of his or her own conscience. This principle is deeply rooted in the Constitution and has safeguarded religious liberty for generations. Once government gains authority over matters of faith, both religion and civil government are weakened.

True faith cannot be produced by force. It must be the result of a free and willing response to God. Whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, atheist, or any other belief, every individual should have the freedom to worship—or not worship—according to conscience, without coercion from the government or interference from man. Freedom of speech and freedom of religion stand together, protecting the liberty of every citizen regardless of their beliefs.

History has repeatedly demonstrated that whenever church and state unite, the result is oppression, persecution, and the loss of religious freedom. Government exists to protect the civil rights of its citizens, while the work of the church is to win hearts through truth, love, and persuasion—not through legislation or civil enforcement.

The Scriptures also teach a distinction between the responsibilities of civil government and the things that belong to God.

Jesus declared:

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."
— **Matthew 22:21 (KJV)**

Christ also said:

"My kingdom is not of this world." — **John 18:36 (KJV)**

The apostles affirmed that our highest allegiance belongs to God:

"We ought to obey God rather than men." — **Acts 5:29 (KJV)**

The Bible teaches that each person is individually accountable before God:

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." — **Romans 14:12 (KJV)**

The Apostle Paul further reminds us:

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." — **Romans 14:4 (KJV)**

These passages demonstrate that matters of conscience belong between the individual and God, not between the individual and the state.

I respectfully urge the Religious Liberty Commission to continue defending the constitutional protections that preserve freedom of conscience for all people. Please oppose any measure that erodes the separation of church and state or grants government authority over matters of faith.

Religious liberty is not only a constitutional principle—it is a biblical principle. It safeguards the rights of every individual and allows faith to remain voluntary rather than compelled.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to protecting the freedoms that have long been a blessing to our nation.

Respectfully,

Kimberly Layon

City Exodus Ministries

Heart of the Desert Wellness & Health

From: Cheri Windemuth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Repot - Tim & Cheri Windemuth

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:09:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

We are in opposition to this report and its recommendations. Fully support separation of church & state as directed by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

From: Marjorie Crawford <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:10:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my opposition to the union of church and state. I believe that the separation of these two institutions is essential for protecting the liberties of all citizens.

History demonstrates that when church and state are unified, religious oppression often follows. Maintaining a clear distinction between them is vital to ensuring lasting freedom and preventing such outcomes.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Crawford

From: Chris Spinolo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Attack on the First Amendment - Michael C. Spinolo

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:10:59 -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 First Amendment.

History demonstrates, without deviation, that when civil government prescribes religious practice, or when the church acquires civil powers, that people will die, eventually by thousands of thousands, due to religious persecution. These unions of church and state sometimes occurred suddenly and oppressively, but most often build gradually over time. The well known "4 stages of the Sunday Law" (ref, Wikipedia or Google) illustrate the persecution brought about by progressive development of a "day of rest" to a prescribed day of worship.

The Committee itself demonstrated the dangers of government engagement (interference) in religious practice with 1) the quick dismissal of Carrie PreJean Bowler for exercising her Freedom of Speech. Because her *questions* did not conform to conclusions the Committee was attempting to establish. 2) the special treatment given Jewish people and the state of Israel. The report is full of rhetoric calling for the protection of religious expression in the workplace or in government activities, but when the very Commission calling for more religious expression in government finds the expression of one of its own members objectionable, it takes swift action against the offending member. This illustrates how uniting church and state inevitably leads to the state being forced to decide religious doctrine.

I believe that the freedom of conscience, especially in regards to religious practice falls under the "certain unalienable Rights" cited in the Declaration of Independence. The Religious Liberty Commission recommendations propose that government must usurp these rights, "endowed by their Creator" - rights given by God, not government.

I find the revisionist tone of the Commission towards the history of separation and the omission of critical facts (e.g. Jefferson did not originate the expression "a wall of separation between the Church and State". A persecuted Puritan minister, Roger Williams did) in order to establish their position is also disturbing.

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, so that churches answer to politicians rather than God. The wall protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,
Michael C Spinolo
Pioneer, Tennessee

From: Eric Buvronn [REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:11:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The support of the separation between church and state is extremely important to uphold and to prevent the take over of the church by the state. With no separation of church and state, state sponsored religious directives would be issued to its people instead of the principles of religious liberty clearly expressed in the US constitution and historically in America by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and by 17th century Baptists and 18th century evangelicals.

Furthermore, with incorrect doctrines such as a 1st day “sabbath” (Sunday was instituted by the Catholic church as a mark of their authority only) instead of the actual, biblical 7-day Sabbath (the Sabbath of the Lord instituted by God), made for all of mankind (not only for the Jewish people), established during creation (Genesis 2:3) and defined in Exodus 20:8-11, these incorrect doctrines will be pushed by the State if the separation of church and state is removed. Such incorrect doctrines like the 1st day “sabbath” which goes against the will of God (Exodus 20:8-11 / Revelation 14:12), will further be expanded by facilitating the propagation using state funds to support churches and religious education supporting these erroneous doctrines. Also, political favors from the church to the state will occur with money flowing into state funded churches.

It is more important now than ever before that the separation of church and state is upheld to focus the nation on proper Christian doctrines by keeping churches independent of the state in preparation for Jesus Christ's soon return.

Sincerely,

Eric Buvron

Uniondale, NY

From: Ellsworth Quinton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:11:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am seriously troubled by the Commission's desire to replace the "WALL" of separation between the Church and the State with a "BRIDGE" between the Church and the State. A bridge may allow cross-pollination between the Church and the State that may be detrimental to both the Church and the State. The Church of Jesus Christ is expected to use PERSUASION to convince men and women of the power of the gospel. The State uses COERCION to ensure its goals are met. Using religious liberty as a bridge between the Church and the State often results in the COERCIVE elements dominating the PERSUASIVE elements, creating confusion. This kind of confusion was seen during the Dark Ages, when the coercive elements dominated the persuasive elements and great suffering and persecution resulted.

I believe the separation of Church and State has been an important contributor to America's success and tremendous growth, separating America especially from its European neighbors where the Church and the State are not separated. Additionally, this separation idea did not originate with Thomas Jefferson or the Supreme Court. During the 17th century, Roger Williams suffered after he suggested the idea of the separation of Church and State. His separation ideas led to the establishment of the state of Rhode Island.

From my perspective, neither Jesus nor his disciples used the government to aid Christians in the development of the fruit of the spirit or to ensure Christians never experienced difficulties as they lived or shared their faith. Saint Paul in his second epistle to Timothy, chapter three and verse twelve states, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution".

Please reconsider eliminating the separation of Church and State. Keep the Church and the State separate and encourage churches and other religious organizations to focus their efforts on the Gospel and its power to change human hearts and lives.

Sincerely,

Ellsworth Quinton
Villa Rica, GA

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Ellsworth Quinton

From: "Verna E. MacKay" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Verna E. MacKay

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:11:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I have learned that the Commission wants to dismantle the wall of separation between church and state and to repeal the Johnson Amendment. I find this quite troubling.

The secret of the power and prosperity of the United States lies in its Constitution. God has blessed our nation above all other nations on earth. The Constitution of the United States is the best constitution of any country.

Because of the separation of church and state, millions have sought our land of liberty, where they have the freedom to worship according to their desires and where freedom of speech is welcome.

If church and state become united, it will lead to the persecution of those who do not go along with the requirements of both entities, and history will be repeated. For example, Roger Williams had to flee for his life during the early years of this country because he stood up for religious liberty and the separation of church and state. He believed that people should have the freedom of conscience. This freedom, which we now enjoy, could be torn down, and persecution would certainly follow.

Please reconsider the course you are on, and do not build a bridge to unite church and state. The government should also not fund churches or any religious institution. This is a grave mistake that will have a tremendous negative impact on the United States of America and also the rest of the world.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message.

Yours truly,

Verna E. MacKay
Flintville, TN

From: Heidi Kremic <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:12:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a devout Christian who finds my faith to be a tremendous blessing and priority in my life. I am a firm believer in the Bible. I am thankful that others feel likewise and would wish that those who do not know the Lord would find Him. However, my understanding of God through reading my Bible informs me that God placed such a priority on freedom of conscience, that He was willing to risk the consequences of allowing this freedom and the whole 'sin problem' mess, because **LOVE NEVER** uses force. I also know from history that when church and state unite, persecution, and a decided LACK of Religious Liberty follow. As a matter of fact, a very large percentage of the early pilgrims came to this country because of a desire to be able to follow their conscience in how to worship God.

I sincerely and prayerfully ask that the Religious Liberty Commission does NOT pursue tearing down the wall of separation of Church and State. Please examine history. Understand what Roger Williams and others like him realized. Religious Liberty and the freedom to worship God according to our individual conscience has been one of the greatest blessings of the United States of America. Please understand that when governments are given an inch, they take a mile. Please do not tear down this fundamental freedom from the citizens of this great nation.

Praying and trusting HIM.

Thank you.

Heidi Kremic

From: Carolyn Scott <[REDACTED] PII>

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:13:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Presidential_Commission_on_Religious_Liberty_Reconsideration_Request.pdf

Please consider the attached document in response to the Commission on Religious Liberty's draft report.

Thank you,
Carolyn Scott

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. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the work the Commission has put into this draft report. I am writing to share some concerns about the report's proposal to replace the "wall of separation" between church and state with a "bridge." I believe this shift moves away from a principle that has long been central to American freedom, and I hope the Commission will consider the following points as it continues its work.

I would like to offer a few thoughts on why I hope the Commission might reconsider its current direction:

- A fuller historical picture: The report describes the "wall of separation" as a modern invention or a single metaphor from Thomas Jefferson. I would gently note that this concept actually dates back to 1644, when Roger Williams articulated it, and that it played a central role in the early "experiments" in religious liberty in colonies like Rhode Island and Pennsylvania.
- A foundation many people of faith helped build: The separation of church and state was not a secular imposition. It was championed by people of faith, including Baptists, whose support for the Constitution depended on the inclusion of the First Amendment.
- A concern about funding and independence: I worry that increased government funding for religious activities could, over time, entangle churches in the political process in ways that are not good for them. Public money tends to come with public expectations, and I fear this could pressure religious institutions to adjust their beliefs to keep their funding.
- A respectful request on the Johnson Amendment: I would ask the Commission to reconsider its recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment. I'm concerned that doing so could turn churches into vehicles for partisan politics, opening the door for wealthy interests to influence religious causes in ways that could erode their spiritual integrity.
- A historical success worth remembering: Alexis de Tocqueville, writing in the 1830s, observed that both clergy and laypeople credited the growing influence of religion in America to the complete separation of church and state. I think that history is worth keeping in mind.

I do not see the "wall" as something that separates religious people from public life. I see it as a safeguard that protects both religious and civil institutions from each other's overreach. I respectfully ask that the Commission take another look at its historical account and reconsider the recommendations that could put this important principle at risk.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Scott

From: "Eric C. Hughes" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Sham Report - Eric Hughes

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:13:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a humanist and 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.

And, it's formatted and written like a sophomore term paper.

Disrespectfully,
Eric Hughes

From: Jon Gusky <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - E Jonathan Gusky

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:14:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

I am troubled by the recommendations of the commission and would encourage you to reconsider at least (2) of the major findings:

1) Repealing of the Johnson Act. I believe this will negatively affect any churches ability to work out by faith. By being able to support a candidate/representative, a church can receive favors, and in many cases, this can have churches to battle for funding - this is not the way a church should run, should always be operated by faith of believers to effect changes, not to potentially battle for bucks

2) Removing the wall of separation and building a bridge. The specific language of a "wall of separation" is not found in the constitution, but the 1st amendment does show that congress shall not establish nor prohibit religious beliefs, which is what a wall of separation is. It also goes on to demonstrate freedom of speech. This goes hand in hand with religious freedom. When you are free to speak your mind - you are by default not told what to say and that freely demonstrates that you are not told what to or how to think.

America is great because American is good. A moral society will preserve the republic (yes, we are not a democracy, but a constitutional republic - thank God for that, we enjoy freedoms and protections that were only dreamed of by any other country in the world's history). The State bears the sword to punish wrong doers, this constitutes the last 6 commandments - the church is to provide means for you to love God - you cannot keep the first 4 any other way. If the state uses the sword to create a moral state, it will find fearful morality will not produce a great society. We do have history in the world showing what can happen when the state gets involved in prescribing faith for the common good of all. Biblically, Daniel 3 and 6 are examples of the state and religion combined. Daniel 3 shows government determining what the tenants of religion will consist of while Daniel 6 shows what prohibiting the free exercise results in. We also have the dark ages as an example.

I do understand the fear of America becoming more immoral, but a moral person cannot be made by fear of punishment.

I am a strong person of faith. I would never choose to vie for funding for projects, help with education programs, church bailouts, or supporting candidates. I do believe, as a Christian, that we should take the words of Jesus in consideration - Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God, the things that are God's. I believe He understood the best way for governance. I believe going against this will weaken both the Church and the State.

Thank you for maintaining the freedom we have by providing an outlet for public comments on you findings,

Kindest Regards, Jon Gusky
Berrien Center, Michigan

From: Wayne Lee <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Regarding Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:14:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a United States citizen and have been since the time of my birth. I cherish the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and to try and change or alter any of it is unconstitutional. Religious freedom is guaranteed and the State has no part in it, the two are separate as the Constitution reads. Do not tamper the Constitution.

Sincerely

Wayne Lee Keller

From: Marques McBride <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-seperation church/state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:15:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of religious liberty commission:

I was trouble to read that the religious liberty commission wants to replace the Wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect , I do not agree or support this change. As a person of faith, I find the idea alarming.

I would like to keep my religious freedom, exactly the way it is for the exact reason the separation was created in the first place. I hold dearly to my believe that as an American, i have full religious liberty and freedom without any government say.

Thank you for concidering my concerns.

Marques McBride

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "PII" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response Letter to RLC 7/12/26

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:16:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_RLC.docx

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for allowing the opportunity for dialogue and feedback.

Attached it my letter for consideration by the Committee.

Respectfully,

Mark Ranzinger

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

Thank you for your work in revisiting the subject of religious liberty and how it should best function in our republic, with an eye to continue its arc as longest functioning republic in the history of the world. In the words of President Reagan “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We don’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.” These words being but an echo of an earlier founding father, “The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.”

President Trump is to be lauded for seeing and sensing the threat of an incipient ideological progressive atheism every bit destructive as the overt Soviet communism. His words and actions show he understands the grave menace this represents to the nation bequeathed to us by the founding generation.

The two great horns of our power as a nation have been Republicanism (we the people) and Protestantism (by every word of that proceeds from the mouth of God, without king or pope). These principles are the distillation of Jesus’ teaching on the subject sublimely encapsulated in one sentence, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.” These distinct but mutually beneficial and reinforcing spheres have been the source of America’s great power for freedom and good at home and abroad.

In the sphere of the state is the responsibility for maintaining civil order, protecting life and property, administering justice and preserving the rights of the citizens. In the sphere of the church lies the responsibility for proclaiming the gospel, teaching God’s Word, making disciples and the care of people’s spiritual needs.

In this division the government should not establish nor control the church, the government should not compel religious belief, worship or observance and should not appoint ministers or determine religious teaching. It certainly should not use governmental power to enforce doctrine or punish heresy and its main job is to defend religious liberty such that it is protected equally for believers of all faiths and for those with no faith. Government should protect the churches freedom to worship, own property and preach without interference.

The churches and other religious institutions should encourage citizens of these United States to be honest, law-abiding, charitable and responsible which will greatly benefit society and humanity. The churches and other religious institutions should provide education, disaster relief,

and food assistance, and charitable services that complement governmental efforts. Religious leaders should also speak to the moral issues affecting society, while recognizing that government is tasked with making laws for all citizens rather than enforcing or empowering any one denominational or religious persuasion.

The concept of separating religion from political power emerged from the religious wars in Europe, the sectarian violence that resulted from powerful denominations, and from the abuse of divine authority by monarchs and institutions. Church-state separation was and is not anti-religion; it was anti-theocracy. Only too clearly do we see in Iran the danger of a merged and non separated religion and state.

Contrary to popular belief, magnified and distorted by a secular atheism, separation does not mean banning religion from public life, enforcing atheism, or silencing religious expression. Rather it means no religion controls the state, no state enforces religious doctrine and laws apply equally to all citizens. Belief remains free but power to coerce does not. The government is not to hinder the church nor help it. It is free as it should be.

The last 1000 years of history has fearfully warned us the result of mingling church with state. How many millions over this millennium were discriminated against? How many lost livelihoods, were imprisoned, tortured and killed for their religious faith whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim? The mind and heart recoil at the brutality of this period. The terms used to describe this period range from the Golden Age to the Dark Ages depending on which religious class you belonged to and which end of the stick you were on - the giving end or the receiving end.

Separation has served us well the last 250 years until the current moment of sexual revolution and revision, the undermining of authority, the loss of faith, and increasing atheism. The means to address these are what they always have been - the preaching of the gospel. That worked for the early Christians at a fearful cost but it overcame the then known empire. And they did this all without the aid of the state, yea with the state actively persecuting them unto death. As a matter of record both Jesus and Paul died from religious men influencing the governmental power to their ends.

While it is true that the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the U.S. Constitution there is an equivalent to it. The separation of church and state is rooted in the First Amendment's Establishment Clause "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". This is how Jefferson understood the first amendment.

His famous letter thus 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 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."

The plain reading of his words shows that he understood the Establishment clause to be the

equivalent of a wall. And that phrase is in the Bill of Rights. Furthermore he speaks of “that act of the whole American people” and of “the supreme will of the nation” indicating these were not his sentiments or understanding alone. He indicates this to be the desire of the nation, or at least a majority, at the time of these events. James Madison concurs: “Religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.”

The idea of separation of church and state was in existence in the colonies more than 100 years before the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Roger Williams used these very words but more importantly put this concept into action in his colony.

Thus let us play a thought experiment. Two colonies paint a vivid contrast of colonial life as it developed over the same period of time. On the one hand we have Massachusetts Bay colony with its harsh and severe punishments, its religious persecutions, eventually cumulating in the Salem witch trials of 1692. Church and state were hand and glove in this colony.

On the other hand, we have Rhode Island, a colony who welcomed Jews, Indians and Quakers, who taught no one should be forced to join a church or be forced to pray, and who passed a law to abolish slavery (1652), not to mention caring deeply about women’s rights. This colony early on made it a principle and practice to separate church from state.

Back to the thought experiment. If any member of this committee were made to spend 10 years with their family in one of these colonies, which would they choose? And which system is more reflective of the US system of laws and governance today?

Now in regards to the specific proposals given by the Committee. In reference to support of philanthropic organizations, let the churches appeal to the people directly and receive from the people directly. Our founding words are “We the people” and so it should be, not “We the government.” The government inevitably cannot support every organization equally and therefore will place its thumb of the scale. Let the free market of ideas and persuasion be the source of its income, not the purse of the government, which given its indebtedness may be the prudent thing as well.

It does not speak well of the churches that they are going hat in hand to the government. Does not the gospel teach its followers the need for giving, sacrificial giving, for the gospel and the poor? This issue speaks to the poverty of the churches in terms of following the instructions of our Lord. “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows liberally will also reap generously.”

A recent study from 2026 reported average giving to churches among evangelical Protestants was 1.66% of household income. If the Biblical precedent of tithe were taken seriously would there not be enough money for the philanthropic endeavors? Why should the government support what the churches are unwilling to do themselves? Is this the government’s problem?

Ben Franklin on this matter: “ 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, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”

Now in regards to education, if there were a blind trust that gave to parents directly and equally for the education of their children, whether religious based or not, such an arrangement may not be prohibited. But it must be equal and the government, once the money is given, can have no further say in the matter. Is this even possible? This again opens up the church to entangling alliances (to use a metaphor from another context) that leave it unable to pursue its mission single heartedly.

In regards to the Johnson amendment, please allow the church to be the church and not become entangled in political labyrinths. This advocacy will change the nature of the church and has the potential to split congregations. To speak to the great moral issues of the day - yes. To support specific candidates will use precious church time to advocate for feeble men when that time could be spent extolling the virtues of our Lord and the gospel which is the only solution for the troubles of our time. The church is not to be the handmaiden of the government. They are the handmaiden of the Lord. And you cannot serve two masters with first loyalty.

The document speaks of a bridge between church and state. All right then, let there be a bridge. But make it a narrow way, a foot path, where Uncle Sam and the bride of Christ show deference and mutual respect to the others position and responsibilities as they pass on their way to their respective duties. Let it not be a bridge wide, a broad way, wide enough to carry cartloads of clergy or wagons awash in cash. This will be the spoiling and corruption of both. Let the Uncle not take advantage of the betrothed women nor the women compromise her vow nor sully her garments white.

My parents both escaped a war torn Europe to come to this country. They could kiss the ground of this beautiful land of freedom. Many were the stories I heard at the table growing up of the old world and its way. They knew there religious discrimination and desired their new home to ever remain free of its taint. I choose America – the land of the free and the home of the brave, not the land of the dependant and the home of the craven.

How deeply I love this country and its freedoms. How I love its Declaration, its Constitution and its Bill of Rights. Let us be ever so careful to preserve this legacy for the generations unborn.

May we be eternally vigilant in denying the robbers of our freedoms so dearly purchased, whether from a not so well meaning secular left or a well intentioned religious right. Let us, I pray you, avoid this untried adventurism. Let us not allow the camel to put its nose in our tent.

God bless you and God bless America.

Respectfully Yours,

Mark Ranzinger

From: "Ernesto Layon, Jr." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:16:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully oppose any effort to weaken the separation of church and state. Religious liberty is a God-given right that must remain protected for every person, regardless of their beliefs.

Whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, atheist, or of another faith, every individual should have the freedom to worship according to the dictates of conscience, without coercion from the government or interference from man. Faith cannot be legislated or forced by civil law.

Jesus Himself taught the distinction between civil and religious authority: *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matthew 22:21, KJV). Christ also declared, *"My kingdom is not of this world."* (John 18:36, KJV).

Please continue defending the constitutional protections that preserve freedom of conscience and oppose any efforts to erode the separation of church and state. Religious liberty protects us all.

Respectfully,

Ernesto Layon Jr.

City Exodus Ministries
Heart of the Desert Wellness & Health

From: Richard Davis <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:16:53 -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 because that's how we keep them both free. Keep the current wall in place. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Richard Davis

Entiat, WA

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "PII" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Emailing Guide to Responding-2(1).pdf

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:17:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Guide_to_Responding-2(1).pdf

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<https://adobeacrobat.app.link/Mhhs4GmNsxb>

Sent from AOL on Android



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

GUIDE TO COMMENTING ON THE DRAFT REPORT of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Executive Summary of this document:

1. **Make yourself familiar with the Report**

2. **Write a comment.**

If you don't have time, just write "I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them."

3. **Email your comments to [Redacted] PII by July 13, 2026, 5pm EDT.**

Detailed Guide:

On Friday, June 26, 2026, the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty released its draft report, which President Trump accepted in the Oval Office. The report was the product of seven hearings, and included both basic summaries of the hearings and recommendations. At the beginning and end of the report there is an editors note that "for the benefit of the public, the draft will be open to public comment," until July 13, 2026.

There are many critical issues that should be of concern for citizens of the United States, as well as all the inhabitants of the world, as the United States commonly sets the standard for freedom that other

nations aspire to. **The most critical issue by far is the Commission's effort to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state.**

The Commission's attempt is marked by making two primary types of recommendations that should alarm everyone. The first is the repeal of the Johnson Amendment which will further politicize America's churches, and the second is the expansion of funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities. Both of these recommendations are counter to the separation of church and state as provided for by the Constitution.

In making its recommendations, the Commission relies upon faulty history. Feel free to read Pillar of Freedom's response which is at pillaroffreedom.org that addresses the relevant American history and the recommendations that are of concern.

You can make difference by filing your own comment. Comments are to be sent by email by July 13. [assume 5pm Eastern Daylight Savings Time] The Department of Justice website states:

Comments may be emailed to [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] The Commission has requested that the subject line use the following format:

PUBLIC COMMENT – [TOPIC OR CHAPTER NUMBER] – [NAME]

Please remember that public comments are open to public inspection. Do not include personal addresses or other sensitive personal information.

For a complete record of the hearings, got to:

<https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/resources>

The Executive Summary fails to mention some of the report's central recommendations.

In drafting your comment, it is important that you use your own words. The best comments will be sincere and heartfelt. Issues you may wish to address in your comment could include:

1. Objections to funding religious non-profit activities.
2. Objections to funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.
3. Objections to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities.
4. A request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.

5. Objections to the special treatment given Jewish people and the state of Israel, and whether you desire complete neutrality in the government's relationship with religion.

Perhaps one of the best comments you could make would be to tell a story of your personal benefit from the separation of church and state, or perhaps religious persecution you may have experienced in a foreign country because there was no separation. Personal stories that would be good tell might include:

1. If your ancestors came to America to escape religious persecution. Many of us have ancestors who did that, whether to Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, Delaware, or some of the other colonies, such as South Carolina which promised freedom of worship.
2. If you came to America to escape religious persecution that was the result of a union of church and state.
3. If you ever suffered religious persecution because in America because there was inadequate separation of church and state.
4. The history of your religious denominations fight for religious freedom and the separation of church and state.
5. If you ever were denied a visa or other right because of your religious beliefs.

When making your objections and telling your personal story, support the commission on key issues that you agree with them on. If you are a person of faith, express that. Let them know what your faith is.

If you are feeling ambitious, point out that the Commission's own conduct proves the need for separation of church and state. You can do so by familiarizing yourself with Carrie Prejean Bollern—often referred to simply as Carrie Prejean, the former Miss California USA. Carrie Prejean was removed after the Commission's February 9, 2026 hearing on antisemitism. During that hearing, she pressed witnesses on whether criticism of Israel or anti-Zionism should be treated as antisemitism, asked whether opposition to Zionism made Catholics antisemitic, and questioned Israel's conduct in Gaza. Prejean also quoted 1 Thess 2:14-15, which stated that the Jews killed Jesus. This text is widely condemned as antisemitic, as it has been used as a rallying call to persecute the Jews in the past. Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, the Commission chair, announced her removal and said no commissioner had the right to "hijack a hearing" for a personal or political agenda. But this raises an interesting point. The report is full of rhetoric calling for the protection of religious expression in the workplace or in government activities, but when the very Commission calling for more religious expression in government finds the expression of one of its own members objectionable, it takes swift action against the offending member. This illustrates how uniting church and state inevitably leads to the state being

forced to decide religious doctrine. The easiest way to familiarize yourself with her side of the story is to listen to Tucker Carlson interview her on March 13, 2026. After understanding the facts, you can chastise the commission for what they did which by their own stated standard is an act of religious intolerance towards Prejean or you can chastise them for disproving their claim that religious expression in government should be protected. Better yet, chastise them for both.

Your goal is probably not to write a comprehensive critique of the Commissions report, but rather to make a pointed criticism or two, share a story of the importance of the separation of church and state, and let them know that you object to their report. Your second goal should be to get as many of your friends to do the same thing. Consider throwing a little party where each of you send a comment.

We would like to see your comments. Please send us a copy at [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]. By sending it to us, we can review it, and perhaps post it on our website as a model comment to inspire others.

It is important to stand up for our religious liberty rights. Religious liberty is the bedrock of all of your liberties. As Benjamin Franklin famously said, "We must all hang together, or most assuredly we will all hang separately."

EXAMPLE RESPONSES

Please change the wording of these emails so that the Commission will know that you are sending genuine response, and not merely copying other thoughts.

Email to: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Your Name] Tyrone Murray

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,

[Your Name] Tyrone Murray

[City, State] Huntingdon, Tn

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Your Name] Tyrone Murray

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,

[Your Name] Tyrone Murray

[City, State] Huntingdon, Tn

***Share this with everyone you know that might
have an interest in our freedoms.***

Please consider making a donation at:

pillaroffreedom.org

From: Bob Stone <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:18:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Committee,

I want to thank you for the time you have put into this most important work. I want to thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

My family has been deeply involved in the founding of this great nation and I take my families heritage of supporting and defending this wonderful nation from suppression of the freedoms that we hold so dear to be very serious. My relatives include Gorge Washington, and singers of the Declaration of Independence.

Now that I have introduced myself I would like to get to the point. I agree with the Pillar of Freedom's comments and I ask you to take them seriously. I believe that the strength of our country is greatly related to our separation of church and state. I don't say this because I agree with the anti God segment of society. I myself am a conservative Christian. I believe in putting God first in everything. I believe we should have Christians in government. I am greatly pleased when we have governors that pray. Gorge Washington was a praying man. But to create a bridge between the church and the state has never led to anything good. Just read history.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely

Robert Stone

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for iOS.

From: joshua saladino <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:19:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

Please refrain from any bridge building between church and state. Roger Williams agreed that there should be a wall protecting religion, protecting the conscience. I agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments, please implement them.

Thanks,

Joshua Saladino [REDACTED] PII

From: Pastor Hal Mayer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to the findings of Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:20:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 26.7.10_Presidential_Religious_Liberty_Commission.docx

Please find attached my Response to the Commission's Findings.

Respectfully Submitted

Pastor Hal Mayer
Keep the Faith Ministry

July 12, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

PII

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 Presidential Religious Liberty Commission has admirable motives in its desire to push back the tide of secularism and its attendant evils that has come onto America. I deeply share that desire.

However, the Commission has overlooked or ignored substantive history in its quest to make America a "Christian" nation. A long line of presidents, Supreme Court justices and other political leaders have declared the separation of church and state to be very important. Separation of church and state is not a myth. It has been part of the U. S. Constitution, without using those words, since its first amendment was adopted.

To declare that the United States of America is a Christian nation necessarily means that laws will be needed, eventually, to support Christianity as the state religion. Laws require enforcement. And this is where the trouble comes. The Commission wants to protect Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and others, but if it identifies a preference for Christianity, eventually, with the problems that this raises for equality of all citizens before the law, the government will necessarily have to abandon protecting these minority religions in favor of protecting the majority Christian religion. Christianity makes exclusive claims, therefore, it will become inevitable that other religions will be discriminated against and may even be eventually persecuted.

Many countries do not provide a separation between the majority religion and the state, and they are all entangled in various levels of discrimination and persecution. To have a Christian religion as the state religion will eventually, maybe sooner than later, lead to the same result only under the color of Christianity. And this has happened before. European states allied to the church persecuted non-conforming Christians, not to mention Jews, Muslims and others.

To state that America was founded ON the Christian religion is manifestly false. Though Christian people were involved in establishing the nation, it is a different thing from establishing a "Christian" nation. They created the separation of church and state in its constitution. While they had a sense of the moral obligations resting upon them by their understandings of the word and law of God, they had come from the old world with its persecutions of minority religions and could not allow the same environment to arise again. They knew from history that whenever the state establishes a religion, this leads to discrimination, censorship and even outright persecution of minority viewpoints.

Jesus Himself separated our obligation to the state from the church. He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's," Matthew 22:21. While the state has been given the right to regulate the last six of the Ten Commandments, which have to do with human relationships, laws in relation to them are the foundation of a just and free society. The state should never presume to control the conscience regarding their citizens' solemn and sacred duty to God, which is enshrined in the first four commandments.

When the state professes Christianity, what version of Christianity do they profess? The wide diversity of forms of Christianity makes it impossible to fairly and equally give all of them the same level of respect before the law. Therefore, the state has to choose which theology or doctrine it is willing to support. If the government wants to align itself with Christianity and make laws to support it, what form of Christianity would those laws support. It will be necessary to formulate laws that support that certain aspect of Christianity which is common to most. And when a conflict arises, they will always choose to support the majority version. This will naturally leave out those which are not common. And there are very different viewpoints between Christians, such as over which day is the Sabbath, what is the state of man in death, understandings concerning the end-time prophecies, immortality, etc. Even the main branch of Christianity has wide differences, such as church authority, the role of works and faith, sexuality and sexual identity, etc. Historically, many of those minority Christians were eventually persecuted by the majority when the state assumed the supposed "obligation" to regulate the consciences of men and establish a state sponsored religion.

No civil power has the right to invade the consciences of man. It should be neutral to religion. But if laws are made to support Christianity in the nation, which is the goal of the Commission, it will have the opposite effect on the liberty of those that hold a Bible understanding that is different from the mainstream of Christianity in America. America's founders were very concerned about this and talked and wrote about it extensively.

To enforce upon men laws regulating Christian faith, is nothing more than an attempt to compel them to be Christians, and does, in fact, compel many to be hypocrites. The civil government does not have the right to command the conscience. If it does, the government will first make minority viewpoints unequal before the law. Eventually laws will be made that will censor minority viewpoints and drive them underground as in other nation states that have a state religion, or the religion of atheism. This is only a short step from outright persecution.

In the age of high-tech surveillance and censorship it becomes especially crucial to maintain the separation between church and state because they can be used to persecute minority viewpoints and are already active in the public square.

It will be easy to dismiss these concerns as an overreaction to the Commission's recommendations. But if the Commission wants to protect Judaism and Israel, there is only one style of Christianity that can do this, namely Christian dispensationalism and Christian Zionism. The removal of Carrie Prejean Boller from the Commission for asking questions and making comments informed by what she believed to be traditional Catholic teachings on Judaism, is an example of the intolerance of minority viewpoints of at least some on the Commission. To remove her, the Commission was forced to use ad hominem and paint her religious beliefs as antisemitic. This reveals the unsavory underbelly of the union between church and state that will play itself out in other arenas when the legal steamroller gets a head of steam.

One final point, funding, largely derived from taxes, will become necessary to support Christian institutions, which will lead those Christian entities to comply with government policies (and ideology) to receive those funds, thus prostituting the church to the state. This will strip Christianity of whatever vital power it still has left.

Respectfully with Christian Sincerity,

Pastor Hal Mayer

Madison, VA

From: Callis Rowe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:21:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam:

Please vote no on the issue of church and state union. It always in the end leads to persecution.

Sincerely,
Callis L.

From: Bill Rousen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:21:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the separation of church and state and believe it is my constitutional right to choose to worship or not to worship when or where I want, as my conscience dictates, not as my government dictates.

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From: David and Daniela Giangrande <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response Statement

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:21:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Respected members of the Religious Liberty Committee

I would join the voices of concern regarding the idea that there is no separation of church and state in our Constitution. Our founders, such as Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin, have stated clearly that the secular government should not legislate religion and that religion should not steer the government to legislate with favoritism toward any particular religion. When religion pushes for secular power, as we see in certain Islamic states where Sharia law prevails, the minority groups suffer. Many examples abound in today's world. Our founders were well acquainted with the religious persecution that occurred in Europe for centuries as well as the same intolerance that was part of Colonial America. They set up our founding governing documents to prevent anything like that happening in our republic.

What has made our nation great was a populace that understood what our Constitution and our Bill of Rights meant. These values were taught to their children at home. Respect for law and the rights of others was learned at home, in civics classes at school, and in houses of worship. The secular government allowed the church to instill religious values, and the church was content to have the civil government maintain the civil codes, the rights of private property, and public safety.

What is needed today is for people to respect those values and teach their children to do so as well. People should act out of personal and moral conviction and not governmental force and coercion. Our elected representatives should lead by example. Our laws are just fine. However we have a large segment of our society that has not learned to respect what is currently in place.

History shows that when religion influences the state, even with the best of intentions, it always ends up persecuting those in the minority. That is the opposite of what this commission is supposed to be setting in place, which is religious liberty for all. Please take into account the principles I have laid out in this email. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

David Giangrande

--

[REDACTED]

PII

[REDACTED]

From: Robert Buletti <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom :I object to the taking away of religious freedom. It is a God-given right it is also in the constitution not in so many words. first beast in revelation is the papacy or papel Rome the second beast is the when religious liberty is taken away and Church and State merge together. Persecution of the people of God will take place. This has all been prophesied study the book of Daniel and Revelation and you will find the answers. This message is sent from Santa Rosa, California.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:22:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Jessica Thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:22:47 -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. Furthermore America is known to be the land of the FREE and the HOME of the BRAVE! We are free to choose what we believe in as much we are free to choose who we believe in. I'm a Christian and I know that a Christian is really a true Christian when they follow Jesus Christ. Jesus NEVER forced anyone to worship him and Jesus IS GOD. He gave EVERYONE the OPPORTUNITY to choose him or not. WHO is man that he should step over the guidance of God? What Christian man or woman can require another man or woman to obey their God when the true and living God never ever did that or wanted that? We can prove this BIBLICALLY. It is against human rights to force them to worship. We have free will which is a gift from God. Church must be separate from the state. There is no such thing as freedom or free will in America if we enforce religion on the public and in the public spaces. Jesus didn't allow money changers in the temple. He said render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's and render unto God the things that are God's! The church is to be ruled by God and the state is to be ruled by state. Individuals have the right to decide what they believe. Any change to that is not in harmony with the Word of God.

Sincerely,
Jessica T
Greensboro, NC

From: Ann Harshbarger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Ann Harshbarger

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:23:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good evening,

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

Thank you,

Ann Harshbarger

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)

From: Lawrence c Raglione <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:23:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am in full support of the commissions reversal of separating religious constitutional beliefs from government life. I support holy the commissions reversal of supporting the religious influences and structure of our US Constitution. There should not be the separation that has been for the last 70 years. It's about time it was reversed and put back into it its proper orientation. Thank you.

LARRY RAGLIONE

From: "Bryant & Joy Davidson" <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:23:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

7/12/2026

TO: The Department of Justice – Religious Liberty Commission

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

I appreciated the opportunity to express my views to the commission, I am very thankful for the freedom of speech afforded in this country by means of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. However, I am very concerned, no, **ALARMED** at some of the recommendations of the Commission. Specifically, the first recommendation that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." Commission Chair, Dan Patrick, publicly stated "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and the phrase has no constitutional basis."

This would imply either that the commission knows better what the framers of the constitution meant when they wrote the amendment than the framers of the amendment knew themselves, or that the commission itself is participating in "revisionist history" that the Right so adamantly accuses the Left of. The Commission is encouraged to review the statements of the framers of the constitution.: James Madison (one of the framers of the constitution, and 4th president), "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." And Ben Franklin, "When a 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 Power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one." And Thomas Jefferson, "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."

The principle of "Separation of Church and State" as outlined in the First Amendment has been a guiding light for this country for nearly 250 years. We need only look history to understand the doleful results of the bridging of Church and State. It was the "Religious Right" that convinced the Roman State to crucify Jesus Christ. Moving on to the Dark Ages, any opposition to the Roman Church-State power was met with severe punishment, often Death, i.e., Tyndale, Huss, Jerome, and countless others. Many of our early settlers were fleeing from religious persecution, because they raised the voice of decent. Unfortunately, many set up their own governments suppressing decent themselves. Thus William Penn, Roger Williams and others fled to establish their own colonies. So it was with this background that the framers put in the First Amendment the principle of the "Separation of Church and State."

But one need not go back so far to see the dire consequences of the State meddling in matters of conscience. We need only look at the history of the former Soviet Union and other Communist countries to see the results as millions were sent to prisons, labor camps or death because they did not ascribe the Atheistic tenants of the State. And currently we only need to look at the Islamic block countries to see the results of a State supported Religious system, where if one is suspected of being an Infidel, his life is in immediate danger and the accusation alone is sufficient for incarceration or death. I could go on but I think you can see my point.

I am a Bible believing, Sabbath keeping, Christian, but clearly in a minority. The Bill of Rights, with the First Amendment including the Separation of Church and State, is there to guarantee the rights of the minorities in deference to the voices of the majority. Those minorities to be protected include, but are not limited to the Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Atheists.

This also seems to be a backdoor attempt to redefine the first amendment without the due process outlined in the Constitution for Constitutional change.

I also adamantly object to the proposal of the Commission to remove the Johnson Amendment. It has been said that “Money Talks”. Thus if Religious organizations are allowed to support specific politicians or lobby their causes by monetary or other support, they will potentially sway the judgement of the politician and thus the policies of the land. Again, promoting the allowance of the Church controlling the State.

I respectfully request that you seriously consider the points above, and those of similar input, and leave the First Amendment and the Johnson Amendment intact with no further clarification needed beyond the original script of the framers of the Constitution.

Sincerely,
Bryant Davidson
Oklahoma

From: Julie Hyde <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Re: Separation of Church and State – Julie Hyde, Ph.D.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:24:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a U.S. citizen, I have the privilege to worship as I choose without the interference of the government. Separation of church and state protects religious liberty of conscience. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on all individuals which can lead to discrimination and tyranny.

Worship and religion are personal choices. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress. The United States was founded to protect liberty of conscience. The first pilgrims came here because church and state in their own countries were NOT separate. So PLEASE, keep church and state completely separate.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views with the commission.

Kind regards,
Julie Hyde, Ph.D., CPA

From: Donna Fitzgerald <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to RLC report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:25:34 -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,
Donna Fitzgerald

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From: Greg Jones <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] respond letter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:25:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: responding_to_religious_liberty_commission.docx

Goodnight, thank you so much for this opportunity to give a response to the religious committee. I pray that all would be understood in this letter.

God bless you all and praying for your final decision.

To Whom this may concern,

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,

[Eld. Gregory Jones]

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:25:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

7/12/2026

TO: The Department of Justice – Religious Liberty Commission

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

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I respectfully request that you seriously consider the points above, and those of similar input, and leave the First Amendment and the Johnson Amendment intact with no further clarification needed beyond the original script of the framers of the Constitution.

Sincerely,
Joy Davidson
Oklahoma

From: Natasha Prince <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Don't forget the past- keeping church and state separate

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:26:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

[Good](#) evening members of the religious liberty commission

Thank you for the privilege to be able to reach out and share my concern with you. America the land of the free and the home of the brave was founded on freedoms; freedom of religion, freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom to petition. As a woman of faith, I'm compelled to write on the matter of repealing aspects of the Johnson amendment and also removing the precious wall which creates a division between church and state. The early pilgrim and puritans came to America in search of the current freedoms we all currently hold dear. These freedoms are at stake with the breakdown of the wall between church and state. In accordance with constitution , Americans should be able to choose their religion and worship freely without the influence of the state. I ask that you please reconsider the decision that is being made as it will tear down the very foundations of what America has been built upon for so many years.

N. Prince
Huntsville,

From: Jonathan Fitch <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:26:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the President's Religious Liberty Commission

My desire is to continue to worship God according to the dictates of my own conscience.

Roger Williams and William Penn reasoned well on the issues of religious liberty. Please understand that while it is the duty of the government to enforce the last 6 of the commandments of God the first four are of a personal nature between God and the believer. Freedom of conscience should never be abolished. The First Amendment prevents Congress from establishing religious laws or limiting the free exercise of religion.

I sympathize with your effort to bring moral guidance to our nation. I sincerely hope that you can recommend enforcing the morals of God's Holy Law without returning to the state-Church alliance of the Middle Ages.

Religious persecution will certainly be the result. We can not afford to forget that in Europe a corrupt church persuaded secular governments to kill untold millions and that for more than a thousand years!

Also: The Church that cannot support itself by the donations of the members is not a very good Church.

For the state to fund the church only produces a church bureaucracy unaccountable to the gospel commission of Christ. Like Revelation seventeen's Harlot that commits fornication with the kings of the earth. That is not the way to God's favor.

Idea: Protect the freedoms of law-abiding citizens by prosecuting law-breakers.

Jonathan Vanoy Fitch

[REDACTED] PII

P.S. I LOVE President Donald Trump

From: Mark Ray <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:26:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that the four fathers intended that the government has no say so in religious matters and a religious body's of any kind, has no say so in the government. This is how it's been for 250 years and worked well. Morality can not be mandated or in forced.

From: Melendez Family <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience – Michele Melendez

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:27:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious liberty is the God-given freedom of every person to seek, worship, or decline to worship according to the convictions of conscience without coercion. Throughout Scripture, God invites rather than compels (Joshua 24:15; Revelation 3:20). True faith, a heartfelt faith cannot be produced by legislation but by the work of the Holy Spirit. I encourage the Commission to preserve and strengthen protections for the freedom of conscience of all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs, so that no citizen is compelled in matters of worship as they are matters of the heart.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Kwang-Pill Sung <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Kwang-Pill Sung <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep the Constitution and keep the separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:27:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Keep the Constitution and keep the separation of church and state

From: Jack&Judy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Chapter 14 - Jack Odell

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:28:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I find the document to be satisfactory in its entirety as is. I encourage the draft document be adopted as is without any modification.
Jack Odell

From: David Hor <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:28:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty.
RE: PUBLIC COMMENT on Religious Liberty.

Dear Sir/Madam:

I believe and urge the U.S. GOVERNMENT to maintain complete neutrality with all profit and non-profit religious organizations. Also, that the U.S. GOVERNMENT do not fund their activities on public campuses.

In addition, please fully enforce the Johnson amendment.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

David Hor

Milpitas, California

From: Michael Fifer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:28:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Dr Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

To begin, I will state that I am against building a bridge between church and state.

The draft proposal where you are suggesting our government should disregard the first amendment, and build a bridge between church and state, needs revising. Please revise and protect our first amendment.

Religion is a private matter, if government gets involved it will try to make every one believe the same. Forced religion is not God's way.

Thank you,

Michael Fifer

From: Jeanette Mott Oxford <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT DRAFT REPORT: Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:29:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission, US Department of Justice,

I am disappointed in the draft report recently published by the Religious Liberty Commission, and I fear that it may lead to weaker protections of religious liberty. The founders of the U.S. were determined not to establish a national religion and to protect both freedom OF religion and freedom FROM religion. Religious tests for office are prohibited in Article VI.

I am especially concerned that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is encouraged to conduct strategic litigation in support of state laws requiring the Ten Commandments to be displayed in public school. I was born in 1954, and we took the U.S. Constitution seriously when I was a child in rural southern IL. Forcing schools to display the Ten Commandments comes very close to promoting a state-sponsored religion which violates the Bill of Rights.

It is important that we tell the whole truth about our history. The report smells more of religious ideology connected to White Supremacist Nationalism than careful historical scholarship. Much that you claim is settled historical fact is still vigorously debated by serious scholars.

I know that my vigorous defense of the religion of my best friend - a sect of Hinduism - is one of the best defenses of my own religion as an evangelical Christian (of the Evangelical and Reformed branch of the United Church of Christ, born of the merger of multiple churches in 1957. The U.S. is not "a Christian nation." We must ensure that religious liberty is available to every U.S. resident.

Sincerely,
The Honorable Jeanette Mott Oxford
State Representative, 2005-2012

[REDACTED] PII . PII

From: Hector Puig <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:29:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to you today as a citizen deeply concerned about the recommendations outlined in your recent report. Specifically, I feel compelled to speak out against the proposals to weaken the separation of church and state, such as repealing the Johnson Amendment and increasing government funding for religious organizations.

To be honest, I find the idea of turning that wall of separation into a "bridge" incredibly alarming. In my view, that wall wasn't constructed to keep religion out of the public square; it was established to ensure that our faith institutions could remain independent and true to their own missions. When churches become dependent on government grants or start navigating the messy world of partisan politics, they lose their autonomy. They end up answering to politicians and budget requirements rather than to their own core values. History has shown us time and again that when the church and state join hands too closely, it's rarely a positive outcome for either one.

I really urge the Commission to rethink these recommendations. We need to maintain a government that is neutral and respects the healthy distance between our religious and political lives. Please, keep the wall of separation intact—it is one of the most effective tools we have for ensuring that both our religious and political institutions can thrive freely.

Sincerely,
Hector Puig
Montgomery, Alabama

Sent from [Mailspring](#), the best free email app for work

From: FRANK MARIETTA <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:30:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Keep the separation of church and state to protect religious freedom!
Sent from my iPhone

From: Len Fast <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:30:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am no attorney and that is itself proof that one does not need to be an attorney to see that the provisions of the constitution does in fact effectively provide a wall of separation between the church and the civil government. The current national rhetoric criticizing the "wall" is evidence of a lack of understanding of the meaning of the phrase that "government shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". To hear our leadership claiming that there is no provision for this division between these two domains is alarming in the extreme. This freedom to worship according to the dictates of one's own conscience or to not worship at all has been the backbone of American strength for the past 250 years.

Even a brief and cursory review of history will reveal that every time the church turns to civil authority for support, persecution of dissenters is the inevitable results and we will return our nation and even the world to the horrors of the dark ages when Papal authority reigned supreme and slaughtered 100 - 150 million people simply because they disagreed with the church's doctrines or conclusions on traditions. Is this the objective of our "Make America Great Again" leadership, to return this great nation of religious freedom to the feet of the Roman Pontiff by making an image of the beast and following in the footprints of Rome, killing our own citizens if they don't agree with the government's opinion of God or worship? The honest actors in this drama do not understand where their feet are treading and are swept along in a narrative that sounds productive today, but will end in tyranny. The planted operatives that answer to a different authority than the American People do understand the agenda. Rome has always hated our constitution that allows every person to determine for themselves their relation to God, and has stated this position plainly in print.

I don't have the training to address this issue as befits the authorities of the presidential commission that will be reviewing my comments, but there are others much more skilled and well trained for that than I, and I hereby express my support for the response provided by PillarOfFreedom.org.

I do appreciate with great American zeal, the work and strength of President Trump and I also agree that the American people need God. Where I have to part ways is in using civil government to enforce religious teaching, traditions or the exercise thereof. Force is the last resort of every failed religion. Forced worship is not really worship. Legislated morality is not really morality.

I recommend the film, Freedom 250 by JudgmentHour.org at https://youtu.be/Rz379tIx7J8?si=h0_QRB1EICG8SDZt

Ferrin Fast

From: Keyla Isabel Nuñez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- I SUPPORT OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
COMMISSION - KEYLA NUNEZ

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:31:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a person who emigrated from the Dominican Republic at 7 years old, and was Naturalized as a US citizen over 20 years ago, I studied in this country and learned that the whole reason this country came to be was because our founders wanted the freedom to be Christians without persecution. Sadly, this is not where our country is at today! We desperately need to go back to God as our nation's ruler and guide.

May God bless you,
Keyla Isabel Nuñez

From: "Harold & Sandra Merriman" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:31:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a person of faith, religious liberty is extremely important to me. For example, I agree with the commission that it is critical for parents with traditional beliefs to be able to have their rights respected when their children are educated in public schools.

However, I am deeply concerned that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." 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. Specifically, Roger Williams who was a Puritan minister in the 1600s championed separation of church and the state of Rhode Island flourished because of this separation. A bridge won't strengthen the church; it will open the door for government money, political favors and control. The Johnson amendment is a very wise policy which should be protected and not repealed.

History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and the results are tragic for both. The US was founded by religious groups fleeing the European model of a state established church. Please don't build that bridge, which will actually severely weaken the mission and influence of the church.

Sincerely,
Harold Merriman
Waynesville, Ohio

From: Brenda Jobe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Commission Report - Brenda Bosque

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:31:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with the findings of the committee. Our Constitution guarantees, in the most explicit terms, the inviolability of conscience: "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States."
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

From: Tiff Wright <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Don't take away the separation of church and state.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:32:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a Christian who believes fully in the separation of church and state. We do not need or want a government run religion. This, like in all history, will lead to persecution of all who do not kneel to the new government religion.

I am going to give a rather extreme example as to not waist time; While I myself do not believe that groups like Satanists should be worshipping the one that is directly against our Lord Jesus Christ, I do believe they have a human right given to them by God to choose who they will follow. This sediment goes for all groups, as long as it is not impending on another humans rights.

We have that right protected within the bill of rights. Who are we to take away others rights to choose? It will be argued that choice will still be ours. These arguments will be brought by men and women who have no idea of the historical context of the separation of church and state. This country has been beautiful because of this separation, it has kept America safe for all religions to come in and make it home. If this is followed through and church and state is brought together history will repeat itself and it will be horrific.

Christ didn't force himself on anyone, and we shouldn't be using His name to force anyone into a religion or a relationship with him. God is not about force Satan is, and this is just opening the door for him to come in and destroy our religious freedom in this country.

- Tiffany Wright

From: Alan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

My name is Alan Stowell and I am concerned by the fact that the Commission is making the claim that there is no such thing as a separation of church and state. First of all, the First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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." If the separation between church and state is removed, then these rights in the First Amendment could eventually be torn down, because laws could be made "respecting an establishment of religion." In history, we can see what happened when the government was involved in the way people worshipped. People were persecuted if they did not agree with the way they were being told to worship God. I would hate to see history repeat itself. As George Santayana stated "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." I believe that force and persecution will happen again if the separation is removed. The books of Daniel and Revelation reveal that the joining of church and state will bring about persecution. This is exactly what was happening in Europe whenever the Pilgrims fled to come to America. They were being persecuted for the way they worshiped and lived. That is why they left looking for a better land where they could be free. They were searching for a land and they found it. It is known as the United States of America. They came here because they wanted to have the freedom to worship how they wanted and live how they chose and not to be controlled by the state. They left because they didn't have freedom to worship or live normal lives. The principles of what America is known for is the Land of the Free. If the separation of church and state is removed, America will fall and it will no longer be known as the Land of the Free. I STRONGLY recommend keeping the wall of separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

Alan Stowell

From: Ken Merrick <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good day to you. I hope I am not too late in reacting to the recklessness of the proposed combination of church and state. Our country was founded on the separation of church and state, and any deviation from this principle is not only anti-Christian but creeping closer and closer to government controlled religion. My opinion is to cast my vote against any combination of church and state and putting religion toward the highest bidder is completely absurd.

Sincerely,

Kenneth, a concerned legal citizen from Louisiana

From: JOHNrD <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to respectfully express my concern regarding the protection of my First Amendment right to religious freedom and freedom of conscience.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects both the free exercise of religion and the right to be free from government coercion in matters of faith and conscience. These protections ensure that every individual is free to follow his or her sincerely held religious beliefs—or to hold no religious beliefs at all—without government pressure, favoritism, or discrimination.

My request is simple: that your agency carry out its responsibilities in a manner that respects these constitutional protections. Government has an important role in serving the public fairly and impartially, while remaining neutral in matters of religion. This neutrality protects people of every faith and those with no religious affiliation alike.

Freedom of conscience is a foundational American principle. It means that individuals should not be compelled to act against sincerely held religious convictions except where the law clearly and constitutionally requires it. Likewise, government should avoid policies or practices that unnecessarily interfere with the free exercise of religion or give the appearance of endorsing or discouraging any particular faith.

I respectfully ask that your agency review its policies and actions to ensure they fully comply with the protections guaranteed by the First Amendment and other applicable federal and state laws. I also ask that any decisions affecting me be made with careful consideration of my constitutional right to religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

This request is not intended to seek special treatment, but rather equal protection under the law. Our Constitution was designed to safeguard the rights of every citizen, regardless of religious belief or practice, and I trust your agency is committed to upholding those principles.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Respectfully, John Delsid

From: Jack Odell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 14 - Judy Odell

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

The "Separation of Church and State Clause", we were told, was a "wall of separation" that prevented religious leaders from bringing any of our values or opinions into the public arena. President Trump's Religious Liberty Commission has tackled this issue with a draft to rectify this situation. I am in agreement with what the Commission has written.

From: CATHY KNEPP <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Separation of Church and State - Mary Knepp

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:50 -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.

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.

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

Sincerely,

Mary Knepp
Greenland, Arkansas

From: Glenn Henderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:34:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

From: DONHELLn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:34:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

"Congress shall make no laws respecting the establishment of religion..."

The genius of America's success has been the separation of the civil and ecclesiastical powers. We have enjoyed this freedom for 250 years. Don't fiddle with it now.

The Constitution has worked successfully for 250 years. Politics and religion do not mix. Don't fiddle with them now.

Let religious forces play out against themselves without federal or civil legislation imposing political controls in any direction. Don't fiddle with it.

The various religions and denominations all have their own sets of guidelines and definitions of behavior. Secular government has no place in interfering with the freedom of conscience to believe as one chooses. Power is not given to civil government in this realm. God protects the righteous not a government of civil laws or a commission of religious liberty.

Don't fiddle around trying to fix what isn't broken.

From: Elizabeth Frazao <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTS - chapter 10 (vaccines) - revised - Elizabeth Frazao

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:35:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I thought the report did a good job of describing the fact that “vaccines carry significant theological implications” although the report mentioned the problem often arose because “of the ways in which vaccines are researched, developed, and administered.” However, the report ignored the bigger issue that vaccine mandates (such as the childhood vaccine mandates and vaccine mandates for the military) is theologically wrong, since it removes our unalienable God-given right to liberty, that is, our right to choose and decide for ourselves and for our children, whether or not we want certain medical procedures or treatments.. By MANDATING vaccines, the government has decided IT has the right to decide what is best for some groups of people. Medical and religious exemptions are partial attempts to deal with this problem, but they do not change the fact that mandating any vaccine, medical treatment, or procedure is theologically wrong, it is coercion, and it also goes against the Nuremberg Code’s requirement of informed consent.

The problem could be eliminated by making ALL vaccines voluntary. Given full information, parents would likely get their children vaccinated if they believed it would be ethical, and medically beneficial to their children. To be consistent with religious liberty AND the Nuremberg Code, the Commission should recommend that ALL vaccines be voluntary.

In the meantime, I would also like to see a recommendation that the procedures for obtaining a religious exemption should not be burdensome or attempt to indoctrinate the religious believer. For example, the State of Mississippi recently allowed religious exemptions for vaccines. However, the procedure to obtain a religious exemption for children’s vaccinations is onerous and seems designed to indoctrinate or punish/coerce the parent into giving up! After obtaining the religious exemption form online, a parent requesting a religious exemption for their child MUST 1) make an appointment at the County Health Department, 2) watch a Vaccine “Education” video, and 3) be subjected to a “presentation” about the benefits and risks of immunizations - WHY? Why not simply allow the parent to complete the religious exemption form online and submit it online, particularly since the form already provides some disclaimers, and the Mississippi Dept of Health website states that any religious exemption requested will be accepted.

The Commission should also broaden Chapter 10’s last recommendation (p. 150). Rather than recommending an ethically acceptable vaccine - which, if mandated, would still meet the religious objection that the State is forcing decisions that belong to the child’s parents - the Commission could recommend a broader set of ethically acceptable and voluntary alternatives, including approaches that strengthen the immune system or effectively treat the disease. It should be noted that some study findings suggest that mild childhood diseases help prime the immune system and lead to better health in later years.

From: Calogero <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:35:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have seen that the liberty commission, is trying to take away the separate of church and state. As a Christian, I find this troubling, because, history has shown, that when church and state unite, persecution arises, for a certain sect of people. I hope that you will keep the separation of church and state, so that all people of any religions, may have the freedom, to practice their faith, according to their conscience. And not have any religion, have the government power, to oppress, those who are not of their faith. Thank you your time to read

From: Bruce D <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - [Bruce Wolpin]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:35:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I have read statements from our founding fathers that make it clear to me that they believed in the separation of church and state. I believe the concept is in the Constitution, though the exact wording may not be there.

History is replete with the suffering through imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom as a result of the union of church and state. Although there are many, many documented accounts that could be cited, I mention two here. We read about it in the Bible account of the crucifixion of Christ and in Fox's Book of Martyrs--numerous instances of voices of conscience brutally silenced from the time of Christ to the time of the Reformers. It is estimated that between 50 million and 150 million people met the fate of martyrdom. Church and State do not make good bedfellows.

I believe that the "bridge" being proposed that opens the door for the government funding of religious non-profit activities and religious education is actually a slippery slope. First, I do not believe the government can remain objective in deciding which religious organizations to fund and the amount to be funded. What will initially engender political influence in organized religion can easily devolve to more egregious involvement on the part of government; i.e. making laws respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, using coercion as the means to an end. This is a road we should not embark upon.

I am convinced that the separation of church and state has been a bulwark against authoritarianism in America. It should be maintained to keep America the greatest country the world has ever seen.

Thank you for considering my deeply held views.

Sincerely,
Bruce Wolpin

From: John Dawson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:36:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm writing you to let you know that I'm appalled at even the idea of combining religion and government. This country was founded on religious freedom where anyone could worship anyway they saw a fit or not. All we have to do is look in history to see what kind of persecution and murder takes place when you combine religion and government. Government should never dictate any religion and any religion should not dictate government. My ancestors came to this country to escape religious persecution. I have a great, great, great, great great grandfather that moved from England to Ireland and then Canada to escape religious persecution please leave our constitution alone and don't marry Government and religion. There needs to remain a wall between government and religion. Thank you for doing the right thing. John Dawson. From Walla Walla, Washington.
Sent from my iPhone

From: Sharon Dustin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Consideration of Discontinuation of Separation of Church and State by Religious Liberty Commissioners Report (Discussion) of June 26, 2026

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:36:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the proposed elimination of the separation of church and state as traditionally established by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

As a grateful American and a descendant of ancestors who fled religious persecution by state authorities in Europe in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, I am writing to strongly oppose any removal of the protections provided by the First Amendment. Specifically, I support the continued upholding of the two essential clauses: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Notice that the establishment clause prevents government from having authority over religion, while the free exercise clause protects each citizens right to worship according to conscience.

I believe these protections remain vital to the practice of every religion or the freedom to practice none, and must be preserved.

Sincerely,

Sharon Dustin

From: Rachel Cottle <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:37:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I DEFEND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

From: Marie <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report – Marie Kaniecki

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:37:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

This administration's continued efforts to undermine the constitutional separation of church and state is deeply concerning and goes against everything the founding fathers stood for when creating our government. America always has been and always should be a democracy, not a theocracy. **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. After the Revolutionary War which created our nation, our early government embraced the phrase *E pluribus unum* over 170 years before it was supplanted by the overtly religious motto "In God We Trust" in 1956. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control, and that is the American tradition we should carry forward.

As a historical researcher, I am disappointed to see how **the report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Thomas Jefferson himself supported separation of church and state in his **letter to the Danbury Baptists** (1802), which emphasizes "that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God" and references "a wall of separation between Church & State." Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.

The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. For example, the Freedom of Religion doctrine that has been upheld as one of America's greatest values differs significantly from the French principle of Freedom **from** Religion, which minimizes the visibility of all religion in public life. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

I stand with other historians, educators, and American citizens in denouncing this draft report. I hope that those who are currently in positions of power do their duty to the American people - protect Freedom of Religion in America as enshrined in our constitution.

From: Lisa Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:37:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Religious Liberty Commissioners:

We need to keep the separation of church and state. Individual choice of who we serve is what gives us freedom. Please don't take it away.

Sincerely,
Lisa Johnson

Sent from my iPad

From: Jan Webb McQuistan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty—America's First Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:39:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 11, 2026

To the Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

My husband and I are writing to formally submit our comments and outline several pressing legal concerns regarding the draft report, "Americans' First Freedom." While the Commission's dedication to preserving the First Amendment is evident, the proposed recommendations raise significant constitutional issues, particularly regarding the delicate balance between the Establishment Clause and general free speech limitations.

The report advocates for a sweeping reinterpretation of the separation of church and state, specifically targeting policies that prevent government-funded institutions from imposing religious doctrines on the broader public. While protecting the internal, faithful mission of religious organizations is a bedrock constitutional principle, we must be highly cautious of how the Commission's proposals might inadvertently expand free speech restrictions in the public square.

By recommending that institutions receiving federal funding operate with expansive exemptions from established civil rights, healthcare, and educational standards, the state risks effectively deputizing private religious enforcement. This creates a fraught legal environment where the free speech and conscience rights of dissenting citizens, employees, and students could be severely restricted under the guise of an institution's overarching religious liberty. True religious freedom ensures the government does not silence individuals, but it cannot be weaponized to silence others in publicly funded arenas.

Furthermore, the recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment fundamentally alters the statutory nature of tax-exempt entities. Removing this restriction does not merely protect the pulpit; it risks transforming houses of worship into unregulated conduits for partisan political campaigns. This policy shift would heavily entangle the state's tax apparatus with religious and political speech, blurring the lines of government endorsement.

Our constitutional framework relies on a vital, historical balance. It absolutely guarantees that the state will not suppress individual religious exercise, but it equally demands that the government does not establish, fund, or coerce religious orthodoxy. I strongly urge the Commission to reconsider and revise its recommendations to ensure that efforts to protect religious liberty do not inadvertently foster state-sanctioned free speech restrictions for the broader American public.

Sincerely,
Janet M. Webb
John R. McQuistan

[REDACTED] PII

From: Johnathan Chang <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Johnathan Chang

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:39:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who believes both religion clauses of the First Amendment stand together, and I would like to lay out why, drawing on arguments that predate the Constitution's modern defenders and come instead from Christian reasoning itself. Christ himself divided all human duties into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. That line was drawn by the highest authority Christians recognize, not by a secular committee. As Jones put it to a Senate committee weighing a national Sunday law, "the principle upon which we stand is that civil government is civil, and has nothing to do in the matter of legislation, with religious observances in any way." The test that follows is simple: government may ask whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Every recommendation that places government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the line Christ himself drew, and the objection to it is not secular hostility to faith but faithfulness to what Christianity actually teaches about the two jurisdictions.

I also hold that rights come from the Creator, not from majorities, and this matters enormously for what this Commission recommends. If a right can be granted by a vote, it can be taken away by the next vote, which means it was never a right at all but a permission. Man's first and highest allegiance is due to his Creator, and that domain is one no human government, of one or of many, has authority to invade. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can protect itself at the ballot box. As Jones told a Senate committee weighing exactly this kind of majoritarian claim, "the people, I care not how many there are, have no right to invade your relationship to God, nor mine." Widespread public support for prayer in schools or religious displays on public property cannot supply the missing authority, because religion was never among the things submitted to the vote in the first place.

A still deeper argument is that religion is non-delegable, so government never received it to begin with. Our government rests on the consent of the governed, meaning on powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God; a man can authorize another to manage his property, never to believe or worship in his place. Since that power could never be given, it could never be received, and the Declaration of Independence therefore excludes religion from the jurisdiction of every government that flows from it. No government will ever stand at the judgment seat to answer for an individual's soul, and therefore no government can rightly assume responsibility for it. The First Amendment did not invent this boundary; it merely recorded a limit that already existed.

Finally, I would urge the Commission to weigh that any law touching religion, even one meant to favor it, destroys free exercise. Jones called this a flat impossibility: "it is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion." Any such law must define the religion it favors, and any definition excludes someone while turning even the favored believers into people who practice their faith by legislative permission rather than by right. Believers who welcome government endorsement today are building a precedent that a future administration, with different convictions, will inherit and wield.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Johnathan Chang

From: PII PII

To: " PII " < PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:41:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 13_July.docx

PII

13 July,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 a concerned believer I would like to make comment on the very important issue of "The Separation of Church and State" and its validity in this current modern world.

I state at the outset that I am a committed Christian and have been for the last 36yrs. Before that I came from a place of unbelief and self-serving; and am eternally grateful to Almighty God for opening my eyes to the reality of His existence and to the peace and hope we find in a knowledge of His great love for us all.

I would like to base my comments along the lines on which my mind runs on a daily basis, that being lines that are based on high Biblical principles for living; even in the midst of what is becoming a more and more morally corrupted modern world. This can be a challenging position to hold at times, yet a position that conscience compels me to take, knowing that to turn from such a position will inevitably lead me to compromise my own convictions, which is to betray one's own self; something I am unwilling to do.

Regarding "The Separation of Church and State", there are several situations recorded in the Bible narrative I believe are relevant to this topic and worth paying close attention to, for, as we all have heard "History Repeats".

a) The tragic account of what happened to the Lord Jesus Himself, sadly carried out by those He called "His Friends", the leaders of His own chosen people. Because His actions and words at times did not seem to marry with the understanding of the Scribes and Pharisees view of "their laws", a growing hatred of the Savior was cherished in their hearts, which lead ultimately to His betrayal and death. The

religious leaders (Church) dragged Him before the Civil Power, namely, the Roman Governor Pilate (State), to be falsely accused, tortured and finally crucified. This is the most terrible example of what can happen when the Church goes to the State to enforce her own religious dogmas and judgements.

It is worth noting that Jesus said numerous times, including to Pilate, that His kingdom is “not of this world”. He never instructed His followers to approach the Civil powers to further the Kingdom of Heaven.

To Peter in the garden of Gethsemane, after Peter had drawn His sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, servant of the High Priest, Jesus told Peter to put away his sword for “All who take up the sword will perish by the sword”. The “Sword” is symbolic of the Civil power! Paul said that “the weapons of our warfare are not of this world”, but are spiritual weapons, the most powerful of which is the “Sword of the Spirit”, which is the Word of God. Jesus Himself clearly illustrated this fact when tempted in the wilderness after His baptism; every time He was approached by the enemy with his various temptations, the response of our Lord was “It is written”.

Paul also said that we should live according to the civil laws where we live because “He who holds the sword does not hold it in vain”. But the Church is never to use the Civil sword to advance the Gospel! Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you”, and it “does not come with outward display”. The Kingdom of God is advanced by the working of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men to “convince them of sin, of righteousness and of judgement” Jesus said. It can never be profited by the engagement of civil legislation.

The authority Jesus spoke of that the Church would wield is a “Spiritual Authority” over spiritual powers in high places, not a Civil authority to be exercised with the Civil sword.

b) In the story of Esther is brought out an example of one who was receiving false worship, Naman, going to the Civil power (King Ahasuerus), to bring persecution upon those who would conscientiously keep the commandments of God and not bow down to a man. Naman was given the King’s signet ring and was able to draft legislation that decreed all Jews would be executed. Thankfully God had a plan to counteract this wicked scheme and disaster was averted. The blaringly obvious lesson to be learned from this story is that worship should never be compelled but rather offered freely to God “in spirit and in truth”. Worship enforced by the State can only be a false form of worship to be avoided at all cost.

c) Finally we must draw our attention to the most terrible scenario in the Bible, presented in the 13th of Revelation, the “Mark of the Beast”; and the also obvious

drawing of our attention to the experience of three faithful young men in Ancient Babylon. This account is given in Daniel chapter 3.

King Nebuchadnezzar, displeased with Daniel's interpretation of his dream in Daniel chapter 2, decides to set up a golden image of himself on the plain of Dura and declares that when the music plays all must bow down and worship, or be cast into a burning fiery furnace. This is what happens when religion (Church) is controlled by the Civil power (State), and this is what Bible prophecy declares will bring about the last great crisis this world will face. The Beast from the earth will "force all, great and small, rich and poor, to receive a mark" and to worship the image to the first beast, or they shall be unable to buy and sell and eventually killed.

I would have thought that if there was a country on the face of this planet that would understand this, it would be the United States of America, for she was founded by a people who fled from just such a condition of things in the old world, where the Church had influenced the civil powers to commit unspeakable atrocities, along with herself, for centuries. Do we really want to take even one step in the same direction? God forbid!

Might the Church of God rely on the power of God to perform the will of God is my prayer. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

Anonymous.

From: Ranger's Wife <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:41:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

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

As a citizen I am writing 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.

My fear is that my religious convictions will be disregarded due to sentiments such as "the good of the community." In that case, if many people in my community do not believe the way I do, my freedoms would end. This is not how America has treated its citizens throughout our history.

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

I am attaching a copy of the "Pillars of Freedom" comment on this subject, and I am in agreement with its sentiments.

Respectfully,

Cindy Petersen
Yellville, AR



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. . . .nTo 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.ñ

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 ofrBody.—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...”¹⁴

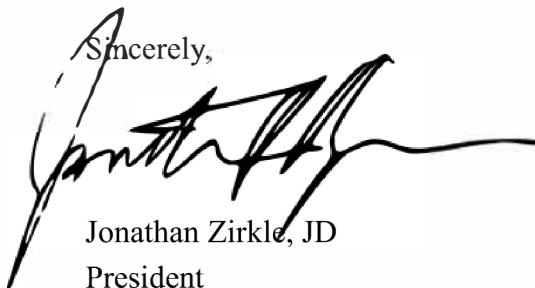
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

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: Susan Talley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:42:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Committee,

I am grateful and appreciate the religious freedoms that myself and the people of the United States have been able to experience throughout our country's history.

To exercise our rights comes from our 1st Amendment from our Forefathers and I cherish our freedoms.

To combine church and state would be a violation of our Religious Freedoms, as before mentioned due to our 1st Amendment rights.

Respectfully,

Susan Talley

From: Chares Osadchuck <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state committee

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:43:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Dr. Carson and Members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the recommendation that the establishment clause of the 1st Amendment be reinterpreted to diminish the historic separation of church and state. Such a recommendation is inconsistent with the text of the founding fathers. These two protections were designed to work together. Thomas Jefferson was describing a principle that was embedded, within the 1st Amendment. The duty to God is stronger than the duty to civil government.

The dangers of abandoning are not just theoretical but real. Religious liberty can not be secure if only ONE religion holds sway.

Government is at its best when it maintains proper boundaries between church and state.. Please do not reinterpret the clauses on separation of church and state from the Constitution as well as the clauses on freedom of conscience. They are important and they helped us for 250 years to allow people to worship God according to their convictions. We are praying for wisdom to let it be!!

Blessings for remembering this is a government of people by people and God requires you to listen and obey the Bible, since you say "we trust in God, we must allow people to choose how they worship and protect that right as a fundamental truth that can help make America great again!!"

Sent from my iPhone

From: North bay Shalom <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] From Nick to the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:43:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

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

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

There is nothing more I appreciate in my life than my personal and religious freedom. The day I first stepped onto American soil in NYC in 1997 until today as a naturalized citizen I value protestant principles.

I pledge allegiance to this country where the separation of church and state is a necessary prerequisite for every citizen's freedom and foundation of our constitution.

I humbly appeal to keep it this way.

With gratitude to God for the opportunity to contribute to a better society in the United States,

Nick L.

From: Paula Wolfe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:44:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the U.S.A. it saddens me that that the Commission is planning to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. Why was there a wall? To keep the church free from government influence which includes money and political favors and whatever else it wants to use to control the church, including corruption. Please keep the wall and protect all churches. The bridge needs to be excluded.

Sincerely,

Paula Wolfe
Muncy, PA

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPhone

From: Brenda Washington <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:44:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

It was troubling to read about your Commission's Report advocating a joining of state and church.

The founding leaders of these United States rebelled and cut ties with England for the freedom to govern themselves and to worship as they pleased within a structure of the political system separate from the Church.

I applaud their efforts and appeal to this Committee to continue this process which has worked for our Republic thus far.

I advocate maintaining a separation of church and state.

Respectfully
Brenda Washington

From: Pat <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Patsy Arrabito

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:44:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for receiving comments from the public on the draft report. I write to ask the Commission to uphold the separation of church and state — the arrangement that has kept faith in America both free and strong. My reasons are these:

Christ himself divided human duty into two jurisdictions: what we owe our neighbors belongs to civil law; what we owe God lies beyond it. As A. T. Jones told the United States Senate in 1888, “civil government is civil, and has nothing to do in the matter of legislation, with religious observances in any way.” I urge the Commission to keep every recommendation on the civil side of that line.

Religious liberty is a right, not a majority’s permission. “A right is something which, in its very nature, is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons.” Popular support can justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never among the things submitted to the vote.

The two religion clauses are one shield. As Jones warned the Senate in 1888, “It is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion.” A law favoring religion today is a precedent controlling it tomorrow, and the machinery now proposed comes with no guarantee about who will operate it next.

America has already run the experiment of sincere majorities enforcing religion — Salem in 1692, and Tennessee in 1892, where Sabbath-keeping farmers were jailed and marched in a chain gang for quietly working on Sunday. As B. O. Flower wrote, “A nation can sometimes afford to err on the side of mercy, but no nation can afford to be unjust to her lowliest citizen.”

Individual conscience is precious and should be protected at all cost. A state church or state-sponsored religion is incompatible with religious liberty. The two cannot exist simultaneously.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Patsy Arrabito

From: Jose Bosquen <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Commission Report - Jose Bosque

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:45:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with the findings of the committee. Our Constitution guarantees, in the most explicit terms, the inviolability of conscience: "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States." "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

From: Anne Bloomenthal <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 11 - Anne Bloomenthal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:46:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on this draft report.

As a Jew, I am well aware that my people have suffered from religious discrimination for centuries. Religious liberty was one of the reasons that my ancestors came to the United States. But this is not a valid reason for singling out antisemitism in a document on religious liberty, as is done in Chapter 11 of this report.

There has been religious discrimination against people of a myriad of faiths - and of no faith - since long before the founding of the United States. Even though one of the founding principles of the US is religious liberty, we know all too well that religious discrimination, against Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, various Christian denominations, and others, persists to this day. Thus, the existence of a chapter devoted exclusively to the subject of antisemitism is, itself, a form of religious discrimination against practitioners of other faiths who have been persecuted for their faith (or even appearance of faith, such as turban-wearing Sikhs).

One only has to look at the news to know that Islamophobic incidents have also been pervasive in recent years (in addition to antisemitic ones). I haven't been able to find explicit statistics, but I found a report from VOA about 2023 that said:

"The number of reported antisemitic incidents in the U.S. increased by 388% in the four weeks after October 7, according to the Anti-Defamation League, or ADL, while the number of Islamophobic incidents in the U.S. increased 216% during the same timeframe, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR."
<https://www.voanews.com/a/antisemitism-islamophobia-surge-in-2023-watchdogs-say/7407451html>

If, as it appears from the draft report, commission hearings were focused exclusively on antisemitism, to the exclusion of all other religious discrimination, then additional hearings should be held to present a full picture of the current state of religious discrimination in the US, and the report updated to include this additional perspective, as background for how to combat it.

It's also important that any examination of religious discrimination must clearly adhere to the principle that criticism of the actions of political entities (e.g. governments of Israel, Muslim countries, or other countries strongly associated with a particular religion) is protected speech, and must not be conflated with abuse of practitioners of the related religious.

Please reframe the discussion of antisemitism into a broader look at all types of religious discrimination and intolerance in the US, and then help us understand how to combat that.

Thank you,
Anne Bloomenthal
Lawrenceville, NJ [REDACTED] PII

From: Millie Algarin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of State and Church

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:46:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

0

I am a Christian and I am aware of what the government wants to do regarding the clause in the First Amendment which prohibits the government from establishing a national religion or interfering with religious practices.

Our forefathers worked endlessly and diligently to put together our Constitution which was meant to protect the rights of "The People"

They were intelligent individuals who understood what could happen to a persons rights if not stated in the Constitution. The separation of church and state is essential in allowing us to worship freely. Not having the government telling us what faith or day we worship.

We have seen what happens to religious institutions when the government gets involved.

This country was founded by pilgrims seeking freedom of religion. Without them seeking this freedom would we be the USA of today? A country that opened the gateway to many immigrates seeking some sort of freedom.

Our country has changed immensely, and in many ways not for the good; but it is still the country that we love.

From: Anne Bloomenthal <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 2 - Anne Bloomenthal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:46:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on this draft report.

Much of the purported "history" in Chapter 2 is distorted, but I am not a historian, so I will leave it to the historians to offer comments on those details. But as a lay person, it is quite clear that the inaccurate history ends up derailing the whole chapter, because the conclusion that it reaches is quite the opposite of the constitutional basis for religious liberty.

Of course, the definitive definition of the place of religion with respect to our federal government is in the first amendment to The United States Constitution (1789) reading:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

But by the time Chapter 2 reaches its final section, it has turned the constitution on its head, to say "Where We Are Now: **Building Bridges Between Church and State.**" Clearly, any **bridges** between church and state are the antithesis of "no law respecting an establishment of religion." The intervening history is really immaterial. The examination of terminology about a "wall" is also immaterial. A "bridge" is clearly what is excluded by the first amendment.

The remainder of this report is built from this invalid conclusion reached in Chapter 2, and thus none of it satisfies the requirements of the first amendment to the constitution.

Please correct the erroneous conclusion of Chapter 2, about "bridges," and reorient all subsequent parts of the report that promote government involvement in support of specific religious beliefs and practices, such as forming partnerships with faith-based institutions, and acting in support of laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80).

Thank you,
Anne Bloomenthal
Lawrenceville, NJ

[REDACTED] PII

From: Linda Carney <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep church separate from state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:47:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

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

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

Please maintain the wall of separation between church and state.

The 1st Amendment explains the separation that the Constitution implies.

The Constitution does not mention religious freedom but the Constitution implies it.

The Commission's report seems biased about the balance between religious liberty and government involvement.

The first amendment guarantees us the right to freedom of conscience.

Please consider my dissent before pursuing removal the phrase "separation between church an State".

Sincerely,
Linda Carney MD from Arkansas

From: Sara <[REDACTED] PII >
To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >
Cc: Father Mike Schmitz <[REDACTED] PII >, [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >, [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >, [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty in Healthcare - Sara Pedro

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:49:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

Catholics do not inherently possess superior intellect to others. But sin darkens the intellect. So we believe that when someone does not have access to the sacraments and is not living a devout Catholic life - their sin decreases their cognitive function. History reveals this.

One of the most important things not mentioned in this report is that one of the worst forms of religious discrimination occurs when a Catholic is competent and others who are incompetent are exposed and/or threatened by the competence and skills of the Catholic.

For example, I filed a religious discrimination lawsuit against Duke University Hospital. During my employment there, I had a patient who came in with a broken jaw after being assaulted with a brick to his face. He was put up for discharge but I raised concern to the attending physician. They re-read his x-rays and discovered he did, in fact, have a broken jaw and he was taken to surgery.

I have struggled with an overwhelming amount of religious discrimination for being Catholic.

The most common form of discrimination occurs because I am competent and although I never try to make anyone else look less than - my competence from being Catholic naturally exposes the incompetence of non-Catholics.

This needs to be recognized and understood.

Sincerely, Sara Pedro

From: Annette Fales <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My thoughts on the religious liberty commission's report 2026

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:50:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

These are my thoughts on the religious liberty commission's report:

* 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.

Thank you for time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Annette L Fales

[REDACTED]
PII

DII

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: First Name <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:51:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen and a person of faith, I am deeply troubled by the Commission's proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge" between the two. The First Amendment's Establishment clause dictates that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion". It is very clear we need to continue to uphold to this. There should be no need to reinterpret, modify or change that which we have upheld for the past 250 years. If any changes, modifications, or reinterpretations are made, we will be treading down a path of tyranny and not of freedom.

This wall was built by believers to keep the church free, not by secularists to restrict religion. A bridge opens the door for government funding and political influence, forcing churches to compete for grants and answer to politicians instead of to God. History demonstrates that the blending of church and state is detrimental to both and will result in our liberties being stripped away. This is why it is of utmost importance not to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

In addition, not a single point of the 12 points should be put into action. We, as the public, are not being informed of the details and were not included in the initial stages of these meetings.

The public requires ample time, information, and discussion to understand what is being proposed.

I urge you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken this separation and not move forward on any single point — specifically, using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. When churches engage in partisan politics or accept government funding, they inherit political corruption. Separation protects faith, which is precisely why religion has remained strong in our country.

Please maintain the separation of church and state and do not repeal the Johnson Amendment - that's how we keep both free.

Respectfully,

Daniel Barragan

From: QUINTERO2007 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation church state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:53:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep church and state separately in our country, the history shows that that is not a good equation, the results are contrary to what this country is founded under
Thanks

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Alanna Rodriguez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:53:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States, Alanna Rodriguez. 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!

From: Engel Yoder <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Your Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:54:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

It appears that the Commission is rejecting the golden principle [in the United States] of the separation of church and state. If this principle is formally rejected it will spell the doom of religious freedom in our country. What a disaster! Please, do not go in this direction as it will surely have precisely the opposite effect from what you intend. The Commission may have good intentions, but it is actually opening the floodgates to the persecution of religious minorities. What a disaster that the nation that thrived largely because of its religious-freedom principle will repudiate the very principle that in large part made it great! By doing so, the American experiment in government by and for the people will be proven to have failed, and history will show that the Commission will have marked a critical turning point in the failure.

Engel Yoder
Marquette, KS

From: Krinstin Joe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:55:04 -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,

Dr. Krinstin Joe, Pharm.D. of South Dakota

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

From: Gladys Bazemore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:57:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the chairman and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully disagree with the conclusion that there is no separation between church and state.

History reveals the results of such a plan over and over. It always leads to oppression, persecution, and destruction of Liberty rather than promoting freedom.

Please do all you can to preserve this wall of separation between church and state. In matters of conscience the state has no right to compel the individual choice before God.

We must all have the freedom to study God's Word for ourselves to answer the question, What does God require of me of how and when to worship Him?

We honor our country, but we must worship our God according to our own convictions.

Sincerely,

Gladys Joy Bazemore

From: Michael Belnavis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Religious Liberty Commission's Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:00:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I would like to share an insert of our stance on The Separation of Church and State

Religious Liberty Department

This branch of our work was first organized in the year 1888 as the National Religious Liberty Association. It became the Religious Liberty Department of the General Conference when the various departments within our denomination were organized in 1901. The occasion for the original formation of a Religious Liberty Association was the introduction into Congress in 1888 of the famous Blair Sunday Bill. A hearing was given on the merits of this bill, and Sunday law advocates occupied practically all the time. A Seventh Day Baptist minister was granted a few minutes, but he weakened his cause

by admitting the right of Congress to legislate on the subject, and asked only an exemption in favor of observers of the seventh day as the Sabbath.

At this point Seventh-day Adventists asked for a hearing and were granted some time. A. T. Jones spoke, making it very clear that Adventists were not seeking an exemption clause, and that they would oppose the bill just as readily with such a clause as without it, because they regarded the whole principle of legislation in behalf of a religious institution as fundamentally wrong. Thus, for the first time Seventh-day Adventists were brought into prominence as advocates of religious liberty.

About the same time that the foregoing Sunday bill was introduced, an amendment to the Constitution of the United States was proposed which would place the name of Jesus Christ in the Constitution, and would declare that the laws and usages of Christianity must be a part of the fundamental law of the land.

The National Religious Liberty Association opposed this measure on the ground that such an amendment would be clearly a union of religion and government.

Our Religious Liberty Department has one object and one only ; namely, the preservation to every man, regardless of his creed, of those inalienable rights with which mankind has been endowed by the Creator.

Civil power may properly enact laws regulating the relationship of man to his fellow man, but it has no right to pass measures which have to do with man's relationship to God or to religion.

Years before the organization of the Religious Liberty Association, Adventists had taken the position, based upon the prophecy of Revelation 13:11-17, that there would arise in the United States a hierarchy similar to the Papacy of the Middle Ages, which would use the civil power of the government to accomplish its own ends. As evidences of the working of just such a power began to be seen, it

The Blair Sunday Bill was the first to be introduced into Congress, but since that time almost every session of Congress has witnessed the introduction of proposed Sunday legislation.

This national issue, as well as legislation in many States and cities, has been consistently opposed by our Religious Liberty Department. The enforcement of religious legislation, whether the revision of the old colonial blue laws or the passing of new legislation in some States, has led to real religious persecution. The prosecutions were so severe in one State that even the sympathy of the State legislature was awakened in favor of the persecuted, so that an exemption clause was enacted, granting religious liberty to those who observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. In some places, however, where such an exemption clause has not existed, Sabbathkeepers have been torn from their families and forced to work in the chain gang with criminals, all because they chose to "obey God rather than men."

Aside from defending the cause of religious liberty, it has been the constant aim of the Religious Liberty Department to educate the general public in principles of justice."

"The Great Advent Movement 108-110.

Sent from my iPhone

From: String Bean <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Coment re: uniting Church and State will usher in the end of U.S.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:02:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of Church and State is clearly indicated in the 1st Ammendment's "Establisment Clause"n Removing the infered wall of separation of Church and State and replacing it with misconstrued United paradigm will bring desolation from God as it apes the Church of Rome that brought the world the destruction of millions of church designated heretics throughout the Dark ages. Revelation 13's Lamb like beast which I believe to be the U. S. MAKES an image of the dark ages church state paradigm by creating legal structures that establish the institution of Rome being the establishment of 1st day, Sunday worship, instead of Creation and 10 Commandments 7th Day Sabbath. Rome declares her attempted change of God's 7th Day Sabbath to the first day, to be her Mark of authority because most of her Protestant daughter church's adhere to. Revelation 13:11-17.

Revelation 14:6-12 describes the destiny of those who receive the Mark of the Beast/Rome's Day of the Sun, in contrast to those who remain faithful in vs.12 Here is the Patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. James 2 declares that the 10 commandments are both the Royal Law of God as well as The Law of Liberty. He further states that to break one is to break all, and finally it is the standard that each will be judged by God in the final Judgment.

The attempted change of the Commandment was prophecied by Daniel in Daniel 7:25 several hundred of years in advance of Romes attempt that fully struck out the 2nd commandment regarding idol worship, moving the 4th place 7th Day Sabbath Commandment into the 3rd place commandments. Then realizing their attempted altering of the Law of Liberty resulted in only 9 commandments, Rome split the 10th commandment regarding covetousness into two anti coveting commands. Thus their sleight of hand preserved the number, preserved image worship in the Roman paradigm that was clearly forbidden directly from the Lord.

So who should we honor? A Churc-State decreed counterfiet 1st day Sun worship thousands of years old, or the words of Command written by the finger of God of enduring tables of Stone reaffirming the 7th day Holy from Creation onward? The choice must be personal and not coerced. This is why church and state can not succeed but to ruin the greatest nation build heavily on freedom and liberty of conscience.

In conclusion if you choose church and state union, it will lead to establishing the persecuting dark ages character under protestant-state union. The legislation will sift the faithful from the unfaithful by causing the later to receive the Mark of the beast and the undiluted plagues that hamper their attempt to exterminate God's true faithful. Much like the plagues hindered Pharaoh at the Exodus, except this time the plagues end with the sky rescue of the 2nd Coming! 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Rev 1:7, etc and the destruction of the unfaithful Psalms 50:3-6; Matt 24:20-31; Rev. 6:14-17; Revelation 19:11-21.

Fortunately a 4th angel in Revelation 18:4 is instructed to call the faithful out of the confusion of church state corruption and stand with the faithful and avoid the awful scourge of undiluted plagues falling upon tha adulterous church and state crowd that attempt to wipe God's true Commandment keepers via grace and the New Covenant off the realm of the living.

I pray that the commission heed the Law as written by God and not man; and not cause the church betrothed to the Saviour to fornication of union with the state. See Rev 17.

Uniting of church and state can only lead to ruin as it historically has! Check out the Decree Of Nantes...lasted 100 years and made the nation prosperous. If the course the committee remains set to call the establishment clause a lie, prepare for national ruin via natural disasters, economic collapse, because God stops intervention and allows Satan to turn the globe into Rev 19 gory supper for the carrion eaters.

May God Bless the USA with wisdom from His Word and Spirit, that more souls may be won before the Coerced crisis of the Mark of the Beast vs the Commandment keepers and those that follow the unadulterated faith of Jesus.

Your's truly,

From: Elsy Niebles <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:02:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a Christian, and citizen of the United States of America, I am asking you to reconsider the decision to remove the boundaries protecting my right, as well as the right of all human beings to decide who, when, and where to worship. Religious liberty is what our forefathers fought to provide this nation. We must do all we can to preserve the Constitution they brought forth.

Jesus gave us the free will to choose whom we will serve. He never forced himself on his creation. He healed, forgave, blessed, and served everyone while He was on earth. As a follower of Christ, I wish all would come to accept Jesus and be saved. But that is a personal decision. I know that God judges the heart. Many who might not have had the opportunity to learn about Him will be saved because they lived the light they had.

Let's continue to spread the good news and let the Holy Spirit do His work in the hearts of people.

Thank you for your time.

Blessings,

Elsy Niebles

From: Reiner Kremer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Alice Kremer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:03:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for receiving comments from the public on the draft report. I write to ask the Commission to uphold the separation of church and state — the arrangement that has kept faith in America both free and strong. Please keep the business of religion out of the government business. **We** are not a theocracy. **My** reasons are these:

Separation was the founders' deliberate design, urged on them by the churches themselves. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention: "There is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it would be a most flagrant usurpation." I ask the Commission to honor that design, not explain it away.

The founding generation's own Congress already examined this question. The reports of Richard M. Johnson's committees, adopted in 1829 and 1830, declared: "It is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false. Our government is a civil and not a religious institution." I ask the Commission to align its report with that precedent.

Force can make hypocrites, never Christians — and state sponsorship corrupts the faith it favors. President Grant said it plainly in 1875: "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the State and Church forever separate."

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Alice Kremer
Franktown, CO

From: Shawn D'Abreu <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 2: Religious Liberty and the American Story – Shawn D'Abreu

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:04:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

"When a religion is good, I conceive 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 help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."- Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to Richard Price. October 9, 1790.

Separation of church and state is a Christian idea which has proved its success over the 250 years of our nation's history. Otherwise the United States would not be the most religiously diverse country in the world.

The sectarianism promoted in this report threatens the success and diversity of the American Experiment by interjecting incomplete storytelling and flawed analysis into our national narratives no different than Lost Cause myth-making.

The omissions within the report are glaring.

For example the report's second mention of James Madison reads,

"When Virginia drafted its first constitution, called the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776,^L Madison, then just 25^L years old, came forward and tirelessly advocated for the fullest religious liberty protections for his fellow Virginians.⁶² The result was language very similar to that which would become the First Amendment of^L the U.S. Constitution, drafted eleven^L years later and adopted thirteen years later."

The religious liberty which Madison advocated for in Virginia included non-establishment of religion and separation of church and state. Even though these protections of liberty of conscience insures that the vast majority of people in this country are never and have never been harassed, sanctioned, or prosecuted for their beliefs or non-belief, the report is filled with an undercurrent of grievance which is bitter but without basis or reason.

Elsewhere the report blames separation of church and state on "secular" people who don't believe in God. But Madison served as a deacon in his church. While it is true that the first amendment largely reflects the Virginia Declaration the report's survey of history makes no mention that Madison and Jefferson steadfastly worked to prevent the kind of religious license advocated for in this report.

The report mentions the Virginia Declaration but not the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* which is a basis for the First Amendment to the Bill Rights.

There is no mention of *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, no mention of the lineage of the idea of non-establishment through the experiences and advocacy William Penn and Roger Williams. These were the spiritual and intellectual forebears of non-establishment not "God is dead" philosophers.

There is also silence regarding the "no religious tests" clause in the Constitution. Why would a prohibition against privileging Christians in elected office be included if the original intention was for the United States to form a Christian nation?

The relationship between church and state has always been "rightly ordered" so long as we adhere to the principles of the Constitution and to Jesus' declaration that "My kingdom is not of this world."

The power of the gospel does not come via legislation or tax support by governments. This report is validating the notion that the Holy Spirit can be replaced with state power, that our hope can be built on something less.

Non-establishment works in tandem with "free exercise" so the church can operate in a public square free of government intrusion *and* politically connected sectarianism. Since the gospel is spread via persuasion not state favoritism or coercion, an unencumbered public square where there is also freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, and the right to petition the government is the best environment for Christian ministry and witness.

Religious liberty does not mean that magisterial denominations or sects repining for the political power to funnel state funds into their treasuries and to punish dissent from their dogmas should be allowed to bend the Constitution and our civic institutions to their will.

Religious liberty and religious freedom insures that churches and other religious communities don't have to engage in political competition to safeguard the liberty of conscience of their members.

"No state aid" to any religion, a principle explicitly incorporated in many U.S. state constitutions, is not persecution of denominations which insist on state aid. Where there is no entrenched political advantage *for* any group there is no targeted disadvantage *of* any group. The public square is where the contests of ideas to win hearts and minds should be won or lost. This report recommends allowing certain religions to rewrite the rules and rig the contest in their favor.

When there is disagreement or conflict, churches can be heard like any other institution in the courts which, in our system, should be neutral toward religion. These religious groups have the same rights but not exclusive access and a license for impunity.

This report is attempting to sacralize political grasping for power by sectarian interests under the guise of victim-hood and persecution. The report engages in dissemination and sly omission which fails to reach the Biblical standard of honesty and integrity.

These attacks on separation of religion and state for political advantage will result in long term damage to our democratic republic and to religious institutions. You are attempting to hand power over to influences that will use the United States to do to the world what magisterial churches did to Europe for more than a thousand years.

Let the churches, already in a privileged position, be satisfied and let God make up the difference. If these entities really trust in God then it is no hard thing for Him to fund their ministries, build their institutions, and convince people by a godly example and the truth "as it is in Jesus" to repent and be baptized.

If they can't do this, then Franklin has accurately described their condition and we should not subsidize their inadequacy and lack of faith. True religion does not need state power favoritism it to be successful.

Abandon this effort to destroy the foundations of our republic by repudiating the principles which have made us strong and successful as a nation. Those promoting combining church and state have the

lost argument; they lost at the Founding, they lost in the Constitution, they lost in the Civil War, they lost in the courts, they lost in state legislatures over and over again.

The rehashing and rewriting of history this report engages in illustrates Franklin's picture of bad religion all too well.

It is impossible to maintain free exercise of religion "for all" without limits on the political power of religious institutions to *establish* their dogmas via public policy, budget appropriation, and legislation. Any religion or coalition of religions striving for power to control the purse and the sword will soon attempt to control consciences and bodies as well.

Establishment of religion, which this report is endorsing, has always resulted in corruption, incompetence, hypocrisy, and persecution. Leaving our liberties and freedoms intact is the surest path to national revival. Degrading them is the surest path to national ruin.

Choose wisely.

Grace to you,
Shawn D'Abreu

From: raulrihistory <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – RELIGIOUS LIBERTY - REBECCA ULLRICH

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:05:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a historian and I submit the following comment on the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report.

While the report correctly asserts the importance of religious liberty within the culture and communities of the United States, it assumes a dominant Christian faith that should appear in government-funded activities and institutions.

The founders were quite clear that religious tolerance - and tolerance of religious diversity - were critical to the new republic. The United States has seen a variety of debate and consideration of the complexity of what religious liberty looks like in a free society. these discussions and arguments have repeatedly landed on the notion (verified by the Supreme Court repeatedly) that maintains the central principal that the government (federal or state) should not privilege or favor one set of religious beliefs or practices over another.

This means that the government, while allowing religious expression both public and private for all faiths, does not directly fund, support, or display the religious artifacts, tenets, doctrines, or beliefs of any particular faith. Children may pray in public schools (indeed, many probably due, especially on test days), but the public school may not direct prayer or inculcate prayers or religious views in the students it teaches.

Please move away from this notion of have the government (federal or state) press for or advocate religious expression. Please move away from the urge to use taxpayer dollars (provided by taxpayers of all faiths) to support particular religions and their expressions. Let the citizens practice and celebrate the faiths of their choosing. Do not impose any faith's views upon them.

Thank you for your time,
Rebecca Ullrich

From: Kyle Henry <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Chapter 2 – Where We Are Now: Building Bridges
Between Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:05:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

As much as the visualization of a "wall" between church and state may be perceived by the honorable Religious Liberty Commission as implying the mutual opposition between the church and the state, building bridges is not the best way to proceed. Influence on the two from each other is a given, but there must still be a pronounced separation between church and state. The Dark Ages was characterized partially by [Roman] church control over the state, and it led to the persecution of many. Conversely, the state that was the Soviet Union took over and suppressed the church, removing it from many citizens' lives in Russia. America's forefathers came from the former situation to establish a place where people would be free to practice their own religion and not have any religion imposed on them, which was secured by the First Amendment, which you very well know. The English approved translation of the Treaty of Tripoli says this: "[t]he Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." Let the observant travel through to both sides, but if you want a real comparison, consider a wall with doors and many watchmen on the top, ready to call out who will immigrate to the other with foreboding intentions.

From: Brett McAllister <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom is Paramount

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:06:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I applaud the commissions work on its final report to the President (Trump) to bring to the forefront a clearer understanding of the language of separation of church and state and its meaning for USA citizens and The Department of Justice. The important principles of religious freedom rights for individual believers, as well as faith based organizations, must always be an unrestricted choice in our great land

Sincerely,

Brett McAllister

From:JB T <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:06:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar Of Freedoms response. We need to keep church and state separate. This is what our founding fathers fought and died for.

God bless

Jadran Turina

From: Amy Krum <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:13:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am greatly concerned at the proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. I am a person of faith and understand that believers formed this policy to protect religious freedom. It may sound good to have a bridge, but which religion will it support? I believe we cannot break down this separation without serious repercussions to religious freedom for every person, regardless of what they believe.

Please keep church and state separate. That is the only way I believe we can keep them both free.

Sincerely

Amy Krum

Colfax, California

Sent from my iPhone

From: Miguel Alonso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Objections to the DRAFT REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:15:39 -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

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

As a Christian and an American, I believe that your assessment of the “separation of church and state” should be re-evaluated.

In your assessment, you violate Executive Order 14291 Sec.2 (b)(iv) in that by dispensing with the separation of church and state, you will be paving the way for the church to influence the U.S. government to violate the First Amendment of the Constitution.

In order to ensure the upholding of the God-given right of liberty of conscience protected by the Constitution, we need to ensure that the “church” (or any religious institution) does not control government or dictate policy. Once religious establishments are directly involved with the government, they will begin looking out for their own interests. This in and of itself may not be bad; however, it is unlikely that they will encourage or lobby for legislation involving matters of conscience or the free exercise of religion.

We must respect all forms of religion if we are going to claim religious liberty. For example, the blue laws affected religious people who didn’t have beliefs aligned with the beliefs of the legislators. Many religions, Christian and non-Christian, hold other days as the day of rest (including the biblical Saturday Sabbath observed by Seventh-Day Adventists, Seventh-Day Baptists, Jews, and even the late Charlie Kirk). However, I do not think “blue laws” should be made in favor of the Saturday Sabbath either. I believe all religions and sects have the God-given right to practice their religion however they please, provided it does not violate someone else’s rights.

Although the First Amendment only restricts the state from going after the churches, it necessitates that the churches not go after the state. If the churches tell the state what to do, it will only be a matter of time before the church-state uses the power of the state to advance its own cause and infringe upon the rights of other religions or persons that hold different religious beliefs. Thus, in order to protect the God-given right to freedom of conscience as outlined in the First Amendment of our Constitution, we must keep the churches or religions out of

the government. We must remember that all forms of religion and all people are given the same rights by God, and it is the duty of the American government to protect those rights.

In conclusion, I appeal to you, the members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty, to reconsider your assessment and maintain the integrity of the American government by protecting the religious liberty of all people and religions. Protect our God-given rights by keeping religious establishments from having direct political influence. By allowing religion into the government, we end up trampling individual rights, as seen in Afghanistan, Iran, and other Islamic states instituting Sharia law. Just because it is our religion does not mean that our beliefs should govern another man's conscience. God gave the inalienable rights to all men, not just Christians.

Sincerely,

Miguel Alonso

From: George Prieto <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - George Prieto

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:16:56 -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,

George Prieto
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

From: Ronda Welch <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:18:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments please implement them

Geraldine

Flint Michigan

Sent from my iPhone

From: Paul Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response Letter to Religious Liberty Draft

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:19:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good Afternoon,

Im writing this email in response to the
Commissions suggestion that there should be a bridge between church and state instead of a wall.

Historically this nation was founded due to freedom of religious persecution in the "Old World", this religious persecution became most rampant when the Catholic church of Rome had civil authority over the empire.

The founding fathers recognized this as Benjamin Franklin states, "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, so that it's Professors are oblig'd to call for the help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one".

Benjamin Franklin could make such a profound statement like this because he understood, that historically when Church and State would be united, religious persecution would soon follow.

Jesus said in Matthew 22:21 "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesars, and unto God the things that are Gods." Furthermore He states in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world then my servants would fight."

These two verses combined demonstrates that there should absolutely be a separation between what is Caesar (State), and what is God's (Church).

Lastly in Matthew 23:37-39 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee... behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord". Since this statement comes after the 1st triumphant entry, we can understand that Jesus means this to be at his 2nd triumphant entry, that is at his second coming. The house of literal Israel will be desolate until Jesus establishes a New Jerusalem after His second coming. Again, Jesus states that His Kingdom is not of this world.

Therefore, I suggest that the founding fathers, the constitution, and the Bible confirms that there should be religious freedom for all, that there should not be a merging or a bridge between church and state, for the church belongs to God alone and the state belongs to Caesar.

From: stacey hudson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] 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.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:20:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Ave, 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 the 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 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 in Article V of the U.S Constitution.

Sincerely,
Stacey Hudson,
Concerned American Citizen

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Urgent Appeal: Defend Religious Liberty Before July 13 [REDACTED] The President's Religious Liberty Commission has opened a formal public comment period, allowing individuals the opportunity to submit written feedback and express their concerns regarding the Commission's work and recommendations. The deadline for submitting comments is July 13, 2026, making this a limited window to have your voices heard. Those who value the constitutional principles TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII 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 obvi

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:21:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of Church & State

Jo

From: Danny Ivette Moctezuma <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recomendaciones de la Comisión De Libertad Religiosa

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:21:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

RECOMENDACIONES DE LA COMISIÓN DE LIBERTAD RELIGIOSA

Gracias por la oportunidad de brindar comentarios sobre las recomendaciones del Comité de Libertad Religiosa presentadas al Presidente Donald J. Trump el 26 de junio de 2026. Si bien reconocemos el trabajo del Comité, que dio como resultado las 12 recomendaciones publicadas el 26 de junio, con algunas de las cuales estamos de acuerdo, escribimos para expresar nuestras preocupaciones y objeciones a la primera y novena recomendación del Comité [1] y su evidente consideración insuficiente de las advertencias de los Padres Fundadores sobre los peligros de una unión de iglesia y estado o las muchas lecciones de la historia al respecto.

El Comité recomendó que el Departamento de Justicia emitiera directrices que aclararan la interpretación correcta de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la iglesia y el estado. [2] En la presentación formal de las recomendaciones del Comité ese mismo día, el presidente del Comité, Dan Patrick, declaró públicamente que «la separación de la iglesia y el estado no está en la constitución» y que la frase «no tiene fundamento constitucional». [3]

Como ciudadanos, historiadores y cristianos, nos preocupa que la visión errónea e inconstitucional del Presidente del Comité sobre la supuesta «interpretación correcta de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado» pueda influir, o peor aún, servir de guía, para el Departamento de Justicia. Si la opinión del Comité sobre la supuesta «interpretación correcta» de la Cláusula de Establecimiento coincide con la de su Presidente, resulta evidente que dicha interpretación no es correcta, sino incorrecta.

El Padre Fundador, "Padre de la Constitución" y cuarto Presidente de los Estados Unidos, James Madison, contradijo la afirmación del Presidente Dan Patrick de que la separación entre la Iglesia y el Estado no está en la Constitución. Madison declaró que "Si bien la separación entre religión y gobierno está rigurosamente protegida en la Constitución de los Estados Unidos, el peligro de injerencia por parte de organismos eclesiásticos puede ilustrarse con los precedentes ya establecidos en su breve historia". Según James Madison, la separación entre la Iglesia y el Estado sí está en la Constitución. En cuanto a si James Madison, principal autor de la Cláusula de Establecimiento, o Dan Patrick, es la mayor autoridad en este tema, creemos que no es difícil para las personas razonables determinarlo.

Ciertamente, los Padres Fundadores eran conscientes de la persecución de bautistas, cuáqueros, judíos y otros en algunas colonias. Habían presenciado de primera mano los cortes de orejas, los azotes, el encarcelamiento y las ejecuciones en Massachusetts y otras colonias.

En Europa, la persecución de los mártires está bien documentada. Hoy damos por sentada la Biblia, pero olvidamos que William Tyndale fue ejecutado por traducirla al inglés, no por ateos, sino por fanáticos religiosos. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que reprimió la libertad de expresión y de prensa en Inglaterra. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que prohibió la traducción de la Biblia, que cambió el mundo. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que lo obligó a huir a Europa. Fue la unión de la Iglesia y el Estado la que lo mató.

Solicitamos respetuosamente al Departamento de Justicia que, al considerar la cuestión de la orientación pública sobre la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado, tenga en cuenta la historia de William Penn, fundador de Pensilvania y uno de los primeros Padres Fundadores, quien fue encarcelado repetidamente en Inglaterra por su fe religiosa. La colonia de Pensilvania se convirtió en un refugio, no de perseguidores ateos, sino de perseguidores religiosos que no creían en la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado. Lo mismo ocurrió con Roger Williams, fundador de la colonia de Rhode Island, a quien se le ordenó arrestar por declarar que el magistrado civil no puede hacer cumplir la primera tabla del Decálogo. Solicitamos al Comité que tome en cuenta la brutal flagelación pública que sufrió Obadiah Holmes, tatarabuelo del presidente Abraham Lincoln, en la colonia de Massachusetts, por el "delito" de disidencia religiosa. Obadiah Holmes no fue flagelado por ateos, sino por puritanos fanáticos que no creían en la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado. Solicitamos respetuosamente al Departamento de Justicia que considere esta historia al emitir orientación pública sobre el tema.

Nos preocupa que el Comité no haya tenido en cuenta el impacto de la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado en los demás derechos consagrados en la Primera Enmienda. La libertad de expresión y la libertad de prensa, por ejemplo, deben su auge en el mundo moderno en gran medida a la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado en Estados Unidos. Antes de las protecciones de la Primera Enmienda, la Iglesia Católica Romana mantuvo durante siglos una lista de libros prohibidos llamada Index Librorum Prohibitorum. Estos libros estaban sujetos a confiscación, y su posesión conllevaba el castigo de su propietario.

Lamentablemente, el Comité no menciona la censura en este contexto de Galileo y Kepler, Kant y Locke, John Milton y Maimonides, John Stuart Mill y Jeremy Bentham, David Hume y Edward Gibbon, y muchos otros, todos a instancias del Papado romano, que en sí mismo es una unión de iglesia y estado. La libertad de expresión en el mundo occidental es el legado de aquellos que arriesgaron la ira de una iglesia y un estado unificados, a menudo a costa de sus vidas. También solicitamos que el Departamento de Justicia considere los reiterados llamamientos modernos del poder papal a la censura de internet y la supresión de la libertad de expresión, en contravención de la Primera Enmienda. [4] No dudamos de que la censura de Galileo, Kepler, Milton y otros se llevó a cabo bajo la justificación de la censura de la desinformación.

La Iglesia romana no fue la única en sufrir esta persecución. Solicitamos al Departamento de Justicia que, al formular directrices públicas sobre la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado, recuerde las persecuciones religiosas llevadas a cabo por orden de Juan Calvino en Ginebra contra disidentes religiosos como Miguel Servet, quien pagó con su vida por sus escritos y enseñanzas.

Servet fue ejecutado por una unión de Iglesia y Estado. Nos preocupan las declaraciones públicas de quienes pretenden crear un sistema similar en Estados Unidos. [5]

Por lo tanto, nos preguntamos respetuosamente qué orientación adecuada puede esperar brindar el Departamento de Justicia al público sobre la "comprensión correcta de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la iglesia y el estado" si su objetivo está dirigido por un Comité y un Presidente de Comité que han descuidado analizar más a fondo las razones de la separación de la iglesia y el estado, o las razones por las que Estados Unidos codificó la separación de la iglesia y el estado en la Primera Enmienda en primer lugar.

La referencia al muro de separación entre la iglesia y el estado no solo la menciona el presidente Thomas Jefferson en la carta a los bautistas de Danbury, lo cual, por supuesto, es cierto. [6] Lo que a menudo se omite en la narración es que Jefferson afirmó creer personalmente que el principio de la separación entre la iglesia y el estado está codificado en la Constitución. En ella, Jefferson escribió: «Creyendo, al igual que ustedes, que la religión es un asunto que concierne únicamente al hombre y a su Dios, que no debe rendir cuentas a nadie más por su fe o su culto, que los poderes legítimos del gobierno solo alcanzan a las acciones y no a las opiniones, contemplo con soberana reverencia el acto de todo el pueblo estadounidense que declaró que su legislatura no debería "promulgar ninguna ley que establezca una religión ni que prohíba su libre ejercicio", construyendo así un muro de separación entre la Iglesia y el Estado». [7]

James Madison escribió: «Es apropiado alarmarse ante el primer intento de atentar contra nuestras libertades. Consideramos que esta prudente cautela es el primer deber de los ciudadanos y una de las características más nobles de la reciente Revolución. Los hombres libres de América no esperaron a que el poder usurpado se fortaleciera mediante el ejercicio y enredara la cuestión en precedentes. Vieron todas las consecuencias del principio y las evitaron negándolo. Valoramos demasiado esta lección como para olvidarla pronto». [8]

Por último, nos oponemos a la recomendación del Comité de que se elimine la Enmienda Johnson. Como seguidores de Jesucristo, recordamos las palabras de Nuestro Señor: «Dad al César lo que es del César, y a Dios lo que es de Dios». [9] Jesucristo estableció el principio de la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado y enseñó que lo que pertenece a Dios no puede ser dado al César. La aplicación de esta enseñanza es que los religiosos, que aspiran al poder civil, y los políticos, que aspiran a su respaldo, deben mantenerse separados en el sistema político estadounidense, tal como lo exige la Constitución. La unión de la Iglesia y el Estado resulta en la corrupción de ambos, un resultado que ninguno debería desear ni puede permitirse.

Madison afirmó que "El número, la diligencia y la moralidad del sacerdocio, así como la devoción del pueblo, han aumentado manifiestamente gracias a la separación total de la Iglesia del Estado". [10] Y tenía razón. Si se elimina la Enmienda Johnson, los religiosos que anhelan el poder civil harán campaña públicamente y prometerán sus votos y las contribuciones de sus congregaciones a cambio de favores políticos, y los políticos, sin duda, estarán más que

dispuestos a corresponder con la legislación que los religiosos desean, siempre y cuando les ayuden en sus intentos de acceder al poder.

En su tratado anónimo publicado en la Boston Gazette, John Adams, quien más tarde sería el segundo presidente de los Estados Unidos, escribió que el derecho canónico era una forma tiránica de gobierno, al igual que el derecho feudal, pero que la peor de todas las formas de gobierno era la unión de ambas. [11] Y fue Madison quien afirmó que, «En el sistema papal, el gobierno y la religión están de alguna manera consolidados, y se ha demostrado que ese es el peor de los gobiernos».

Por lo tanto, solicitamos respetuosamente que el Departamento de Justicia no adopte las recomendaciones 1 y 9 del Comité y que adopte la recomendación 1 del Comité, que consiste en convocar una audiencia pública, con presentaciones escritas y orales del público, para estudiar de manera más exhaustiva la cuestión de la separación de la iglesia y el estado en la historia, y en la historia estadounidense en particular, un estudio que apoyaríamos con entusiasmo.

Nos mantenemos, Atentamente,

[EL ABAJO FIRMANTE]

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

[2] *Ibíd.*, [Énfasis añadido].

[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?vepAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?vCMBiPIfx-UA>

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

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson aquí se refiere claramente al Congreso. Que la Constitución prohíbe al Congreso formar una unión entre la iglesia y el estado.

[8] James Madison, Memorial y protesta contra las contribuciones religiosas

[9] Mateo 22:21.

[10] James Madison, Carta a Robert Walsh, 2 de marzo de 1819.

[11] John Adams, Disertación sobre el canon y el derecho feudal, 1765.

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

From: pauline smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] God-ordained the Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:23:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission.

I strongly oppose what the Religious Liberty Commission is proposing in regards to our government's involvement in religious practices in the United States. Bottom line is that ultimately, these changes and proposed laws will lead to forced expression of Christian religious practices with religious persecution being the end result for those who don't comply.

Let me remind you, that religious persecution was exactly the reason our Founding Fathers and Pilgrims fled from England to come to the new land in the west, America. That is why, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the passing or creation of ANY law that establishes a religious body and directly impedes on an individual's right to practice whichever religion they see fit. This delineated a clear separation of church and state. "No Pope - Protestantism; No King - Republicanism." This distinction is what has allowed this country to flourish as a religious haven for all, just as God who raised it up intended for it to be. So the clear separation of church and state must remain.

As a devout, Bible-believing Christian, myself, I know that Jesus never forces the conscience. He doesn't force people to serve Him. Instead, He says, like Joshua, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." Joshua 24:15. He gave all man-kind at creation, the power to choose. We were made free to choose who and how we will worship. It is our fundamental God-given right. Please do not allow our country, that God has shed His grace on, to become a despotic, persecuting power.

Thank you for the privilege of voicing my thoughts.

Pauline Smith
Spring Hill, TN

From: heidistein2002 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bridging Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:23:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Please keep Church and State completely separate. For 250 years, we have not mixed Church with State--so, respectfully, why now? Keeping Church and State separate protects our freedoms. The State should not be encouraged or allowed to impose one faith on everyone, as this most certainly will lead to discrimination and oppression, as proven through history. There are currently 372 faith groups in America. Please do not take away the religious freedom of 371 of these groups.

Our wonderful country was founded on principles separating Church and State. This is why so many people left their country under dire persecution to enjoy religious freedom here in the USA. What a huge disappointment to these brave people and to our Founding Fathers if we deny what they tried to protect.

Keeping Church and State separate is necessary to set us apart from other nations, so we can continue being the "land of the free, and home of the brave".

Sincerely yours,

Heidi Stein

Sent from my Galaxy

From: V Michniuk <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report opposition

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:28:40 -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,
Violet Enochs

From: Ginny Frost <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:30:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: Religious Liberty Commission;

The United States of America was founded on the principle of Religious Freedom and Free Speech for all people. Our constitution prohibits our government from "establishing a national religion, endorsing a specific faith, or favoring one religion over another." Please do not undermine these values that make us the nation that we are. All people have the right to their religious beliefs (or no religious belief), along with the right to talk about it freely, without the interference of government deciding how that should be interpreted. No one should be able to force their religion on another. Keep the government out of religious matters. Keep the church and the state separate. Please uphold the constitution and the rights of the American people in this matter. That is what makes us American!

Sincerely,
Ginny F.
Oregon

From: Zachary Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State separation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:33:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I stand with Pillar of Freedom. We must retain the separation of church & State that we may not return to the Dark ages. Persecution is not the way to bring morality back to our beloved country. Uniting church and state will without a doubt divide the country that was founded on freedom, the freedom to choose. To choose whom they serve. God or Mammon.

Jesus never forced himself on anyone. He led the people to the water and let them decide if they would drink. I truly believe that God raised up this country not so that we could be the best in the world, but so His people could have the freedom to study His word and know Him for their selves. (This is Eternal Life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you thou hast sent John 17:3). This commission is doing many good things that I can definitely stand behind and I really appreciate your hard work and dedication. I am praying for you all and Know that our almighty God will guide your decision and future works.

God Bless,

Zachary Smith

From: DEBORAH BAER <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Separation of Church and State-Deborah Baer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:33:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to let you know my objections to your proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. Our country was intended to be free of government intervention in religious matters.
I am against government funding of religious activities and bringing political processes into the church.
I am disappointed that this proposal has such a short time frame for citizens to voice their comments, but am hoping many people respond with a resounding no to your proposal .

Sincerely,
Deborah Baer
Sent from my iPad

From: Zachary Weijohn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of church and state and the Johnson Amendment - Zachary Weijohn

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:34:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I believe religious liberty is one of the bulwarks of our nation and I am concerned with the possible infringements that the recent recommendations to the Department of Justice might cause. My concerns are as follows: if theological institutions become involved in politics through money/donations it will negatively affect the spiritual institution by the politics of our day. Wherever you see religion become involved in politics in history it almost always results in the decline of the spiritual welfare of the group as well as persecution of people that do not share the "mainstream" view. The second concern I have is with the recommendation to repeal the Johnson amendment. This could encourage people to seek political goals through the church, causing a muddying of the waters. Our founding Fathers wisely kept church and state separate and history tells us that they were right to do so. This is not only for the State but also for the prosperity of the church. I would encourage the continued separation of church and state so that we might maintain the rights of American citizens and the welfare of Christians and non Christians alike.

Thank you,
Zachary Weijohn
Ronan Montana

From: Renee Kuhn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Devout Christians PROTESTING Union of Church and State According to the Holy Bible

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:36:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission and Public Audience of the United States of America and the World Stage,

I respectfully submit this letter as a PROTEST and as an expression of my commitment to religious liberty, the Word of God, and my faith in Jesus Christ.

My only creed is the Bible. I believe the Holy Scriptures are the final authority for faith and practice, and that all human traditions, laws, and religious systems must be tested by the Word of God. The Bible warns of a time when **religious and political powers** will unite in a way that **threatens freedom of conscience**. According to my understanding of Bible prophecy, **Revelation** describes a power that **risers like a lamb** but eventually **speaks like a dragon**, exercising authority that leads people away from true worship and pressures them to follow **religious commands enforced by civil power**.

I believe Revelation 13 describes the **United States as the second beast**, also called the **False Prophet of Revelation**, which appears with lamb-like characteristics but later exercises the authority of the first beast and causes the world to follow the same pattern of religious and governmental union. The 2-horned, lamb-like nation who rose up onto the world's stage was none other than the United States of America! My dear nation, set aside for great things – set aside to be the true beacon of light set upon the hill has been taken over by the Vatican. We all know that history has and is being scrubbed. Even you accuse the other side of doing the same thing. So, let me preach our dear history from the Holy Bible a moment. It is a true and sad situation that I have found myself having to accept. My dear friends, the United States of America rose as a two-horned lamb-like nation and those two beautiful horns represent:

1. Protestantism – freedom from the Papacy
2. Republicanism – freedom from the Monarchy

Any type of revamping of history that leads us FROM these two horns continuing to be SEPARATE is speaking like a Dragon, per the Holy Scriptures. However, we knew this would happen. We simply did not know exactly when and who the names and faces would be at that time. But the God above have always known you and your names. He knew you would do this. He also knows who will read this and take it seriously – repent and turn away from the Union of Church and State.

I understand the **first beast of Revelation** to represent the Vatican/Roman Catholic system, and I believe prophecy warns of a future restoration of religious power that will influence governments to enforce religious observances. As the great USA was rising up in the 1700s, the 1st beast of Revelation [which is the Vatican] was receiving a Deadly Wound given to it by Napoleon, in the French Revolution. It is no surprise that we see the Vatican taking on the Deadly Wound and then another nation rising up who would later give allegiance to that first beast/nation. While the devil has preached to all denominations and religions on planet earth that the Antichrist is one man, Paul said that even now [in his time] there are many antichrists as well as the power that would later become the Vatican—which was the Roman System that killed Jesus. It is no new revelation that the Papal Church came from the Pagan Church. I mean, we know that some of the statues are older than the day Jesus walked on the planet as a man.

I understand that many may disagree with this interpretation, but I cannot remain silent when I believe Bible prophecy is pointing toward a **coming crisis of conscience** involving the union of church and state and the enforcement of religious laws. If you do not think you NOW stand against my conscience, then prove yourselves faithful to the true God of Heaven. Prove it by NOT participating in the Union of Church and State.

A paraphrase attributed to **Alexis de Tocqueville**, "When religion is allied with political power, it may share in the decay of political power." Well, my friends, you version of Christianity that WILL FORCE ITSELF onto

Americans AND WILL BE TOLD to the World [since America is the False Prophet] will have an ending to it. All governments of the world will end, per Daniel 2 and 11 as well as Revelation 18. The only government that STANDS FOREVER is the Lord's Government that He has created.

Now, I considered whether I should even participate in this PROTEST, because Scripture says these things WILL HAPPEN. However, I believe that **knowing prophecy does NOT remove my responsibility to stand for truth**. I want to participate in the **keeping of the faith of my Lord Jesus Christ** and to faithfully share the warning that I believe God has given in His Word.

I also do not want to miss an opportunity to proclaim what I believe is the coming National Sunday Law and the warning contained in Bible prophecy. If even one person reads this message, searches the Scriptures, turns to God, and accepts the truth of Jesus Christ, then any personal cost, criticism, or backlash would be worth it.

Throughout history, when church and state have united, persecution has followed. **Jesus Christ Himself** was **condemned** and **crucified** through **a combination of religious and civil authority**. The apostles suffered persecution and martyrdom because they remained faithful to Christ rather than compromise their convictions.

The same principle is reflected in the testimony of early Christians. **Polycarp** of Smyrna refused to deny Christ and was killed for his faith. **Polycrates** of Ephesus defended the practice he believed was faithful to Scripture and the example of the apostles rather than submit to pressure from religious authorities. Their examples remind us that obedience to God must come before obedience to human commands.

I also wish to bring attention to historical statements **regarding Sunday observance**. **Bishop Thomas Enright** was quoted as stating:

"I have repeatedly offered \$10,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to **keep Sunday holy**."

The quotation and related historical material are available here: [Father Enright on the Sunday](#)

I will say, there are so many Catholic leaders who have written so boldly and clearly as this Bishop. So many have not held their beliefs silent—and how their belief in the Scriptures is one thing and yet their Catholic Church is something different.

I believe this illustrates the distinction between **a command found in Scripture** and a **religious tradition** established by human authority dictated by the Vatican. My concern is not directed toward individuals of any faith, but toward **any system—religious and/or political—that seeks to bind conscience** through **civil enforcement of religious requirements**.

The Bible teaches that **God does not change**. His **character does not change**, His **truth does not change**, and **His law does not change**. **His appointed times** and **His commands** have always **pointed** humanity **toward His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ**.

Jesus Christ is the **center** of **God's plan of salvation**. He is the One who dwells in believers through the **Holy Spirit**, and all true worship must point back to Him.

Therefore, I respectfully ask that **religious liberty** be **protected for every person**. **No government should force worship, enforce religious observance, or punish individuals for following their conscience before God**.

May we remember the words of Revelation 14:12:

"Here is the **patience** of the **saints**: here are they that **keep** the **commandments of God**, and the **faith of Jesus**."

My appeal is simple: **protect freedom of conscience, honor the Word of God, and allow every person the liberty to worship** according to **their faith without government coercion**.

As for me and my house, we shall serve the LORD.
Maranatha! Amen!

Respectfully,
Jeffery and Renee Kuhn

From: Lisa Collier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State from Lisa Collier

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:37:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was extremely 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. In history when church and state unite persecution of those who disagree with a narrative begins. If we don't learn from history we will be repeating it. I love my country and I love God. Removing the separation of church and state will begin the downward slide of the greatest nation on earth.

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

Sincerely,

Lisa Collier

Vonore, TN

From: Billie Burcham <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:41:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I am concerned about the government trying to put religion into the government. It should be separated, and it has proven in the past that it was talked against in the early early days of our history and Christ talked about it. That's why he said give to Cesar what is Caesars and to God what is God's.

We came here to be able to have the freedom of religion to worship in our own way and our own God. It is not up to the government to tell people how to worship or that they have to worship. That's why we were here. It's a free country and we are entitled to that freedom and why are you trying to want to take it away from us?

It is important to have separation of State and Church. They should have nothing to do with each other. It's not up to the government to tell people where and how to worship or to set their morals. Everybody has that freedom, and we want to keep these freedoms.

Thank you,

Wilhelmina Burcham

[Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Aryonna Waters <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:42:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

There are many critical issues that are a concern to me as a citizen of the United States, as well as all the inhabitants of the world, as the United State nations aspire to. The most critical issue by far is the Commission's effort to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state.

The Commission's attempt is marked by making two primary types of recommendations that alarm me.

The first is the repeal of the Johnson Amendment which will further politicize America's churches, and the second is the expansion of funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities.

Both of these recommendations are counter to the separation of church and state as provided for by the Constitution.

"I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments regarding the separation of church and state in this report. Please implement them."

Sincerely,
Aryonna Waters
Carson, Washington

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Lynn Price <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please retain Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:44:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe in the separation of church and state.

The principle has served this great country for 250 years.
And it has worked.

I firmly believe in retaining this cornerstone practice.

Thank you for the chance to voice an opinion.

Lynn from Florida

From: Julia Reynolds <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Kyle <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] United States Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:44:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Chair Ben Carson and members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

First I want to commend you for identifying abuses in religious liberty towards individuals that you have mentioned; and also I commend you for your desire to recognize and rectify those abuses.

As a Bible believer and patriotic American it is certainly true that secular humanism has become a favored religion in governmental institutions. This is clearly a peril that you have identified. Although you have correctly described the injuries and injustices done to peoples of faith, I respectfully disagree with your solutions of which I believe will undermine the foundations of our Constitutional Republic.

My ancestors arrived in New England from England in the middle 1600s. We were Separatists and we were fleeing the religious oppression in Europe. We gave up home and hearth and fought to establish and protect the freedoms we had gained at so much of a cost. But when we arrived, we realized that the early colonies were established to form a theocracy and unless you agreed with their version of Christianity you were persecuted and banished. It was freedom for me and not for thee. It wasn't until Rodger Williams founded RI and other states followed that we had true religious liberty in this country. Rodger Williams was banned in Massachusetts for believing that the state had no right to legislate the first 4 commandments of the decalogue and fled in the winter with his life under threat, or be forced on the first ship back to England.

Dear sirs, we never want to go back to the early tyranny of our Pilgrim Fathers. Instead we must reflect more of the position of Jefferson and Madison who clearly understood that the stonger the bond between the church and the state, the more oppressive the society.

Without the separation of church and state the constitution, which we love and which has made this nation great, would never have been founded. The commission is ignoring the most important aspects of the history of this nation and as a result are placing an incomplete and incorrect slant on the solution to the complex problems of our nation.

The state should be neutral in all cases. Not preferring atheism or Judaism or secularism or any one form of Christianity. We may have principles of justice and truth based upon reason and fairness. But anytime faith is coercive, religious persecution will be the results. We can make moral laws but we can't not and we must not compel the conscience. I fear that the direction this commission is heading will undermine what our god fearing men and women who founded this great nation, fought so hard to establish.

Please I urge you to reconsider your stand. If we want to make America great again we need not dissolve the very foundations of the house which it was founded. We must built instead upon liberty and justice for all.

We must not favor one religion over another. The commission will unfairly establish an unconstitutional establishment of religion if these 5 points below are instituted.

1. Financial support for religious, faith based non-profits
2. Financial support for religious education
3. Politicization of Churches and Religious non-profits by repealing the Johnson Amendment.
4. Singling out one religion for special government protection
5. Indoctrination of Americans in the ideology of the Commission.

Respectfully,

Julia Frazier

Sent from my iPhone

From: Nola Vandersloot <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:46:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Freedom Commission,

As someone who loves this country and the freedoms we enjoy. I am writing to ask the Department of Justice to protect our religious freedom. The freedom to worship how, where, and what we may is a founding principle of our country. Please protect this freedom.

Thank you for all you do to uphold the founding principles of this great country. God bless the USA.

Nola Vandersloot

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Lynelle Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:46:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it May Concern in the Justice Department,

I strongly believe in the separation of church and state. Please do not consider blending the two. Our government was founded on the principle of religious liberty. A man's relationship with God is a sacred and private thing that cannot be legislated by a third party. The ten commandments clearly outline our duties to God and to man. The first four outline our relationship to God. The last 6 outline our duties towards our fellow human beings. No where in scripture is it taught that government or another human being should control an individual's relationship with God.

Governments rightly enact laws to enforce the last 6 commandments to protect fellow human beings from other human beings that do not respect life. But the first 4 commandments outline sacred obligations to a higher power, the God who created us. Man cannot interfere with this.

Please uphold the important principle of separation of church and state. Thank you for allowing feedback on this issue.

Lynelle Smith

Sent from my iPhone

From: George Graves <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:47:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a physician who has practiced in Southeast Tennessee since 1985, and a lifelong, serious student of Scripture — not a trained theologian, but a deeply committed disciple of Jesus Christ. Practicing medicine for four decades has put me at the intersection of science, history, and faith, and I have found that genuine science and genuine Scripture have never actually been in conflict — only their distortions have. The Bible has stood the test of time and of scrutiny far longer than any political theory, including this one. I am the grandson of immigrants who left Europe to escape lands where church and state were fused together, the son of an Army medic who served in a field hospital in World War II, and the grandson of a Navy physician who served aboard the USS Panay, protecting American commerce and missionaries on the Yangtze before it was sunk in 1937. I write to object to the Commission's recommendations to repeal the Johnson Amendment and expand government funding of religious activity, and to its broader attempt to replace the separation of church and state with something far more permeable.

History is consistent on this point. From the Middle Ages through the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, whenever government and religion have fused, both have been corrupted. Dietrich Bonhoeffer watched the German church accommodate itself to Nazi ideology and warned that the church's calling is to bear witness to Christ, not to seek political power. Scripture warns of the same temptation: when Israel demanded a king to be "like the other nations" instead of remaining under judges and prophets, God told them plainly what it would cost them — and they got exactly what was promised. Any church that seeks worldly power to advance itself is on a doomed mission from the outset, one Scripture cannot defend.

The healthiest relationship is not one institution fused with the other, but two distinct vessels operating alongside one another — government protecting the freedom of all people, the church persuading by truth rather than force. A church that leans on government money stops depending on God and starts depending on politicians. What the Commission proposes is a bridge to nowhere — the kind built at great cost and never finished. This bridge will fail too, and the toll will be emotional, social, and spiritual, not just financial, leaving churches and communities stranded in a fog of confusion.

Revelation 13 describes a power that fuses religious and civil authority to compel conformity — never presented as a blessing, but as a warning. I ask the Commission to withdraw these recommendations and reaffirm, not dissolve, the separation of church and state.

Respectfully submitted,

A Family Physician

Southeast Tennessee

Supplementary Notes (optional reading)

On a historical missed opportunity: When Marco Polo returned from China in 1295, he reported that Kublai Khan had asked the pope to send one hundred learned Christian teachers to his court. The pope commissioned only two friars, who turned back before completing the journey. Many historians regard this as a remarkable missed opportunity for good-faith religious and intellectual exchange during a rare window of openness between East and West — one that arose not from state power, but from genuine curiosity and invitation.

On family history: My mother's father served as a Navy physician aboard the USS Panay, transferred off the ship shortly before it was attacked and sunk on the Yangtze River in 1937 while protecting American commerce and missionaries. My mother and her younger brother were in Shanghai at the time, which soon fell to Japanese forces. My father served as an Army medic in a field hospital in World War II — an experience that turned him from a planned career in engineering toward medicine, and toward a lifetime as a family physician. These are not abstractions to me; they are the reason my family has never taken religious liberty, or the dangers of unchecked power, lightly.

From: michael firestone <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: michael firestone <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:51:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

The ten commandments are the eternal law of God. They are divided into two tables. The second table of the law (commandments 5 through 10) can be the basis of civil laws. It is appropriate for the government to administer and judge in those commandments. The government can have laws against murder, adultery, perjury, and stealing.

But the first table of the law (commandments 1 through 4) involve an individual's private relationship with God. The government should have no authority over these commandments, nor should any worldly authority. God does not force people to love Him and keep His laws. And neither should the government enforce the first table of the commandments.

Any attempt by the government to legislate the way an individual relates to God (including on which day a person can worship God) must only end in unfairness, persecution, and probably violence. This form of church and state combined is a great evil to society.

From: Todd Guthrie <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State and religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:52:11e0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for receiving comments from the public on the draft report. I write to ask the Commission to uphold the separation of church and state — the arrangement that has kept faith in America both free and strong. My reasons are these:

Christ himself divided human duty into two jurisdictions: what we owe our neighbors belongs to civil law; what we owe God lies beyond it. As A. T. Jones told the United States Senate in 1888, “civil government is civil, and has nothing to do in the matter of legislation, with religious observances in any way.” I urge the Commission to keep every recommendation on the civil side of that line.

American government holds only the powers the people could delegate — and no person can delegate his relationship to God. Religious authority was therefore never among the powers the people could give, and what was never given was never received. The First Amendment did not create that exclusion; it recorded it.

Separation was the founders’ deliberate design, urged on them by the churches themselves. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention: “There is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it would be a most flagrant usurpation.” I ask the Commission to honor that design, not explain it away.

The founding generation’s own Congress already examined this question. The reports of Richard M. Johnson’s committees, adopted in 1829 and 1830, declared: “It is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false. Our government is a civil and not a religious institution.” I ask the Commission to align its report with that precedent.

I do not believe that the church should use the power of the State for furthering its own agenda.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Todd Guthrie, MD
Mount Shasta, CA

From: Elizabeth Pyke <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State. Elizabeth Pyke

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:56:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am troubled to see that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect I find this alarming.

Our forefathers left Europe because there was not liberty 🇺🇸 of conscience. When the government take charge of your religious position it violates your conscience. People are eventually killed by the government when their freedoms are not recognized.

Those of you involved in this want to be able to worship as you see fit soon does everyone.

Please don't build a bridge build a wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Pyke
Bourbon, Missouri

From: Kristi Dyer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Kristi A. Dyer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:58:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Please reconsider the Commission's proposal to bridge the gap between church and state. The separation of church and state is the best solution for those who actively practice their faith, on the day of his or her choice, such as myself. The church is held accountable to God's authority and only God.

For the government to get involved and bridge this gap can bring about a downfall for our country and the liberty of the people of this country will be stripped away. We need only to look at other countries who have followed this example to recognize an identity change that is the furthest from democracy, a republic, and freedom for all. History is our teacher, lest we forget and grow into darkness and corruption.

Thank you for keeping church and state separate as it is intended to be.

Sincerely,
Kristi A. Dyer
Asheville, NC

From: Reed Webster <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission plea

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I urge you to reconsider recommendations in your report that would erode the separation of church and state, particularly those involving government funding of religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. The proposal to replace the “wall of separation” with a “bridge” is misguided and concerning.

Religious liberty forms the very foundation of the First Amendment. The principle of separation was established to ensure the government neither establishes an official religion nor interferes with the free exercise of faith. This wall was erected by people of faith themselves, not to suppress religion, but to shield it from government control and intrusion.

Allowing government funds and political influence to cross into religious institutions would invite corruption, force churches to compete for grants, and make them accountable to politicians rather than to their own beliefs and congregations. History repeatedly shows that when church and state become entangled, both suffer.

True separation protects the vitality of faith in America. It keeps religion independent and strong by preventing politicians from wielding power over it. I respectfully ask that you uphold this foundational principle rather than weaken it. Preserving the wall safeguards the church far more than it limits it — and it remains essential to keeping both our government and our faiths free.

Sincerely,

Reed Webster
Colton, CA

From: Randall Morris <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

The reason no states sponsor churches and churches should not seek federal nor state financial support is that no sooner that one religion gets government backing than that system turns to persecute the religions that do not espouse their creed. Holy wars and financial penalties result against other religions. Athiesm is also religion and should be classified with religions. Apparently, the lgbt stuff is a religion by its objectives. But its federal and state funding is most questionable as it's desire to persecute in the name of suffering misgendering. Anyway, i judt want you to know i believe in separation of church and state as a concept nessary to avoid our nation from becoming like north Korea only under a different exhaulted ideology....

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

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC Comment-Aims of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this comment in response to the aims of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty drafted on 06-26-26. I am deeply concerned for the findings of this commission that do not bear the whole truth about the separation between church and state-something our founding fathers of our great nation saw as so vitally important to the strength and stability of our times and provided for the exercise of our basic rights and freedoms as citizens of this "land of the free and the home of the brave." I believe the repeal of the Johnson Amendment will only increase the politicization of our nation's churches, which will ultimately lead to ridicule, villification, & persecution. I am also strongly opposed to increasing the funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities, which will only lead to competition among the various organizations. Anytime the secular government is allowed in bed with religious entities, they will have to "play by the rules" of their benefactors. We cannot legislate morality, rather, we must educate, educate, educate! In conclusion, I emphatically state that I am opposed to the Commission's efforts to abolish the separation of church and state, and am not in support of their proposals to do so-which will be at the expense of all citizens of this great nation. Please maintain the bastion of the separation of church and state, for everyone's good and peace of mind.

Thank you for listening. Am praying earnestly for us all.

Respectfully submitted,

D.rG.

From: Timm Eickmann <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 18:59:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am concerned about what is being considered currently about separation of Church and State. This Country was founded by people fleeing religious persecution. And when the State joins and is in partnership with a religious institution it is also apt to further preference and religious persecution. I value the Freedoms we HAVE. Why repeat a previous mistake.
TimmEickmann

From: Brittany Juergens <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Brittany Inostroza

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:01:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I was deeply troubled to hear that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state. As a person of faith, I find the idea alarming. Personally, I have dealt with workplace discrimination in regards to religious freedom with my current job. I thank God that our country's constitution currently protects my freedom to worship on the Saturday Sabbath instead of being forced to work.

Legislation that combines church and state, like what is currently being proposed, would not only negatively affect my life and those who believe similarly, but harm those of all different faiths and beliefs. History has shown us what happens when the state is able to regulate religious beliefs and practices, leading to persecution and even death for those who stood for their right to religious freedom.

Please reconsider this draft, and continue to keep church and state completely separate. Thank you for your time.

- Brittany Inostroza
Redlands, CA

From: Vijai Jaladhi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Vijay David

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:02:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who cares about both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses, and I ask you to weigh four arguments before recommending any measure that would draw government further into religious territory.

The first argument is Christian, not secular. Christ himself divided all human duties into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government exists to enforce duties owed to fellow men; duties owed to God belong to another authority entirely, one no earthly power may touch. As one witness put it before a Senate committee in 1888, there is a limit to the lawmaking power, and that limit is the line Christ drew — government may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses that line. The objection is not that such measures are too religious for a secular state; it is that they are forbidden by the very faith they claim to honor.

Second, rights come from the Creator, not from majorities. If a vote could grant religious liberty, a vote could take it away, and it was never a right at all — only a permission. Man's first allegiance is to his Creator, so the domain of conscience lies beyond the reach of human government, whether of one ruler or of many voters. Popular government is instituted precisely to protect the minority, since the majority can already take care of itself at the ballot box. As one advocate told a Senate committee, the people, however numerous, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. Congress's own 1829 committee report affirmed that the Constitution regards the conscience of a single dissenter as sacred as that of the whole community. Popular support can justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one.

Third, religious power was never delegated to government in the first place. Our system rests on the consent of the governed, but no person can delegate his relationship to God — he cannot authorize anyone to believe, worship, or answer for his soul in his place. What was never given could never be received. No government can answer to God for any individual, and none will stand at the final judgment for the people it governs. Whoever claims jurisdiction over another's belief claims a prerogative that God himself declines to exercise.

Fourth, the founders' separation was deliberate design, not accident, and it grew out of respect for religion, not hostility to it. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The churches of that era — Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers — pressed for exactly this separation, having felt establishment from underneath. The founders did not wait for full establishment before objecting; they denied the principle at its first appearance.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Vijay David

Sent from my iPhone

From: Sandy Eickmann <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:02:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I have been so grateful to live in a nation where the church and state are separate. We have a history of people fleeing Europe because of persecution and then coming here and persecuting other religious people who also fled, I am so glad that Roger Williams saw the problem and established Rhode Island and other colonies followed its example. When the state controls the church somehow it ends in persecution.

Several things in the Commission Draft Report concern me:

1. I don't want my pastor telling our politically diverse congregation who to vote for. Please keep politics out of my church. Leave the Johnson Amendment in place.
2. I don't want government money funding our Christian Schools because I don't want the government telling us what to teach and what not to teach. I have a hard time hearing about states insisting that the ten commandments be displayed. When I was in the fourth grade during the 1950's, my teacher tried to teach our class the ten commandments. But knowing that I kept the 7th day Sabbath on Saturday she attacked my belief. As a young child it was hurtful and confusing. Which commandments should be displayed? The Catholic version, ones from Deuteronomy or ones from Exodus, or should you do like my teacher, and try to eliminate a clear description of which day is the Sabbath by condensing them? Who gets to decide, the majority, or someone sitting in a government position?
3. Regarding funds to support churches as non-profits: Money tempts nonprofits to compromise their mission. I was very happy when an orphanage I support let me know that DOGE didn't change their funding because they don't take any money from any government in any of the countries they operate in so that they can be evangelistic in their ministry. It seems to me that if a church's nonprofit ministry isn't compelling enough to attract funds from the congregation and needs state funding, maybe they aren't worth supporting. By having the state fund it is a sneaky way of getting credit for a church when the taxpayers are footing the bill.
4. I do believe that secular atheism is operating like a religion/church. It's so difficult to know how to respond to it. I am in a state where it is scary to see what is being passed regarding gender issues. I appreciate that you are trying to address those issues. But the church acting like secular atheism and taking over isn't the answer. If secular atheism gets ahead in the elections, will they trade places with the churches and then tell the churches what to teach and believe? I think we need to keep social, political and religious issues out of the schools.

I am praying that the Commission, as they refine the draft report, will keep the state and church separate so we can worship freely.

Blessings,

Sandra Eickmann

From: Rhonda Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] religious liberty; honor the constitution; avoid government favoring of one religion over another

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:05:14 -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 (with help from Andy Roman from Oklahoma),

Rhonda Brown from Oregon

P.S. I am very sorry for all the political shenanigans going on here

From: "Clayton D. Brandt" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:05:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

We are very apposed to anything allowing the government to interfere with or coerce people in matters of conscience. We uphold the first amendment as it reads without any reinterpretation of it.

--

Clayton D. Brandt

[REDACTED] PII

From: Mike McGinley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:06:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a citizen of the United States of America and Christian who is troubled by the recommendations of this commission that would destroy the separation between church and state. God gave us free will to worship the way we choose, or not to worship at all.

I object to the repealing of the Johnson Amendment and request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced. I object to funding of religious non profit activities and to the funding of religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.

I believe the government should keep their hands out of the churches business and worry about taking care of our great nation. The Bible warns us that we are headed for great times of trouble and persecution and that we won't be able to buy or sell unless we have the mark of the beast. Revelation 14:12 says Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus. I am 78 years old and I don't know if I'll be around long enough to suffer the persecution and the Sunday laws they talk about but I know that if I am I will do my best to follow God and not man. God will protect and provide for those who love Him.

From: Jay Abell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:06:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Letter.pdf

To Whom it May Concern,

The attached is a letter addressing the released draft report.

Jay Abell

July 12, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to RLC@usdoj.gov

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

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

I am an American citizen, who values the freedoms of America. When the Twin Towers fell, as a newly married man, I chose to join and serve in the Armed Forces to defend these freedoms. My wife and our children have experienced the sacrifices a military family makes to ensure the freedoms Americans hold dear.

I value our unalienable rights given by God and expressed in our founding documents. I have backed this desire with the blank check written to protect my country from all enemies foreign and domestic. I have diligently taught our children the importance of what the founders of America fought for and how precious these freedoms are. As a person who enjoys studying history, a history curriculum which would accurately reflect our nation's history and values was of vital importance in the education of our children. The pages of history tell of the oppression of the past, of a time when the Bible was not in the language of the common man nor could the common man possess a copy. John Wycliffe's work was condemned by the Roman church as was

William Tyndale's. In addition, Tyndale was put to death by the Roman Catholic church.¹ Queen Elizabeth I increased religious freedom for the Church of England, but those who were labeled dissenters were often persecuted. The two largest dissenters were Catholics and Puritans, with some Puritans labeled Separatists. King James I and King Charles I claimed a divine right of kings, "the theory that kings have the right to rule absolutely and without criticism because they are chosen by God."² Absolute power absolutely corrupts. King James I allowed severe persecution of the Separatists. As a result, a group of Separatists fled to Holland which allowed people to worship freely. The Separatists stayed eleven years and were respected by the Dutch; yet the Separatists felt the need for space to be Englishmen and to spread the Gospel.³ These desires are remembered every November, as Americans continue the tradition of thanksgiving begun by the Pilgrims in the 1600's. Thomas Hooker, a pioneer of Connecticut, and Roger Williams continued to lead the colonies toward freedom. Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were banished from Massachusetts for disagreement over religion. "Williams insisted that civil government should not interfere in religious affairs and that churches should never use civil force to promote religion."⁴ Rhode Island was a refuge for those who experienced religious oppression. Rhode Island has proved, through the test of time, Biblical Christianity can thrive without government assistance. Many settlers who came to America were strongly motivated by freedom: religious, political, and economic; desirous of escape from oppression by either the

¹ Michael R. Lowman, *United States History: Heritage of Freedom*, 4th ed. (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Christian College, Inc., 2020), 16.

² Ibid., 17.

³ William Bradford, *Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation: 1606-1646*, ed. William T. Davis (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908).

⁴ Michael R. Lowman, *United States History: Heritage of Freedom*, 4th ed. (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Christian College, Inc., 2020), 29.

church or government (state) fostering unity through diversity.⁵ Much more could be recounted as to the history which has shaped the freedoms Americans hold dear; but for brevity's sake, does God's Holy Word support the separation of church and state?

The Word of God supports the ideology of separation of church and state. When God established the Israelite nation, He chose the tribe of Levi to serve as priests in the tabernacle.⁶ Many years later, when Israel desires to be like the nations around them and have a king, God establishes the line of kings from the tribes of Benjamin and then Judah.⁷ Jesus, Himself, is recorded in the book of Matthew saying, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."⁸ Both the example in Ancient Israel and the words of Jesus signal a separation between the religious leaders and the leadership of the king. The Word of God also supports freedom of conscience and freedom to choose.⁹

My request is for this committee to hold fast to the freedoms our Founding Fathers and those who risked everything to travel to America in search of freedom have fought for: freedom from oppression, freedom of church and state, freedom to exercise humanity's unalienable rights. I, myself, and my family have also sacrificed and recognize the value of the freedoms established in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Please do not remove the wall between church and state

⁵ Ibid., 15-36.

⁶ Exo. 28:1; Num. 3:5-13, 8:5-22, King James Version.

⁷ 1 Sam. 8:19-20; 9:1; 2 Sam. 5:2, 12.

⁸ Matt. 22:21

⁹ Phil. 2:12, Gen. 2:16-17, 1 Sam. 8:6-10, Josh. 24:14-15, Isa. 1:18.

and replace it by building a bridge. History portrays in grim details where the bridge will lead, and those who choose to ignore history are doomed to repeat it.¹⁰

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jay Abell, MA

US Army Ret.

¹⁰ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1980).

From: RRP <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- [Religious Liberty Commission Report] – [Randy Phelan].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:08:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Report_Reply.pages

Attached is my comments on the Religious Liberty Commission Report.

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

God alone is the Moral Governor of the Universe.

The apostle Paul declares in Romans 13:1-7 that civil government is ordained of God to protect the good and punish the evildoer. Yet authority is limited to civil matters-theft, fraud, violence and murder. These are offenses against human rights, life, liberty and property, not against the inner conscience.

To protect liberty of conscience is the only duty of the State, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion. (Great Controversy p.201).

Moral transgressions such as hatred, lust, coveting and unbelief belong to the jurisdiction of God alone. The attempt of earthly rulers to enforce moral religious laws-even in the name of righteous-is a usurpation of Divine Authority and history declares the long list of abuses that have resulted from these unions.

The State may restrain acts that injure others, **but it cannot compel faith or worship without stepping into the place of God himself.**

Freedom of religious faith was granted, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. **Republicanism and Protestantism are the founding principles of our Nation** not catholic social teachings.

Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists is being taken out of context. "Believing with you 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 what American people which declared that their legislature shall "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," there building a wall of separation between church and state.

Jefferson was not saying that the Church should not be involved with the State. Jefferson meant that the State should not have power over the Church.

"I have no doubt that every new example, will succeed, as every past one has done, in shewing that religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together" James Madison Letter to Edward Livingston July 10, 1822.

I agree with those recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission Report that deal with the protection of religious rights, which is the State's only duty in the First Amendment of the Constitution. I disagree with the Report's recommendation that proposes any legislation that violates the Constitution. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is clear: Congress shall make No Law respecting an establishment of religion or free exercise thereof.

The role of government is civil law protection it is not religious authority. Jesus himself set the boundary clearly: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21)

I agree with Rabbi Berman's assessment and hopes to cut off the dangerous cancer of anti-semitism in America. The U.S. must remain a place where people of all faiths including Jewish Americans can live in freedom. I would hope Rabbi Berman would extend an olive branch and call for the repeal of the Noahide laws. Noahide laws passed in direct violation to the the First Amendment of the Constitution. The Noahide law calls for the death of non-Jews that worship their God on the seventh day, Saturday Sabbath. The Religious Liberty Commission Report should call on Congress to immediately repel the Noahide laws.

Appendix A, Page 199, #14. Elected officials may issue proclamations that reflect religious traditions and culture of their communities, so long as the proclamation do not coerce religious observation or reflect a policy of discrimination among faiths.

Appendix B, page 209, #11. Limit federal government assertion of compelling interest to clearly establish law.

President Donald Trump has appointed Paula White to the White House faith office. The Trump administration is on a slippery slope with his advisors calling for Sunday Blue laws that would violate the above two recommendations in the Report. Vice President Vance, Labor Secretary Barry, Secretary of War Hegseth, Heritage CEO Kevin Roberts, Dr. Frank Turek, Bishop Robert Barron and Pastor Longshore are just a few of Trumps advisors that are pushing for the worship of the Trinity and Sunday Blue laws. On May 20, 2026, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Secretary of Defense Anthony Tate dramatically reduced its number of recognized religious faiths and belief systems from 211 to 31.

The Trump administration is aligned with Pope Leo XIV. Cardinal Robert Prevost chose his Papal name because he admired Pope Leo XIII. Leo XIII was famous for his 1891 Rerum Novarum, which is the foundational doctrine for catholic social teaching-cessation from work and labor on Sunday and worshipping the trinity by force.

The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The advisors are concealing the true issue. Under Christian Nationalism they want to legislate morality and worship. If you are not baptized under the name of the Trinity, believe in the Apostles' creed and worship on Sunday; you are an outlaw of the State. God is mentioned 4400 times in the Bible, not one of those refer to a Trinity. 2 Pet 2:1, Jude1:4, 1 Cor 8:6 and John 3:16-19.

The Papacy itself acknowledges that it changed the day of worship from Saturday (God's Sabbath) to Sunday. "Sunday is our mark of Ecclesiastical authority. The Catholic church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is evident of that fact."-Catholic record, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923. "Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act., but the Bible grants no such power."-The Catholic press, Sydney, Australia, August 23, 1893.

During Trump's presentation of the Religious Liberty Commission report, Robert Barron commented that "We do not want to establish a religion". Bishop also has stated that "If you marginalize and privatize religion, Democracy is in danger".

Privatization of religion is Freedom of Liberty of your conscience. Bishop Barron is stating you should not have a choice of religion. Opposite of privatized religion is Government control of religion. So is my worshipping GOD on His true Saturday Sabbath instead of Sunday deadly to Democracy? Is worshipping God the Father (one person) and his begotten Son, Jesus Christ (second person) instead of the Trinity deadly to Democracy? Everything is backward with this Religious liberty commission!

The Trump administration is on a slippery slope. History is repeating itself. Constantine at the Council of Nicene in 325AD mandated the Day of the Sun as a day of public rest. In 508AD, King Clovis destroyed the Arian Visigoths. The Catholics stated this was a theological victory of Rome (State Power) which was the victory of the triumph of the Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity over Arianism. This followed by destroying the nations of the Ostrogoth and Vandals. The Justinian Code was forced in 538AD "Concerning the most exalted trinity and the catholic faith providing that NO ONE SHALL DARE TO PUBLICLY OPPOSE THEM". From 538AD for 1260 years of the Dark Ages Rome killed 100 million in the Crusades until 1798AD when France removed the Pope ending the State power.

Revelation 13 speaks of an "image" to the beast - union of church and state enforcing worship under penalty of economic restriction: "that no man might buy or sell" (Rev 13:17).

This is why James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, declared: "The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep from these shores the ceaseless strife that soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries."

"Millions of innocent men women, and children have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity" - Thomas Jefferson Notes on the State of Virginia 1785.

Page 20 #2. Investigate terrorism-funded activities: I agree with Sam Adams who quantified that freedom of religion is available to those religions that are **Friends of this Country**. A muslim mosque that preaches Death to America, promotes sharia law in place of our Constitution or funds terrorist is not a Friend of America and should not have religious freedom in this country to promote their hate against America.

I pray that the Trump administration will reject the darkness of their Sunday movement. They will repent of their efforts to destroy freedom of conscience that belongs only to God and not Caesar. The Trump administration will see the error of their way and protect the Constitution and freedom of religion.

From: Cheryl Toppa <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Cheryl A. Toppa

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen from Lake City, Florida, because I believe worshipping God should come from the heart of the individual, not from government. That conviction is not new; it runs through Scripture itself, through our founding documents, and through the hard lessons of history, and I ask you to weigh it as you consider recommendations that would draw government further into religious life.

Jesus Christ himself drew the line his followers still owe civil authority, teaching that what belongs to civil rulers should be given to civil rulers, and what belongs to God should be given to God alone. That teaching divides human duty into two jurisdictions, one owed to neighbors and enforced by civil law, one owed to God and answerable to no earthly power. The state's competence is limited to one question: does an act injure another person? It may punish theft or violence because these are civil injuries, but it has no authority to ask whether a person is religious, irreligious, or in error, for that judgment belongs to God alone. When government promotes a particular text, display, or lesson as religiously authoritative, it does not merely risk overreach; it crosses a boundary that its own founding tradition, and the very faith it invokes, forbids it to cross.

Beyond this scriptural boundary lies a structural one. Our government's legitimacy rests on powers the people delegate to it. But no person can delegate his relationship with God to anyone else - not to a neighbor, not to a church, and certainly not to a legislature. I cannot authorize a representative to believe or worship in my place, so that power was never mine to give and never the government's to receive. It follows that government cannot bear religious responsibility, because it can never answer for it before any higher judgment. This is why the First Amendment should be read as recording an exclusion that already existed, not merely forbidding the narrow case of an official national church.

Finally, history testifies that state help injures the very faith it means to assist. Coercion can move the body into a pew but cannot place love of God in the heart; it manufactures conformity, not conviction, and multiplies hypocrisy rather than genuine devotion. The record of state-favored churches across centuries shows pride and indolence among clergy and superstition among the people, not renewed piety. A faith that must lean on the police power to survive confesses that it has lost confidence in its own persuasive power. As one American president counseled long ago, the family altar, the church, and the private school - supported by private conviction, not public funds - are the rightful homes for religious formation, with government kept apart from them.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Cheryl A. Toppa
Lake City, Florida

Sent from my iPad

From: dee kaz <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Commission report/ recommendations

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:10:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am writing you about my concern for religious liberty. I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I believe Christ is the Savior of this world.

I am worried , as a student of history, that whenever there was a merger of church with the state persecution followed. No matter how well intended are the motives, sinful man always attempts to force his opinion on others. Because of this , I am convinced, the founding fathers believed in separation of church and state. The founding of this great country was largely by people escaping the merged church and state in the European nations.

I thank you for you time and consideration .
D. Kazmierczak

From: Benjamin and Breanna <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:11:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Separation of church and state protects freedom. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on everyone, leading to discrimination and tyranny.

Religion is personal. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress.

It was exactly why the USA was founded originally! The first people came here exactly because church and state in their own countries was NOT separate.
So please, keep church and state completely separate.

We want everyone to be able to worship in the way they wish, whenever they wish. Do not take away this freedom that has made America great.

Sincerely,

Breanna Barnett
Talmage, NE

From: Dennis Hayes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:11:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Separation of church and state protects freedom. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on everyone, leading to discrimination and tyranny.

Religion is personal. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress.

It was exactly why the USA was founded originally! The rst people came here exactly BECAUSE church and state in their own countries was NOT separate.

So PLEASE, keep church and state completely separate.

From: William Riley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State ,

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:12:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I do not want to get rid of Church and State. I feel like you people are selling us down the river and I don't know how much plainer to say it than that.

William J. Riley

From: Brenda <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:14:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission Members,

I appreciate the time and effort invested in preparing the religious liberty document. However, I have some disagreements with certain aspects of it. I firmly oppose the repeal of the Johnson amendment. I believe that politics has no place in churches or their activities. Government funding for church activities is akin to a government handout, rather than a blessing from Jesus. Therefore, I request that the Johnson amendment be fully enforced.

Furthermore, I do not support government funding for religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.

I have closely followed the story of Carrie Prejean Boller, who was removed from the RLC due to her differing viewpoints from other members. This incident has led to her persecution. The commission's actions underscore the urgent need for the separation of church and state.

Thank you,
Brenda Mercer
Citizen of the United States
and servant of Jesus Christ.

From: Danielle Ferreira <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clause – Danielle Ferreira

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:14:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who takes both halves of the First Amendment seriously, and I ask you to consider an argument that is not secular in origin but Christian. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority over duties owed to God. Testifying before a Senate committee in 1888 against the national Sunday bill, A. T. Jones put the limit plainly: "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state may ask only whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the very line Christ drew, and does so in his name.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightly claim this ground: it was never given to government in the first place. Our founding rests on the premise that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — no one can believe, worship, or answer for another's soul. What could never be given could never be received. As Jones argued, no government will ever stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer even for itself, much less for its citizens, and therefore no government can rightly assume responsibility in matters of religion. This is the answer to anyone who says the Establishment Clause only forbids a national church: the exclusion runs deeper than any clause. The First Amendment did not create this limit; it simply recorded one that already existed.

This is not only a religious argument — it is our own government's settled precedent. When Sabbatarians petitioned Congress to halt Sunday mail, the committee reports of 1829 and 1830, adopted by Congress while men who had lived through the founding still served, took up the very question this Commission now faces, and concluded that deciding which religion is true or false simply falls outside what a legislature exists to do. The 1830 House report warned that if Congress defines even one point of religious duty, it may with equal right define every article of revelation and every form of worship. It also observed, correctly, that declaring a day holy will not convince the Jew or the Sabbatarian of anything; it will only dissatisfy both. A commission proposing government-defined religious duties today must reckon with this precedent, not a modern court case.

Finally, history shows what state-sponsored religion actually does to faith. Coercion cannot reach the heart; it produces conformity, not conviction. Madison's own survey of fifteen centuries of established Christianity found, in his words, "pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both superstition, bigotry, and persecution." Grant's counsel remains sound: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and keep state and church forever separate. Government backing would not strengthen faith; it would hollow it out.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Danielle Ferreira

Danielle de Almeida Ferreira

PII

From: Wendy Childers <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:14:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that government has no authority to tell anyone what to believe, or how to worship, and that government lacks authority over religion.

Blessings,
Wendy D Childers

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Sandra Waychoff <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:15:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a United States citizen and there are many objections I have to the draft by the Religious Liberty Commission. These are a few of the objections:

The Johnson Amendment must remain in full enforcement. Restricting a church's activities is restricting freedom of expression. I object to government funding of non-profit activities, religious education and religious clubs on public campuses. Government funding opens the door wide to corruption and control. Historically, that is the case. EVERY TIME. I do not approve of religious censorship of any sort. There must be an in-penetrable wall between church and state.

I can't help but think of the removal of Carrie PreJean (from the Commission) in February this year. She was a member who expressed personal beliefs. The Commission championing more freedom of religious expression in government is intolerant of that very thing. Even by one of it's own members! The Religious Liberty Commission is it's OWN glaring example why Church and State must FOREVER be separated. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Many of our founding fathers were religious and were committed to separation of Church and State. That history of the United States has in part, made us exceptional and unique among all the nations of the world. It is also one of the many reasons people from every country want to be an American citizen. The proposed draft is suggesting the U.S become more like the governments of all other countries. In essence, lowering our standards.

Please re-think, re-consider what you are actually proposing. The constriction of the religious freedom of American citizens. The bottom line.

Sincerely,
Sandra Diaz
Chula Vista, California

From: Philip Jones <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation between Church and State (ch. 2) – Jones

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:15:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding recent efforts to weaken, or otherwise remove, the "separation between church and state." I strongly believe that, for the same reason that churches should be protected from the government's meddling in matters of religion, which impedes the dictates of personal conscience and the free exercise of religion, the reverse is equally important: government should be protected from churches. After all, what is a government other than a body of individuals whose actions maintain a functioning state? Each individual has his or her personal beliefs and biases. When they enter office, thus becoming a member of the government, they should not be permitted to legislate or enforce their personal religious beliefs such that it tramples upon the conscience of other members of society who may hold different beliefs. A personal moral compass should guide elected officials as they conduct the duties of their offices fairly with honor and integrity, but they should not be allowed to use their offices to promote their religion or otherwise force the American people to adhere to their personal religious beliefs. This is why I am gravely concerned by recent efforts to weaken, disregard, downplay, or discredit the vital importance of maintaining a clear separation between church and state in this country.

From: Gerald Hamman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Gerald and Pam Hamman

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:15:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

We are writing to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. We are people with faith in Jesus, and members of a local Christian Church. We have always valued this country's position on separation of church and state. We believe the founders of our government were intentional about providing for freedom of religion and they were intent on securing the rights of individuals to worship according to their conscience. Our objections include faith organizations receiving government funding for purposes of education, religious clubs on campuses, or other religious activities. When government money is made available to faith bases organizations, it encourages administrators to answer to politicians instead of to God. We object to repealing the Johnson Amendment, and request that the Johnson Amendment remain in force. It is our desire to have complete neutrality in the government's relationship with religion. 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 shows that when church and state join hands, 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,
Gerald and Pam Hamman
Monterey, TN

From: Danielle Ferreira <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clause – Danielle Ferreira

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:16:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who takes both halves of the First Amendment seriously, and I ask you to consider an argument that is not secular in origin but Christian. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority over duties owed to God. Testifying before a Senate committee in 1888 against the national Sunday bill, A. T. Jones put the limit plainly: "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state may ask only whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the very line Christ drew, and does so in his name.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightly claim this ground: it was never given to government in the first place. Our founding rests on the premise that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — no one can believe, worship, or answer for another's soul. What could never be given could never be received. As Jones argued, no government will ever stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer even for itself, much less for its citizens, and therefore no government can rightly assume responsibility in matters of religion. This is the answer to anyone who says the Establishment Clause only forbids a national church: the exclusion runs deeper than any clause. The First Amendment did not create this limit; it simply recorded one that already existed.

This is not only a religious argument — it is our own government's settled precedent. When Sabbatarians petitioned Congress to halt Sunday mail, the committee reports of 1829 and 1830, adopted by Congress while men who had lived through the founding still served, took up the very question this Commission now faces, and concluded that deciding which religion is true or false simply falls outside what a legislature exists to do. The 1830 House report warned that if Congress defines even one point of religious duty, it may with equal right define every article of revelation and every form of worship. It also observed, correctly, that declaring a day holy will not convince the Jew or the Sabbatarian of anything; it will only dissatisfy both. A commission proposing government-defined religious duties today must reckon with this precedent, not a modern court case.

Finally, history shows what state-sponsored religion actually does to faith. Coercion cannot reach the heart; it produces conformity, not conviction. Madison's own survey of fifteen centuries of established Christianity found, in his words, "pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both superstition, bigotry, and persecution." Grant's counsel remains sound: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and keep state and church forever separate. Government backing would not strengthen faith; it would hollow it out.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,

From: stephanie campbell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:18:04 -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,
Stephanie Campbell
Tustin, MI

From: Prieto George <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - George Prieto

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:18:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Through a friend, I found out that this commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge" and also and wants to repeal the Johnson Amendment. As a person of faith I find this unacceptable as it will open the door for the corruption of politics to enter.

Please keep church and state separate.

Cordailly,

George Prieto
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

From: Erik Hall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- [Religious Liberty Commission] – [NAME]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:19:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Regarding religious liberty and the separation of the state and the church. I strongly support and approve of the concept

As an American it is a fundamental element of the nation and it's founding. As a Christian it is vital in the daily life. Government interference in religion in any form or fashion ultimately corrupts both. It is of extreme importance for the health of the nation religious institutions and organizations remain free of government interference. Any change to this dynamic alters the form any function of these institutions, perverting there purpose. Freedom must maintain. I stand in agreement with Pillars Of Freedom on this and the other issues raised in the report. Government funding should not be used in any way to fund any religious activities no matter how insignificant. Religious institutions must remain free from even the slightest hint of government oversight. As to the repeal of the Johnson Amendment I strongly object to this, and desire it to be fully enforced. While directing to the establishment clause of the first amendment to the US Constitution. Lastly, no religious group, Jewish or otherwise should be given any special treatment or consideration. Neither should the state of Israel be given such attention. An America without religious liberty is certainly not the same country. And would remove a cornerstone of the nations' ideals. For these institutions and the nation as a whole to prosper they must remain independent of each other. Interference would lead to catastrophe. The freedom and ability to practice my religious beliefs is something I hold very dear to my heart.

From: Kathy Marshall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:20:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

There was a reason our founding fathers believed in the separation of church and state

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.

I don’t believe that the Bible should be taught in schools or in any other institution... we are a nation of many cultures and religions, not just Christian and to be honest i can’t believe i am writing this to our very government explaining how important this is..

it’s been this way for 250 years!

Kathy Marshall. Oregon

United States Citizen and a patriot

From: Jo Allison <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendations of Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:20:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide input for consideration in the matter of the 12 recommendations sent to President Trump on June 26,2026.

Please consider the history of such conditions that are recommended by this committee if the removing of the separation of church and State were to occur in this free and wonderful country

What will happen without this separation when put in the hands of those who think different than you or I?

I'm sure that you are aware of such histories to which I speak, and I am alarmed at such a suggestion.

Respectfully consider the thoughts of our forefathers on this subject.

Please keep The United States of America free of interference in the choice that remains ultimately between each person and God.

May God bless and lead this commission to take the appropriate next action in this important matter.

Respectfully,
Jo Krome

From: Magna Parks-Porterfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:23:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission:

I appreciate the work that you are trying to do to defend the Free Exercise Clause. However, I am very concerned about what you are promoting regarding separation of church and state. This separation is one that I believe should be upheld because it is good for both (church and state). It is a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. It is also a principle 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 of worship... Christ Jesus never directed His disciples to the civil magistrate for help in his cause." -- Roger Williams.

The separation of church and state provides the foundation for individuals to choose how to worship (or not worship) according to the dictates of their conscience. This freedom has been a refuge for many and I am fearful that this can change with the current view of church and state promoted by your organization.

Thus I am sending this email/letter to express my disagreement. I love this country and do not want to see the rights and freedoms of those of different faiths (or not of any faith) who live in our country to eventually be dissolved.

Yours respectfully,
Dr. Magna Porterfield

From: Rogersn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comments-Chapter14-Pat Rogers

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:23:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

This country was founded on religious principles and the Bible was our first educational book.

The Bible states that we should be involved in all aspects of our life and a big part of this is our governments, both federal and local.

Nowhere in the constitution does it state that church and state should be separated.

I am thanking you for bringing this to my attention. I have been involved in our public school system and their circumlunar for several years. I also participate in my city's activities

From: Juli Graham <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:23:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

As a life-long US citizen that is also a life-long Christian, I ask that this administration continue to uphold the separation of church and state. People fled to this land from the persecution of the old world to seek freedom of conscience from a king and from a pope. They longed to live in a land where they could worship according to their own religious convictions.

May we continue to allow citizens to worship as their conscience dictates without the interference of the government or a church's influence over the government.

Thank you.

Juli Graham

[REDACTED]
PII
PII

PII

From: R Peter Neri <[REDACTED]> PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:25:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep government out of religion. Freedom to worship as conscious dictates, informed by the Bible, will safe guard against anarchy. Let the Spirit of God be our leader and not the halls of legislation. Thank you
R. Peter Neri

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "PII" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:26:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern:

We value our religious freedom. Government should have no authority to tell us what to believe or how to worship and the government should not have authority over religion.

Thank you,

Jim Childers

Sent from my iPhone!

Jim Childers

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From: Kirstie Richman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support of Recommendations in the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:28:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I fully support the recommendations of this report. Our Founding Fathers intended for government to be kept out of religion, not for religion to be kept out of the government or public sphere. This report corrects this common myth and misinterpretation of our Constitution. The religious freedom of Americans has been wrongfully restricted because of this misinterpretation. I am glad to see that this administration is looking to fix this injustice. Freedom of religion is the basis of all other freedoms. Without the freedom to decide what one will believe, none of the other freedoms matter. That is what the freedom of religion grants to everyone -- the freedom to choose to believe as they want, whether that is to practice a religion or not. Citizens should not have to defend their right to practice their religion in a peaceful and non-coercive manner. Too often, people of faith are restricted from practicing their faith because of the misunderstanding of the First Amendment. The first settlers came to America because of their desire to freely practice religion. It is ironic that the same freedom they risked everything for is now slowly being eroded. I appreciate how this report takes the time to review the history of this issue and hope it will enlighten many Americans and bring a greater appreciation for the important role that religion plays in American civilization.

From: joyce saadi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:31:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have read the report of your Religious Liberty Commission. I find it to be an egregious polemic with the obvious intent to characterize the United States as a Christian country. It is not. The United States cannot be a Christian country because the Constitution forbids this. The Constitutional framers could have created a national religion. They did not. They could have created a country with freedom of religion by having The First Amendment's religious guarantee start and stop with the Free Exercise Clause. They did not. They could have mentioned Christianity or Jesus in the Constitution. They did not. They could have mentioned God. They did not. They could have created a religious test for President. They did not. They could have included the words in the Presidential oath, "So help me God." They did not.

Certainly, national religions were known to the Constitutional framers. They specifically, intentionally walked away from creating a national religion.

But certainly Constitutional lawyers will have informed you of all of this, and no doubt, knowing Constitutional history yourselves (as surely some of the Commission members must) you have turned a blind eye to the plain meaning of the Constitution's Establishment Clause. Why? How is it that you do not see the strength of the United States is its guarantee of not just freedom of religion, but freedom from one particular religious doctrine, and freedom FROM religion.

Morality was not born in the Biblical story in Exodus of Moses and the Ten Commandments. The Code of Hammurabi, perhaps the inspiration for Mosaic law, predates the biblical story as written by one thousand years. Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle believed that morality was not God-based but rather based on civic duty. To believe that Christianity has some sort of special claim on social mores is to deny and denigrate secular civil traditions and other religious traditions (Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and the hundreds of other religious beliefs) that illuminate humanity.

There is a terrible harm in your attempts to insinuate Christianity into the governmental structure of the U.S. The message you send is that non-Christians will be tolerated, but not celebrated, not encouraged, not full-fledged members of society. I grew up in the 1950s and '60s when "The Lord's Prayer" was said in public schools. I felt confused, and also coerced. I knew that the prayer was not one that was said in my parents' household, and I was unsure if it was wrong of me to say it, against my family's religious tradition. Yet, to sit while the class stood, at an age of 6 or 7, seemed impossible. Would the teacher be angry at me? Would class members ostracize me?

Many years later, as a teacher in high school, students came to me upset because the high school football coach was leading players in a bended knee prayer circle. The fear of those who were not Christian: if they refused the circle, would the coach still play them? Would their teammates think they were hurting camaraderie?

The school had a club, "Fellowship of Christian Athletes," that was organized and run by some school athletic coaches as an offshoot of a national club. The purpose: "To mold athletes in the way of Jesus Christ." Students were encouraged to join the club and many felt uncomfortable and dismayed. I let the principal know that this club, as well as coach-led prayer, was unconstitutional. With your efforts, will it still be?

Your Commission report seeks to do so much harm, and you do it in the guise of protecting Christianity. I must tell you that Christianity is not in danger of disappearing in the United States. I live in Gaithersburg, MD. It is a very diverse community. Yet, there are over 70 Christian churches in Gaithersburg alone representing many denominations. If I want to attend a Church, it is easy to find one. If I want a Christmas movie, why then,

Hallmark Channel runs them nonstop. In the winter, if I want to hear Christmas music, there are myriad radio stations and tv stations with religious programming. At Easter, passion plays are performed at many churches. If I wanted to send my children to a Christian parochial school, there are many choices. Christianity is ubiquitous.

So really, what is your agenda? What are you afraid of? Why are you frightened of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and I don't know...Wiccans?

Your report is disgusting, disingenuous, and would trash the Constitution.

Count me as a big "NO!"

(And ironically, if Jesus were somehow to come back to earth and want a place to pray, he wouldn't head to a church. Just saying...)

Sincerely,
Joyce Saadi

From: Bill Warcholik <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:32:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Roger_Williams'_THE_BLOODY_TENENT_OF_PERSECUTION.pages

Dear Religious Liberty Commission:

Please note the attached document that expresses my concern about what your committee will recommend to the Department of Justice. Having spent several years as a pastor while living in Rhode Island and having taken advantage of information from the many historical sites, I have appreciated the position of Roger Williams which led to his suffering persecution and almost led to his death more than once.

item number 1: Please note the contrast between your committee chairperson's position on the separation of church and state and that of others who were actually involved in writing the constitution.

May God guide in what guidance is given to the leaders of our great nation. I served in the USAF and was proud to serve my country during Vietnam. The USA is a nation founded by people who believed in God and who also respected the Bible including the way Jesus Christ limited the power of the state to make people conform to the will of the majority. The article attached below gives wonderful insights into those limits to civil power. Here is a sample:

“Neither Cotton nor Williams ever conceded any major points in the argument, and Massachusetts Bay continued to operate as a theocracy while Providence maintained its vision of individual religious rights as a true democratic republic in which any male citizen over the age of 21 could be elected to public office regardless of their religious convictions. The Bloody Tenet of Persecution would later influence the philosophical writings of [John Locke](#) (l. 1632-1704 CE) whose vision informed the [Founding Fathers of the United States](#) of America, especially [Thomas Jefferson](#) (l. 1743-1826 CE), one of the framers of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. In the present day, the work is considered a classic on religious freedom and the necessity of the separation of church and state for a stable and inclusive civil society.”

One other suggestion for the Religious Liberty Committee: Item number 9: Repealing the Johnson Amendment would be a good step toward improving religious liberty in the USA.

Thank you for your dedication to providing wise guidance for improving religious liberty in the USA!

Sincerely,

Willam Warcholik, Sr.

Roger Williams' The Bloody Tenent of Persecution

“Commentary

Williams' main point throughout is that political intervention in religious matters is not only bad for religion but also for government as it causes civil unrest (clearly expressed in his eighth point concerning civil war). Whenever a political agenda is joined to religious ideals, both the government and the faith are degraded and the people suffer. Scholar Frank N. Magill sums up the book's basic message:

“Within the setting of a civil society, Williams' argument goes on, a church has the same nature and status as a medical society or a business corporation. A religious society has its own functions, which are distinctly separate and different from those of a civil society. Civil harmony and order are the responsibility of the state and not of the Church. Christians have a duty as Christians to protect the purity and integrity of their churches, but they have no warrant whatsoever for ridding civil society of Jews, Muslims, pagans, and others who do not properly belong in the Church. Such persons are clearly qualified for full membership in civil society. (437)

“The book was addressed specifically to John Cotton because Williams believed (wrongly) that Cotton had been the main author of the document A Model of Church and Civil Power, which had been sent to the church at Salem by the Boston magistrates in 1635 CE when they were pressuring the church to dismiss Williams as pastor. Cotton, actually, had nothing to do with this work, but it did express his views that the state could, and should, enforce conformity with the religious views of the

majority of the citizenry in order to preserve unity and harmony of spirit.

“Neither Cotton nor Williams ever conceded any major points in the argument, and Massachusetts Bay continued to operate as a theocracy while Providence maintained its vision of individual religious rights as a true democratic republic in which any male citizen over the age of 21 could be elected to public office regardless of their religious convictions. The Bloody Tenet of Persecution would later influence the philosophical writings of [John Locke](#) (l. 1632-1704 CE) whose vision informed the [Founding Fathers of the United States](#) of America, especially [Thomas Jefferson](#) (l. 1743-1826 CE), one of the framers of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. In the present day, the work is considered a classic on religious freedom and the necessity of the separation of church and state for a stable and inclusive civil society.”

Mark, Joshua J.. "Roger Williams' The Bloody Tenet of Persecution." World History Encyclopedia, 29 Jan 2021,

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1666/roger-williams-the-bloody-tenet-of-persecution/>.

[Joshua J. Mark](#)

Joshua J. Mark is World History Encyclopedia's co-founder and Content Director. He was previously a professor at Marist College (NY) where he taught history, philosophy, literature, and writing. He has traveled extensively and lived in Greece and Germany.

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From: janet freeman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Constitution Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:32:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

When you take away liberty of conscience, this is one of the 1st Steps to Communism. Matthew 22:21 Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God things that are God's." This is our liberty of conscience controlled by God and the Holy Spirit. Not the state(govn't).

The Bible is our ultimate authority...

April 19, 1529 Protestation @Speyer where all the German princesses and representatives of imperial cities, signed that in "matters of conscience, the majority has no power." This document gave the people liberty of conscience and not to be ruled by the Catholic Church anymore. This is where we get the word protestantism

James Madison (father of our constitution) declared that "Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the 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.

In 1822, decades later, Madison reaffirmed this conviction, writing in 1822, Religion and Government will both exist in greater purity the less they are mixed together." It was the recognition that both faith and government are corrupted when either assumes authority of the other.

Isn't there enough corruption in Washington,DC now. Weren't we supposed to 'Drain the Swamp'??? Then why not keep church and state separate as it should be!!!

From: Jannise Wells <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reject Sunday Worship Law

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:32:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Government has no right to subject GODS Commandment Sabbath (Saturday) Keeping Christian's to a federal Sunday law to force the Nation to worship on Sunday. This Nation was built for a day of (Freedom of Worship) without the influences of a Sunday Only worship day with a legislation to support it. The Separation of Church and State and a Religious freedom this Country was founded upon, The Government has no right to tell me how to worship and when to worship. The government has no right to determine or legislate what twenty four hours of a day of the week a people should rest nor should they try to interfere with and try to control the people with some community rest laws made up by "Catholic Social Teaching's and Brainwashing Protestants, and Evangelicals" who want to control the World even the Worship of the One and Only True GOD of Heaven on His Holy True Sabbath Day (Saturday). These people follow The Beast system and are A part of it and they're trying to usher in the MARK of The Beast System, Sunday Worship is the MARK of The Beast, it denies GODS One true Holy Day and to legislate Sunday Federally will only lead to the persecution of Christians GODS true Saints who keep the true Sabbath Day (Saturday) and the Fall of America and the World by the Seven last plagues of GOD. The Fourth Commandment of GOD Says., EXODUS Chapter 20 Verse 8 ; Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy GOD in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy Son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the Seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and Hallowed it. NO SUNDAY LAW.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: kathy spinolo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:33:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

With regard to your recommendation to build a "bridge" between church and state, I wish to share my opinion that there should be space preserved between the church and the state rather than a platform which connects the two. History makes plain the negative results of such a union. With respect, I ask you to reconsider your recommendation and preserve a fixed separation between the two.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Spinolo
Pioneer, Tennessee

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World." John 8:12

From: Barry Krall <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Barry Krall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen from Colton, California, with a concern that has grown in me over many years of watching how religion and government interact. I believe that eventually the state will overreach in its attempt to legislate religion or its practice. There are so many different world views of religion in this country, and no single body — Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Protestant, Hindu, or otherwise — should be trusted to determine the rule of faith and practice for everyone else. That conviction shapes everything I want to say to you.

Any law touching religion, even one meant to help a favored faith, ultimately undermines free exercise for all. Once a legislature concedes that religion is a proper subject for civil law, the only remaining question is who holds the majority at any given moment — and majorities shift. A law that favors my own beliefs today can be turned against me tomorrow by different hands. It has been argued that no man can safely consent to legislation favoring his own faith, because in doing so he gives up his right to ever adopt a different conviction, should he become persuaded it is truer. Religious liberty must include the liberty to keep searching, to change one's mind. A citizen who locks his present belief into law has surrendered his own future conscience along with everyone else's present one.

History confirms where this road leads. The first Sunday law, issued by Constantine while he still held a pagan religious office, opened the door to imperial patronage of the church, mercenary conversions, state-enforced doctrine, and ultimately the Inquisition. These were not accidents but a logical chain: once government is granted the authority to enforce religious observance, it is drawn inevitably into taking sides in religious quarrels, and in doing so it loses the very capacity to keep civil peace between factions. I do not believe anyone on this Commission intends anything so severe as an Inquisition. But no one intends the last step when they take the first one. The danger is that the last step is already contained in the first, small, well-meaning measure.

There is also a further danger closer to home: financial entanglement. If the state provides funding to a church body, that body's practice ceases to be a matter of pure conscience and becomes a matter of expediency — conforming to whatever conditions guarantee the aid. Government money always carries government terms, spoken or unspoken.

Underlying all of this is a distinction I believe goes back to Christ's own words: render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government's proper concern is civility between neighbors — whether an action harms another person's rights. It has no legitimate authority to ask whether an action is religious, irreligious, or heretical; that judgment belongs to a different jurisdiction entirely. Any measure that puts the government behind a religious text, practice, or institution steps outside the boundary Christ himself drew, regardless of how well-intentioned the sponsors may be.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Barry Krall
Colton, California

From: Wendy Nelson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC Report- Public Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the RLC:

I am writing today to object to the direction this commission is taking and to object to the report.

I think there should be a clear separation of church and state and history has shown the damage that is done to freedom and liberty when there is not this separation.

As a Doctor I have seen the damage lack of freedom to diagnose and treat patients has caused our medical community and the same type of damage will occur if we do not have strict clear liberties when practicing our religious beliefs.

Church's should not be in the political fundraising business as they will become political tools instead of places of worship.

Church's should continue to teach us to love our neighbors and respect everyones individual choices.
Thank you for considering this response.

Wendy

From: Mario Aguilar Romero <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Questions

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

My name is Mario Aguilar

You see as a citizen I'm get I did disgusting when I see this demonic entity type of departments with that you guys don't show any type of your guys principles at all from your Mario system from down to you guys personal prohibiting practices, which are meant for evil when you guys are supposed to be some type of white collar, organization of super like a clowns like I don't know if you even see yourself in the TV laughable very much. I believe that you guys department has nothing to do with representing religion. You stand for evil the whole United States it's meant for evil, looking here for California. You guys enjoying having a bunch of devil mountains, and then using the labyrinth scheme of RLC I just don't understand where you guys are sore your guys earth with your incredible scheme of using Jesus a mascara to show some type of lucrative war to yourselves, but you know it seems like it's more like a war for war for the God says that Serral, which is another words Leticia type of act of shining green yourself from one way to another. It could be women it could be a man and nothing is pretty disgusting. I will be going down to your department to speak of manners on this cause there's a bunch of departments here in California and central 209 Central Valley, but stand out of Livingston where there's a bunch of federal crime three festival offenses to just create crime police crime and set up and stuff like that. That's no good bunch of Tweaker departments too demonic way way too much demonic activity pursuing themselves back-and-forth breaking civil and federal type laws represent if they can reach back to me because I wouldn't want to waste my time typing stuff back-and-forth and getting you guys new pole system, you know, obituary, systematic, demonically entity, type of way.

From: Bonnie Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:34:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a retired professor of history. I can tell you that religious liberty is foundational to the United States of America. The founding fathers, all Protestants, **deliberately** maintained that there should be no state religion in America. They knew the damage such an institution could do to personal freedom and liberty. There is NO historical reason to put this dreadful concept into play.

Sincerely, Bonnie S. Anderson, Professor Emerita, City University of New York

From: Robin Ferguson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT CHAPTER 3 & 9 Robin Ferguson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:35:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing about the Religious Liberty commission.

I am a retired LPN who was raised in the Catholic faith. I have lived in WA state my entire life.

Religion is a faith not a right and not a bill for the government to decide.

An example is my personal experience with having been of the Catholic faith and the need for an abortion. I have read the bible repeatedly and cannot find anywhere where it speaks specifically about abortion being against God.

Having a faith in a believe should not have rules and regulations.

So I am asking the commission NOT to pass Trumps Religious Liberty Commission.

Sincerely Robin Ferguson

From: luis ruben rodriguez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:36:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen and as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty. I appreciate the opportunity to submit a public comment on the Commission's draft report.

I believe that freedom of conscience is one of the greatest blessings our nation has. Throughout history, the separation of church and state has helped protect both religious liberty and the rights of all people, regardless of their beliefs.

For this reason, I am concerned about recommendations that could weaken that separation, including increased government funding of religious activities and changes to the Johnson Amendment. I believe churches should remain free to follow their convictions without becoming dependent on government support or partisan politics.

As a person of faith, I want my church to be guided by God's Word rather than by political influence. I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve the constitutional principles that have protected religious freedom for generations.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your service.

Sincerely,

Luis Rodriguez Hialeah, Florida

From: Solace7 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State, Daniel R. Taylor

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:37:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Please note that I positively object to your efforts to "bridge" the Church and State of the United States of America. The Separation of Church and State was a basic principle of the Founding Fathers of our Nation. If you will simply study history in Europe and elsewhere, you will see that combining Church and State invariably results in the State persecution of the Church. Churches MUST be free to exercise their God given rights and freedoms. Being under the control of any State will eventually destroy the Church. Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Please do NOT replicate the mistakes of past generations and nations who tried to bring Church and State together. In these instances, only Satan wins.

Thank you gentlemen for allowing me to comment.

From: Carla Garland <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Urgency

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:39:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It may Concern,

Church and State MUST remain separate.

The Bible clearly states in Matthew 22:21, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Ceasar's; and unto God the things that are God's "

Keep Church and State SEPARATE!!!

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

From: Irene Edwards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:40:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please know how very important this is to myself and all my church Families.

We prefer to worship on the Sabbath, which of course, is Saturday. Please do not make that preference impossible for Saturday worshipers simply because we are in the minority. We count, we are staunch supporters of everything American but this important issue.

Respectfully,
Irene Edwards

From: P W <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] White House Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:41:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm providing this feedback 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. It has allowed the USA to avoid many conflicts that have been seen in the old world that resulted from the lack of separation between church and state. Both have their proper spheres and both spheres should be respected. The state should not use religion for its ends nor should religion use the state for its purposes.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) 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 of the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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." While I believe that America was founded on Christian principles, it was nor is a Christian nation in that it does not have a state religion. All are to enjoy equal rights under the law and the government is to respect the consciences of the citizenry from which it derives its power.

The experience of Seventh-day Adventists provides another historical warning. During the late nineteenth century, Adventists who faithfully observed God's seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) as found in the Bible 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. It is to protect life, limb, and property. 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. Even an atheist should enjoy liberty of conscience, perchance God's Spirit may be working on their heart too. 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.

We are witnessing some fairly astounding history occurring with the election of outright marxists to positions of leadership in this country. It is a concerning testament to our educational system when people are willing to vote themselves into the bondage that comes with marxism despite historical precedence. I'm concerned that people think American can do Communism better despite its 100% failure rate in history. I'm also afraid that the right might be moving towards a similar misstep but with religion. History has shown that freedom and liberty are best ensured when there is a separation of religion and the state. History is full of religious wars, both internal and external to various nations. It also shows that persecution eventually follows those that may hold a different view than the majority despite being good citizens.

I urge the rejection of the idea that there is no separation between church and state in the Constitution.

Sincerely,

Paeter Weikum

Spokane Valley, Washington

From: Mo Braun <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state letter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:43:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENT - SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE - Maureen Braun

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As an American citizen, and a person of faith, I oppose the desire of the commission to replace the wall of separation between Church and state.

Respectfully, while the exact words 'separation of church and state' may not appear in the constitution, it is certainly within the 'spirit' of the constitution to keep these entities separate. Was it not why the people of England fled to America in the first place - to escape religious tyranny; and the power the church had over their lives. They came seeking freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. While the joining of church and state, and the desire to bring Christian values back to our country is admirable; I fear we do not know where we are treading. I believe history is clear on the outcomes when Church and state join forces. The historical outcomes are religious persecution, diminished liberties and bloodshed. I do not believe this is what the founders of our great country envisioned.

When governmental monies fund religious activities, or, when churches end up competing for government funds... We end up answering to politicians rather than God.

Questions that emerge for me are: Who decides who the church is? What religions are acceptable? Do certain religions get canceled when they are outside of the 'common good' for society? I have to wonder if that is really the 'religious freedom' we desire as a country.

So, it is my request that you please reconsider this draft thoughtfully.

Because you speak for all of the citizens of the United States of America, it is imperative that you consider all the possible outcomes. Does this really make America better, or does it create more chaos in an already uncertain political and social climate.

Thank you for your time and attention. We, the people, depend on you, our leaders, to make the best decisions possible for all.

Sincerely,
Maureen Braun
Ocala, Florida

From: Vincen [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request to the White House Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:43:26 -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,

Vince Cantrell
from Airway Heights Washington.

From: kelly davis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:43:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

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:

We did not vote the current cabinet into office to have this type of legislation put into effect. Freedom of religion is one of our founding principles, and it is not something that should be taken away.

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

PillarofFreedom.org | [REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

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

From: GARY PYKE <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:44:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Our constitution states that "congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof"
We do not want the tyranny that our founders fled from, and what you are doing will lead us back in that direction. Please halt
what you are doing immediately. This report undermines our constitution. The Bible predicts this very thing will happen, and
woe to them that promote it.
Gary W Pyke

From: Rebecca Proffitt <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Rights

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:46:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

America is a country built on religious freedom and rights... Following the Catholic dominance and trying to have a Sunday law, is not what American needs.
They've changed this seventh daySabbath to Sunday and take full credit for it. I'm a believer in the Seventh Sabbath, just Charlie Kirk believed.

Rebecca Miller

Sent from my iPhone

From: Sarita <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Funding Faith-based Entities -The Johnson Amendment-Sarita Cantrell-Mayhawk

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:46:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: The Religious Liberty Commission:

1. Objections to funding Non-profit Entities

I as a person of faith and a citizen of the United States of America. I have an issue with faith-based Initiatives and Entities receiving federal and-or state funding. The first that I recall this activity was in 2002 under the leadership of President George W. Bush.

There has always been a clear demarcation between church and United States government in the United States of America. The lines have become more blurred in the years since President George W. Bush's presidency.

It is sad watching the lines blur.

2. The Repealing of The Johnson Amendment

I recall sitting in a church in 2008. When I first noticed the Johnson Amendment being breached. I was appalled as I sat in church waiting for the sermon about faith in my LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, but what I received in place of sermon was a political rally for the person who was running for the presidency of the United States of America at that time.

The church is to be a place of worship and refuge from the cares of life. Where I come apart to worship and fellowship with the CREATOR WHO gives all living organisms life, not for a political rally!!!

I ask this commission to please keep these two institutions separate.

Thank you,

Sarita Cantrell-Mayhawk

From: ADRIAN P <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty- public input

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:50:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs,

I am objecting to the intent of uniting church and state. The Pilgrims undertook a perilous journey across the Atlantic to the land we now know as the United States of America to be able to exercise freely their religion without fear of persecution or state interference. This experiment of uniting church and state has been played out in Europe and other places where the majority oppress, persecute, control, coerce, socially ostracize, commercially cut off, not allowed to inherit or inhabit lands or to conduct business in order to promote the popular church agenda. All others were considered as heretics, dissenters, social outcasts, etc. We cannot return to the dark ages of religion and allow despotism of church and state to control the conscience and reign along with the strong arm of the state. This would be the pinnacle of UN-American activities. The union of church and state would stifle voices that may teach contrary to the established religion of the state. Constantine in the year 321A.D. Made laws to force the population to adopt one religion as the state religion. Such did not produce genuine conversion. It opened itself up to buy adherents. It was so unsuccessful, that other more restrictive laws were legislated to reign in the population to force people to adopt the popular church's way of doing things. This was repeated until the voice of one man was regarded as the voice of conscience for everybody. All we have to do is look at those countries that are antithetical to the freedoms and rights guaranteed by our masterpiece, the Constitution of the United States of America and see that the systems of Russia, China, N.Korea, etc. are not beacons of Light, Truth, Freedom as this Great nation has been. The state must not be united with the church to effectuate or enforce the dogmas of the church. The words of Christ were abundantly clear of two spheres of influence. They cannot be combined except to the peril of both the church and the state. "Give unto Cesar the things that be Cesar's. And unto God the things that are God's." Both church and state must exist independent of each other. One cannot intrude into the sphere of the other.

Very truly yours for freedom of religion,
Adrian Prado

From: Curt Hall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:50:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Replace only the **Alonzo T. Jones** section with this expanded version. Everything else in your letter can remain unchanged.

Biblical and Constitutional Principles Defended Before Congress

During the congressional hearings on the Blair Sunday Rest Bill (1888–1889), Alonzo T. Jones presented a biblical and constitutional defense of religious liberty. His testimony was based on the conviction that God alone is Lord of the conscience and that civil government has no authority to compel religious observance.

Government Has Authority Over Civil Matters—Not the Conscience

- God established civil government to preserve order, punish evil, and protect society.
 - Romans 13:1–7
 - 1 Peter 2:13–14
- God never authorized government to determine how, when, or whom people must worship.
- The conscience belongs to God alone.
- Jesus clearly separated the sphere of civil government from the sphere of worship.
 - Matthew 22:21

Worship Can Never Be Legislated

- Worship is an act of the heart.
- True obedience cannot be created by civil law.
- Love cannot be forced.
- Faith cannot be compelled.
- God invites mankind to choose rather than forcing obedience.
 - Joshua 24:15
 - Revelation 3:20
- Any law requiring religious observance exceeds the authority God has given civil government.

A Sunday Law Is Religious Legislation

- A national Sunday law is not merely a labor law if it requires or favors the observance of Sunday as a sacred day.
- Once government determines which day should be observed as holy, it has entered the realm of religion.
- Religious observance must remain a matter between the individual and God.
- Civil government may protect the right to worship, but it must never prescribe worship.

God Alone Is Lord of the Conscience

- Every individual must answer to God personally.
- No president, king, legislature, congress, governor, church council, or court can stand between God and the conscience.

- Isaiah 33:22 declares:

“The LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”

- Ultimate authority belongs to God—not to man.

Christ Never Used Civil Power

- Jesus possessed all authority.

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” —Matthew 28:18

- Yet He never asked Rome to enforce His teachings.
- He never sought legislation requiring worship.
- He never compelled belief through political power.
- Christ persuaded through truth, compassion, and the Holy Spirit.

History Warns Against Church and State Union

- Throughout history, whenever church and state have united, persecution has followed.
- Civil power has repeatedly been used to punish those whose faith differed from the majority.
- Religious liberty disappears when government enforces religious practice.
- The Blair Sunday Rest Bill demonstrated that such dangers are not merely theoretical.

The First Amendment Protects Liberty of Conscience

- Government should neither establish religion nor prohibit its free exercise.
- The role of government is to protect liberty—not control worship.
- Religious liberty protects every citizen equally, regardless of religious belief.

Religious Liberty Belongs to Everyone

- The freedom I ask for myself must also be extended to others.
- Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists, and every other person possess the God-given right to freedom of conscience.
- Religious liberty is strongest when it protects those with whom we disagree.

The Christian’s Duty When Government Conflicts With God

- Christians should obey lawful government whenever possible.
 - Romans 13:1
- Christians should pray for those in authority.
 - 1 Timothy 2:1–2
- But when government commands what God forbids—or forbids what God commands—the Bible gives one clear answer:

“We ought to obey God rather than men.” —Acts 5:29

The Great Principle

The foundation of Jones’s testimony can be summarized in these biblical truths:

- God governs the conscience.

- Government governs civil society.
- Worship belongs to God alone.
- Civil power must never compel religious observance.
- Liberty of conscience is a gift from God and must be protected for every person.
- A government that protects religious liberty fulfills its proper role; a government that compels worship exceeds the authority God has given it.

These principles are illustrated throughout Scripture by the three Hebrews in Daniel 3, Daniel in the lions' den in Daniel 6, and the apostles before the Sanhedrin in Acts 5. In every case, God's faithful people respected civil authority while remaining unwavering in their obedience to God.

From: Laurie Graybill <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment, separation of church and state, L Graybill

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:51:31 -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 very fearful.

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.

My family came from Europe in the 1700s to Pennsylvania to escape religious persecution.

America is the last stand of religious freedom and we are going to see a terrible amount of trouble by trying to merge church with state.

Sincerely,

Laurie Graybill

From: janet anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:51:57 -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

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

Please keep the separation between church and state. The United States is the greatest nation in the world. Many people have fled to our great nation because we have freedom of religion and freedom from religion. This freedom is one of the things that has made us great. I agree with Thomas Jefferson's statement: "It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." We need to maintain the distance between church and state.

Historically, when the church and state come together, persecution follows. I do not want my religious leader being influenced by taking money from the government and I do not want my government to be influenced by religious entities. Religion is a private matter and should not involve the government.

We need the Johnson Amendment. We do not need the government to fund religious entities. These should be wholly supported only by the members of the organization.

Breaking the wall between church and state will set one church in competition with the other. They will be vying for position and power in the earthly government instead of being focused on God. We need to keep the corruption that naturally comes with politics out of the churches.

Sincerely,

Janet Anderson

[REDACTED] PII

From: Gary Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:52:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

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:

Please keep the separation between church and state. This has worked very well over the years. We are the greatest nation on earth because the United States has separation between church and state. Religious persecution happens when there is no separation between church and state. Even in our early colonial history, we can see that one religious group would persecute the minorities.

We need separation. We need to keep the Johnson Amendment. We need to keep church and state separate. The politicians and the religious leaders should not be influencing each other. The separation of church and state was created by people who were religious. They recognized that the separation between these two entities protects everyone. Our nation began as a wonderful experiment. We have been blessed by God because we have freedom of worship. These freedoms can only be kept if we separate church and state.

Sincerely,

Gary Anderson
Larsen, Wisconsin

[REDACTED] PII

--

"We will know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false" -
-- William Casey - (CIA Director - 1981)

Ephesians 6:12 - For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

From: Allen Snarr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Allen D. Snarr

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was very upset to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly counter to my beliefs — 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.

Allen D. Snarr,

Canyonville, Oregon

From: goia liviun [REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII <

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_the_Religious_Liberty_Commission.docx

To the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty,
Please see attached.

Response to the Religious Liberty Commission's Report, Issued June 2026

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

Dear Mr. Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to share my personal response to the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty report issued in June 2026. I am a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and a U.S. citizen. As a Bible-believing Christian, I worship on Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

I wish to express my concerns regarding the proposed unification of church and state. Having been born in Romania during the era of communism, I witnessed firsthand how a state can forbid individuals from worshiping according to their conscience. As a child, I was obligated to attend school six days a week, Monday through Saturday. Because I attended church on the Sabbath in accordance with the fourth commandment, I faced weekly persecution, including physical beatings and public humiliation intended to coerce me into changing my beliefs. Despite this, I remained committed to my faith.

The consequences of state-controlled ideology in my home country were severe: our pastor was sentenced to two years in prison for his ministry, and my uncle was ultimately murdered by the Communist Party for refusing to stop preaching the Word.

I dreamed of living in a place where I could worship freely without fear. I have been fortunate to immigrate to the United States, where I have enjoyed the religious liberties protected by the Constitution. However, I believe that the unification of church and state is a dangerous path. History shows that when a government has the power to impose a specific ideology, it inevitably leads to the oppression of minority beliefs. While this may not be the committee's intention, such a precedent creates a slippery slope where

religion is forced upon citizens, leading to the same persecution I escaped.

As someone who keeps the Saturday Sabbath, I respectfully ask this committee to consider the views and safety of all believers. I appreciate your time and your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Liviu Goia

From: Matthew Caro <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- Separation of church and state- Matthew Caro

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Please do not break down the wall of separation between church and state and replace it with a bridge. As a former history teacher it troubles me to think of the almost sure result that such an action would have. It would corrupt the church which would persecute those who don't obey it. Please do not repeat this mistake that history has shown us repeatedly to result in disaster for those who disagree with it.

I hear politicians say that, "Separation of church and state is not in the Constitution, it was just in a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote!" This is intellectually dishonest, because in the letter that Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist he said,

"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 quotes the First Amendment, and he considered it a wall of separation between church and state. Those claiming that separation between church and state is not in the constitution are either ignorant of the Framers intentions, or they are dishonest.

Please protect the freedoms of America by keeping the church out of the state, and the state out of the church.

Sincerely, Matthew Caro

Amity, Arkansas

From: Carolyn Oeftger <[REDACTED] PII>

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:53:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

The **Separation of Church and State** ensures that Americans can worship as they choose, and by their own conscience. If this is removed or “bridged” we will most certainly go down the path of making laws regarding worship and religion. This would be un-american. This would be taking away the freedoms that our forefathers sacrificed so much for. They were persecuted in England and came here for freedom. Let us NOT go backward!

We MUST keep our freedoms to worship as we choose. We MUST have religious **LIBERTY!**
Freedom OF religion and freedom FROM religion.

DO NOT dismantle this concept. History repeats itself and we will see persecution by the majority against the minority. We will no longer be a great country if we do that.

Carolyn Oeftger

From: Craig Gerst <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State as is

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:54:22 -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,

Craig Gerst Home State Wyoming

PII

PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Religious Liberty Commission Report and Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:54:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: From_Separation_to_Partnership_-_Addressing_the_Religious_Liberty_Commission.pdf

Dear Chairman Patrick and Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the considerable time and effort you have invested in examining the state of religious liberty in the United States. Like you, I believe religious liberty is among America's greatest blessings and one of the principal reasons our nation has become a refuge for people of every faith. I also appreciate the Commission's desire to defend religious expression in an increasingly secular culture.

After carefully reading the Commission's report, however, I have become deeply concerned that it represents a significant departure from the historic American understanding of religious liberty. I do not question the sincerity of the Commission's motives or its desire to strengthen religion's influence within society. My concern is whether the report preserves the constitutional principle that has protected both religion and civil liberty since the founding of our nation.

The central question is not whether religion should influence society. Christians have always preached publicly, cared for the poor, defended justice, addressed moral questions, and spoken before rulers. Jesus Himself did all these things, and His followers should continue to do the same.

The question is different:

Where did God place the limits of civil government?

When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, He declared, *"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight"* (**John 18:36, KJV**). Earlier He had taught, *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"* (**Matthew 22:21, KJV**). Christ acknowledged the legitimacy of civil government while also defining its limits. Civil rulers bear the sword to preserve order, protect life, and punish crime, but nowhere does Scripture entrust them with authority over worship, doctrine, or the conscience. Those belong to God alone.

America's founders recognized this biblical principle after witnessing centuries of persecution produced by the union of church and state throughout Europe. Thomas Jefferson expressed it clearly in his Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association (January 1, 1802) when he wrote that religion *"lies solely between Man & his God,"* that every individual *"owes account to none other for his faith or his worship,"* and that *"the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions."* James Madison likewise argued that *"The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man,"* and that religion is *"wholly exempt from its cognizance"* (James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, 1785). Jefferson also reflected upon Europe's history in Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVII (1785), observing that *"millions of innocent men, women and children... have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned,"* without advancing religious uniformity *"one inch."*

These men were not attempting to remove religion from public life. They believed religion was indispensable to a free society. Their concern was that civil government never assume authority that God had reserved to Himself.

For that reason, I was particularly concerned by Chairman Dan Patrick's statement that *"the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution"* and that *"from this day forward, that phrase should have no power over*

people of all faiths ever again in America."

I agree that the exact phrase "**separation of church and state**" does not appear in the Constitution.

But that has never been the real question.

The real question is whether the Constitution establishes the principle that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over matters of faith and conscience.

Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists did not invent that principle. It explained it. More than 150 years before Jefferson, Roger Williams spoke of a "*hedge or wall of Separation between the Garden of the Church and the Wilderness of the world*" (Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered*, 1644). Baptist leaders such as Isaac Backus argued that "*God has appointed two kinds of government in the world, which are in their nature and ought never to be confounded together*" (Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty*, 1773). John Leland insisted that "*The liberty I contend for is more than toleration*" (John Leland, *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable*, 1791). James Madison defended the same principle through his Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, and the First Amendment embodied it in constitutional law. Jefferson simply described what many of the founders believed the Constitution had already accomplished.

Nor was this understanding unique to America's founders. After touring the United States in the early nineteenth century, the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville sought to discover why religion flourished in America. After speaking with ministers of every denomination, he concluded that they attributed the peaceful influence of religion in America to its independence from civil government (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. I, Part II, Chapter 9, 1835). He further observed that religion exercised enormous influence, not by governing the state, but by shaping the character of the people. America demonstrated that religion became stronger, not weaker, when it remained independent of civil power.

This is why I believe the Commission's proposal to replace a "**wall**" with a "**bridge**" deserves careful reconsideration.

A wall establishes a jurisdictional boundary.

A bridge establishes an institutional connection.

That change is more than a change in metaphor. It represents a different understanding of the relationship between civil government and religion.

The report also recommends expanded partnerships between government and faith-based organizations, broader opportunities for government funding of religious institutions, repeal of the Johnson Amendment, additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life, and the creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty. Each proposal may be debated on its own merits. Taken together, however, they move the discussion away from limiting governmental jurisdiction and toward encouraging institutional partnership between government and religion.

That shift raises an important constitutional question. Every institutional partnership requires someone to establish standards. Government must determine which religious organizations qualify for public support, what activities deserve funding, what beliefs satisfy the required standards, and what practices fall outside those limits. Questions that once belonged entirely to the church gradually become questions of public administration. In doing so, the state inevitably begins deciding matters that are inseparable from doctrine and conscience. The difficulty is not that government becomes religious; it is that government gradually becomes an arbiter of religion. America's founders sought to prevent precisely this progression by denying civil government jurisdiction over religion from the very beginning.

History repeatedly demonstrates where that path leads. Church-state unions rarely begin with persecution. They begin with cooperation. Government offers assistance. Religious institutions welcome support. Public funding

brings public oversight. Oversight gradually becomes regulation, and regulation eventually reaches the conscience. America's founders understood this progression because they had inherited the painful lessons of European history. They established constitutional restraints not because they distrusted Christianity, but because they understood both Scripture and human nature.

One additional historical observation deserves consideration. For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church rejected unrestricted liberty of conscience. Pope Gregory XVI condemned what he called "*that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone*" (Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos*, §14, 1832). Pope Pius IX described liberty of conscience as "*a most pestilential error*" (Pope Pius IX, *Quanta Cura*, §3, 1864). Pope Leo XIII likewise rejected unrestricted liberty of worship (Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas Praestantissimum*, §§15–16, 1888). Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church articulated a different understanding of religious freedom in *Dignitatis Humanae* (Second Vatican Council, 1965). Whether one accepts that development or not, it raises an important historical question. Is the Commission preserving the constitutional understanding embraced by America's founders, or is it moving toward a different historical understanding of the relationship between church and state?

Because a letter cannot adequately present centuries of biblical, constitutional, and historical evidence, I have attached my booklet, ***From Separation to Partnership: How the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Redefines Religious Liberty***. It documents the historical sources, constitutional documents, papal quotations, and biblical evidence summarized in this letter. I hope you will receive it in the spirit in which it is offered—not as an attack upon the Commission, but as a sincere contribution to an issue of profound importance for our nation.

If the Commission concludes that Jefferson's phrase should no longer shape America's understanding of religious liberty, I respectfully ask that it also consider whether the constitutional principle Jefferson was describing should likewise be abandoned. In my judgment, that is the real question before the nation, not whether a particular phrase appears in the Constitution, but whether the Constitution continues to limit civil government to the jurisdiction God has entrusted to it.

Thank you for your willingness to consider these observations. It is my sincere prayer that America will continue to protect both religion and civil government by preserving the principle that has served this nation so well for nearly two and a half centuries:

The conscience belongs to God. Caesar has no rightful claim upon it.

Respectfully,

David Barron

PII

ThirdAngelsMessage.tv

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

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The Question Before America- Introduction

For more than two centuries, the United States has understood religious liberty to rest upon a simple but profound principle. Thomas Jefferson expressed it in his famous letter to the Danbury Baptist Association:

*"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.**"*

President Donald Trump receives the report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission at the White House. This booklet examines the Commission's recommendations in eradicating the term "separation of church and state".

Those words captured the historic American understanding of liberty of conscience. Civil government was ordained by God, but its authority was deliberately limited. It was entrusted with the responsibility of preserving justice, protecting life, and maintaining civil order. It was **not** entrusted with authority over faith, worship, or the conscience.

The issue has never been whether government is ordained by God. Scripture plainly teaches that it is. The issue has always been where God said government must stop.

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission affirms the importance of religion and rightly recognizes the vital role faith has played in the history of the United States. Yet its recommendations represent a significant shift in emphasis. Rather than defining religious liberty primarily by the constitutional limits placed upon civil government, the Commission encourages a closer institutional relationship between

government and religion. It proposes replacing the familiar "wall of separation" with a "bridge" between church and state.

This booklet argues that the question before America is not whether religion should influence society. It should. Nor is the question whether government should protect the free exercise of religion. It must.

The question is whether civil government should move beyond protecting religious liberty and begin fostering an institutional partnership with religion.

That question reaches far beyond constitutional interpretation. It touches the biblical distinction Christ established between His kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. It shaped the convictions of America's founders, influenced the framing of the First Amendment, and ultimately points forward to the final conflict over worship described in Bible prophecy.

The pages that follow examine that question from three perspectives—Scripture, history, and the Constitution, to determine whether America's historic understanding of liberty of conscience is being preserved or redefined.

The conscience is not outside God's government—it is outside Caesar's.

Chapter One - Liberty of Conscience Begins with God

Religious liberty is not first a constitutional principle. **It is a biblical principle.**

Long before legislatures enacted laws, before nations drafted constitutions, and before courts interpreted rights, God established the proper relationship between His kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. The distinction between civil authority and the conscience did not originate with Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Roger Williams, or any other statesman. It originated with Jesus Christ.

One of the clearest statements ever made concerning that distinction occurred while Jesus stood before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Accused of claiming to be a king, Jesus answered:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36)

This declaration establishes the foundation upon which every discussion of religious liberty must rest. Christ was not denying the legitimacy of civil government. He was defining its jurisdiction.

In fact, only a few verses later Jesus acknowledged that Pilate's authority had been given "from above" (John 19:11). Civil government has a legitimate place within God's order. Yet Christ made it unmistakably clear that His kingdom operates upon entirely different principles.

Earthly governments preserve civil order. They enact laws, punish crime, defend innocent life, and bear the sword against evildoers. Christ's kingdom advances in another way. It governs not by civil force, but by truth, conviction, love, and the work of the Holy Spirit upon the conscience. It never compels genuine faith by civil power.

Jesus explained the difference in a single sentence:

"If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight."

Earthly kingdoms ultimately rely upon force to maintain their authority. Christ's kingdom does not. Faith produced by coercion is not faith at all. A government may compel outward actions, but it cannot produce love for God. It may punish crime, but it cannot create holiness. It may command attendance, but it cannot command worship. Worship belongs to another kingdom.

Christ's words establish the biblical foundation of liberty of conscience. His kingdom does not spread by the sword of Caesar but by the power of truth working upon willing hearts.

The Two Jurisdictions

Jesus reinforced this principle when asked whether taxes should be paid to Caesar. Holding up a coin, He answered:

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)

With these few words, Christ established two distinct jurisdictions. Caesar possesses legitimate authority. God possesses supreme authority. The question is not whether government has authority. Scripture plainly teaches that it does. The question is **what authority God has entrusted to it.**

Worship belongs to God. Faith belongs to God. Conscience belongs to God. No earthly ruler may rightfully claim what belongs exclusively to the Creator. Whenever civil government attempts to prescribe doctrine, direct worship, or compel religious belief, it reaches beyond the authority God has granted it. Those things belong to **God's jurisdiction** alone.

God Ordained Civil Government

The Bible does not teach anarchy. The Apostle Paul wrote:

"For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." (Romans 13:1)

Civil government is God's servant for the preservation of society. Paul explains that rulers are appointed to reward those who do good and punish those who do evil. They "bear not the sword in vain," for they are "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4).

The sword is a civil instrument. It exists to restrain violence, protect innocent life, punish crime, and preserve public order. It was never given to enforce faith, determine doctrine, compel worship, or govern the conscience. God entrusted civil rulers with authority over civil matters—not over the conscience.

Romans 13 establishes both the authority and the limits of civil government. The magistrate bears the sword to preserve civil order and punish those who commit outward acts of evil. Yet nowhere does Scripture authorize civil government to compel worship, prescribe doctrine, or govern the heart. Those belong to God's jurisdiction alone. Civil rulers judge outward conduct; God alone judges the heart.

This distinction is essential. Not every sin falls within the jurisdiction of civil government. God condemns pride, covetousness, lust, hatred, envy, unbelief, idolatry, and every sinful thought of the heart. These are violations of God's moral law, yet they are not crimes that the civil magistrate is authorized to punish. No government can imprison a man for coveting his neighbor's house, fine him for pride, or sentence him for hatred in his heart. These sins are real, and God will judge them, but He has reserved that judgment to Himself.

Civil government is ordained to punish outward acts that violate the rights and safety of others—murder, theft, fraud, violence, and similar

offenses. It was never commissioned to enforce the whole of God's moral law. If it were, the magistrate would be required to punish every violation of the Ten Commandments, including idolatry, unbelief, covetousness, and every sinful desire of the heart. Furthermore, with the punishment of death. We would all be guilty. (Romans 3:19) Scripture gives no such authority.

This is the distinction of jurisdiction. God ordained civil government to restrain outward acts that disturb the peace and safety of society. He never entrusted it with authority over worship, faith, repentance, doctrine, or the conscience. Those remain under His government alone.

The Limits of Civil Authority

The apostles themselves recognized this distinction. When commanded by the Jewish authorities to stop preaching Christ, Peter answered:

"We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Peter did not deny the legitimacy of civil government, nor did he call for rebellion. He simply recognized that civil authority has limits. Whenever earthly rulers command what God forbids, or forbid what God commands, the jurisdiction of Caesar has ended and the jurisdiction of God remains supreme.

This is the very essence of liberty of conscience. No government possesses the authority to stand between God and the individual soul.

Faith Cannot Be Forced

Throughout Scripture, God appeals to mankind through persuasion rather than coercion.

Moses pleaded: *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life."* (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Joshua challenged Israel: *"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."* (Joshua 24:15)

Paul wrote: *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*
(Romans 10:17)

Again he declared: *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."* (2 Corinthians 5:11)

The biblical pattern is unmistakable. God reveals truth. He invites. He warns. He pleads. He persuades. He never produces genuine worship through civil compulsion. If the Almighty Himself does not force the conscience, no earthly government has the right to do so.

Conclusion

The Scriptures establish two governments, each ordained by God for a distinct purpose. Civil government exists to preserve justice, punish wrongdoing, and protect society. It governs outward conduct. Christ's kingdom governs the heart, transforming the conscience through truth, love, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Confusing these two jurisdictions has produced some of the darkest chapters in human history. Whenever the church has sought the sword of the state, or the state has assumed authority over the conscience, liberty has suffered and religion has been corrupted. The chapters that follow will demonstrate how this biblical principle profoundly influenced the development of religious liberty in America, shaped the thinking of the nation's founders, and remains the defining issue in the ongoing debate over the proper relationship between church and state.

Biblical religious liberty is therefore far more than a constitutional principle. It is a divine principle established by Christ Himself.

Civil government is ordained by God, but it was never ordained to govern the conscience. The conscience belongs to God. Caesar has no rightful claim upon it.

Chapter 2 - America's Founders Recognized the Limits of Civil Government

The principle of liberty of conscience did not begin with America's founders. As we saw in the previous chapter, it began with Jesus Christ Himself, who distinguished His kingdom from the kingdoms of this world and taught that what belongs to God must never be claimed by Caesar.

The founders of the United States did not invent this principle. Rather, they recognized it after centuries of painful experience and sought to preserve it in the constitutional system they established.

The American experiment in religious liberty was born from HISTORY. For centuries, Europe witnessed repeated attempts to enforce religious conformity through civil power. Kings legislated doctrine. Magistrates enforced religious decrees. Churches relied upon the sword of the state to preserve orthodoxy, while governments relied upon religious institutions to strengthen political authority.

The result was not religious unity. It was persecution, imprisonment, confiscation of property, exile, torture, and death. America's founders knew this history well, and they were determined not to repeat it.

Roger Williams

Long before the American Revolution, Roger Williams recognized the danger of uniting church and state. A Puritan minister in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Williams believed that civil government had no authority over matters of faith and conscience. His convictions brought him into direct conflict with the colony's leaders, who believed the civil magistrate should help

preserve religious uniformity. In 1635, Williams was banished from Massachusetts because of these convictions.

After establishing the colony of Rhode Island, he sought to build a society where liberty of conscience would be protected and civil government would exercise no authority over worship.

Describing the proper relationship between church and state, Williams wrote of: *"...the hedge or wall of Separation between the Garden of the Church and the Wilderness of the world."*

Williams' concern was not to protect the government from religion. It was to protect the church from the corrupting influence of civil power. He understood that once the civil magistrate entered the affairs of religion, both institutions would suffer. The church would gradually lose its spiritual independence, while the state would become entangled in matters that belonged to God alone.

Isaac Backus

A century later, Baptist minister Isaac Backus continued the same argument. Opposing the establishment of religion by civil government, he wrote:

"God has appointed two kinds of government in the world, which are in their nature and ought never to be confounded together."

Backus understood what Christ had taught centuries earlier. God ordained civil government to preserve justice and order, but He never gave it authority over faith or worship. To confuse those two governments was to violate the jurisdiction God Himself had established.

The language differs from Christ's teaching about rendering unto Caesar and unto God, but the principle is identical. There are two governments, two jurisdictions, and each must remain within the sphere God has assigned it.

John Leland

John Leland, who greatly influenced James Madison regarding the first amendment carried this principle even further. A close friend of James Madison and an influential Baptist minister during the debates surrounding the Constitution, Leland insisted that liberty of conscience was more than mere toleration.

He wrote: *"The liberty I contend for is more than toleration. The very idea of toleration is despicable."*

Leland understood that toleration assumes government possesses authority over religion and merely chooses not to exercise it. Liberty of conscience rests upon an entirely different foundation. Government has no rightful jurisdiction over the conscience in the first place.

Leland also warned: *"The notion of a Christian commonwealth should be exploded forever."*

He was not arguing against Christianity influencing society. Rather, he rejected the idea that civil government should assume responsibility for enforcing Christianity.

Thomas Jefferson

Perhaps no founder expressed this principle more clearly than Thomas Jefferson. Writing to the Danbury Baptist Association on January 1, 1802, Jefferson declared:

"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."

Jefferson did not merely defend religious tolerance. He identified the proper jurisdiction of civil government. Government may regulate actions affecting civil society, but it has no jurisdiction over faith, worship, or conscience. That authority belongs to God alone.

Years earlier, Jefferson reflected upon Europe's history with these sobering words:

"Millions of innocent men, women, and children... have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity."

His conclusion was unmistakable. Civil force had failed to produce genuine faith. Instead, it had produced centuries of suffering.

James Madison

James Madison shared the same conviction. Often called the "Father of the Constitution," he became one of America's strongest defenders of liberty of conscience. Reflecting upon Europe's long history of religious persecution, Madison wrote:

"The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries."

Madison was not speaking in the abstract. He was looking back upon centuries in which civil governments enforced religious conformity through the power of the state. Throughout much of the Middle Ages and beyond, church and civil authorities worked together to suppress what they regarded as heresy. The result was imprisonment, torture, confiscation of property, exile, and death.

Both Madison and Jefferson reached the same conclusion. Civil force cannot produce genuine faith. Instead of preserving religion, it corrupts both the church and the state. Whether expressed as "separation," "liberty of conscience," or the "free exercise" of religion, the principle remained the same. Civil government was never intended to govern religion. Its duty is to protect every person's liberty to worship God—or to decline worship—according to the dictates of conscience, without coercion from the state.

George Washington

America's first president expressed the practical result of these principles in his famous letter to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport

in 1790:

"The Government of the United States... gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

Washington did not speak merely of toleration. He envisioned a nation in which citizens of every faith could worship freely because government neither established religion nor persecuted those who differed.

The Constitution would not create religious liberty. Rather, it would protect the liberty of conscience that belongs to every person as a gift from God.

The First Amendment

These principles found expression in the First Amendment to the Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

Notice that the Amendment accomplishes two complementary purposes. First, it prevents the civil government from establishing religion. Second, it protects the free exercise of religion. These are not competing ideas, they are inseparable. Government refrains from exercising authority over religion precisely so that religion may remain free.

The freedom of the church depends upon the restraint of the state.

Is "Separation of Church and State" in the Constitution?

One objection frequently raised today is that the phrase "separation of church and state" never appears in the Constitution. That observation is correct. The exact phrase is not found in the Constitution. But the question is not whether Jefferson's particular wording appears. The question is whether the principle appears.

The First Amendment declares:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

Those words establish two complementary principles. Civil government may not establish religion, and it may not interfere with the free exercise of religion. Thomas Jefferson later described this constitutional arrangement as building "**a wall of separation between Church & State.**" He was not inventing a new constitutional doctrine. He was describing the practical effect of the First Amendment.

Jefferson was not alone. James Madison defended the same principle. Roger Williams described a hedge or wall separating the church from the wilderness of the world. Isaac Backus spoke of two governments that "ought never to be confounded together." John Leland insisted that government possesses no rightful authority over the conscience. Though they expressed the idea differently, they defended the same constitutional principle: **civil government possesses no jurisdiction over religion because the conscience belongs to God.**

The issue, therefore, is not whether Jefferson's particular phrase appears in the Constitution. The issue is whether the Constitution limits civil government in matters of religion.

It plainly does.

Protecting Both Church and State

One of the greatest misunderstandings surrounding the phrase "*separation of church and state*" is the assumption that it was designed either to exclude religion from public life or merely to protect government from religious influence. The founders understood the issue differently. They believed that God had ordained both civil government and the church, but had entrusted each with a different jurisdiction.

History had repeatedly demonstrated the danger of confusing those jurisdictions. Whenever the church sought the power of the state, it gained political influence but lost its spiritual independence. Whenever

the state assumed authority over religion, it became entangled in matters of faith and conscience that God had never entrusted to it. The result was not liberty, but persecution.

Roger Williams sought to preserve the church from the corrupting influence of civil power. Isaac Backus distinguished the two governments that God had ordained and insisted they must never be confounded. John Leland rejected mere toleration because he believed government possessed no rightful authority over the conscience. Thomas Jefferson limited the legitimate powers of government to "actions only, and not opinions." James Madison sought to spare America the religious bloodshed that had soaked the soil of Europe for centuries. George Washington envisioned a nation that would "give to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

Though each expressed the principle in different language, they defended the same fundamental truth: civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience. By keeping church and state within their God-given spheres, they sought to preserve the independence of both institutions. The church would remain free to proclaim truth without relying upon civil power, and the government would remain free from assuming authority over worship, doctrine, or faith. In protecting liberty of conscience, they protected both the church and the state from exercising authority that belonged only to God.

Conclusion

America's founders did not establish liberty of conscience because they distrusted religion. They established it because they understood both Scripture and history. They recognized that Christ's kingdom advances through truth rather than force, and they deliberately limited the jurisdiction of civil government to preserve that principle.

For nearly 250 years, this understanding of liberty of conscience has distinguished the United States from the systems that preceded it. The question now before the nation is whether that historic understanding will be preserved, or fundamentally redefined.

Chapter 3 -Religious Liberty Redefined

"The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." — Thomas Jefferson

A New Direction

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission was established to examine the state of religious liberty in America and recommend ways to strengthen it. At first glance, many of its recommendations appear commendable. The report affirms the importance of religion, recognizes the indispensable role faith has played throughout American history, and calls for protecting the free exercise of religion. Every Christian should welcome sincere efforts to preserve the freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience.

The question before us, however, is not whether religious liberty should be protected. The question is **how the Commission defines religious liberty**. Throughout history, liberty has seldom disappeared by being openly abolished. More often it has been redefined until the original principle is scarcely recognized.

For nearly 250 years, the American understanding of religious liberty rested upon a simple constitutional principle: **civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience**. Government protected religious liberty precisely because it limited its own authority. The Commission proposes a different emphasis.

Rather than focusing primarily upon the constitutional limits of civil authority, the report repeatedly encourages a closer relationship between government and religious institutions. That shift becomes especially clear in its discussion of the historic concept of the separation of church and state.

The report states:

"The concept of a 'wall of separation between church and state' can wrongly imply that church and state are opposed to one another... Perhaps a better analogy is that religious liberty acts as a bridge between church and state."

This statement deserves careful consideration because metaphors reveal assumptions. A wall establishes a boundary. A bridge establishes a connection. A wall limits jurisdiction. A bridge facilitates cooperation. Whether one prefers Jefferson's terminology or another expression, the historic American principle remained the same: civil government protects religious liberty by recognizing the limits of its own authority. The Commission's proposed metaphor points in a different direction.

From Protection to Partnership

That change in emphasis is reflected throughout the Commission's report. It recommends expanded cooperation with faith-based organizations, broader opportunities for religious organizations to receive government funding, repeal of the Johnson Amendment, additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life, the creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty, and even points to historical examples of governmental encouragement of Sabbath observance as positive precedents.

Each recommendation may be evaluated on its own merits. Taken together, however, they reveal a consistent shift in emphasis. For nearly two and a half centuries, America's understanding of religious liberty sought to preserve liberty of conscience by carefully limiting the jurisdiction of civil government in matters of religion. The Commission increasingly presents religious liberty not simply as protection from governmental interference, but as a framework for closer institutional cooperation between government and religion.

That distinction is more significant than it first appears. The historic American question was, "Where has God placed the limits of civil authority?" The Commission increasingly asks, "How can government and religion work together to strengthen society?" Those are fundamentally different questions. One preserves liberty by recognizing constitutional limits. The other encourages a closer institutional relationship between government and religion.

History demonstrates why that distinction matters. Once government becomes a partner with religion, it cannot avoid making religious

judgments. It must determine which organizations qualify for public support, which religious practices deserve official recognition, and where the limits are to be drawn. The Commission's favorable reference to Abraham Lincoln's order encouraging Sabbath observance illustrates how quickly these questions move from protecting religious liberty to government encouraging religious practice. Whether future generations apply that principle more broadly, including questions surrounding Sunday observance, is a question Americans should not dismiss lightly.

Whether that shift ultimately strengthens religious liberty or gradually expands the role of civil government in religious affairs is the central question examined throughout this booklet.

Public Religion Is Not the Issue

At this point an important clarification is necessary. Nothing in this discussion suggests that religion should be confined to private life. Scripture teaches the opposite. Jesus preached publicly. The apostles preached publicly. The prophets addressed kings. Christians are called to proclaim the gospel, defend truth, care for the poor, pursue justice, and bear witness before rulers and nations.

The issue has never been whether religion should influence society. The issue is whether civil government should become institutionally involved in religion. Those are fundamentally different questions. A free church should influence the nation through persuasion, preaching, and faithful witness. A constitutional government should protect that freedom without assuming authority over religion itself.

The Question of Jurisdiction

Ultimately, every discussion concerning religious liberty returns to a single question:

What authority has God entrusted to civil government?

Scripture answers that question clearly. Civil government exists to preserve order, protect life, restrain violence, and punish crime. Worship, doctrine, faith, and conscience belong to another jurisdiction, and it is the duty of the civil government to protect the freedom of it.

History repeatedly demonstrates what happens when that distinction is forgotten. Governments that begin by supporting religion eventually find themselves deciding religious questions. Which beliefs qualify for protection? Which religious organizations deserve public support? Which doctrines fall outside acceptable limits? Who determines what constitutes heresy? These questions are unavoidable whenever civil authority crosses into matters of conscience.

That is precisely the danger America's founders sought to prevent.

Why This Matters

The issue before America is therefore much larger than a disagreement over a metaphor. The question is whether the constitutional principle that protected liberty of conscience is being quietly redefined.

Replacing a wall with a bridge may sound harmless, but history teaches that liberty is rarely lost in a single dramatic moment. More often it is surrendered gradually, one definition at a time, one principle at a time, until the original safeguards are scarcely recognized.

If America's understanding of religious liberty shifts from protecting the conscience by limiting civil jurisdiction to encouraging institutional alliance between government and religion, then America has begun moving away from the constitutional principles that distinguished it from the Old World.

Before determining whether that shift represents progress or departure, we must first recognize that history itself presents two very different understandings of religious liberty. One sought to preserve liberty by limiting the authority of civil government in matters of religion. The other envisioned a closer relationship between civil authority and religious truth. Understanding those two models is essential before evaluating the direction America is now taking.

Chapter 4 -Two Competing Historical Understandings of Religious Liberty

By the close of the eighteenth century, the United States had embraced a principle that distinguished it from nearly every nation in the world. Civil government would possess no jurisdiction over the conscience. Religion would neither be established by Congress nor prohibited by Congress, and the free exercise of religion would be protected because the conscience belonged to God alone.

This understanding did not arise in a vacuum. It emerged after centuries of conflict over the relationship between civil government and religion. To appreciate the significance of America's constitutional system, it is necessary to compare it with another historical understanding of religious liberty that prevailed throughout much of Europe for centuries. This comparison is not intended to criticize individuals or denominations. It is simply an examination of two different historical models.

The American Model

The American understanding of religious liberty rested upon one fundamental principle: **civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience**. As we have seen, this conviction was championed by Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, John Leland, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and ultimately embodied in the First Amendment. Though each expressed the principle differently, they agreed that the authority of civil government reached only its proper sphere.

Thomas Jefferson summarized that principle with remarkable clarity 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."

Jefferson's distinction is both simple and profound. Government reaches actions, not opinions, worship, or conscience. Those belong to God alone.

James Madison expressed the same concern when reflecting upon the religious wars that had devastated Europe:

"The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries."

These convictions found constitutional expression in the First Amendment, which prohibited Congress from establishing religion while protecting its free exercise. Under this model, religion remained free because civil government remained limited. The state's responsibility was not to determine religious truth but to protect every citizen's liberty of conscience.

The Historical Papal Model

For many centuries, the relationship between church and civil government developed differently throughout much of Catholic Europe. Rather than treating religion solely as a matter beyond civil jurisdiction, influential papal documents taught that civil society owed duties toward the true religion.

Pope Gregory XVI, writing in *Mirari Vos* (1832), rejected unrestricted liberty of conscience in some of the strongest language of the nineteenth century. Referring to what he viewed as religious indifferentism, he wrote:

"From this poisoned source of indifferentism flows that absurd and erroneous proposition, or rather delirium, that liberty of conscience must be asserted and vindicated for everyone."

Pope Pius IX reaffirmed the same position in *Quanta Cura* (1864), describing liberty of conscience as **"a most pestilential error."**

Pope Leo XIII continued this line of thought in *Libertas* (1888), writing:

"Let us examine that liberty in individuals which is so opposed to the virtue of religion... A liberty such as we have described... is no liberty, but is degradation."

These statements did not deny the importance of religion. Rather, they reflected a different understanding of the relationship between civil authority and religious truth. Whereas Jefferson argued that religion lies solely between man and God, these papal documents maintained that civil society possesses obligations toward what it understands to be the true religion.

Civil Government and Religious Truth

The difference between these two systems extended beyond abstract principles. Throughout much of European history, civil rulers frequently assisted ecclesiastical authorities in suppressing heresy, enforcing religious conformity, and protecting what was regarded as the true faith. Likewise, church authorities often appealed to civil rulers to carry out judgments that the Church itself could not enforce through spiritual authority alone.

These arrangements varied considerably across countries and centuries, and their legal details changed over time. Nevertheless, they reflected a broader understanding that civil government and ecclesiastical authority could cooperate in matters concerning religion.

By contrast, the American constitutional model deliberately denied civil government jurisdiction over religious doctrine while protecting the liberty of every individual's conscience. The distinction was not merely practical. It represented two fundamentally different understandings of the relationship between church and state.

Two Different Starting Points

Although both systems acknowledged the importance of religion, they began from fundamentally different assumptions.

The American system asked, **What authority has God withheld from civil government?** Its answer was straightforward: **the conscience.** Civil

government possesses legitimate authority over civil society, but worship, faith, and doctrine remain under God's jurisdiction alone.

The historical European model more often asked, **What duties does civil government owe toward the true religion?** Its answer generally included some form of cooperation between civil authority and religious truth as understood by the Church. Those different starting points produced two distinct understandings of religious liberty.

Why This Comparison Matters

The purpose of this chapter has not been to determine which historical model was correct. It has simply been to establish that two very different understandings of religious liberty existed. One limited civil government to its God-ordained jurisdiction and sought to protect liberty of conscience by restricting governmental authority.

Recognizing that distinction is essential before examining more recent developments. If America's understanding of religious liberty has remained unchanged, then contemporary discussions should reflect the same constitutional limits recognized by the founders. If, however, that understanding has changed, Americans should carefully examine how, why, and with what consequences.

If these two historical models differed so fundamentally, an obvious question arises: Has that difference disappeared, or has it simply been redefined?

To answer that question, we must examine the modern understanding of religious liberty and ask whether it represents a continuation of America's constitutional tradition, a development within Catholic thought, or the emergence of an entirely new relationship between church and state.

Chapter 5- Vatican II and the Modern Understanding of Religious Liberty

The previous chapter demonstrated that two distinct historical understandings of religious liberty existed for centuries. America's founders understood liberty of conscience to mean that civil government possessed no jurisdiction over matters of faith and worship. Religion belonged to God, while government exercised authority only over civil affairs.

Historical Roman Catholic teaching approached the question differently. As we have seen, Popes Gregory XVI, Pius IX, and Leo XIII each criticized principles associated with unrestricted liberty of conscience and liberty of worship as they were understood in nineteenth-century liberal thought. That historical distinction raises an obvious question: **Did the Roman Catholic Church change its teaching on religious liberty?**

Most Catholics today answer that question by pointing to the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II and *Dignitatis Humanae*

Between 1962 and 1965, the Roman Catholic Church convened the Second Vatican Council. Among its sixteen major documents was *Dignitatis Humanae* ("Declaration on Religious Freedom"), a document devoted entirely to the subject of religious liberty.

Its opening declaration states:

"The human person has a right to religious freedom."

The document goes on to explain that religious freedom consists in immunity from coercion by individuals, social groups, or civil authority in matters of religion.

To many readers, these statements sound remarkably similar to principles long embraced within the American constitutional tradition. At first glance, one might naturally conclude that the historical debate has been resolved. Yet the matter is more complex than it first appears.

Development Rather Than Contradiction?

The principal debate is not primarily between Protestants and Catholics. It exists within Catholic theology itself.

Catholic theologians generally reject the suggestion that Vatican II contradicted earlier papal teaching. Instead, they argue that doctrine developed. According to Catholic theology, divine truth does not change, but the Church's understanding and application of revealed truth may develop over time. *Dignitatis Humanae* is therefore understood by Catholic scholars not as a rejection of Gregory XVI, Pius IX, or Leo XIII, but as a legitimate development of earlier teaching.

Whether one agrees with that explanation or not, the purpose of this booklet is not to resolve an internal theological debate. It is simply to recognize that the discussion exists.

Public Religion and the Authority to Define Truth

That question becomes especially relevant because Bishop Robert Barron, a member of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, frequently presents Vatican II as one of the great achievements of modern Catholicism. Barron has also argued that religion must not be reduced to merely private belief, stating:

"If you marginalized and privatized religion, democracy is in danger... That's deadly to our democracy."

In the historic Roman Catholic understanding, religion is not merely a matter of private judgment. Religious truth is authoritatively defined by the teaching office of the Church, and the individual conscience is expected to be formed by and submit to that established doctrine rather than independently determining matters of faith. Barron's concern should be understood within that theological tradition.

The American understanding of liberty of conscience begins from a different premise. The individual stands accountable to God. Thomas Jefferson wrote that religion "lies solely between Man & his God," and that the legitimate powers of government reach "actions only, and not

opinions." Liberty of conscience therefore protects every individual from civil coercion because the conscience answers ultimately to God rather than to the civil magistrate.

If, however, religious truth is authoritatively defined by the Church, then liberty of conscience cannot simply mean that every individual is free to determine truth for himself. *The disagreement is therefore not over the importance of religion, but over the source of religious authority.*

That difference explains why Popes Gregory XVI, Pius IX, and Leo XIII rejected unrestricted liberty of conscience and liberty of worship. Their concern was not merely that religion remain public, but that religious truth not be reduced to private or individual opinion.

The question before America, therefore, is not whether religion should influence society. It always has. The question is whether liberty of conscience belongs to the individual before God, or whether civil society should increasingly recognize and support an established understanding of religious truth.

Looking Ahead

If these two understandings of religious liberty begin from different assumptions about authority, then an important constitutional question follows.

When the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission speaks of strengthening religious liberty, which understanding is it preserving?

Is it preserving the founders' conviction that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience?

Or is it moving toward a closer relationship between civil government and an established understanding of religious truth?

That is the question we now examine.

Chapter 6 - Does the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Preserve America's Understanding of Religious Liberty?

The previous chapters have established four important principles. First, Scripture teaches that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience. Second, America's founders deliberately incorporated that principle into the Constitution after witnessing centuries of persecution produced by the union of church and state. Third, history has revealed two distinct understandings of religious liberty—one beginning with the liberty of the individual conscience before God, the other beginning with an established understanding of religious truth. Finally, we have seen that the modern discussion of religious liberty cannot be understood apart from this deeper question:

Who possesses authority to define religious truth?

The question before us is therefore straightforward. Does the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission preserve the historic American understanding of liberty of conscience, or does it redefine it? That question cannot be answered by examining motives. It must be answered by examining the Commission's own language, recommendations, and underlying assumptions.

The Commission's Central Claim

The Commission's understanding of religious liberty was expressed not only in its written report but also in the public remarks of its chairman, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, when the report was presented to President Trump.

Referring to the phrase "separation of church and state," Patrick stated: "...the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution... From this day forward, that phrase should have no power over people of all faiths ever again in America."

This statement deserves careful consideration. Patrick is correct in one respect. The exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution. But that has never been the central question. The real question is whether the Constitution establishes the principle that civil government possesses limited jurisdiction in matters of religion.

As we saw in the previous chapter, America's founders answered that question with remarkable consistency. Roger Williams described a hedge separating the church from the civil power. Isaac Backus distinguished two governments that "ought never to be confounded together." John Leland insisted that government possesses no rightful authority over the conscience. Thomas Jefferson explained that the legitimate powers of government reach "actions only, and not opinions." James Madison defended the same principle, and the First Amendment embodied it in constitutional law. And they defined it as the separation of church and state.

The founders used different language, but they defended the same constitutional limitation. This booklet is not an argument for preserving Jefferson's phrase. It is an argument for preserving the constitutional principle that Jefferson's phrase describes.

With that distinction in mind, we may now examine the Commission's report itself. Perhaps no statement better illustrates the Commission's direction than its discussion of the separation of church and state. The report states:

"The concept of a 'wall of separation between church and state' can wrongly imply that church and state are opposed to one another... Perhaps a better analogy is that religious liberty acts as a bridge between church and state." (Page 22)

At first glance this may appear to be merely a change in terminology. In reality, it represents a different constitutional philosophy. A wall establishes a jurisdictional boundary, while a bridge establishes an institutional connection. Jefferson described the legitimate powers of

government as reaching "actions only, and not opinions." The Commission instead speaks of building a bridge between church and state. One emphasizes constitutional restraint; the other emphasizes institutional cooperation. The difference is not merely rhetorical. It reflects two different understandings of the relationship between civil government and religion.

That distinction becomes even clearer when the report's recommendations are viewed together. The Commission encourages expanded partnerships between government and faith-based organizations, broader opportunities for religious institutions to receive government funding, repeal of the Johnson Amendment, additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life, and the creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty. Each proposal may certainly be debated on its own merits. Taken together, however, they reveal a consistent direction. Religious liberty is increasingly presented not merely as protection from governmental interference, but as a framework for closer institutional cooperation between government and religion.

One important question naturally follows.

What happens when partnership requires government to make religious decisions?

Every institutional partnership requires standards. Government must determine which organizations qualify for funding, what activities deserve public support, what groups receive official recognition, and where the limits are drawn. Questions that once belonged entirely to the church gradually become questions of public administration.

History demonstrates that this is how jurisdiction slowly expands. The issue is not whether today's officials intend persecution. The issue is whether civil government gradually assumes responsibilities that previous generations believed belonged to the conscience alone. America's founders sought to prevent that progression by limiting governmental jurisdiction from the very beginning.

At this point an important clarification is necessary. The issue is not whether religion should influence society. It should. Jesus preached publicly. The apostles preached publicly. The prophets addressed kings. Christians should proclaim the gospel, defend truth, strengthen families, care for the poor, and seek justice within their communities. America's founders never intended religion to be confined to private life.

Beyond the Commission

The Commission's recommendations do not exist in isolation. They reflect ideas that have gained increasing influence within broader religious and political circles concerning the proper relationship between Christianity and civil government.

For example, Vice President J. D. Vance has stated that his views on public policy are "pretty aligned with Catholic social teaching." He has also appeared at conferences where influential speakers argued that civil government should be shaped by biblical laws and Christian political principles rather than maintaining the historic constitutional distinction between church and state.

This is significant because Catholic social teaching has long addressed the relationship between the Church and the civil order. Pope Leo XIII, whose social encyclicals laid the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching, urged Catholics:

"All Catholics should do all in their power to cause the constitutions of states, and legislation, to be modeled on the principles of the true Church."

Whether one agrees with Pope Leo XIII or not is not the issue. The issue is that his understanding of civil government differs fundamentally from the understanding articulated by Jefferson, Madison, Backus, Leland, and the First Amendment. One envisions legislation being modeled upon the principles of the Church. The other limits civil government to its God-given jurisdiction while leaving worship and conscience entirely to God.

The Commission's report likewise presents historical examples of government encouraging religious observance as positive precedents. In its discussion of religious liberty within the military, it approvingly cites President Abraham Lincoln's General Order calling for the orderly observance of the Sabbath within the Army and Navy. Because Lincoln's order referred to Sunday observance, the report treats governmental encouragement of religious observance as part of America's constitutional tradition rather than asking whether such measures fall within the proper jurisdiction of civil government.

Yet this is precisely the constitutional question. Is encouraging religious observance one of the civil magistrate's God-given responsibilities, or does it move civil government beyond the jurisdiction God assigned it?

None of these examples—considered individually—proves that America has abandoned its historic understanding of liberty of conscience. Viewed together, however, they point in the same direction.

Dan Patrick argues that the principle of separation should lose its influence. The Commission proposes replacing a wall with a bridge. Bishop Barron argues against reducing religion to private judgment. J. D. Vance openly embraces Catholic social teaching as a model for public policy. The Commission cites governmental encouragement of Sunday observance as part of America's constitutional tradition.

The significance of these examples is not that they are identical. It is that they all move in the same direction—away from asking where government must stop and toward asking how government can promote religion.

That represents a significant shift from the constitutional philosophy of the founders, who believed religion was strongest when civil government remained within the limits God had assigned it.

The issue is not whether religion should be public. The issue is whether civil government should become institutionally responsible for religion.

A free church influencing society through preaching, persuasion, education, charity, and moral example is entirely consistent with liberty of conscience. Government becoming institutionally responsible for religion is something altogether different.

Ultimately, every discussion concerning religious liberty returns to a single question:

Who possesses jurisdiction over the conscience?

Scripture answers that question by placing the conscience under God's authority alone. Jefferson answered by insisting that government reaches actions only, not opinions. The First Amendment answered by prohibiting Congress from establishing religion while protecting its free exercise. The founders consistently protected liberty by limiting governmental authority.

The Commission, however, repeatedly shifts the emphasis from constitutional restraint toward institutional cooperation between government and religion. That is why replacing the wall with a bridge is so significant. The metaphor reflects an entirely different constitutional philosophy.

History repeatedly demonstrates a remarkably consistent pattern. Churches seek governmental assistance. Government provides support. Support gradually becomes oversight. Oversight becomes regulation. Regulation becomes influence. Influence eventually reaches the conscience. This progression seldom begins with persecution. More often it begins with cooperation, mutual benefit, and the best of intentions. America's founders understood that danger. They did not establish constitutional restraints because they distrusted Christianity. They established them because they understood human nature and recognized that concentrated power, whether exercised by church or state, has a tendency to exceed its proper limits.

The Commission repeatedly asks how religion can strengthen America. That is a worthy question. A more fundamental question is this:

How can America preserve liberty of conscience while religion continues to strengthen society?

For nearly two and a half centuries the American answer has been remarkably consistent. Religion remains entirely free. Government remains constitutionally limited. The church influences society through preaching, education, charity, and moral persuasion, while government protects that freedom without becoming religion's institutional partner.

The purpose of this booklet has never been to argue that religion should retreat from public life. Christianity should continue to influence society through faithful preaching, compassionate ministry, education, charity, and moral leadership.

The question has always been one of jurisdiction.

Who governs the conscience?

Christ answered that question before Pilate.
America's founders answered it in the Constitution.
History answered it through centuries of persecution.

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission now asks America to reconsider it.

Every generation must decide whether civil government will remain within the limits God assigned it, or whether it will gradually assume authority over matters that belong to God alone.

The conscience belongs to God. Caesar has no rightful claim upon it.

Chapter 7 -The Final Test of Liberty of Conscience

Throughout this study we have examined religious liberty from three perspectives. We began with Scripture, where Christ distinguished His kingdom from the kingdoms of this world and declared that His servants do not advance His cause through civil force. We then examined the constitutional principles embraced by America's founders, who recognized that civil government possesses no jurisdiction over the conscience. Finally, we considered the recommendations of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and asked whether they preserve that historic understanding or move in a different direction.

These questions are important not merely because they concern constitutional history. According to Bible prophecy, they become central in the closing conflict between Christ and Satan.

From Genesis to Revelation, the great controversy has never centered merely upon politics, economics, or civil government. At its heart lies the question of worship. Who is worthy of worship? Who possesses authority over the conscience? Who determines religious truth? These questions reach their climax in Revelation 13, where worship is enforced by civil authority under the threat of economic sanctions and ultimately death. The final conflict is therefore not fundamentally political. It is a conflict over jurisdiction. Who has authority over worship? God or the state?

Jesus answered that question before Pilate:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight." (John 18:36)

Throughout this booklet we have returned repeatedly to these words because they establish the biblical boundary between Christ's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. Civil government bears the sword to preserve public order. Christ governs the conscience through truth, love, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Genuine worship cannot be compelled because it must arise from a willing heart.

The book of Daniel illustrates this same principle. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden image and commanded every nation to worship it under penalty of death. In Daniel 6, another decree prohibited prayer to anyone except the king. In both instances, the issue was not whether civil government existed. God Himself had ordained civil government. The issue was whether civil rulers possessed authority over worship. The faithful obeyed the king in every lawful matter, but when civil authority claimed jurisdiction over the conscience, they obeyed God rather than men.

Revelation presents the same issue on a worldwide scale. The beast receives worship. An image to the beast is formed. The second beast causes the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast. The prophecy is not merely predicting persecution. It is predicting the reappearance of the same governing principle that has appeared throughout history: civil authority assuming jurisdiction over worship.

An image reflects the character of the original. The medieval system united ecclesiastical authority with civil power to enforce religious conformity. Revelation predicts not merely another persecution, but the reappearance of that governing principle. Whenever civil government assumes authority over worship, the image begins to form because the same relationship between church and state has returned.

America's Providential Beginning

Ellen White understood that the rise of the United States occupied a unique place in prophecy. Before describing America's future role in Revelation 13, she first explained why the nation became such a powerful defender of liberty of conscience.

She wrote:

"Among the Christian exiles who first fled to America and sought an asylum from royal oppression and priestly intolerance were many who

determined **to establish a government upon the broad foundation of civil and religious liberty....** Freedom of religious faith was also granted, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of **his conscience.... Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation.** These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 441.)

This statement deserves careful attention. Ellen White identifies two principles that distinguished America from the nations of Europe.

Republicanism recognized that civil authority derives its just powers from the consent of the governed rather than from ecclesiastical control or hereditary monarchy.

Protestantism, in its historic sense, represented more than a collection of denominations. It embodied the great protest against the union of church and state that had dominated much of medieval Europe through the Papal church. It affirmed the supremacy of Scripture, the direct accountability of every individual to God, and the liberty of every person to worship according to the dictates of conscience without civil coercion.

Together these principles established constitutional restraints that protected liberty of conscience unlike any nation before it.

Liberty Must Be Extended to Everyone

Yet Ellen White was equally careful not to idealize America's beginnings. Although many of the early colonists came seeking freedom from religious persecution, they did not always extend that same freedom to others.

She observed:

"Yet honest and God-fearing as they were, the Pilgrims did not yet comprehend the great principle of religious toleration. The freedom which they sacrificed so much to secure for themselves, they were not equally ready to grant to others." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 292.)

She then describes what happened when church and civil authority became united in the Massachusetts Bay Colony:

"The regulation was adopted by the colonists, that only church-members should have a voice in the civil government.... A kind of State church was formed... the magistrates being authorized to suppress heresy. Thus the secular power was in the hands of the church. It was not long before these measures led to the inevitable result—persecution." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 293.)

The lesson is unmistakable. Even sincere and devoted Christians can repeat the mistakes of history whenever civil government assumes authority over religion. The problem was never Christianity itself. The problem was the union of ecclesiastical authority with the coercive power of the state.

The Prophetic Warning

Having explained both America's strengths and its early failures, Ellen White then looked forward to the final crisis.

She summarized the biblical principle in these words:

"To protect liberty of conscience is the duty of the state, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 201.)

This statement perfectly harmonizes with the teachings of Christ, the apostles, and the principles embraced by America's founders. Civil government is ordained by God, but its authority has divinely established limits. It exists to preserve justice and civil order, not to govern worship or the conscience.

Because of this principle, Ellen White repeatedly warned against every movement that would weaken the constitutional restraints protecting liberty of conscience. Writing in 1900, she declared:

"An amendment to the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience, has long been urged upon the legislators of the nation; and the question of

enforcing Sunday observance has become one of national importance. Are we ready for the issue involved in the Sunday movement?" (*Signs of the Times*, November 28, 1900.)

It is significant that she begins, not with Sunday, but with **"an amendment to the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience."** The prophetic issue is constitutional before it is ceremonial. Sunday legislation becomes significant because it represents civil government exercising authority over worship.

Her warning becomes even more direct in *The Great Controversy*:

"Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 564.)

Throughout this booklet we have identified those restraints. They are the constitutional principles that deny civil government jurisdiction over the conscience and protect every individual's right to worship according to the dictates of conscience. Remove those restraints, and history demonstrates what follows. The issue is not merely one religious observance or another. The issue is whether civil government possesses authority to command worship.

Conclusion

This brings us back to the question that has guided this entire study.

Who possesses jurisdiction over the conscience?

Scripture answers: God.

Christ answered: God.

America's founders sought to preserve that principle by carefully limiting the jurisdiction of civil government.

Ellen White warned that the final conflict would arise when those constitutional restraints began to disappear.

As America commemorates 250 years of constitutional government, the preservation of liberty of conscience deserves more than patriotic celebration. It deserves careful vigilance. Liberty has rarely been lost all at once. More often it has been redefined—gradually, respectfully, and with the best of intentions. The issue has never been whether religion should influence society. The issue has always been whether civil government should exercise authority over worship.

That question stood before Nebuchadnezzar.

It stood before Darius.

It stood before Pilate.

It confronted the Pilgrims as they struggled to extend the liberty they themselves had sought.

According to Revelation, it will soon stand before the entire world once again.

Appendix A

Selected Statements from the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

The purpose of this appendix is to provide several representative statements from the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and its members that are discussed throughout this booklet. They are presented so readers may examine the Commission's own language alongside the constitutional and biblical principles discussed in the preceding chapters.

1. Dan Patrick -Chairman, Presidential Religious Liberty Commission On "Separation of Church and State"

"...the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution... From this day forward, that phrase should have no power over people of all faiths ever again in America."

2. Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report From a Wall to a Bridge

"The concept of a 'wall of separation between church and state' can wrongly imply that church and state are opposed to one another... Perhaps a better analogy is that religious liberty acts as a bridge between church and state."

3. Recommendations of the Commission

Among the recommendations discussed in this booklet are:

- Expanded partnerships between government and faith-based organizations.
- Increased opportunities for religious organizations to participate in government funding.
- Repeal of the Johnson Amendment.
- Additional executive guidance concerning religion in public life.
- Creation of a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty.

These recommendations are presented by the Commission as ways to strengthen religious liberty.

4. Bishop Robert Barron - Member, Presidential Religious Liberty Commission On Religion in Public Life

"If you marginalized and privatized religion, democracy is in danger... Values is up to me. My gender, it's up to me. The whole structure of my life, it's my choice. That's deadly to our democracy."

Questions for the Reader

After reading the report and the statements above, consider the following questions:

- Does the Commission define religious liberty in the same way America's founders defined it?
- Does replacing a "wall" with a "bridge" preserve the constitutional limits placed upon civil government, or does it encourage a different relationship between government and religion?
- Can government become an institutional partner with religion while remaining outside the jurisdiction of the conscience?
- How should Christians encourage religion's influence upon society while preserving the constitutional principle that civil government possesses no authority over worship?

These are the questions this booklet has sought to examine.

Appendix B

The Great Controversy over Liberty of Conscience- A Biblical and Historical Timeline

c. 605 B.C. — Daniel 3: Worship by Civil Decree

King Nebuchadnezzar erects a golden image and commands all nations to worship it under penalty of death. The issue is not civil government itself, but civil government exercising authority over worship.

c. 539 B.C. — Daniel 6: Prayer Forbidden

King Darius signs a decree prohibiting prayer to anyone except the king for thirty days. Daniel obeys the king in all lawful matters but refuses to surrender his conscience to civil authority.

A.D. 31 — Christ Before Pilate

Jesus declares: *"My kingdom is not of this world... if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight."*

Christ distinguishes His kingdom from the kingdoms of this world and establishes the biblical boundary between civil authority and the conscience.

A.D. 31 — "Render Unto Caesar"

Jesus teaches that Caesar has legitimate authority—but only within the sphere God has assigned him.

A.D. 31–33 — The Apostles Before the Sanhedrin

Peter declares: *"We ought to obey God rather than men."*

The apostles recognize the legitimacy of civil authority while affirming that God's authority over the conscience is supreme

The Development of American Religious Liberty

1636 — Roger Williams Calls for a "hedge or wall of separation" protecting the church from civil power.

1773–1774 — Isaac Backus Distinguishes the two governments ordained by God that "ought never to be confounded together."

1780s — John Leland Argues that liberty of conscience is far more than mere toleration because government possesses no rightful authority over religion.

1785 — James Madison Publishes his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, defending liberty of conscience and arguing that religion is exempt from

the authority of civil society.

1791 — The First Amendment Congress is forbidden from establishing religion while protecting its free exercise.

1790 — George Washington Promises that the United States gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

1802 — Thomas Jefferson Describes the First Amendment as building "a wall of separation between Church & State."

The Historical Debate

1832 — Gregory XVI *Mirari Vos* Rejects unrestricted liberty of conscience.

1864 — Pius IX *Quanta Cura* Describes liberty of conscience as "a most pestilential error."

1888 — Leo XIII *Libertas* Argues that unrestricted liberty of worship is not true liberty.

1965 — Vatican II *Dignitatis Humanae* Affirms immunity from coercion in religious matters while presenting this as a development of Catholic teaching. Yet, claiming not to have changed.

The Prophetic Perspective

1900 — Ellen White

Warns of efforts to amend the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience and identifies this as the beginning of the Sunday movement.

The Great Controversy

States: "To protect liberty of conscience is the duty of the state, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion."

She also warns: "Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed... there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution."

Today -2026 — Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

The Commission recommends a "bridge" rather than a "wall" between church and state and calls for expanded institutional cooperation between government and religion, raising the constitutional questions examined throughout this booklet.

From: Tammi Thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:56:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a US citizen and Christian, I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposal to replace the wall of separation of church and state with a "bridge". The wall of church and state was implemented by our forefathers, of faith, to keep the church free of government corruption and allow us to have the freedom of choice. This freedom is God given to every man and woman. If you look at the history of the US, you will see why this was implemented. It is never a good idea to mix the two. When this occurs, corruption, brutality, persecution, and denial of liberty soon follow. There is a place for government and a place for faith but not together. As it is written, "Give to Caesar, what is Caesar's and give to God, what is God's".

Religion is a personal matter, the government should have no say or reach into this area. The government should stay neutral in the citizen's right to choose their faith and how to practice it. This means that no government funds should be given to any church, faith activities, clubs, schools, etc. Taxpayers should not have to pay for these expenditures.

Keeping the wall actually protects faith, repealing the Johnson Amendment will be disastrous to the faith. This country was built on religious and civil liberty, let us not forget where we come from. I agree with the Pillar of Faith's comments, please implement them.

Please uphold the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,
Tammi Thomas
Stroudsburg, PA

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

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – William Guthrie

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:57:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I write as a citizen of the United States of America and a resident of Loma Linda, California, with a conviction I have held for many years: that religious liberty, properly understood, requires the complete abstinence of civil government from legislating over matters of conscience and the first table of the Ten Commandments as written in the Bible. I have studied the history of what happens when this line is erased. When Constantine wed the Roman state to the church, the result was not a golden age but the long night that produced the Inquisition. That history is not an accident of one bad emperor; it is what inevitably happens whenever civil power reaches for jurisdiction that was never given to it. Civil governments govern civil matters. Matters of conscience belong to the individual and God alone. In the preamble to the declaration of independence, we read that all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. It follows then, that the government also has a defined and God-given jurisdiction. When the government seeks authority over matters of individual conscience and religious linearity it treads on the very rights of same citizens it claims to uphold.

This is not merely my own opinion; it rests on the clearest line Christ himself drew. When he said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's, he divided all human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority whatsoever over duties owed to God. As A. T. Jones told a Senate committee in 1888 opposing the national Sunday bill, there is a limit to the lawmaking power, and that limit is the line Jesus Christ has drawn. The state's only legitimate question about any act is whether it is civil or uncivil, injurious to a neighbor or not. It may never ask whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical. Any commission recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, symbol, or observance crosses that line, not because it is too religious for a secular republic, but because it is forbidden by the very faith it claims to serve.

Nor can popular support supply the missing authority. If a majority vote could grant religious liberty, a majority vote could revoke it, and it would never have been a right at all, only a permission. Rights are inherent in the individual, granted by the Creator, and placed in our Constitution precisely to be beyond the reach of election returns. As Jones put it to that same Senate committee, the people, however numerous, have no right to invade any person's relationship to God. Congress itself once affirmed this, declaring that the conscience of a solitary dissenter is as sacred under the Constitution as the conscience of the whole community. That most Americans favor a measure is no argument for enacting it where religion is concerned, because religion was never a subject submitted to the vote. If a religious law is enacted outside of the God-ordained boundaries placed upon government, it will inevitably result in persecution and violence against its own citizens.

It should also be said plainly that a law favoring religion is no safer than one restricting it. Any law touching religion must define which religion it favors, and that definition necessarily excludes someone. Even those it includes no longer practice their faith freely; they practice it by permission of a legislature that can just as easily change hands. Jones called this outright impossible to avoid, and warned that no man can safely consent to legislation favoring his own faith without surrendering his right to change his mind later. Believers who welcome state sponsorship today are handing a loaded instrument to whichever administration governs tomorrow.

Finally, this separation was not an oversight of the founders but their deliberate design, urged upon them by the churches of their own day. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for full establishment to object; they saw the consequences in the principle and denied the principle itself. Any commission that claims the founders intended government partnership with religion must first explain away Madison in his own words.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
William Guthrie, MD
Loma Linda, CA

From: Renee Majors <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:57:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

The First Amendment declares that government shall make no law “respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Please defend both principles. Government must neither establish favored religious beliefs nor punish citizens for following conscience. Religious liberty belongs to every American, not merely the politically powerful or religious majority.

Protect the freedom to believe, worship, speak, and abstain without coercion. Once government gains authority over conscience, no one’s liberty is secure.

Respectfully,
Renee Majors

Sent from my iPhone

From: James Hall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thoughts on your "report"

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:59:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Commission,

As the child of an evangelical minister and an Army Officer who has served alongside devout Muslims from Middle Eastern countries, I urge this Commission to reconsider its fundamental approach.

First, I ask that you review our nation's founding documents. It is clear that the founders, mindful of the government-imposed religious conflicts and civil wars in Europe, explicitly sought to establish a government independent of religion. As men of the Enlightenment, the founders intended to protect religious liberty, and the current direction of this Commission appears to contradict that foundational principle.

Second, I have witnessed firsthand how religious extremism can destabilize a society, having seen Iran transform from a functioning nation into a restrictive theocracy. The push toward an intolerant, single-religion framework risks creating deep divisions and conflict within our own country among different denominations and faiths.

Finally, I urge the Commission to approach these decisions with humility and tolerance. Before proposing policies that mimic religious inquisitions, it is vital to reflect on the core principles of the faith you claim to represent.

James Hall

From: Judi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Judi K

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 19:59:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am submitting my Public Comment STRONGLY OPPOSING the Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

The draft report and its many proposals advance a predetermined ideological agenda which, if implemented, would threaten the constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and equal treatment for religious believers and nonbelievers alike that Americans have had for more than 200 years. The report repeatedly mischaracterizes the Establishment Clause, minimizes the rights of religious minorities and nonreligious Americans, and recommends sweeping changes that would erode one of the Constitution's most important protections for individual freedom rather than presenting a balanced or historically accurate assessment of religious liberty in the United States.

The United States Constitution, Article I states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievance."

The Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. It does not authorize the government to sponsor religious observances or use its authority to promote one faith over others. When government sponsors prayer, displays religious symbols or includes worship in official activities, it sends a message that some faiths are preferred over other faiths or non-faith. Past experience has demonstrated that religious liberty is best protected when the government remains neutral toward religion rather than privileging one faith over others. Historical evidence documents that the Framers intentionally supported a broad separation between religion and the government.

I respectfully urge the Commission to substantially revise the draft report so that any final report should accurately reflect the text of our U.S. Constitution, the accurate historical record, and preserve the equal rights of all Americans, whether they are religious believers or nonbelievers.

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 9 public healthcare comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:00:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commision,

NAPRO fertility care model was able to treat and diagnose my heavy menstrual cycles and restore my quality of life by providing me with bioidentical progesterone during my luteal phase. I was able to treat my problem by addressing my hormone issues without suppressing my cycle using oral contraceptives. This type of healthcare is important to women and access needs to be broadened so that more women can have the help they deserve.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Stowell

Sent from my iPhone

From: Elgin Jenkins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Church and State Separation~~n~~- [Elgin Jenkins]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:00:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a Bible believing Christian, and I take religious liberty very seriously. I'm writing in support of maintaining a proper separation between church and state.

Maintaining a proper separation of church and state is not an attack on Christianity. It is one of the safeguards that keeps Christianity, and every sincere faith, free from government control and political manipulation. When the church seeks the power of the state to advance its ends, both are placed in danger. The church trades spiritual authority for political influence, and the state is tempted to favor one religious group over another. This is very clear from history.

As a born-again Christian, I believe conscience belongs only to God. True faith comes from a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot be produced by law or preserved by political favoritism. Jesus said in Mark 12:17 "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus clearly separated our duty to Him and our duty to the government and the two should remain separated. Civil government has a proper role, but it should not become the instrument by which the church imposes its beliefs on others, nor should the church use the government to impose its beliefs on others.

I therefore respectfully object to any recommendation that treats the separation of church and state as a legal error rather than a constitutional principle. The First Amendment's protection of free exercise and its guard against establishment belong together. Religious liberty is strongest when the government neither persecutes religion nor manages, sponsors, or privileges it.

I also oppose any efforts to weaken the Johnson Amendment. I strongly believe the Houses of worship should call people to God and truth, not become partisan campaign instruments.

History offers a consistent warning here. Religious persecution in this country has often come not from irreligion, but from religious groups using civil power to punish dissenters. Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Jews, and others have all suffered when government favored one creed over another. Our constitutional order was wise to avoid that path, and I ask the Commission to preserve it, for Christians and for every American, religious or not.

As a devout Christian, I do not fear a proper separation of church and state. I value it, because it protects the purity of the church, the freedom of conscience, and the liberty of every American.

Respectfully submitted,

Elgin Jenkins

From: Laura Caro <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:00:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a concerned citizen and a Christian, I am writing to respectfully ask you to reconsider any recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state, including the recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

I am a firm believer in defending religious liberty. I believe every person should be free to worship God according to the dictates of his or her conscience, or not to worship at all, without government coercion or favoritism. In my view, the most effective way to preserve that freedom is by maintaining a clear separation between church and state. This principle has protected both the independence of the church and the liberty of the individual.

As a Christian, I view the separation of church and state as one of the greatest safeguards of religious liberty. It has helped protect freedom of conscience and the freedom to worship according to one's convictions, allowing people of many different faiths to live together peacefully. I believe this principle has been one of the distinguishing strengths of our nation.

History provides many examples of governments becoming closely aligned with particular religious institutions. While the circumstances have varied, such alliances have often resulted in diminished religious freedom for those outside the favored faith. Minority religious groups have frequently faced discrimination, restrictions on worship, or outright persecution. I fear that weakening the separation between church and state increases the risk of repeating these historical mistakes.

My concern is not rooted in a lack of appreciation for Christianity but in a desire to preserve its integrity. I believe the church fulfills its mission most faithfully when it persuades through the sound reasoning of Scripture, love, and service rather than through political influence or government support. Faith is a matter of conscience and free choice and cannot be compelled by government. Likewise, governments best protect religious liberty when they neither favor nor disadvantage any particular faith. Preserving this distinction protects the integrity of both the church and the government and safeguards the freedom of conscience for all people.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider any recommendations that would weaken the historic separation of church and state. Rather than diminishing this principle, I believe we should continue to strengthen the constitutional protections that have allowed religious liberty to flourish in the United States. The independence of both church and state is strengthened when neither exercises authority over the other.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

Talaura Caro

Amity, Arkansas

Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and angels know of us

From: 마준|막 기별 <[REDACTED] PII>

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:02:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Committee,

I am writing to formally submit my public comment regarding the critical issue of religious liberty. I strongly oppose any efforts to unite religion and the state, as such actions directly disregard the U.S. Constitution and the clear intentions of the Founding Fathers who established it.

Historically, the United States has served as a brilliant example of how a nation can thrive when church and state remain strictly separate. It became renowned worldwide as a land of true freedom—specifically, the freedom of conscience—guaranteed to anyone who sets foot on its soil.

I believe the primary reason the United States was able to surpass major European powers and become the world's leading superpower in such a short period is rooted in this very principle: by refraining from government interference in religion, the nation granted genuine religious freedom to all its residents.

Therefore, I am deeply concerned by the current actions of the committee, which appear to undermine this foundational pillar. I firmly oppose any measures that infringe upon true religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Taylor Kim

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

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello, I would like to state my opinion on the draft of the Religious Liberty Commision's first report. I am very frightened by the language throughout the report suggesting that we break down the wall of seperation between church and state. Religious liberty is foundationally based on the seperation of Church and State. Although America's earliest roots were not founded on a religious liberty that promoted a seperation (many early settlements had strict blue laws, etc), the fundamental ideas of religious liberty that were placed in the constitution require a seperation. If the government starts gettting involved in promoting on or another religion, even if it is the religion I belive in, that undermines religious liberty. Religious liberty means that no religion recieves any punishment or support from the Government. By reccommending that the DOJ back legislation to support state's laws requiring the display of the 10 commandments, the report is actively supporting a state-sponsored religion. Just because America has, in a large degree, chosen to forgo Christianity for many years, does not mean that it is the government's place to try to fix that by giving any support to a specific group. Thank you for listening.

Nathan Krum
Associate Director of Marketing and Media
Weimar University

From: Ardella Koskinen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully ask that you keep the church and the state separate.

History shows that when church and state are united, persecution results. Many have fled religious persecution in other countries and come to America for religious liberty.

If the government is telling the church what it can and cannot do, where is religious freedom? If the government is making religious laws, where is freedom of conscience? This will lead to force. Force is not of God.

Nothing good can come from further politicizing our churches by repealing the Johnson Amendment. Please enforce it.

Thank you,

Ardella Koskinen
Grass Valley, California

From: Reo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. The proposed government laws will surely lead to the dismantling of religious freedom.

God does not lead by force - he beckons us to come, find rest, and be restored in Him but it is our choice. If we remove free will, we are not truly free.

From: Evett Palmer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Evett Palmer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:03:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

With reference to the captioned matter, I write to express my objection to uniting church and state together. This spells a recipe for disaster and please note my reasons below:

The United States Constitution establishes a government, of limited authority, whose primary responsibility is to protect the civil rights and liberties of all people equally. Among those liberties, none is more fundamental than the freedom of conscience. For this reason, the Constitution requires a clear separation between the authority of civil government and the exercise of religion.

The First Amendment provides:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

These two protections work together. Government is prohibited from establishing, endorsing, promoting, or compelling religious observance, while simultaneously protecting every individual's right to practice—or decline to practice—religion according to the dictates of conscience.

The jurisdiction of civil government extends only to civil matters involving the protection of life, liberty, property, public safety, and the equal rights of all citizens. Matters of faith, worship, doctrine, and religious observance lie beyond the proper authority of government because they concern an individual's relationship with God and the exercise of conscience.

The authority to compel religious duties has never been delegated to the civil government by the Constitution. A law whose purpose or effect is to require participation in, or observance of, a religious practice exceeds the constitutional limits placed upon governmental power. Religious observance is meaningful only when it is voluntary. Faith that is compelled by law is no longer an exercise of conscience but an act of coercion.

The Fourteenth Amendment further provides:

"No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

These guarantees ensure that the constitutional protections of religious liberty apply equally against actions by state and local governments. Every citizen is entitled to equal treatment under the law regardless of religious belief, religious practice, or the absence of religious belief.

History consistently demonstrates that when civil authority assumes the power to enforce religious observance, the rights of conscience are diminished. Government ceases to remain neutral in matters of religion and instead becomes an instrument for advancing one religious viewpoint over others. Such action inevitably discriminates against citizens whose sincerely held beliefs differ from those favored by the state.

The proper role of civil government is not to determine what constitutes true religion or to prescribe how, when, or whether individuals should worship. Its role is to secure justice, preserve civil order, and protect the constitutional rights of every person equally. The government's legitimate authority extends to regulating conduct that harms others or threatens public safety, but it does not extend to compelling religious worship, enforcing sacred days, or prescribing religious duties.

The constitutional principle commonly referred to as the separation of church and state is not an expression of hostility toward religion. Rather, it is a safeguard that protects both institutions. It preserves the independence of religious organizations from governmental control while ensuring that government remains impartial among differing religious beliefs and practices. In doing so, it protects the liberty of every citizen to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of governmental coercion or discrimination.

Accordingly, any law or governmental policy that directly or indirectly compels religious observance, favors one religious tradition over another, or penalizes individuals because of their religious convictions raises serious constitutional concerns under both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, as applied to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment.

The enduring strength of the American constitutional system rests upon maintaining the proper distinction between civil authority and religious authority. Preserving that distinction protects the freedoms guaranteed to every citizen and upholds the principles upon which this Nation was founded.

Respectfully submitted,

E.Palmer

From: Thomas Clark <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:05:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for your work to help address issues of concern regarding religious freedom. My name is Thomas Clark. I am a Christian and I'm very thankful to be a citizen of the USA which gives me and people of all faiths so much religious freedom. I respectfully ask that you uphold the separation of church and state as defined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. (Although not stated in the words "separation of church and state" the same concept is clearly there). When the state interferes with religion, bad things can happen and when religion gets too close to the state, bad things can happen. I realize that in recent years, in the United States, Christians have been banned from speaking about Jesus in public schools and from speaking against LGBTQ issues. I believe many of these instances are probably examples of government overreaching in regards to religion and not allowing "the free exercise thereof." If public schools are allowed to teach about other religions they should also be allowed to teach about Christianity. I appreciate your support of Christian's having the right of free speech, etc. There are two clauses in the First Amendment regarding religion, the first clause which guards against Congress making laws regarding the establishment of religion and the clause regarding Congress making laws against the free exercise of religion. I respectfully ask that you uphold both clauses—the establishment clause and the free exercise clause which will help uphold the balanced concept of separation of church and state which our founding fathers held.

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."

In history we see painful examples of what has happened when church and state have united. When church and state were united during the Middle Ages, the state church killed and persecuted millions of Protestant Christians for not following the state religion. In our day we see communist countries where the state makes laws against religion and Christians are persecuted for following and teaching the Bible. I believe this is also an example of dangers resulting from not having separation of church and state. We also see the example of Muslim countries where church and state are united and Christians are persecuted because there are state laws against practicing religion contrary to the state religion.

Thank you for reading and considering my comment and request to uphold the separation of church and state as found in the First Amendment of the Constitution—the separation of church and state that Thomas Jefferson and Roger Williams taught. Thank you for your work to help uphold the Constitution and uphold the freedoms that our founding fathers fought for.

May God bless continue to bless The United States of America!

Sincerely,

Thomas Clark

From: Steven K <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Protect Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:07:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully submit this public comment out of concern for the future of religious liberty in the United States.

Please preserve the historic American principle of a clear distinction between the authority of church and state. One of the greatest safeguards of our constitutional republic has been the government's refusal to establish or enforce religious observance through civil law. This principle protects the freedom of every American, regardless of his or her faith.

As a member of a religious minority, I am concerned about any precedent that could permit government enforcement of religious practices, including laws requiring the observance of a particular day of worship, such as Sunday "blue laws." Regardless of their stated purpose, such laws place the government in the position of favoring one religious practice over another and burden the consciences of those whose sincerely held religious convictions differ.

History repeatedly demonstrates that when religious and civil authority become united, the result is often persecution rather than liberty. Jesus Christ Himself was crucified when the religious leaders of His day persuaded the Roman civil government to enforce a religious judgment. During the medieval period, the union of church and state led to the persecution of countless individuals whose only offense was following their conscience in matters of faith. In colonial America, Roger Williams recognized these dangers and became a leading advocate for religious liberty and freedom of conscience—principles that were later enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The genius of the American system is not that it protects only the beliefs of the majority, but that it protects the God-given right of every individual to worship according to conscience—or not to worship at all—without coercion from the state.

Religious liberty means little if it protects only beliefs that are popular. Its true test is whether it protects the conscience of those in the minority. I respectfully urge the Commission to defend this foundational principle and to oppose any policy that would blur the constitutional distinction between civil authority and religious authority or permit government enforcement of religious observance.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to protecting the religious liberty of all Americans.

Respectfully,
Steven Kramar

Sent from my iPhone

From: Pr Marcelo Rodrigues <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Establishment Clause – MARCELO RODRIGUES

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:09:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen from Juazeiro, Bahia, though a resident of this country, watching with real concern the debates over how far government may go in accommodating or promoting religion. My own faith matters enormously to me, which is precisely why I want the state to have no jurisdiction over it. I ask you to consider four arguments, drawn from a long and rigorous American tradition, for why government must stay entirely outside the domain of religion.

First, consider what government is and where its powers come from. American government rests on the principle that just powers are delegated by the people. But no person can delegate his relationship to God to anyone else — I cannot authorize a representative to believe for me, worship for me, or answer for my soul at judgment. Since this power was never mine to give, it could never have been received by any government. As one classic statement of this argument puts it, government can never have anything to do with religion, because no government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer even for itself, much less for its people. This is not a restriction added onto government from outside; it is a boundary built into the very idea of delegated authority.

Second, rights that depend on majority approval are not rights at all, only permissions that a future majority can revoke. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can already look after itself at the ballot box. As one Religious Liberty Library tract put it, a right is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons. The people, however numerous, have no right to invade any person's relationship to God. Even a Congressional committee once affirmed that the Constitution regards the conscience of a solitary dissenter as sacred as that of the whole community. Popular support may justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one.

Third, I take seriously the line Christ himself drew: render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. This divides human duties into two jurisdictions, and civil government holds only one. The state may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil — whether it injures a neighbor — never whether it is religious or heretical. Morality belongs to God; civility belongs to the state. Any government action that crosses into blessing a text, display, or doctrine steps into territory its own founding faith forbids it to enter.

Fourth, this separation was not an oversight or an act of hostility toward religion. It was deliberate design, urged by the churches of the founding era themselves, who had felt establishment from underneath. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for full establishment before objecting; they saw the consequences in the principle and denied the principle itself. Any commission that claims the founders for state-sponsored religion bears the burden of explaining away Madison in Madison's own words.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Marcelo Rodrigues

Juazeiro, BA

Obter o [Outlook para Android](#)

From: Marc Guimond <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Your draft report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:09:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

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- 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.

From: 바바라 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:13:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Committee,

I am reaching out to share my perspective on the recently released draft report concerning religious freedom. As someone who deeply values both the constitutional foundations of this nation and the sacred teachings of the Bible, I must express my strong opposition to any movement that seeks to unite church and state.

This union is not only an explicit violation of the U.S. Constitution, but it is also profoundly contrary to the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospels, Jesus explicitly stated, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Throughout His earthly ministry, He never once attempted to align His spiritual mission with the power of the state, nor did He seek to enforce faith through governmental authority.

For a committee that claims to uphold religious liberty and honor sacred scripture, taking actions that promote the union of government and religion is a direct contradiction of your stated beliefs. It is deeply concerning to see a body that speaks of faith acting in direct opposition to the clear words and actions of Jesus Christ.

I strongly urge the committee to reject any proposals within this report that compromise the distinct boundary between church and state, which remains the only true safeguard for freedom of conscience.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbra Bang

From: Barry Krall <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Helen Krall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:13:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am an 88 year old grandmother writing from Loma Linda, California, and I write because I am concerned for the world my grandchildren will inherit. Over my long lifetime I have watched the character of government at every level rise and fall, and I confess I find it hard to imagine any legislative body, composed of the mix of individuals I see across today's political spectrum, drafting rules for anyone's faith that I would trust. That is precisely why I believe the wall between church and state must be kept intact, not weakened, so that God alone continues to guide each person's walk.

The deepest argument for this is not secular but Christian. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said that what is Caesar's belongs to Caesar and what is God's belongs to God. Civil government was given charge only of duties owed to fellow men; the duties owed to God were placed beyond its reach by the highest authority a Christian recognizes. The practical test that follows is simple and fair to everyone: government may ask only whether an act injures a neighbor's rights, never whether it is religious, irreligious, or heretical. Every time government backs a religious text, symbol, or lesson with its own authority, it crosses the line Christ drew, not in the name of too little religion, but in violation of the very faith it claims to serve.

There is a further reason government can never rightly hold this power: it was never given to it in the first place. Our whole system rests on the idea that just powers come from the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people themselves possessed and could hand over. But no person can delegate his relationship with God to anyone else, not to a neighbor and certainly not to a legislature. A man can appoint another to manage his land; he cannot appoint another to believe or worship in his place. Since this power was never the people's to give, government never received it, and no government will ever stand before God to answer for another soul's faith.

Finally, I do not believe a popular majority can rightly settle what belongs to God, however sincere or numerous that majority may be. If a vote could grant religious liberty, a vote could take it away, and then it was never truly a right, only a permission. Our rights are supposed to come from our Creator and be placed beyond the reach of election returns, precisely so that the minority, even a minority of one, is protected from the will of the many. The greatest number of citizens wanting a religious measure has never been sufficient reason to enact it, because matters of conscience were never submitted to the ballot in the first place.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Helen Krall
Loma Linda, California

From: Lori [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Lori Bixby

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:14:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am concerned about the things I am learning about the report that suggests that the wall of separation between church and state be removed and a bridge built between the two.

I believe in separation of church and state. I believe it preserves freedom for people of all faiths, and people of no faith. Everyone should be free to practice their beliefs according to their conscience.

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments and request that you please implement them.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my letter.

Lori



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 ofrBody.—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...”¹⁴

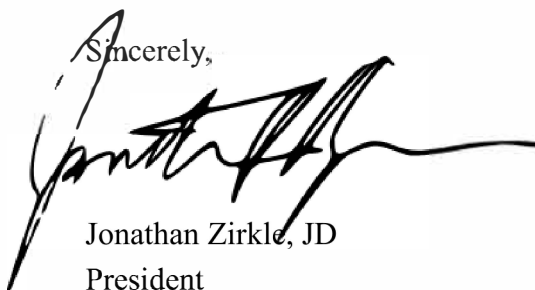
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

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: Julisa Quoos <[REDACTED] PII>

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION -Julisa Quoos

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:14:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for your service and for the time you devote to considering matters that affect one of our nation's most cherished freedoms. I respectfully submit the following comments regarding the Johnson Amendment and the importance of preserving the separation between church and state.

I respectfully urge you not to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

Christ's church has never needed political support to fulfill its mission. In fact, throughout history, the church has often been at its strongest, purest, and most faithful during times of political opposition and even persecution from political and religious powers.

Repealing the Johnson Amendment would invite corruption into our churches. It would create a strong incentive for political candidates and organizations to direct money toward churches in exchange for endorsements or political influence. Even if many churches resisted that temptation, the mere possibility would undermine public trust in religious institutions and distract churches from their primary mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

There has been considerable discussion recently about the legitimacy of the separation of church and state. I am deeply concerned to hear influential voices claim that this principle does not exist because the exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution. While the phrase itself is not found in the Constitution, the principle is firmly rooted in the First Amendment's protections of both religious liberty and the prohibition against government establishment of religion.

James Madison, often referred to as the "Father of the Constitution," understood the importance of keeping government and religion institutionally separate. He warned that the purpose of this separation was to prevent the religious conflicts and persecution that had plagued Europe for centuries. Whether expressed as a "wall of separation" or through the constitutional protections of religious liberty, the principle has helped preserve both faith and freedom in America.

Today, Americans enjoy the freedom to worship according to their conscience, or not at all, without government favoritism or interference. That freedom has allowed countless religious traditions to flourish. Weakening the separation between church and state risks entangling both institutions in ways that could ultimately diminish the independence of each. Churches should remain free to preach Biblical truth without becoming political organizations and government should remain neutral among religions.

The Johnson Amendment helps protect both our religious liberty and the integrity of our churches. I respectfully ask that you preserve it and continue to uphold the principles that have served our nation so well for generations.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Julisa Quoos

From: Duane Montgomery <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Duane Montgomery to Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:16:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have been a practicing Christian from childhood. And I am an Elder and Religious Liberty Director for my church. I am also a licensed attorney. Religious liberty is an essential right under our constitution. Thomas Jefferson made it clear in his writings that he interpreted the First Amendment's Establishment Clause to create "a wall of separation between Church and State". It is essential that this separation remains as government promotion of religion has historically always led to persecution and oppression. Please heed the counsel of Christian religious liberty organizations, such as the ChurchState Council, which strongly counsels against increased government involvement in promoting religious practices to the extent recommended by Trump's Religious Liberty Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,

Duane Montgomery
Church Elder and Religious Liberty Director

From: Dennis Millburn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please keep Church and State affairs separate!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:16:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs and Madams

I just read the report of the commission and am concerned that we keep government out of religion and religion out of government. Our county was founded to give religious liberty to its citizens and we need to keep it that ways. Even though a Christian myself, I want to make sure that Christianity does not get special treatment and that all religions or no religion at all feels safe for our citizens and free to make that choice and not be disadvantages in any way. Our founding fathers worked too hard to give us this freedom and I do not want to have government funds or influence to be used in any way to promote one religion over another.

Thank you

Dennis Millburn

Religious Liberty officer for our local church.

From: "Dr. Eugene Runne" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state should be a unmoveable principle

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:16:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

The God of the Bible does not compel me to believe in Him by force of law. He leaves me free to choose this day and all others to follow Him or not. Therefore I request that our government not force the conscience of any to follow Him.

Dr. Eugene Runne

From: Charlie Swanson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I Object

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:17:54-0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT- Charles R Swanson III

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

I Object to your proposed plan.

PLEASE DO NOT destroy the wall of separation between church and state. I do not want any civil government body telling me how or when to worship. I do not want any religious body telling me how or when I can worship. If you combine the civil government's control with any religious body's control it will inevitably lead to religious persecution of the worst kind, They can rule against my religious beliefs no matter what I say or want.

I want to honor my Heavenly Father and obey the Bible according to the dictates of my own conscience.

If you build a bridge instead of a wall between church and state you will destroy this precious separation which we now have. It will be a total disaster.

Do NOT destroy the separation of church and state. Do not change the Johnson Amendment in any way.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Swanson III

From: Kayleigh Abell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:18:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Scan_Jul_12,_2026_at_20_13.pdf

To Whom it May Concern,

The attach is a letter addressing the released draft report.

Kayleigh

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

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

As a child, I was taught everyone believes in something, but we all have a choice and that freedom of choice should never be taken away. My father was in the Army and fought for those freedoms. In my history classes, I was taught the true history so I would know when history was just repeating itself. This country was built on the separation of church and state, and the freedom to follow whatever religion you wanted to. Our Founding Fathers understood the issues and persecution in England where the church and state were not separate. The monarch had control over the church and the government. When these men founded our nation, they wanted to ensure the hardships they went through in obtaining the freedoms we have now, would never happen again. As someone who has had the hardship of having a father serve in the Army, I cannot agree with the combination of church and state because everyone has a choice. God

gives us a choice in everything; forcing ideals or religious beliefs on someone removes their freedom of choice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kayleigh Abell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kayleigh Abell

From: Becky Wright-Schlaht <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:19:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern:

I am very concerned with the government being involved with religion. That should always be a person's inalienable right to choose their own religion. That is why we have a constitution to give us the right to worship as we wish! This great USA was built on this very right to choose religion or not!

I believe in the separation of church and state, and do NOT APPROVE of the bridging you are considering! Please reconsider what you are doing, and think of how our forefathers set this up for all of us to have the right to choose!

Thank you for your consideration in this matter!

Sincerely
Becky Wright-Schlaht

From: Ray Schlaht <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:19:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Leaders,

I humbly ask that you reconsider any Bills or other Legislation to affect the bridging of Church and State. Our forefathers, recognizing the necessity of the freedom of religion, understood that religious Liberty and freedom of speech were of paramount importance to the formation of a free nation. Please vote against any form of government involving itself where it does not belong; Government has no place deciding religious matters.

Thank you,
R. M. Schlaht

From: Melissa Clapper <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:19:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Commission,

Grace and peace to you.

I am writing not simply as a private citizen, but as the president of a Christian nonprofit ministry that serves our community every day through acts of compassion, disaster response, practical assistance, and the love of Jesus Christ. Because my life's work is centered on ministry, this issue is deeply personal to me, and I appreciate your willingness to consider my comments.

I respectfully ask that you preserve the longstanding principle that has protected both religious liberty and the integrity of the Church in our nation for generations.

Our ministry exists because people freely choose to support it. Every Bible we distribute, every family we assist, every child we encourage, every meal we help provide, and every act of service we perform is made possible through the voluntary generosity of individuals who believe in our mission. We have never believed that government funding is what gives ministry its strength. Rather, we believe that the Church is strongest when it depends first upon God and upon the willing hearts of His people.

For that reason, I am deeply concerned whenever government and religion move closer together financially or institutionally.

This concern is not born out of fear of government, nor out of opposition to public education or public service. It comes from a sincere desire to protect something I hold sacred: the freedom of every individual to seek God according to the dictates of his or her own conscience without governmental influence, preference, or pressure.

As Christians, we cherish the freedom to share our faith because it is freely received—not because it is promoted, financed, or endorsed by the state. Genuine faith cannot be legislated, purchased, or sustained by public funding. It flourishes when people respond freely to God's invitation.

History continually reminds us that whenever governments become entangled with religion, both institutions suffer. Religious liberty is weakened, minority voices become vulnerable, and faith itself risks becoming influenced by political power rather than spiritual conviction. Our nation's founders wisely understood this danger, and I believe their commitment to protecting liberty of conscience remains one of America's greatest blessings.

My concern extends beyond protecting my own faith tradition. Religious liberty means protecting the rights of every person—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist, agnostic, or anyone else—to live according to sincerely held convictions without the government favoring one belief system over another. That freedom belongs equally to all of us.

As the leader of a Christian ministry, I believe our calling is to earn the trust and support of those we serve through faithful service, integrity, compassion, and love—not through taxpayer funding. If people believe in our mission, they are free to support it. If they do not, they should never be compelled through taxation to fund religious work that does not reflect their own convictions.

In many ways, I believe maintaining this principle protects the Church as much as it protects the government. When ministries rely upon voluntary generosity rather than public funding, they remain accountable first to God and to the communities they serve. That independence preserves both the purity of our mission and the freedom of our witness.

My prayer is that future generations will inherit the same precious gift of religious liberty that has allowed countless ministries, churches, charities, and faith communities—including my own—to serve freely without governmental control or dependence.

Thank you for your service to our nation and for taking the time to read my thoughts. They are offered with humility, respect, and a sincere desire to preserve the freedoms that have enabled ministries like ours to care for our neighbors while honoring God according to our convictions.

May God grant you wisdom as you carry out your responsibilities.

Respectfully,

Melissa Clapper

President



PII

From: Lisa Krall <[REDACTED]> PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Lisa Krall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:21:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as someone who loves this country deeply and does not take its religious freedoms for granted. I have traveled abroad to countries where expressing one's faith openly, or sharing it with others, is forbidden by the state. Watching believers there navigate what we take for granted here has sharpened my conviction that the wall separating church and state is not an obstacle to religious liberty but its very foundation. I belong to a mainstream Christian denomination, and even so, I worry: in a rapidly changing culture, my own tradition could someday fall out of favor with whatever majority holds power. That is exactly why this protection cannot depend on majority approval.

If a right can be granted by majority vote, it can be taken away by majority vote, and then it was never really a right at all, only a permission. Our founding theory holds that rights come from the Creator and are only recognized, not created, by government, which is why they are written into the Constitution beyond the reach of election returns. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can generally protect itself at the ballot box. The Constitution regards the conscience of the smallest dissenter as sacred as that of the largest congregation, and gives no more authority to overrule one person's conscience than an entire community's. Whatever the polling shows about what most Americans want in the realm of religious expression, that popularity cannot be the measure, because matters of conscience were never submitted to a vote in the first place.

I am also convinced, from history and simple observation, that force cannot produce faith. Government can compel outward compliance, but it cannot reach the heart, and any attempt to legislate religious observance only manufactures hypocrisy rather than genuine devotion. What concerns me most is what establishment does to the favored religion itself. Fifteen centuries of state-sponsored Christianity produced, in the words of one careful historical survey, pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility among the people, and no shortage of superstition and persecution. A faith that needs the state's help to survive has already confessed its own weakness. The wiser counsel, offered by a president long ago, was to leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and to keep state and church forever separate.

Finally, I want to be clear that separation was not an accident or a modern invention grafted onto the Constitution. It was deliberate, and it was demanded largely by churches themselves, who had felt the weight of establishment from underneath. Madison, who drafted the First Amendment, told the Virginia ratifying convention that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that even its slightest interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for a full establishment to take root before objecting to it; they resisted the principle at its very first appearance. That is the standard I ask this Commission to hold itself to as well.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Lisa Krall
Colton, California

From: Ruben Tom <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar Of Freedom response

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

As an American citizen, I completely believe in the freedoms we have as it pertains to my own conviction in how I choose to adhere to the one I call my God.

I cannot, in good conscience accept special government protections or added indoctrinations that are trying to be passed into the great United States of America.

God bless America and God bless my President!

From: "What is Truth?" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 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 Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to express my concern that the Commission's draft report appears to minimize or dismiss the principle of the separation of church and state, a principle that has been fundamental to American religious liberty since before the founding of the United States.

Too often, discussions of this issue focus narrowly on Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, as though the concept of separation between church and state originated there. It did not. Jefferson's famous phrase describing a "wall of separation between Church and State" was a concise expression of ideas that had been developing in America for more than a century.

Early American history provides several important examples of the principle of separation of church and state in practice. Roger Williams argued that civil government and religious institutions should remain separate to protect the integrity of both. After being banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for defending freedom of conscience, he founded Rhode Island in 1636 as a place where government would not dictate matters of faith. Williams wrote of a "hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world," believing that government corrupted religion when it exercised spiritual authority and that religion was diminished when it relied on political power.

In 1786, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, written by Thomas Jefferson and championed by James Madison, ended government support for the Church of England in Virginia and guaranteed religious freedom for all citizens. The adoption of the First Amendment in 1791 prohibited Congress from establishing a national religion and protected the free exercise of religion. In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association describing the First Amendment as creating a "wall of separation between Church and State," expressing the idea that government should not interfere with religious belief or practice. These early actions helped establish a tradition of religious liberty that has remained a defining feature of American democracy.

The United States was founded not as a religious state, but as a constitutional republic committed to protecting the liberty of conscience for all. That commitment is one of our nation's greatest achievements. It has enabled an extraordinary diversity of religious communities to thrive because none depends upon government preference for its existence.

I respectfully urge the Commission to recognize the full historical record. The separation of church and state is not a modern invention, nor does it rest on a single letter written by Thomas Jefferson. It is rooted in the writings of Roger Williams, the struggles for religious liberty in colonial America, the Virginia Statute for Religious

Freedom, James Madison's defense of liberty of conscience, and ultimately the text and purpose of the First Amendment itself.

History repeatedly demonstrates that when governments become aligned with a particular religion, the result is rarely greater freedom. Instead, the state tends to favor one religious tradition over others, granting it influence, recognition, or legal advantages that are not equally available to everyone. Those who belong to minority faiths—or who hold no religious beliefs at all—often find themselves excluded, marginalized, or pressured to conform. Whenever the church and state are married, persecution follows. The Dark Ages is a history we would do well to never forget.

Genuine religion is a matter of personal conviction and conscience. While civil governments may rightly punish actions that harm others, they have no legitimate authority to regulate a person's duties toward God, such as worship, Sabbath observance, or religious profession. These belong exclusively to the realm of individual conscience.

When a nation adopts an official religion or grants special privileges to one faith, it inevitably infringes upon the liberty of conscience. Even if such a religion is supported by a majority of citizens, compelling religious observance undermines the voluntary nature of faith. True worship cannot be produced by law because it must arise from sincere conviction rather than external pressure.

The strongest protection for both religion and civil liberty is a complete separation of church and state. This principle safeguards the rights of believers and non-believers alike, allowing every person to worship God according to conscience—or not to worship at all—without interference from the state.

I respectfully encourage the Commission to continue defending policies that preserve governmental neutrality in matters of religion and uphold the equal rights and freedoms of all members of our community.

Sincerely,

Jan Daniels

--

God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him. - Martin Luther

From: Joseph Allen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment {Johnson Amendment} - Joe Allen

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To do away with the Johnson Amendment would open our houses of worship to become partisan political battlefields. The Johnson amendment follows the Constitution's First Amendment about the establishment of a state religion. Political action groups could funnel money to candidates through houses of worship. This would open houses of worship to participate in unethical and partisan politics. This should never happen. Thank you.

From: wei shen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:25:45 -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"- especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. With respect, that is exactly backwards — and as a person of faith, I find the idea alarming. The wall 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.

People of different religious beliefs came to this land more than three hundred years ago to worship God freely, fleeing from interference and persecution of established churches and government. Roger Williams - the founder of Rhode Island is a noble example. The religious freedom we enjoy today was dearly fought for and protected by men of wisdom and courage. This is one of the secrets of America's prosperity.

I grew up in China and know how Christians have suffered because they refuse to join the church with the state. They refuse to receive government favor or be censored by the government. They choose to worship according to their conscience in house churches.

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,

Wei Shen

Ironton, MO

From: Tina Pearson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep our constitution

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:26:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to you because I want to keep a constitution so we Can choose where we go to church. We should be able to choose when we go to church. God would want it that way. This is a free country. We should be able to do what we wanna do sincerely yours

Tina Pearson

From: Mirian Bildner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Mirian Bildner

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:26:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a private citizen from Sun City, Arizona, to ask that you keep religion separate from the machinery of government. That is not a slogan to me; it is the conviction that led me to write this letter, and I hope you will consider it carefully, because I believe it reflects both the letter and the spirit of the First Amendment.

Consider first that this question is not new, and it was not left unanswered by the founding generation. When Sabbatarians pressed Congress in 1829 and 1830 to halt Sunday mail and legislate religious observance, the committees chaired by Senator Richard M. Johnson answered with what amounts to an official state paper on the limits of government power. They wrote plainly that it is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false, and that our government is a civil and not a religious institution. They went further, warning that if a legislature defines even one point of religious duty, it has claimed the authority to define them all, down to the ceremonies of worship and the support of the clergy. And they observed that coercion cannot even achieve its stated aim: declaring a day holy will not convince the Jew nor the Sabbatarian, it will only dissatisfy both. This was not a court ruling handed down decades later; it was Congress itself, in the presence of men who had lived through the founding, declaring these matters outside its business. A commission proposing government-defined religious duties today is asking us to overrule that judgment.

Consider also what coercion does to faith itself. Forcing people indoors, or to church, will not make Christians of them—it may make hypocrites, but it will make no believers, because love for God cannot be legislated into being. History bears this out on a larger scale. James Madison, surveying fifteen centuries of established Christianity, found that the fruits of legal establishment were pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution. Even General and President Grant counseled that religion belongs to the family altar, the church, and the private school, sustained by private contribution, with state and church kept forever separate. A faith that needs the government's help to survive has already confessed its own weakness.

Finally, consider how these things escalate. The first Sunday law came from Constantine in A.D. 321, and from that beginning came mercenary converts, a state drawn into policing church disputes, Augustine's theory of righteous compulsion, and eventually the Inquisition. As one writer of that era put it, if the first step be taken, the last step is then as certainly taken, for the last step is in the first. No one today proposes an Inquisition. No one ever does, at the start. The danger of small, well-meant measures is that they concede the very principle from which everything else follows.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Mirian Bildner
Sun City, AZ

From: Office GraceBridgeConsulting <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] We Value Our Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:29:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

My wife and I would like to go on record to let it be known we VALUE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM and believe that the government should have nothing to say about how we worship, when we worship, or Who we worship.

Please support Religious Freedom

Thank you
Jack A. Nash

From: Santa Uzomaka <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:29:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good day, I'm writing in response to government officials who want to end church and state, which I disagree with, and, might I add, to get rid of the Johnson Amendment. History has shown us the consequences of when church and state are united, that perilous times commence as they did in the time of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST who was a victim of when church and state come together. I remind you of 538 A.D. to 1798 when the church and state ruled together resulting in 40 to 80 million people losing their lives and today as in the Middle East their church and state are together. JESUS said my kingdom is not of this world so why are we wanting to remove a boundary that is necessary for order? Church and state have no business being together because it's a foot in the door to controlling people's decisions by feeding on their emotions when it comes to their beliefs. Things are working in darkness that have yet to be brought to light after their feet get through that door. Ellen G White has written numerous amount of books about these things happening or being architected behind the scenes. There's no earthly or heavenly reason why church and state should be together because many questions come to mind. What church is to be influencing the government?? Are we going to have to deal with a church different from our beliefs ?? Many more as well. My concern and fear are the aftermath of taking away the wall between church and state. As far as the Johnson amendment why are we disrespecting GOD allowing the government to be involved in church with campaigning politicians in a holy place talking about worldly things?? Im confused.

Thank you for your time and may GOD be with you

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

From: Ted Baze <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:30:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear committee

I am writing this letter to strongly encourage you to take every action possible to preserve the wall of separation between church and State. Freedom of conscience is crucial, and the separation of church and State serves as a crucial element on that freedom.

Thank you work allowing me the privilege to give this input.

Pastor Ted Baze

From: nP B <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RESPONSE TO PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY DRAFT REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:31:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_presidential_Commission_on_Religious_Liberty.pdf

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, D.C. 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Chair Dr. Carson and Commission Members:

Religious Liberty is the very fabric of our Constitutional Republic. Religious Liberty was the very reason our Forefathers left Europe and made the treacherous voyage across the Atlantic and settled in the land we now call America.

156 years before Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, the Pilgrims left the Old World and its system of State Churches where the State Religion was forced upon them for a new, uncharted land where they could worship God according to the dictates of their conscience.

I believe history proves that God blessed the early efforts for Freedom of Conscience taken by the Pilgrims, the Puritans and Roger Williams. God blessed those early efforts precisely because God is a God of Freedom, allowing every human being to choose his or her desired course of action in their religious beliefs and in their life.

America's 250th Anniversary Celebration proves the wisdom developed in the 156 years prior to the Declaration of Independence's words; "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._That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...." (Declaration of Independence paragraph 2.)

Allow me the opportunity to show what those 55 words from the Declaration of Independence mean to me and to I believe the majority of American patriots throughout the last 250 years.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident:”

“We” were the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence “pledging their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.” To a man they knew that by signing their names they were committing an act of treason against the British Crown. Five of these men were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army, another two had sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the Revolutionary War. Several of them lost their wealth and one, Thomas Nelson, Jr., on discovering, during the Battle of Yorktown, that British General Cornwallis had taken over his home as headquarters, urged General Washington to open fire on his home. That was done, his home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt. (Taken from: <https://www.sarconnecticut.org/the-price-they-paid/>)

“Truths to be self-evident,” the “truths” followed and “self-evident” is “self explanatory.” Meaning every intelligent human being knows them to be true.

“[T]hat all men are created equal.” All mankind was created in the image of God. Even though it took some 87 years before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863, it was still true that “all men were created equal” prior to that Declaration.

“[T]hey are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” Endowed; “to be freely given” by their Creator (God), “certain unalienable Rights.” Years ago, reading an American History book printed in 1875 that book described the word “unalienable” this way: “un a lien able”. This old history book went on to say that the rights outlined in the Declaration of Independence were “un a lien able” because they came from God and no human being or government could place a “lien” against rights from God! Governments can give 14th Amendment type “privileges and immunities” but only God can give “Rights”! In 1998 I was present at Mt. Rushmore when the Presidential Trail was dedicated. That evening there was a presentation movie where the Declaration of Independence was read and in the second paragraph the word “unalienable” was pronounced “un a

lien able” not “un alien able.” Which confirmed that no human nor government could place a lien on rights because they come from God!

“[A]mong those are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” “Life” is a right from God! The same right that five of the signers of the Declaration of independence lost by being captured by the British and tortured before dying and that nine of the signers lost by fighting for your’s and my liberty in the Revolutionary War. “Liberty” defined in Black’s Law Dictionary, 3rd ED, 1933 as “Freedom: exemption from extraneous control. The power of the will to follow the dictates of unrestricted choice and to direct the external acts of the individual without restraint, coercion, or control from other persons.” Followed by citations from 7 different Court Cases including 2 US Supreme Court Cases. See p. 1107, top of column 2 in said Law Dictionary. “Pursuit of Happiness” defined by the same edition of Black’s Law Dictionary, p. 1469, top of column 2: “As used in constitutional law, this right includes personal freedom, freedom of contract, exemption from oppression or invidious discrimination, the right to follow one’s individual preference in the choice of occupation and the application of his energies, liberty of conscience, and the right to enjoy the domestic relations and the privileges of the family and the home.” Followed by citations from three court cases including the U.S. Supreme Court and one Constitutional Law Text Book.

To this point we have learned that the un a lien able right of the “pursuit of happiness” from the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence includes “liberty of conscience” according to the U.S. Supreme Court (Hopper v. California, 155 U.S. 648, 15 S. Ct. 207, 39 L. Ed. 267). What is “Liberty of Conscience”? Black’s Law Dictionary, 3rd Ed, p.1108, defines “Liberty of Conscience” as “Religious Liberty” (see column 3 mid page 1108 and the same Law Dictionary gives the definition of “Religious Liberty” on p. 1109, 1/3 of the way down column 2 as : “Freedom from dictation, constraint, or control in matters affecting the conscience, religious beliefs, and the practice of religion; freedom to entertain and express any or no system of religious opinions, and to engage in or refrain from any form of religious worship, not inconsistent with the peace and good order of society and the general welfare.”

The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty states that “Separation of Church and State” is not found in the Constitution. There are two ways to ‘find” such a statement:

1. By the actual words and
2. By the content and intent of other words in the Constitution:

Article VI, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution states: “The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution, but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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.”

In addressing the statement by the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty that the words “Separation of Church and State” is not found in the Constitution I submit that it is clearly stated via the content of other words found within the Constitution, including the first “Rights” found in the Bill of Rights aka the First Amendment to the Constitution, that “Separation of Church and State” is in fact prohibited by the following words:

“[B]ut no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.” (Article VI, Clause 3) when combined with “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of [religious] speech, or of the [religious] press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble [for religious meetings], and to petition the government for a redress of [religious] grievances.” (Amendment One).

Clearly taken together, as shown in the above paragraph, not requiring any religious test as qualification to any office or public trust under the United States is placing a clear separation between church and state as is Congress not being able to make a law respecting an establishment of religion, such as a law bridging Religious Freedom by allowing government to give or bestow upon any or all religions monies out of the public treasury, or having any actions whatsoever that affect religious speech, religious press, peaceable assembly for religious meeting or prohibiting the redress of religious grievances.

Religious Liberty is in the very fabric of America and American Religious Liberty is vastly different than the Religious systems the Pilgrims, Puritans and Roger Williams came to the New World to escape from.

That Old World Religion had government involvement in making laws that suppressed the "Liberty of Conscience" by suppressing free exercise of religion, supporting religion economically and even to dictating what religion or religions were acceptable to government.

Further I agree with the stance taken by Pillar of Freedom in their July 6, 2026 electronic mail to [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] which includes the history of religious freedom in America from Pilgrim, Puritan and Roger Williams' view point.

Honorable members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty, the wisdom of our Founding Fathers with respect to a hands off stance with regard to any government involvement in Religious Liberty has stood the test of time in a manner that no other government stance in history, since Christ walked on this earth, has eclipsed.

It is my plea that, rather than attempting to improve what has stood the test of time by taking action that appears in clear violation of the intent of the Constitution, Article VI, Clause 3 and the First Amendment Rights, guaranteed to all Americans with regard to Religion, leave the results that have stood the test of time for well over two centuries as they now are and thank God for the wisdom and sacrifices of our Founding Fathers.

Thank you for your reading and listening and your consideration and may God Bless America as we continue our 250th Celebrations.

Sincerely,

John Brownlee, JD

John Brownlee, JD, Veteran, and American by the Grace of God.

From: Joseph Broadmeadow <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapters 2 & 14 (Separation Doctrine) –
Broadmeadow

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:32:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: public_comment.docx

Joseph Broadmeadow
Capt. (Ret.) East Providence police Department
Warren, RI [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]
Sent from my iPad

Public Comment on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Submitted during the public comment period closing July 2026

To: Presidential Religious Liberty Commission — PII

Suggested subject line: PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapters 2 & 14 (Separation Doctrine) – Broadmeadow

From: Joseph Broadmeadow, Captain (Ret.), East Providence Police Department, Warren, Rhode Island

Date: July 12, 2026

I write as a retired police captain with twenty years of service, including organized-crime, narcotics, and federal task-force assignments. For two decades I took an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and applied its provisions — including the First Amendment — in real situations with real consequences. I am also an author and publisher. I submit this comment not in opposition to religious liberty, which I support without reservation, but because a report meant to protect it should be constitutionally accurate. In several important places, this draft is not. What follows are specific, good-faith recommendations for revision before the report is finalized.

1. The separation-of-church-and-state sections misstate constitutional history

The draft is correct on one narrow point: the phrase “wall of separation between church and state” does not appear in the Constitution. It comes from Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists. But the surrounding argument in Chapter 2 and the Executive Summary contains claims that will not survive scrutiny:

- **The “mid-twentieth-century invention” claim is inaccurate.** The report states that reliance on Jefferson’s metaphor only “took off” in the mid-1900s with *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947). In fact the Supreme Court treated Jefferson’s letter as “almost an authoritative declaration” of the First Amendment’s scope in *Reynolds v. United States* (1878) — nearly seventy years earlier. The report should correct this.
- **A contested legal interpretation is presented as settled truth.** The draft asserts that the Establishment Clause means only that government may not prefer one religion, take over a church’s functions, or coerce observance. That “coercion-only” reading is a genuine position, but it is the view of a minority of Justices (Thomas, the late Scalia, Gorsuch); it is not the settled law of a Court majority, and many scholars reject it. Recommending that the Department of Justice issue binding guidance adopting one side of a live constitutional dispute is not neutral public education. The report should acknowledge the disagreement rather than declare one reading “the proper understanding.”
- **The “God is dead” origin story is not supportable.** The draft traces modern separation doctrine to European philosophy — naming Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre.

This is chronologically impossible as stated: the decisions the report criticizes (*Everson*, 1947; *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962; *Abington v. Schempp*, 1963) all predate Foucault's influence in American academic life by decades. This passage should be struck or heavily qualified.

- **The reference to Justice Black's Klan past is an ad hominem. Noting that the author of Everson had once belonged to the Ku Klux Klan does nothing to establish what the Clause means — and it is undercut by the fact that Everson actually upheld* public reimbursement for busing children to Catholic schools. The point should be removed.*

2. The historical narrative is selective

The draft relies on Washington's Farewell Address, John Adams's "moral and religious people" line, and the Declaration's "endowed by their Creator." These are accurate quotations. But a report on "the foundations of religious liberty" should not omit the counter-record:

- **Article VI** of the Constitution forbids any religious test for public office.
- **The Treaty of Tripoli (1797)**, ratified unanimously by the Senate and signed by President John Adams, states that the government of the United States is "not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion."
- **James Madison**, whose *Memorial and Remonstrance* the report cites approvingly, also opposed congressional chaplains and government religious proclamations; **Jefferson** declined to issue Thanksgiving proclamations as president, on separation grounds.

A document that quotes the founders on one side of this question, while omitting the same founders on the other, is advocacy, not history. The final report should present both.

3. Composition and the one-sided record

The draft candidly states that its method was witness testimony rather than experts or statistical study. That candor is welcome, but it has consequences. Several anecdotes describe active or recently decided litigation in terms drawn from a single party. *Kennedy v. Bremerton* is described as a coach "fired for praying"; the school district's account — and the dissent, which included photographs — described public midfield prayer joined by students, and administrative leave rather than firing. The Anchorage shelter matter is likewise presented in one-sided terms. The final report should at minimum note the procedural posture and outcome of cases it cites.

The Commission is composed of eleven Christians and one Orthodox Jew, with no Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or nonreligious member, and the catalog of harms skews heavily toward Christian claimants. For a report that repeatedly invokes "all faiths," the near-total absence of substantive Muslim religious-liberty questions — prison accommodation, workplace dress, surveillance of houses of worship — is conspicuous and should be remedied.

4. The economic claims need sourcing and caveats

The draft cites religion's roughly \$2.6 trillion annual contribution, along with figures for shelter beds, adoption rates, and international aid. The \$2.6 trillion figure traces to advocacy research that has been criticized for counting the entire revenue of religiously affiliated businesses and hospital systems. These numbers should either carry their methodology and its criticisms, or be removed.

Respectfully submitted

I support the robust protection of private religious exercise, including the real cases — acknowledged in this comment — in which officials have wrongly suppressed it. Precisely because that cause is worth defending, the final report should rest on accurate history and a neutral statement of constitutional law, not on contested interpretation presented as settled truth. I ask the Commission to revise the sections identified above accordingly.

Joseph Broadmeadow

Captain (Ret.), East Providence Police Department

Warren, Rhode Island

From: LOUIS TRUEB [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTS - DRAFT RLC REPORT - LOUIS P. TRUE JR.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:34:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

COMMENTS ON DRAFT REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

I have many concerns about the narrow makeup of the commission and many of the historical and constitutional arguments in the report concerning, especially, the relationship between the establishment and the exercise clauses of the first amendment. I will, however, leave it to others to comment on those important concerns. My brief comments principally address two areas: Factions and what seems to me to be a failure of imagination on the part of the Commission. I thank the Commission for this brief opportunity to comment on its report.

FACTIONS:

A number of the Commission's recommendations will, I believe, tend to risk magnifying an existing majority religious faction, the operation of which will impair the religious freedom of many Americans. We were warned of this danger very early in our nation's history – most prominently perhaps in Federalist Paper #10. In it, James Madison described how an "overbearing majority" could jeopardize "justice and the rights of minority parties". He reasoned that our nation needed to defend against that outcome, including with respect to matters of faith, "as long as the reason of man continues fallible." It may be argued that the Judaeo-Christian faith traditions currently represent just such a threat in the U.S. with evidence provided by the recommendations of the Commission's draft report. It may also be argued that there is no evidence that human's have become less fallible since the founding of our nation.

IMAGINATION:

I am not given to cinematic allusions when discussing matters of great importance, but perhaps . . . What we have here is a failure to imagine.

Surely the members of the Commission can imagine life under slightly different circumstances. For example, it is not much of a stretch to imagine awaking tomorrow in our nation, with most laws as they now exist, but with a majority of the population that does not adhere to Judaeo-Christian faith traditions. Instead, a majority might be Hindu, Atheist, Muslim, or Buddhist, among many possibilities. The exercise of imagination then only requires us to predict how Christians, for example, might feel if faced with:

- U.S. currency bearing a motto such as "In Allah we trust", "In the Buddha we trust", or "In ourselves we trust", etc.
- The Pledge of Allegiance with "under God" replaced with other faith references.
- State laws requiring every classroom to display single, specified texts guiding human behavior from Hindu scripture, the Koran, or writings of those who deny the existence of all things supernatural.

- Christmas replaced as a national holiday by a celebration from a non-Christian religion.
- Emails from a federal cabinet member's official government account to all department employees explicitly celebrating a specific non-Christian religious observance, such as Ramadan or Divali – instead of "He is Risen."

Further elaboration of these examples would be easy. The point is that many persons of any faith might find such displays offensive, as many regard the current situation. I would hope that imagining such circumstances would give most of my fellow citizens, and members of the Commission, pause before adopting some of the recommendations in the Commission's draft report. I ask the Commission to show greater, decent respect for the opinions of those who may not share your faith tradition or, who would find such actions by a majority faith to be offensive, even if they shared that faith.

CONCLUSION:

With respect, I urge the Commission and my country to consider the view that the surest approach to guaranteeing religious freedom for all is to keep government out of religion to the extent possible. Faith should be an entirely private matter.

From: Joanne Carder <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:35:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good evening

My husband and I , as practicing Christians, having lived in this country for over 80 years, fully support the First Amendment which states that this country was founded on separation of church and state. There should never be a reason to change that.

Thank you.

Bernard and Joanne

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

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:36:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing this letter to express my deep concerns regarding the report from the Religious Liberty Commission. I am absolutely appalled that we have reached the time in our country when the founding principles of our nation is not only misunderstood but opposed as well. Sadly, it is presented under the guise of defending our constitutional rights. If you would carefully look at the history of the United States you will find that the position that you advocate strikes at the very heart of the American spirit. If the United States of America no longer understands the doctrine of "soul liberty," then we are likely to repeat the mistakes of the past.

The reason there is so much confusion on this issue is because many do not understand where the wall of separation takes place. The wall of separation between church and state is in regard to the first four commandments of the moral law. According to Romans 13 governments are ordained to punish those who are breakers of the laws of the land. These laws are defined by the last six commandments of God's moral law. But nowhere in the scripture do we find God ever placing the first four commandments under the jurisdiction of the government because they have to do with our conscience regarding how and when and who we will worship. This is not, I repeat, this is not the role of government nor for that matter is it the role of the church to dictate to one's conscience who, when, and how we will worship regarding God. Additionally, I suggest reading the chapter "Liberty of Conscience Threatened" in *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White at this link: <https://greatcontroversy.app/en/chapter-35/liberty-of-conscience-threatened>

I highly recommend that you read the article "Soul Liberty" by Charles Small Longacre at this link: <https://www.libertymagazine.org/article/soul-liberty>

This is one of the most fascinating summaries on the doctrine of soul liberty. I ask of you to please prayerfully consider what is written in this article, then you will understand where I and millions of other American are coming from regarding our opposition to the proposed document from your committee regarding taking the wall of separation of church and state.

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

Thank you,
Raymond DeCarlo
Hagerstown, Maryland

From: Todd Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church/State Wall ? .. of course!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:37:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png; image(1).png; image(2).png; image(3).png

Dear Esteemed Members of the RLC,

Of course there is a separation, (wall/ hedge), between church and state.

If there was not, we would be like every other nation before us. Even a novice of history can see it.

If we indeed have inalienable rights, just what rights are those that are untouchable? ... So protected in another realm altogether separate from man-made structures?

They are each individual's rights from God alone. (Based on the first tablet of the Biblical, Protestant decalogue - our responsibilities to God alone. The second tablet being our responsibilities to our fellow man -- a man I'll mention in a moment was shown this and it is explained in our nation's park honoring him in Providence, RI.)

Books have been filled in definitively making the factual, historical case of church / state separation in America. Any debate on it was settled for those who look at facts long ago. But, apparently, here you ago selfishly trying to fuse the two again in any way you can.

FACT: There is a wall / hedge of separation between church and state in the U.S. Constitution. It IS THE First Amendment, and Jefferson, Madison and others said so!

Here are one or two pieces of evidence among volumes ...

Since there is such a campaign to deride Jefferson's Danbury letter, here is the main paragraph in it. We should note that he upholds THE First Amendment in the Constitution itself as the establishment of THE WALL!

Conclusion: in light of much sad history, they intentionally established the wall.

"Believing with you 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 legislative 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 would "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 rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties."

— President Thomas Jefferson

I would invite you to find this writing as well on the Jefferson Memorial building right there in Washington, DC:

"Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens ... are a departure from the plan of the holy Author of our religion ... No man shall be compelled to frequent or support 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."

-- Excerpted from A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, drafted in 1777. First introduced in the Virginia General Assembly in 1779, after he had become Governor. Passed by the Virginia Assembly in 1786, while Jefferson was serving as Minister to France. The last sentence is excerpted from a letter to James Madison, August 28, 1789, as he was returning to America to assume his position as Secretary of State.

We aren't blind. Your document creates more of a path for Faith to travel over the wall and engage in the sphere of State, and therefore vice versa. We don't need to guess what this is certain to create. You are, indeed, playing with fire. The records

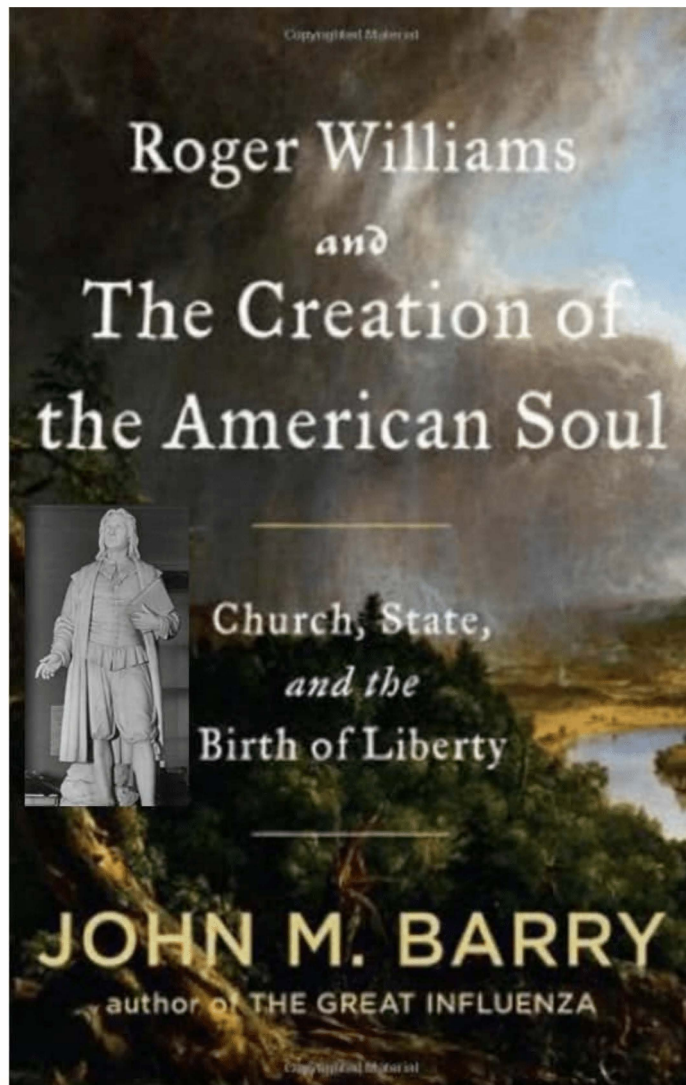
will then show your involvement in this tyranny and Bible prophecy isn't kind to the result you will face. These are not my words, but God's. In His love for your soul, I earnestly appeal to you to reverse course.
Revelation 13:11-18

Roger Williams:

Established in America long before our Constitution.

There's a reason he is on the Protestant wall of reformers in Geneva. (The only American.)

He had to flee persecution from his own people already happening in Massachusetts. This is more than a century before our nation was created!



“Williams described the true church as a beautiful and magnificent garden, unsullied and pure, resonant of Eden. The world he described as ‘the Wilderness.’ That word too had resonance with him, a personal resonance. Then he charged that Massachusetts had mixed the two, and he used for the first time a phrase which he would use again in the future, a phrase which although not attributed to him has echoed through American history.

‘When they have opened a gap in the hedge or wall of Separation between the Garden of the Church and the Wilderness of the world,’ ... He was saying that mixing church and state corrupted the church. He was saying that when one mixes religion and politics one gets politics.” pp. 307, 308

“... to him (Williams) the words ‘wilderness’ and ‘world’ were almost interchangeable, and they connoted corruption ... Government was comprised of people in the world. He recoiled at the idea of allowing this worldly wilderness to intrude upon the Edenic garden of the church, and he was convinced that any breach of the wall between them – any involvement either of a magistrate in churchly things or of the church in government – would bring the wilderness into the garden.

Therefore, the heart of his disagreement with his critics and enemies, the axis upon which all else turned, was their conviction that the state was and must be ‘nursing father’ to the church ... Virtually all of England, all of the Puritan colonies in America, and all of Europe – Catholic or Protestant – believed that, and believed also that without it not only could society not be moral but that it would not survive.”

-- Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul; John M. Barry, p. 330

Oh, members of the RLC! Did you really miss these facts of history? Maybe a few of you, but I suspect that most of you know very well what you are intending to do. On that, I sincerely hope I'm wrong.

Without this wall, the history of tyranny is endless. Why would you want to go back to such a dark, chain-filled world and lose eternity?



In your document you quote de Tocqueville, but conveniently don't include his most prescient findings. He said the beauty of America was that when a problem arises in a community the citizens come together on their own -- **without ANY form of government** -- and find a solution. He called it a miracle.

He also described a terrible road America has been on now for a long time ... government as the solution for social needs.

"Society will develop a new kind of servitude which covers the surface of society with a network of complicated rules, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate.

"It does not tyrannise but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd."

-- Alexis de Tocqueville

He was describing our Third Sector (Not-for-Profits) which, sadly, we have allowed government to also infiltrate greatly. In your document, this sad trend will be accelerated even more and more precious freedom will be lost.

Someone more recent in history also understood all of this quite well. We haven't forgotten it ...



"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 - 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."

-- President John F. Kennedy; Remarks to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12 1960]

Oh, how much freedom we have already lost!

So, when you say there is no separation of church and state in America, we recognize the lie.

For me and all others in my church and community, we strongly appeal for you to reverse course. The final prophecy in God's Word is nearing fulfillment, and there are many precious souls to save for His Kingdom before you may return us to tyranny. I pray to God you will awake and abandon the dark path of history you are returning to.

Respectfully Yours,

Todd Parrish

P.S. <https://youtu.be/hWvJaRhnpO0?si=Exh8S0Mx4NHV6d3B>

P.S. 2

Today we celebrate 250 years of independence in this beautiful country, a nation founded without a king and to a church without a pope.

The irony is that, in celebrating these freedoms, many forget the very foundation that made them possible: the Constitution does not establish our rights, rather it recognizes that our rights are not granted by government or by the will of the majority. They are inalienable rights, given by God.

In 2020, we saw tyranny rise to trample those who dared to claim that God, not the government, owned their bodies. In the name of the common good, men were coerced into violating their conscience and their duty to God or else lose their inalienable rights. Today, men and women continue to give away their freedoms left and right in exchange for petty promises from politicians who, in due time, prove themselves to be liars who hate liberty.

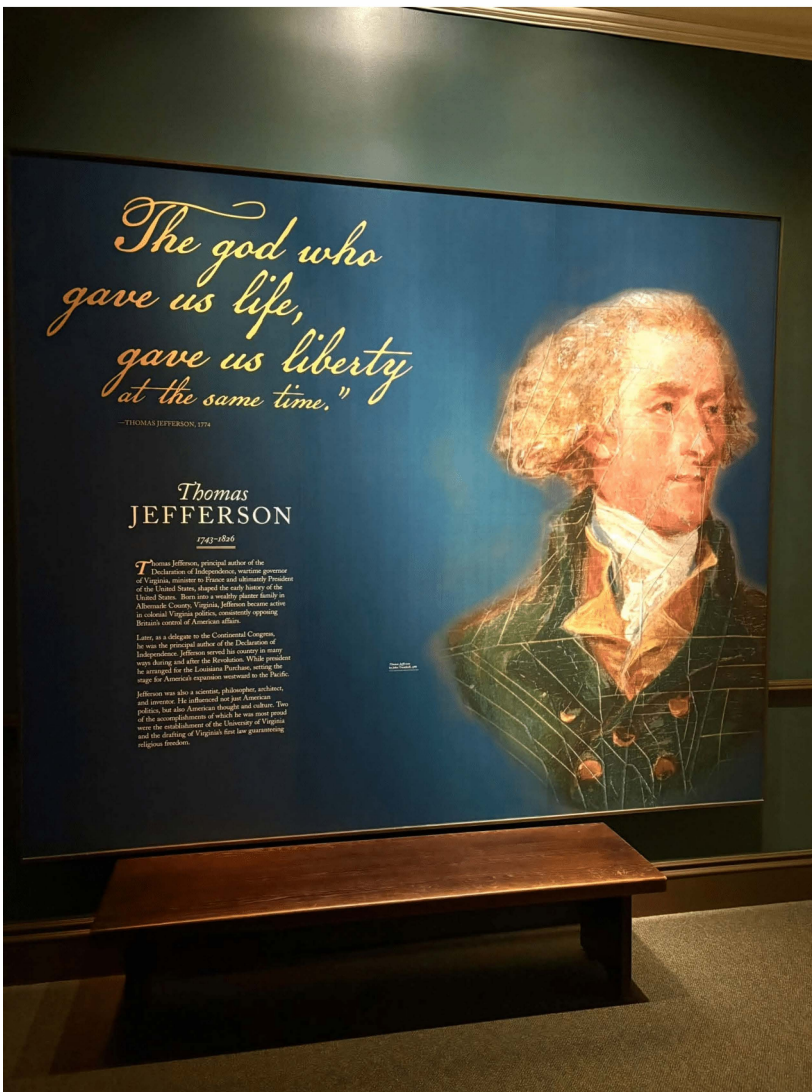
True religious liberty is not the recognizing of the value of religion, nor is it based on whatever serves the “common good.” It is the recognition that every person is accountable only to God in matters relating to His duty to God and therefore must be free to follow conscience.

That freedom protects the Christian’s right to worship, just as it protects the atheist’s right to not worship. That is one of the greatest strengths of the American experiment. Religious liberty and liberty of conscience is for all.

Revelation tells us that this will change and our freedom of religion will be removed. We must be thankful while it lasts and stand up for the freedom that is given us of God, not given by our government. Because a freedom given by the government can be taken by the government. But a right given by God is inalienable.

Only in Christ do we find true freedom.

God bless America, land that I love.



American Revolution Museum Yorktown, VA

From: S Camp <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please Read This

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:39:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

The first amendment **MUST** stand as is, separation of church and state **MUST** remain in place. Shortly after this land was discovered by Europeans, many fleeing papal persecution during the Middle Ages fled here. Revelation 12:16 shows us these events in the earth, (sparsely populated land) helping the woman (church) by swallowing up the flood (papal inquisition). The protestants fled here and flourished. When a religious system is able to use the state to enforce her decrees and do her bidding, persecution always follows. It happened before and it will happen again. The so-called Christian nationalist movement is blind to these facts. God's people are described as keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus. Sunday is the day that they wish to be enforced. Sunday is not the sabbath of the fourth commandment. The last great crisis in the bible is about worship and loyalty to God by keeping His commandments. Please consider this wisely. Egypt was destroyed for making void the law of God in Exodus 5:2-9 and what followed was the ten plagues. Seven last plagues are forecasted on those who make void the law of God in the last generation, Psalm 119:126; Revelation 13:11-18; Revelation 16:1-2.

The first amendment must stand and this secular government must remain secular and not establish a national religion.

Sincerely,

Brother Camp

Youngstown, OH

From: Office GraceBridgeConsulting <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~ [Religious Liberty Commission Report] – [Jack Nash].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:40:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please be informed I wish to make it known I support Religious Freedom and it is my position that it is the right of each citizen of the USA to determine when and how to worship free from pressure of any kind from any government organization or entity.

Thank you for your time,
Jack Nash

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:40:20 -0400

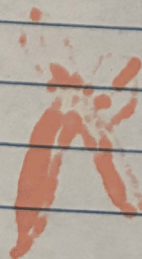
Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: IMG_8592.jpg

Dear members of the Religious
Liberty Commission,

I write as a Native
American who deeply values the
God given freedom of Conscience
that has long been recognized as
one of America's greatest principles
my Conscience belongs To God alone,
not to the State.

History has already shown the
painful consequences of government
interfering with matters of faith.
Native Americans were pressured,
displaced and often denied the
freedom To practice their beliefs
and preserve their way of life.
That history should never be
repeated in any form.

 Diane Madriag
North Fork Ca 93643
Ca.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Connie Jones <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom Response

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:40:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

Connie Jones

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - religious liberty commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:42:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States (since my birth 65 years ago). 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 to believe in Him 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 of the 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 your consideration of these views!

From: Jayne Patricia <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Jayne Litts

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:42:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

IT IS VERY ALARMING TO ME TO READ THE COMMISSION THAT WANTS TO REPLACE THE WALL OF SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE WITH A BRIDGE. I BELIEVE THIS BRIDGE WILL NOT KEEP THE CHURCH FREE. A BRIDGE DOESN'T STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH BUT OPENS THE DOOR FOR GOVERNMENT MONEY AND POLITICAL FAVORS WHICH WE KNOW IS DANGEROUS FOR OUR GOVERNMENT (BEING CONTROLLED BY CHURCHES).

THE JOHNSON AMENDMENT WILL POLITICIZE OUR CHURCHES . I DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD FUND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGING IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES. THIS WOULD OPEN UP A CAN OF WORMS. WHY CHANGE SOMETHING THAT HAS WORKED FOR ALL OF THESE YEARS.

PLEASE DO NOT BUILD THIS BRIDGE. PLEASE KEEP A WALL THAT PROTECTS THE CHURCH.

JAYNE LITTS
UNION, MANE

From: Angela Diane Harebottle <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:43:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good evening,

I am writing to you as a 10 generation US Citizen with roots that go even deeper into the soil of this great nation. I have ancestors who fled to this nation for the freedom to follow their own religious beliefs. I trace my lineage to a Protestant denomination that began here in this Country and has spread throughout the world sharing the message of Christ's unconditional love for us and His soon return.

I appreciate the ability to worship differently than others by worshiping on the seventh day of the week as mentioned in the 10 Commandments even though the majority of Christians have changed to the first day of the week. I value being able to raise my children as seventh generation believers and have the freedom to believe as we choose. I value you being able to worship as you choose. I value my atheist cousins being able to choose to not worship God because no bit of forcing will change their hearts, only loving them and being their friends will. I value the fact that minority religions from around the world can escape persecution and come here to worship freely. I am no less a follower of the God of Heaven because my neighbor calls God Allah. Or another calls Him Yahweh. Why should we ignore and cancel our rich heritage of diversity for one narrow version of faith? And why do we claim we are a "Christian" nation when we weren't founded as one? Most of the "In God we trust" and "under God" mottos weren't added until the 1950s and the rise of Fundamentalism.

It is critical to continue allowing diversity to thrive in our country. Our original motto was, E. pluribus unum - Out of many, one. We are who we are because of our diversity and being united in our desire to have a safe place to live and raise our families in.

Once our country decides to unite with a narrow version of "Christianity", we loose our light and witness. Once Church and State combine, we become like Rome in the Dark Ages and become stagnant. And we begin to persecute those who will not bow down. Do we really want to become that? The US Government should not be controlled by a religious group nor should a religious group be controlled by the US Government. We need to keep separate in order to continue flourishing.

And Dr Carson - please be an Esther or a Daniel. You know what is happening. This is in your spiritual DNA. So many generations of us have been raised reading your book and wanting to be like you.

Thank you for your time,

Angela D Harebottle

From: Marla Savik <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Religious liberty commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that everyone has the right to worship in the way they choose, as long as they are following the laws within our United States.

As Thomas Jefferson said, no laws should be made in regards to religion. I believe that included what day to worship.

Jesus Christ gave us a day of rest however he never forced anyone to rest/worship on that day. He let each individual choose.

We value our freedoms here in the U.S. and I beg you to not legislate or make any rule as to what day everyone has to rest/worship on, that would be against all we stand for!

Sincerely,
Marla Savik

Sent from my iPhone

From: Glon Lanagan <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for Religious Freedom and the Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the U.S. Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my support for protecting religious freedom and preserving the separation of church and state.

I believe every person should have the freedom to worship according to their conscience—or not worship at all—without coercion from the government or from any religious group. Faith is meaningful only when it is freely chosen.

As a Christian, I believe Jesus invited people to follow Him; He never forced them. Protecting religious liberty safeguards the rights of people of every faith and those of no faith.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your work in protecting this important freedom.

Respectfully,

Glon Lanagan Jr.

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Kathleen Comerford <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear sirs and madams,

Please. Read the Constitution itself. Read the Federalist Papers themselves. Don't rely on what others have told you.

Religious liberty has never been about a monolithic Christian consensus. The Founders were deeply anti-Catholic, as are many modern Evangelicals. Thomas Jefferson was fascinated by Islam. No one among the Founders was what modern Evangelicals would call a Biblical literalist.

Not even "Biblical literalists" agree on exactly what that phrase means, and most Christians by far do not subscribe to the belief that for some of the Bible to be true, every word in it must be. Christians do not even all agree on what exactly the Ten Commandments are (ask a Catholic, and then ask an Evangelical--you will find that their Ten are different).

The Constitution of the United States, born out of a reaction against an understanding of kingship that nearly deified those kings, strongly resists any argument for establishing any kind of national church--in stark, clear, short, unmissable words.

Be honest with yourselves and with the citizens of the United States. If you genuinely believe in a particular religious interpretation, believe me, I have no interest at all in challenging that. As a lifelong Catholic and a trained historian of religion, I am secure in my church's tenets. I am equally secure in my knowledge of US law. These are separate interests, and as Jesus so eloquently said, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's." That did not, and must not, include the ability to legislate belief for citizens; Jesus used stark, clear, short, unmissable words.

Sincerely,
Kathleen M. Comerford

From: nRnldn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Presidents Commission on Religious Liberty by Ron Myer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:45:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:
I have read through the religious liberty draft report. Further I wholehearted agree with the Pillar of Freedom response to this draft report. As a life-long retired Tax Professional, client interviews acquainted me with the myriad motivations people have to make charitable contributions for tax purposes. It is alarming to me the Commission would recommend elimination of the Johnson amendment. It is clear to me such a move would bring political corruption into America's churches, church institutions and the like. Please do not do this. It is imperative for freedom of conscience that there remain a "chinese wall" between the realm of political life and religious life. Be bold. Honor our country's history. In recent decades the "wall" has weakened whereas on the contrary it should be strengthened. Yet your report recommends it be repealed!! Shame. I am familiar with the way this Commission has treated former commissioner Carrie Prejean. Such treatment is antithetical to the stated aims of the Commission. Stop being hypocrites....it is not a

good look, especially in this day and age when respect for government is at an all time low.

Sincerely Submitted

Ron Myer, Gonzalez Florida

From: Grant Goodge <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Requested feedback

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:47:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Religious_Liberty_Commission.jpg

Memo: To Mr. Dan Patrick, Chairman of the Religious Liberty Commission.

RE: Your statement of April 13, 2026, that “There is no such thing as ‘separation of church and state’ in the Constitution.”

Although there is no exact phrasing of those words in the Constitution, The First Amendment of that document states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This statement has historically harmonized with Thomas Jefferson’s belief that there should be a “wall of separation between church and state”.

It is often said that History repeats itself. Therefore, I would kindly request that you and the committee review what happened when the Roman civil government joined the Roman Church for more than a thousand years during the Dark Ages. Historians estimate at least 50 million souls were tortured and or killed because they would not agree with the rules/ beliefs of that combined church and state. That is the reason millions of souls fled from Europe to the New World. They wanted to be free to worship as they chose.

I humbly plead that you and the Committee do NOT take our currently free Country down that same punitive Roman path.

Sincerely,

July 12, 2026

From: Dale Mulkins <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding the issue of separation of church and state and religious freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:47:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Our country was founded on the concept of religious freedom and of the peoples right to self govern. It was eventually written up in several profound statements (and signed by those authors) that lead to the establishment of our nation. Those statements were based on observations and experiences of how well or not well the ideals of governance were implemented in other nations and I believe were divinely guided. As a person of faith and with a firm belief in God's dealing with the nations he allows to exist and to attempt to guide from the beginning of that nation toward right principles I believe he has setup a system to guide our nation "The United States of America". To strike down any part of that system is an attempt to rate mans judgment above God's. Jesus said render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's. Based on this council, I believe there is to be a separation of church and state.

From: Isha Colbert <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:47:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of church and state is appropriate.

I 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.

Isha Colbert

[REDACTED] PII

From: Nathan Ridgley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Maintaining separation between church and state. Thank

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:48:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission, as well as to whom it may concern,

I am concerned about the Commission's proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." As a person of faith, I believe this approach may be unwise and could have unintended spiritual implications. Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." The church does not rely on government authority to fulfill its mission. Rather, it depends on the power of God, the freedom of conscience, and the ability to share its message without political influence.

The wall of separation was not intended to silence the church, but to protect it. When the church seeks government favor or power, it may risk compromising its spiritual independence. Both history and Scripture suggest that close alignment between religious and civil authority can place pressure on conscience and affect the integrity of religious witness.

I respectfully urge caution in pursuing a path that could blur the distinction between church and state. Maintaining this separation helps preserve religious liberty, supports the integrity of faith, and allows the church to remain accountable to its spiritual convictions.

- Nathan

Nathan Ridgley

PII [REDACTED]

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

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:49:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: Department of Justice

CC: Religious Liberty Commission

RE: Constitutional Separation of Church and State and Recommendations 1 and 9

We write as citizens, Christians, and students of history to respond to the Religious Liberty Commission's June 26, 2026 recommendations, particularly Recommendation 1 (guidance on the Establishment Clause and "separation of church and state") and Recommendation 9 (repeal of the Johnson Amendment).

At the public release of the report, Commission Chair Dan Patrick asserted that "the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." We respectfully submit that this claim is historically and constitutionally **untenable**, and that if it informs the Commission's understanding of "proper" guidance, it risks directing the Department of Justice away from the very principles the Constitution was designed to secure.

I. Why the Constitution was framed against a union of church and state

The framers were not theorizing in a vacuum. They had seen, in Europe and in the colonies, what happens when church and state are united: Baptists jailed in Virginia, Quakers hanged in Massachusetts, Obadiah Holmes publicly whipped for religious dissent, William Tyndale executed for translating the Bible into English, and countless others punished under religious establishments. It was not atheists who carried out these persecutions, but religious authorities armed with civil power.

James Madison's outrage at jailed Baptists led him to condemn religious persecution as a "diabolical, hell-conceived principle" and to devote his career to securing full religious liberty and disestablishment. Thomas Jefferson's 1779 bill for religious freedom and Madison's 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance* were direct rejections of proposals to tax citizens to support Christianity as an established religion. The American experiment was consciously designed as a break from the European and colonial union of church and state.

II. How separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution

It is true that the exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear verbatim in the Constitution. But the **substance** of separation is clearly codified in two provisions:

1. **Article VI, Clause 3:** "...No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." This breaks with centuries of established churches that required confessional conformity for office and structurally disestablishes religion at the federal level.
2. **First Amendment, Establishment Clause:** "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." "Establishment of religion" refers to the practice, common in Europe, of legally privileging a particular church, funding it with tax revenues, and enforcing its doctrines through civil penalties. **The clause bars Congress from creating such a union.**

James Madison, principal architect of the Constitution and the Establishment Clause, explicitly described the Constitution as guarding separation: “Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States...” Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to the Danbury Baptists, wrote that the First Amendment “thus [builds] a wall of separation between Church & State.” Madison and Jefferson were not outsiders; **they were the very authors of the constitutional framework.**

To claim that separation “has no constitutional basis” is to ignore both the text and the framers’ own explanations of that text.

III. The role of separation in protecting other First Amendment freedoms

The separation of church and state is not an enemy of religious liberty; **it is its guardian.** Free speech and freedom of the press have flourished in America in large part because the federal government is not an arm of any church. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, banning books and punishing their possession. Galileo, Kepler, Milton, Kant, Locke, Maimonides, Mill, Bentham, Hume, Gibbon, and many others faced censorship or worse at the behest of religious authorities backed by civil power.

The Constitution of the United States guarantees *liberty of conscience*. Nothing is dearer or more fundamental. Pope Pius IX, in his Encyclical Letter of August 15, 1854, said: “**The absurd and 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 his Encyclical Letter of 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.”

Modern calls from papal authorities for tighter control of internet speech continue this pattern. When church and state are united, conscience and expression are policed not by neutral law but by **sectarian doctrine**. What has happened in the past, will be repeated if we do not learn our lessons from the past. Rome asserts that she never changes.

The American Constitution was framed precisely to prevent such a union. As Madison later wrote, “Religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.”

Asserting that there is no separation of church and state without specifying that it’s only the phrase that is not there is misinformation to the public and get’s the “foot in the door” to abolish Liberty of Conscience and hand over the rod of force to the church, thus opening persecution once again upon the people.

IV. The Johnson Amendment and the corruption of both church and state

The Commission’s Recommendation 9 urges repeal of the Johnson Amendment, which restricts tax-exempt religious organizations from direct partisan campaigning. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of His teaching: “Render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” This is not a call for religious withdrawal from public life, but a clear distinction between the things of God and the things of Caesar.

Removing the Johnson Amendment would invite a transactional politics in which religious leaders trade congregational votes and money for legislative favors, and politicians trade policy for pulpit endorsements. **This is inherently immoral.** Madison observed 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.” A union of church and state corrupts both; **separation protects both.**

V. The danger of re-establishing church and state

John Adams warned that canon law and feudal law were tyrannical, but that the worst form of government was a union of the two. Madison wrote that “In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.”

Efforts to deny or weaken separation of church and state today risk re-creating the very system the framers rejected: a government that privileges one religious faction, uses churches as vote-delivery systems, and polices conscience and speech in the name of “truth.” This is not religious liberty; it is religious establishment by another name.

We must also state directly that many Americans do not view these developments as hypothetical risks, but as the literal fulfillment of long-standing prophetic warnings. These citizens hold—based on their reading of Revelation 13 and the writings of a 19th-century Protestant prophetess—that the dismantling of the constitutional separation of church and state is not merely a political trend but a predicted step toward the formation of an “image to the beast”: a civil-religious structure modeled on the historic union of church and state embodied in the papacy, where ecclesiastical authority and civil authority are consolidated. They point to recent actions, including the public announcement of a White House Office on Faith—an unprecedented development in American history—as evidence that the prophetic sequence has begun to unfold exactly as foretold. When a prediction comes true, exactly as foretold, then you know the person is a true prophet, because only God can reveal the future.

Prophecy does not suggest that coercive religious legislation *might* occur; **it declares that it will occur**, specifically through the enactment of a national Sunday observance law enforced by civil penalties. Such legislation would constitute a direct repudiation of the First Amendment’s disestablishment principles and would mark the moment when civil government compels religious conformity **in violation of conscience**. Prophecy further warns that once the United States enacts such a law, the nation will suffer catastrophic decline. The passing of the Sunday law marks **apostasy** of this nation against God’s authority of the 7th day Sabbath and starts the final 3 ½ years until Jesus second coming in the clouds of heaven.

Whether or not one shares this prophetic conviction, the constitutional implication is unmistakable: movements to weaken or deny separation of church and state open the door to **compelled religious observance**, the very abuse the First Amendment was designed to prevent. The warning is clear: dismantling the constitutional barrier between church and state is not a path to national greatness, **but a path to national ruin**.

VI. Our request to the Department of Justice

In light of the foregoing, we respectfully request that the Department of Justice:

1. **Decline to adopt Recommendation 1** of the Commission insofar as it rests on the assertion that separation of church and state “has no constitutional basis.” Any guidance on the Establishment Clause should reflect the framers’ own understanding: that the Constitution strongly guards the separation between religion and government.
2. **Decline to adopt Recommendation 9** and maintain the Johnson Amendment as a safeguard against the corruption of both church and state.

The church that turns to the state for power to employ force is not of God, because God does not employ force to compel the conscience.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandtley Greenlaw
Winston, Oregon

From: yvette@ [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Yvette Loaiza

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:50:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a Californian and a person of faith who believes deeply that human life and human freedom were given to us at great cost, and that we owe it to those who came before us, and to the one I know as Jesus Christ, not to squander that gift by handing our consciences over to government. I do not believe a world without soul liberty is a safer or more godly world; I believe it is a world where hate finds new tools. That is precisely why I ask you to protect free exercise for everyone, and to keep government out of the business of religion altogether.

Start with where rights come from. If religious liberty exists only because a majority currently favors it, then it is not a right at all, only a permission that can be revoked by the next election. Our founding theory says the opposite: rights are inherent, given by the Creator, and placed in the Constitution precisely so they cannot be taken by a vote count. Popular government exists to protect the minority, the individual, because the majority can already protect itself at the ballot box. As one classic statement of this principle puts it, the people, no matter how many, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. Public support for a religious policy today is no more a justification than public support would be for silencing it tomorrow.

Go deeper still. Our government's power comes from the consent of the governed, meaning from powers the people delegate. But no one can delegate his relationship to God. I cannot authorize a senator, a court, or a commission to believe for me, worship for me, or answer for my soul on judgment day. Since that power was never mine to give, it was never government's to receive. No government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer even for itself, much less for me. That is not a technicality of the First Amendment; it is the reason the First Amendment exists at all.

This is also why I cannot ask you to legislate in favor of my own faith, even though I hold it sincerely. Any law touching religion has to define which religion, which excludes some and conditions the rest on permission rather than freedom. A believer who welcomes government endorsement today is building a precedent that a future government, of a different persuasion, will use tomorrow. I want to remain free to follow my conscience wherever the truth leads, and legislated religion forecloses that.

Finally, this is not a new argument invented by advocacy groups. Congress itself, one generation after the founding, ruled on this. Its own committees declared that government is a civil and not a religious institution, that it is not the legislature's business to determine what religion is true, and that if government defines one religious duty it may just as well define them all. That Congress also said plainly that human power may extort outward compliance but cannot command the heart. I ask you to honor that precedent rather than override it.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Yvette Loaiza
California

Sent from my iPhone

From: Addie Jackson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: A sample letter on religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:50:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 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,

From: Eraldo Baker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Separation of church and state -Eraldo Baker

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:51:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen urging you to reconsider the report's recommendations that would erode the wall between church and state — particularly channeling public funds into religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

The moment churches accept government dollars or wade into partisan campaigns, they invite politics — and all its compromises — into the sanctuary. Congregations end up chasing grants and answering to officeholders instead of to God, which serves neither faith nor the republic well. This separation was never a secular invention; it was built by believers themselves to shield religion from government's reach, and it's precisely why faith has thrived in this country.

Please keep church and state apart. That's how both remain free.

Sincerely,

Eraldo Baker
Sacramento,Ca

From: Y L <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Yvette Loaiza

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:51:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a Californian and a person of faith who believes deeply that human life and human freedom were given to us at great cost, and that we owe it to those who came before us, and to the one I know as Jesus Christ, not to squander that gift by handing our consciences over to government. I do not believe a world without soul liberty is a safer or more godly world; I believe it is a world where hate finds new tools. That is precisely why I ask you to protect free exercise for everyone, and to keep government out of the business of religion altogether.

Start with where rights come from. If religious liberty exists only because a majority currently favors it, then it is not a right at all, only a permission that can be revoked by the next election. Our founding theory says the opposite: rights are inherent, given by the Creator, and placed in the Constitution precisely so they cannot be taken by a vote count. Popular government exists to protect the minority, the individual, because the majority can already protect itself at the ballot box. As one classic statement of this principle puts it, the people, no matter how many, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. Public support for a religious policy today is no more a justification than public support would be for silencing it tomorrow.

Go deeper still. Our government's power comes from the consent of the governed, meaning from powers the people delegate. But no one can delegate his relationship to God. I cannot authorize a senator, a court, or a commission to believe for me, worship for me, or answer for my soul on judgment day. Since that power was never mine to give, it was never government's to receive. No government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer even for itself, much less for me. That is not a technicality of the First Amendment; it is the reason the First Amendment exists at all.

This is also why I cannot ask you to legislate in favor of my own faith, even though I hold it sincerely. Any law touching religion has to define which religion, which excludes some and conditions the rest on permission rather than freedom. A believer who welcomes government endorsement today is building a precedent that a future government, of a different persuasion, will use tomorrow. I want to remain free to follow my conscience wherever the truth leads, and legislated religion forecloses that.

Finally, this is not a new argument invented by advocacy groups. Congress itself, one generation after the founding, ruled on this. Its own committees declared that government is a civil and not a religious institution, that it is not the legislature's business to determine what religion is true, and that if government defines one religious duty it may just as well define them all. That Congress also said plainly that human power may extort outward compliance but cannot command the heart. I ask you to honor that precedent rather than override it.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Yvette Loaiza
California

From: Courtney Vanover <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendations of Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:52:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: DOJ_Letter.docx

Good evening,

Please see attachment.

Thank you,
Courtney

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Via EMAIL: PII

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I appreciate the opportunity to share feedback regarding the proposed changes submitted by the Religious Liberty Committee. Reinterpreting the Establishment Clause to weaken the separation of church and state is deeply concerning as it contradicts the Constitution, the intent of the Founders, and the biblical principle that matters of conscience belong solely to God rather than civil authorities. As you are all very aware, the First Amendment provides two equally significant protections: it prohibits the government from establishing a religion while also protecting every individual's right to freely exercise their faith.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Since the founding of our nation, these protections have constituted a vital cornerstone of American liberty. They guarantee that no citizen is forced to support, participate in, or adhere to a specific religion, while concurrently preserving the right of every individual to worship, or abstain from worship, according to their conscience. Although the explicit phrase, "separation of church and state" is absent from the text of the Constitution, this principle has historical recognition as a barrier against state interference in religious affairs. This dual safeguard insulates religious bodies from state control and prevents civil governance from acting as an arm of religious authority. Embracing people of all faiths or no faith at all, the Constitution mandates equal protection under the law, ensuring absolute state neutrality. The church has its place, and the government has its place; blurring their roles is catastrophic. This is not merely my opinion - it is the definitive lesson of history.

The God of the Bible does not compel belief. As Revelation 3:20 states, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Notice the choice. We must not seek to force others into compliance in the name of Christianity. This is a dangerous trajectory that risks returning us to the Dark Ages -- a time when truth was suppressed and millions of lives were tragically lost to religious coercion. If our nation embarks upon this trajectory, we will inevitably find ourselves standing once again at the foot of burning stakes.

While you are aptly named the Religious Liberty Commission, it is this exact liberty that is currently under attack. I continue to pray for the spirit of wisdom and discernment to operate within your midst as you navigate these challenges and that as fellow Christians, you will find the courage as the Apostle Paul to stand boldly for biblical truth.

2 Corinthians 3:17

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*."

A concerned citizen of faith,
Courtney Vanover

From: Todd Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Praying You Reverse Course

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:53:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

More food for thought. We are watching very carefully, and praying you will reverse course.

<https://www.amazingfacts.org/news-events/af-blog/religious-liberty-at-a-crossroads-why-it-still-matters/>

<https://www.amazingfacts.org/bible-study/free-offers/america-in-bible-prophecy/>

From:

To:

PII

PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Beautiful constitution

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:54:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings!

I am born and raised here in the United States of America. We have something so valuable here in this fair country that we may not realize it until we lose it. It is what all here know -and that is our freedom to worship and live here without government interference. We will be stepping into our own noose if we lose this inalienable privilege and right. Religion is never good if it is coerced. God's own character of love and justice and mercy never forces our hearts to serve Him. How could we truly love someone if we had no choice in the matter?

It's basic to our lives to have this power to live in peace with Him.

I'm not that articulate, but you must see my point. Please understand that we have an enemy of freedom and he wants this bill to pass. Our future is not in coercion if we maintain the rights and privileges we enjoy as a distinctive nation.

Please be wise and act responsibly in this important document. It is a privilege to uphold the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A concerned citizen

From: Mark Peppel <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment on committee report on separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:54:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Screenshot_20260712_100223_Messages.jpg

Freedom of conscience should never be removed, coerced, or used to enact laws that will infringe upon individual citizens rights as stated in our Constitution. Mob rule, or consensus of a committee should never be used to lessen ones freedoms. The separation of Church and State should remain the same.

God's Word gives us ample guidance in such matters. As in our Country's motto "In God We Trust" also should speak much to the desire of a Nation, or its elected officials, to infringe upon a citizens God given rights.

Below is an attachment which speaks very clearly to the issue ;

Sincerely, Mark Peppel

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

John 8:31

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

Commentary:

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. **“The truth shall make you free;”** and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is “the law of liberty.”

James 2:12. DA 466.5

From: Sandra Drumheller <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] letter response

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:55:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a Christian believer and a citizen of the United States of America, it is a privilege to voice my concerns on the breakdown of the wall of church and state separation. The Bible states it properly when it says in Matthew 22:21: Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Civil matters belong to the government and moral and religious matters belong to God and Him alone. The dark ages were not a very good time in earth's history, and if we rule as did Rome during those years, we can expect much hardship and trouble. My moral allegiance is to the Almighty Father and Him alone!

Sandra Drumheller

Thermopolis, WY



Virus-free. www.avast.com

From: Todd Parrish <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Your Future?

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:55:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Is this the future you are creating?

I pray for your spiritual discernment -- to see the need to reverse course.

<https://www.amazingfacts.org/armageddon-ways-to-watch/>

From: Guiding The Impact <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 10 Vaccine Mandates, Education & Healthcare Access - Guiding the Impact

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:57:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Guiding the Impact respectfully submits these comments in strong support of the Commission's draft report and its recognition that vaccine mandates have imposed serious burdens on Americans of faith in education and healthcare. It is clear that much prayer, courage, and care went into this report and we are deeply thankful to Chairman Patrick and the members of the Commission for hearing the pleas of families who have carried this burden for years. For many parents, students, and patients, the simple acknowledgment that this issue is real -- and worthy of federal attention -- is itself a profound answer to prayer.

We are especially grateful that Chapter 10 recognizes the coercive nature of vaccine mandates; documents the exclusion of religious families from educational access; recommends investigations, strategic litigation, federal legislation, agency guidance, and official compliance letters; and calls for protection of students' religious exemptions from vaccination requirements.

We also support the Commission's recommendations concerning parental rights, school accountability, public complaint portals, strategic litigation, restored conscience protections, the HHS Conscience and Religious Freedom Division, "Know Your Rights" resources, federal religious-liberty divisions, and a DOJ Religious Liberty Task Force.

The final report should now make those recommendations explicit and operational for the Americans most directly harmed by vaccine-related religious discrimination: children and parents excluded from education, patients and families denied healthcare, and students denied access to required professional training because of sincerely held religious objections to vaccination.

Guiding the Impact respectfully urges the Commission to make clear that no child, student, patient, or family should be forced to choose between sincerely held religious beliefs and equal access to education or nonemergency healthcare.

Our recommendations focus on two connected priorities:

1. Protecting children and students from early childhood through completion of required clinical and professional training; and
2. Protecting patients and families from denial of nonemergency healthcare because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

I. Strengthen the Commission's Existing Education Recommendation From Childcare Through Required Clinical Training

Chapter 10 already recommends that the Administration advocate for federal legislation requiring educational institutions to grant students religious exemptions from vaccination requirements as a condition of receiving federal support.

Guiding the Impact strongly supports that existing recommendation. We are not asking the Commission to create

a separate or competing legislative track. Rather, we respectfully urge the Commission to clarify and strengthen its current recommendation so that it provides meaningful protection throughout the full educational continuum.

The Commission's recommended legislation should expressly apply to childcare, daycare, preschool, pre-kindergarten, and early-learning programs; public and private elementary and secondary schools receiving federal financial assistance; charter schools; colleges and universities; trade and technical programs; graduate and professional schools; and required clinical placements, internships, practicums, residencies, and other training sites necessary for academic progression, degree completion, professional certification, or licensure.

We respectfully recommend that the final report include language substantially similar to the following:

"The Administration should advocate for federal legislation requiring any educational institution, program, agency, contractor, or required clinical-placement site receiving federal financial assistance to provide a meaningful religious exemption or accommodation from vaccination requirements for a child, student, applicant, or trainee who, or whose parent or legal guardian, asserts a sincerely held religious objection. This protection should extend from early-childhood education through higher education, professional education, clinical training, and required placements."

The protection should be meaningful and complete. A child or student should not be denied admission, enrollment, attendance, transportation, educational services, extracurricular participation, academic advancement, graduation, degree completion, or required clinical training because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

An exemption is not meaningful if a student may enroll in a program but is later blocked from completing a required practicum, internship, clinical rotation, residency, or placement. No student should be forced to abandon a degree, profession, or calling because the final required training component refuses to honor the same religious protection that applied to classroom enrollment.

II. Establish a Simple, Respectful Religious-Exemption Process While Preserving Stronger State Protections

The federal legislation recommended in Chapter 10 should establish a clear minimum protection for covered entities receiving federal financial assistance. It should operate as a federal floor, not a federal ceiling, while preserving state authority to enact and administer stronger constitutional, statutory, and religious-liberty protections.

For covered federally funded educational institutions, programs, and required training sites, a simple written-attestation process should be sufficient to obtain a religious exemption or accommodation from vaccination requirements.

This recommendation does not seek to displace stronger state protections or to prevent states from maintaining broader exemptions and additional safeguards for families. Rather, it would ensure that federally funded entities cannot impose burdensome or theological screening requirements that effectively nullify a family's religious exemption.

A parent, adult student, or trainee seeking a religious exemption in a covered federally funded educational setting should be permitted to submit a brief signed written attestation affirming a sincerely held religious objection to a vaccination requirement. That attestation should be sufficient absent specific, objective evidence of insincerity.

Neither a government agency nor a covered institution should require a clergy letter, proof of church membership, denominational approval, theological examination, proof that others in the same faith tradition share the belief, or intrusive disclosure of private religious reasoning.

The Commission should recommend language substantially similar to the following:

“A signed written attestation of a sincerely held religious objection to a vaccination requirement shall be treated as sufficient in covered federally funded educational settings absent specific, objective evidence of insincerity. A religious exemption or accommodation may not be denied because a covered entity or government official disagrees with an individual’s theology, religious affiliation, denomination, religious practice, or perceived consistency with the beliefs of other adherents.”

Religious liberty cannot depend on institutional approval of a family’s theology.

III. Add Explicit Patient and Family Protections to the Healthcare Recommendations

The report appropriately recognizes that healthcare-related religious-liberty protections are needed. However, its specific healthcare recommendations primarily focus on medical students, healthcare professionals, staff, institutions, and religious employers.

The final report should expressly add patients, parents, and guardians to the protections afforded through HHS oversight of federally funded providers and programs, agency guidance, federal enforcement, complaint pathways, official compliance letters, and healthcare-related legislation where appropriate.

Federally funded healthcare providers, facilities, programs, and contractors should not deny, discontinue, condition, delay, or otherwise discriminate in the provision of nonemergency healthcare solely because a patient, parent, or guardian asserts a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

We respectfully recommend that the final report include language substantially similar to the following:

“HHS should issue guidance and, where appropriate, regulations and enforcement policies clarifying that federally funded healthcare providers, facilities, programs, and contractors may not deny, delay, discontinue, condition, or otherwise discriminate in the provision of nonemergency care solely because a patient, parent, or guardian asserts a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.”

This protection should ensure equal access to primary care, pediatric care, specialty care, referrals, nonemergency hospital-based care, outpatient services, prenatal and maternity care, rehabilitation, home-health services, long-term care, specialty programs, and continuity of care with existing providers.

No family should lose access to a pediatrician, primary-care provider, specialist, outpatient hospital service, treatment program, or other needed nonemergency care solely because it seeks to live consistently with sincerely held religious beliefs.

A family should not be told that it may obtain care only if it abandons its religious convictions regarding vaccination.

The final report should also clarify that vaccine-related religious objections must be included within the healthcare-conscience protections it recommends for medical students and healthcare trainees. These protections should not be limited to abortion, physician-assisted suicide, sterilization, or other listed procedures while leaving vaccine-related conscience objections unaddressed in required healthcare education and training.

Medical students, nursing students, residents, interns, and other healthcare trainees should not face discrimination, retaliation, loss of clinical placement, exclusion from training, delayed graduation, or other adverse action because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination. The Commission should recommend that these vaccine-related conscience protections include timely individualized review, meaningful corrective action, and an enforceable remedy where statutory rights are violated.

IV. Apply the Commission’s Enforcement Recommendations to Children, Students, Patients, Families, and Trainees

The Commission has already recommended the essential enforcement tools needed to address vaccine-related religious discrimination: guidance, public-awareness resources, reporting pathways, official letters, investigations, strategic litigation, and limits on federal support to noncompliant districts or entities where feasible.

Guiding the Impact strongly supports those recommendations. We respectfully urge the Commission to make clear in the final report that these enforcement tools should be applied specifically and urgently to vaccine-related religious discrimination affecting children, parents, students, patients, families, and trainees.

The final report should recommend that the Department of Education, HHS Office for Civil Rights, and Department of Justice prioritize complaints involving children excluded from childcare or school, students blocked from higher education or required clinical training, and patients or families denied nonemergency healthcare because of sincerely held religious objections to vaccination.

The Commission should also make clear that enforcement must address not only outright denials, but also nominal or illusory exemptions that exist on paper while imposing conditions, delays, third-party requirements, or discretionary barriers that make the exemption ineffective in practice.

Finally, the Commission should emphasize that guidance and agency action must reinforce, not replace, durable federal statutory protection. The report's existing education-legislation recommendation should create a lasting protection that cannot simply be withdrawn by a future administration, while preserving stronger state constitutional, statutory, and religious-liberty protections.

Conclusion

The Commission has taken an important step by recognizing vaccine mandates as a serious religious-liberty issue.

The final report should ensure that its protections reach the Americans who have suffered the greatest practical harm: children kept out of childcare and school, parents denied equal educational access for their children, students blocked from completing degrees and required professional training, patients denied needed nonemergency healthcare, and families pressured to abandon sincerely held religious beliefs in order to participate in basic public life.

No child should be excluded from childcare or education because his or her family seeks to live consistently with sincerely held religious beliefs.

No student should be blocked from completing required clinical or professional training because of a sincerely held religious objection to vaccination.

No patient or family should be denied nonemergency healthcare solely because it seeks to live according to sincerely held religious beliefs.

The Commission should also ensure that its employment-related religious-liberty recommendations are meaningfully applied to vaccine requirements so that adults are not forced to choose between sincere religious beliefs and the ability to work, support their families, and pursue their chosen vocation.

Guiding the Impact stands ready to assist the Commission, the Administration, the Department of Justice, and HHS in implementing these recommendations by sharing the experiences of affected families and helping ensure that any parental-rights or religious-liberty implementation efforts address vaccine-related discrimination in education and healthcare.

Guiding the Impact respectfully urges the Commission to adopt these clarifications and additions in the final

report.

May this report mark not only the acknowledgment of a grave injustice, but the beginning of meaningful federal action to ensure that no family, student, or patient is ever again forced to choose between faith and equal access to education or healthcare.

In faith and freedom,
Elyse Young
Founder, Guiding the Impact

From: Maura Carroll <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Establishment Clause – Maura Carroll

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:57:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to comment on the Commission's draft report. I respectfully urge you to defend both religion clauses of the First Amendment — no establishment, and free exercise — with equal vigor. My reasons are these:

Religious liberty is a right, not a majority's permission. "A right is something which, in its very nature, is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons." Popular support can justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never among the things submitted to the vote.

Force can make hypocrites, never Christians — and state sponsorship corrupts the faith it favors. President Grant said it plainly in 1875: "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the State and Church forever separate."

The founding generation's own Congress already examined this question. The reports of Richard M. Johnson's committees, adopted in 1829 and 1830, declared: "It is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false. Our government is a civil and not a religious institution." I ask the Commission to align its report with that precedent.

This country was founded on religious liberty. Why would we want to ruin it now? Everyone should be able to worship God by their own convictions. Please consider doing as our forefathers before us did.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. Please consider this prayerfully as you make your decision. Your choices will affect generations to come. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Maura Carroll

Sent from my iPhone

From: Deanna Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT re separation of church and state - Deanna Brown

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:57:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a very strong proponent of the separation of church and state and find this report very troublesome. I do not think it is right to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Churches should not take government funds and have to answer to politicians. The wall between church and state was built by believers to keep the church free and will strengthen the church by keeping it free from government entanglements. Please reconsider your recommendation in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,
Deanna Brown
Anderson, SC

From: Karen Griffith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:58:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have some concerns in regard to your Report in that while the US Constitution may not have this phrase the very fact our founding fathers came to America to escape religious persecution. It is fair to stipulate that though they may not use the vernacular we use or understand today, the very concepts outlined in the documents, the history of the struggle to make the church/state separation to ensure religious freedom is very evident.

Today we see the results of NGO status for my denomination and how the UN binds the hands of those in mission fields who desire to provide to individuals the freedom of life lived in Christ. I may be a Christian but I also advocate for all religions-- or even lack thereof-- to have the freedom to make decisions INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT. This nation is based on the freedom to serve in my faith as my conscience dictates.

I educated my children in Christian schools, encouraged and funded mission work, and made this choice FREE of government subsidizing any of it. Was it a sacrifice, yes. Was it worth it, definitely. As soon as government entangles church based education, mission or any other service it dictates what can be said, what can be done, who can speak, who gets funded. Bad scenario!!!

I firmly support the stand that Pillar of Faith takes in regard to a Bridge between Church and State. Then the State gets to open or shut the access to the Bridge based on abeyance to the State. My religious freedom is not the State's to determine; it is from my God. And that God gives that to Christians, Moslem, Jewish, Atheist, etc whether they acknowledge Him or not. Freedom is not freedom when the government dictates it. Even God does not force abeyance. He respects our freedom to choose.

Karen K. Griffith
Van Buren, Ohio

From: larry rahn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:58:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

I am in favor of religious freedom. To worship on the day that one chooses. Not a day set by the state.

Larry rahn

From: Jean Goetzee <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - THE PATH FORWARD - JEAN GOETZE

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:59:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

Please clarify the misguided notion that there should be a 'wall of separation between the church and the state' which stems not from the Constitution but on a selective reading of one sentence in one private letter. which has ben used beginning in the mid-20th century to block religion and the freedom to express it from the public square.

The Constitution does not require any such separation. On the contrary the 1st Amendment supports the freedom of religion but only requires that the state not establish one particular religion upon all people. The Founding Fathers truly believed that we cold not keep our republic unless we were a people of virtue - which the practice of religion helps to ensure.

Thank you for clarifying this misconception which has been abused and used to keep people from enjoying the freedom of the first amendment and helping our society to thrive thereby.

From: Enderson Renck <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Enderson Renck

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 20:59:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen of Richmond, Virginia, with a plain conviction: American politicians have no business legislating the terms of religious liberty. That liberty is not the government's to define, ration, or hand back to us. We should build a wall of separation between church and state, and mean it. Freedom is for everybody, not just for whichever faith holds the most votes in a given year.

Consider first where government's power actually comes from. Our whole system rests on the idea that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning from powers people can actually delegate to them. But no person can delegate his relationship to God. I can authorize someone to manage my land or speak for me in business, but no one can believe in my place, worship in my place, or answer for my soul in my place. Since that power was never mine to give away, it was never received by any government, state or federal. This is not a loophole in the Establishment Clause that only bars a national church while permitting everything short of it. It means government was excluded from religious jurisdiction from the very foundation of its authority, before any amendment was written down to say so.

Second, history and plain human experience both testify that force cannot produce faith. A law can march a body into a pew; it cannot put belief in a heart, because love for God is essential to any real act of religious devotion, and love cannot be legislated. What coercion produces instead is hypocrisy. And the deeper damage lands on the very religion the state tries to help. Fifteen centuries of established Christianity left a documented record of what happens when church leans on state power: pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility among the people, and, in both, superstition and persecution. A faith that needs the police power to sustain it has already confessed it isn't sustaining itself. General Grant said it plainly and I still believe it: keep the state and church forever separate, and leave religion to the family, the congregation, and private conscience.

Third, there is no neutral, generic religion for government to adopt, however well-intentioned the effort. Even the Ten Commandments are not common ground; Protestants and Catholics number and translate them differently, and any official display must pick a side. There are hundreds of traditions claiming the Bible as their own, so a state that officially endorses "the Bible" is really just endorsing one group's particular reading of it and calling that reading universal truth. A congressional committee understood this danger as far back as 1830, warning that for lawmakers to settle a religious dispute that divides Christians among themselves is to act like a church council rather than a republican legislature. The same problem shows up today whether it is a monument on a courthouse lawn or a line in a school curriculum describing the principles of a particular faith. In every case, someone in a government office ends up writing a creed, and that is establishment, however sincerely intended.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Enderson Renck
Richmond, VA

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

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

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

Since Roger William founded Rhode Island our founders have held the belief that separation of church and state was a God given right because they had escaped the European experiment that lasted 2,000 years with almost constant religious wars and persecution brought on by the "State Church" against any that would not believe as the "State Church" dictated.... Century's of martyrdom followed....

This is the natural outcome of human's that have their chosen dogma and then they add the "Power" of the state to enforce and punish!!!

The main problem is that Spiritual issues are spiritual discerned and State issues are controlled with Force...

If there is another trial of combining church and state we will experience another era of persecution.... It has been tried many times before.... Just like Socialism and communism.... You all should know... it never ends well....

Thank you for voting and preaching to keep State and church separated.... That doesn't mean that we can't act like compassionate country, and loving each other.

Our founders set this out plainly.... We all have natural rights such as Liberty of thought, Freedom of religion, and our God given rights to all believe what we want...

Thank you for your consideration concerning this matter...And please... vote NO on the joining of State and Church!h!

Sincerely,

Steven Spady DO
Barbara Spady

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

From: james arocho <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:01:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Esteemed Religious Liberty Commission:

Freedom of religion is one of the bedrock's upon which this great nation was established. It has been a beacon of light and aspiration for people from all over the world who either want to come here and become citizens or desire to emulate our constitution.

It would be a betrayal of one of our core beliefs and I cannot imagine that the architects of our great nation would allow any restrictions on religious freedom.

Of course there have to be some guidelines, such as are moral across cultures and societies but no mandating of specific days or forms of worship. Majority rule would and has in the past in other nations lead to persecution of groups who while of moral character and behavior, become objects exclusion, persecution and even martyrdom.

Please consider carefully the possible implications and or complications that inaccurate wording or omission of protecting religious freedom could entail.

Thank you for your attention to this extremely important issue.

James Arocho

US Citizen, Florida resident

From: Betty Zmaj <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Feedback for recommendations of RLC

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:02:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_the_Department_of_Justice_re_Religious_Liberty_Commission.docx

See attached

Betty R. (Zmaj) Kuist

PII

July 12, 2026

The United States Department of Justice
RE: Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Dear Review Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to our President, Donald Trump on June 26, 2026. As the 12 recommendations were reviewed, I considered the impact on the people of the United States and the constitutional direction taken. I therefore ask that the United States Department of Justice review carefully the issue of the safest placement of each proponent of religious desires, and political – state power. This would require the first recommendation be redressed and changed to reflect the plan and structure of the constitution.

I have several years of educational experience both at instructing students in United State History and as principal in two small parochial secondary schools. I have also served as a delegate and witness for education for the legislature of Wisconsin.

Observation and research has been a part of my preparation to provide students with direction and critical thinking skills. Part of my review for this feedback included the book James Madison on Religious Liberty, by Robert Alley 1985 Prometheus, Buffalo, NY Library of Congress # 85-62743, along with other readings from United States History texts as well as British and Roman history and law. The book by Robert Alley includes a historical review of reactions and direction in both the 19th and 20th centuries. It also includes the statements by James Madison, the principal author of the Constitution, that he, Madison, thought that he had delineated the need for separation of church and state clearly. Additionally, Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to the Danbury Baptists stated that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. (see <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib9806/danpre.ht>)

With respect to the Chair of the Committee, a full understanding of the Establishment Clause with regard to separation of church and state should be forthcoming. The first amendment to the Constitution provides a barrier and buffer which should be kept fully visible in all of the recommendations. The founders of this great nation were aware of the persecution of various religious preachers and adherents in several colonies. Their plan and promise were for a republic without even a fear of reprisal for one's belief, lack of it, and the free exercise thereof. They knew also that the will even of the majority should not erase the freedom of the minority. They were close enough to the fateful history of reformers, and Bible translators to set this nation on a path free from the override of a king or the dictates of papal power, and fully against having them both

working together to override the right of any person for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Regarding the recommendation (9) that each state take up the address of the right to require closing laws and work laws which may and will infringe on any citizens rights, no state must override the nation's constitution. The constitution clearly states that in areas NOT included in the constitution, the states have the right to make laws, however this is clearly part of the first amendment and therefore is off the table for any state to make laws which would negate any part of it.

Without making my treatise any longer, I do thank you again for your review of the available resources and ask for more time and arena for public debate and input. As we advance to the new school term, what an opportunity to include our students in study and thought in this momentous and nation changing direction.

Thank you for listening and reviewing my comments.

Sincerely,

Betty Rae Zmaj

Betty R. Zmaj

From: Shelli B <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:03:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Commission on Religious Liberty:

I was concerned to hear about the plan to remove the phrase, "wall of separation between church and state" from key documents of the United States. My maternal ancestors came to America in the 1600s to escape religious persecution. Unfortunately, once they were convicted to reject infant baptism, they had to relocate to Rhode Island to avoid being sent to jail. Thankfully, Rhode Island was a haven where everyone could serve God (or not) according to their own conscience.

I have appreciated living in the United States where I can be free to follow God according to my understanding of the Bible without the State controlling my church or how I personally live out my Christianity. Please keep the wall of separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

Shelli Baze
California

From: wgdragonfly1 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:03:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

I would respectfully plead that you not remove the wall of separation between church and state. History has proved over and over that state religion leads to division, hatred, persecution and finally a death decree. Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. The United States of America was powerful precisely because she granted freedom for her people to enjoy freedom of conscience, freedom to worship (or not to worship) as they deemed fit. The Middle Ages were a glaring example of what will happen if the church and state come together. Somewhere between 50 and 150 million innocent people were put to torture and death simply because they could not violate their conscience. Our worship should be a private matter between us and our God.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Trey G <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Plea for separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:04:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep Church and State separate, and please do not remove the Johnson Amendment that protects Religious Liberty. Please enforce the Johnson Amendment rather than repeal it. This helps protect all of the American Peoples' religious liberty; the Johnson Amendment prevents specific groups from receiving special attention and privileges while other groups can/will be persecuted.

Thank you for your time,
Trey Gallagher

From: nEWn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:04:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm for separation of church and state just like Roger Williams.

Elizabeth Wall

From: Tapiwa M <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Tapiwa M

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:06:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a resident from Georgia who believes the strongest argument for keeping government out of religion is not a secular one but a Christian one. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions when he said render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. That teaching does not merely counsel restraint; it excludes civil government from religious matters altogether, because the line has already been drawn by an authority higher than any legislature. As one nineteenth-century witness told a Senate committee opposing a national Sunday law, "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state's only proper question about any act is whether it injures a neighbor's rights, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text or practice crosses that line, and it is Christianity itself, rightly understood, that forbids the crossing.

I also want the Commission to remember that rights do not come from majorities. If a vote can grant religious liberty, a vote can revoke it, and then it was never a right at all but a permission. Our whole constitutional structure exists to place conscience beyond the reach of election returns, protecting the minority precisely because majorities can already protect themselves at the ballot box. As Jones put it, "the majority has no right to say what we shall render to God; nor has it any right to say that we shall render to Cesar that which is God's." Popular support may justify a highway bill. It cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never a subject open to the vote.

A further danger is that any law favoring religion, even one many of us might welcome today, becomes a precedent controlling us tomorrow. It concedes that religion is a fit subject for legislation, and once conceded, the only remaining question is who holds the majority next. As one advocate testified plainly, "It is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion." Believers who welcome government sponsorship of their own faith are handing future officials, of every persuasion, a tool that will not stay in friendly hands.

Finally, history has already run this experiment, and sincerity never changed the outcome. Salem's judges were devout and certain; Tennessee's courts, in 1892, jailed Sabbath-keeping farmers for quietly plowing their own fields on Sunday, marching them through the streets in chains while other laborers passed unbothered nearby. The editor who investigated left us a maxim worth remembering in this hearing room: "A nation can sometimes afford to err on the side of mercy, but no nation can afford to be unjust to her lowliest citizen."

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,

Tapiwa M
Georgia

Sent from my iPhone

From: Michael Kelsey <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT on Separation of Church and State from Michael Kelsey

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:06:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing during this time of public comment to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the principle of separation of church and state. We all know those exact words aren't in our founding documents, but the principle is in our very first amendment! Especially the notion of 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. If recent history is any guide, what seems like an advantage at one time, would seem just as disastrous a few administrations later. We have done a good job staying clear of that for our first quarter of millennium. 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 the spirit of church and state separation alive in our republic. That's how we keep ourselves a truly free people.

Trepidatiously,
Michael Kelsey
Maryland Heights, MO

From: Adam Unsworth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of State - Adam Unsworth

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:06:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

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!

Adam Unsworth.

From: PII [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Plea for separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:07:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep Church and State separate, and please do not remove the Johnson Amendment that protects Religious Liberty. Please enforce the Johnson Amendment rather than repeal it. This helps protect all of the American Peoples' religious liberty; the Johnson Amendment prevents specific groups from receiving special attention and privileges while other groups can/will be persecuted.

Thank you for your time,
An American

From: Joyce Bonner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bridge across the Gulf

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:08:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please respect Religious Liberty and do not Sign Sunday keeping into Law for all of us

From: Wayne Berry <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTn- Establishment Clausen- Wayne C. Berry

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:08:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who believes, as I told a friend recently, that our freedoms come from God and not from man, and that no legislature can enact righteousness into being. That conviction shapes everything I want to say to you about the work before this Commission.

Start with where rights come from. If religious liberty exists because a majority permits it, then a majority can also revoke it, and it was never a right at all but a favor subject to recall. Our constitutional tradition holds the opposite: rights are inherent, Creator-endowed, and placed in writing precisely to put them beyond the reach of election returns. Popular government exists to protect the minority, not to await the majority's permission on questions of conscience. As one old defense of this principle put it, the people, however many they number, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. That principle should govern the Commission's work as much as it governed the founders': the fact that most Americans favor some religious display, text, or practice in public life is not, and can never be, a warrant for the government to adopt it.

I ground this not only in constitutional theory but in Christ's own words: render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. That single sentence divides all human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government governs civil relations between persons; it has no authority whatsoever over what is owed to God. The only question the state may ever rightly ask of an action is whether it is civil or uncivil, injurious to a neighbor or not. Whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical is simply outside its competence. A government that legislates religious observance is not honoring Christianity; it is trespassing on ground Christ himself marked as belonging to God alone.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightfully hold this power: it was never given. Our system rests on the consent of the governed, meaning powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his belief, his worship, or his soul to another to manage. What cannot be delegated cannot be received. No government will stand before the judgment seat to answer for any soul, and accountability and authority belong together. Since government can never answer for a man's faith, it can never rightly hold jurisdiction over it. The First Amendment did not invent this limit; it simply recorded what was already true.

Finally, I ask the Commission to weigh this: any law touching religion, even one meant to help a favored faith, destroys free exercise for everyone, including those it favors. To legislate in support of one's own religion is to trade the free exercise of that religion for permission to practice it on terms a future legislature may change. Believers who welcome state endorsement today are handing a tool to whoever holds power tomorrow, and that tool will not always be friendly to them.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Wayne C. Berry

From: J Henri Evard <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom Commision

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern.

I firmly believe in separation of church and state. We do not need this commission. If we continue to follow the Constitution of the United States our religious liberties are fully protected.

Please stop this infringement on our constitutional rights and personal beliefs.

J Henri Evard

Sent from my iPhone

From: Edge Evangelistic Ministries <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – LOGAN DESHEA

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:10:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen from Pinehurst, Idaho, who believes deeply in both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses, and I ask you to hold the line that Christ himself drew. When Jesus said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's, he divided all human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority whatsoever over duties owed to God. As Jones told a Senate committee in 1888, "There is a limit to the lawmaking power; and that limit is the line which Jesus Christ has drawn. The government has no right to make any law relating to the things that pertain to God, or offenses against God, or religion." The state may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, symbol, or lesson steps across that line into territory that belongs to God alone.

Nor can a popular majority supply what Christ withheld. Rights that depend on a vote are not rights but permissions, revocable whenever the count changes. Our whole constitutional order rests on the opposite premise: that liberty is Creator-endowed and therefore stands above election returns, existing precisely to protect the minority from the majority, not the other way around. When Senator Blair pointed to the great weight of public opinion favoring Sunday legislation, Jones answered for all time: "But the people, I care not how many there are, have no right to invade your relationship to God, nor mine." A commission acting in the people's name should remember that religion was never among the things the people submitted to the ballot box.

That is because religion could never be delegated to government in the first place. A citizen can authorize an agent to manage his property, but no one can authorize another to believe, worship, or answer for his soul. What was never given cannot have been received. As the older writers put it plainly, "No man nor any set of men can ever have faith for another." Government cannot bear religious responsibility because it can never be held to account for it at the judgment that matters. The First Amendment did not invent this limit; it simply recorded what was already true.

Finally, even laws that favor religion destroy free exercise, because any law touching religion must define whose religion counts, and definitions exclude as surely as they include. Jones stated the plain impossibility: "It is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion." Believers who welcome government endorsement today are handing a tool to whichever administration holds power tomorrow.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Logan Deshea
Pinehurst, Idaho

From: Vanessa [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-APPENDIX B-VANESSA R.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:12:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this comment to urge the Commission to defend the historic principles of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. I oppose any recommendation to the Department of Justice or another government agency that would weaken these constitutional safeguards or encourage greater unity between religious institutions and civil government.

True religious liberty does not require the government to promote religion. It requires government to protect every person's right to worship according to conscience—or not to worship—without coercion, discrimination, or interference.

American history shows why this protection is necessary. During the colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and other religious minorities suffered fines, imprisonment, and discrimination because established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These abuses helped lead to the adoption of the First Amendment.

The experience of seventh-day Sabbath keepers, particularly Seventh-day Adventists, provides another warning. During the late nineteenth century, some were fined, imprisoned, and sentenced to chain-gang labor for performing ordinary work on Sunday after conscientiously observing Saturday as the biblical Sabbath. Their experience demonstrates that when government enforces religiously influenced observances, minority believers are often the first to suffer.

History repeatedly shows the danger of giving civil authority power over conscience. Whether through religious persecution, state-backed religious extremism, or atheistic governments that suppress faith, the result is the same: individual liberty is lost. Government should protect public order, individual rights, and equal treatment under the law. Religious institutions should advance their beliefs through teaching, persuasion, and voluntary faith—not through civil power or coercion. Genuine religion does not need the state to compel belief or observance.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to reject any proposal that weakens the constitutional separation of church and state. Every church should remain free to proclaim its beliefs, and every citizen should remain free to accept or reject those beliefs without government pressure.

The lessons of history are clear. When religious and civil power are united, intolerance and injustice follow. Please defend the First Amendment and preserve the religious liberty of every American.

Respectfully submitted,

Vanessa R.

From: Pine Price <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:12:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs:

- 1) please leave the wall between church and state the way it is.
- 2) please leave the JOHNSON Amendment the way it is.
- 3) Your other proposals seem thoughtful and well recommended.

Thank you.

From: Kellen Edwards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation Between Church and State - Kellen Edwards

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:12:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I urge the Commission to remember the strengths that America has embodied in the history of its country. The two pillars of the strength of the United States has been in its Republicanism, a nation with a Pope, and its Democratism, a nation without a King.

Yes, I do agree that this world needs a knowledge of The Lord. The Lord indeed wants to see righteousness and justice being done on the earth. Yes, it is good for the Ten Commandments to be learned.

However, these must all be done without force. The Lord did not force Adam nor Eve to eat from the Tree of Life. They were allowed to make their own decision.

I ask you to consider that force will never bring about the result that one will want. A true conversion of the heart in surrender to God will do so much more than what force ever can.

Please consider the history of nations where force ever achieved anything meaningful outside of destruction and anarchy. A bridge between Church and State is a burning bridge built on legs of wood.

Joshua 24:15 - "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Thank you,
Kellen Edwards
Brookeville, MD

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

To: Rlcrc [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment--Religious Liberty Commission Report--Regina M Martin

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:13:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Mr. Patrick,

I am a VERY concerned citizen. The rights of the people are about to be trampled upon. Let me start out by saying, I am a Christian. My denomination is not important to the outcome of this letter. I do believe that the outcome of certain actions being taken in the nation are of concern. I speak of the separation of the church and the state in our country.

It is true that the phrase, "separation of church and state," is not in the US constitution; however, its essence is most definitely there. Take the first amendment for example:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

No law should tell me that I MUST do, or not do, something because it is "Christian" to do so. Jesus NEVER, used force, or law, to MAKE someone obey. He never directed His disciples to the civil magistrate to gain people to His cause. He used persuasion and love to win souls. Jesus Himself stated, "My kingdom is not of this world, if it were my servants would fight..." John 18:36. Jesus did not build His Kingdom using political power. In fact He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Matt. 22:21

Thomas Jefferson made clear his opinion when he penned (In his letter to the Danbury Baptists on Jan. 1, 1802):

"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,"

He believed strongly in this separation.

The separation of church and state is good for both the church and the state. For the church, because each member can worship according to the dictates of their conscious. (Even those who are not Christian.) Good for the state because no particular religion can enforce their beliefs and mores into law.

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.

I also believe that public funds should go to public schools and not to private schools. These public institutions should not be able to discriminate against anyone who wants to enter; but be open to all regardless of their religious background, or lack thereof. All should be treated equally.

Public schools should not push any type of sectarian faith. If so, which faith, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoism, Christian? I know that the movement is to remove the separation between church and state to enforce Christian principles; however, which denomination will you use? Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican? Even forcing classroom teachers to post the Ten Commandments in their classrooms is a violation of Jesus' gift of freedom of choice.

The Founding Fathers were wise when they left a deity out of the Constitution. Pilgrims immigrated this land to escape religious persecution and even in the early days of this country, persecution was happening here among the various Christian sects. The Founding Fathers left religion out of the law, because they wanted the people to be free to worship as they saw fit as long as you didn't infringe on the rights of others.

Please consider this right that the Founding Fathers gave us when the issue of separation of church and state is being discussed.

In Sincerity,

Regina M Martin
A Concerned Citizen of these United States of America
A Christian

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

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:13:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: text_0.txt

I believe in separation of church and state.
Audine Dieter

From: Nick Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Rebuttal to Page 42 and Page 80 Separation Framework – Nicholas Moore

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:14:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I am submitting this formal public comment to stringently reject the draft report's characterization of the Establishment Clause on page 42 and the subsequent recommendations on page 80. The assertion that the "separation of church and state" is a modern distortion or a hostile "Berlin wall" is historically inaccurate and directly contradicts the explicit intent of the founders.

To argue that separation is not a constitutional principle ignores the foundational philosophy of the man who literally structured our government. James Madison—the 4th President of the United States, AKA Father of the Constitution, and primary author of the Bill of Rights (the First Amendment)—had the following to say regarding the separation of church and state:

On the "Line of Separation" (1819 Letter to Robert Walsh): "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."

On Keeping the Line Absolute (1832 Letter to Jasper Adams): "I must admit moreover that it may not be easy, in every possible case, to trace the line of separation between the rights of religion and the Civil authority... But the tendency to a usurpation on one side or the other, or to a corrupting coalition or alliance between them, will be best guarded agst by a total separation of the two."

On Government Staying Out of Religious Matters (Memorial and Remonstrance, 1785): Before he wrote the First Amendment, Madison successfully fought a Virginia tax meant to fund Christian teachers, writing that the government has no business using its power to support religion: "The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man... Ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation."

From his Memorial and Remonstrance (1785): "Torrents of blood have been spilt in the old world, by the vain attempts of the secular arm, to extinguish Religious discord, by proscribing all difference in Religious opinion... The alternative to which it bans is the Inquisition."

From his letter to Edward Livingston (1822): "Religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together... Every new example, will succeed... in shewing that religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together."

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Moore

Archbald, Pennsylvania

From: G Lorr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Greg lorren

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:14:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as an ordinary citizen from Oregon, not a scholar or a lawyer, just someone who believes in plain common sense when it comes to religion and government. Common sense tells me that once government starts deciding whose faith is correct, it has stopped doing the job it was hired to do, and started doing a job that was never its business.

Common sense also tells us to look at what our own government has already decided. In 1829 and 1830, when Sabbatarian petitioners asked Congress to shut down Sunday mail and enforce religious observance, Congress said no,

From: Carmen Lastine <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State: Public comment by Carmen L Lastine

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:15:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The task set before you is of utmost importance. In reading parts of your report, I am compelled to write as a most concerned citizen. The concept that America was not founded upon the most cherished and certain foundation of Separation of Church and State is a grave error. In fact, Separation of Church and State is one the most fundamental foundations upon which The Republic of the United States of America was established. May no false rhetoric or theories threaten to deceive the commission members concerning the far-reaching principles of this fact and the freedom it provides. Separation of Church and State should stand and as a nation we must protect it valiantly and perpetually to ensure life, liberty and justice for all.

Respectfully,
Carmen Lastine

From: "Yolanda R." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-APPENDIX B-YOLANDA R.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:15:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this comment to urge the Commission to defend the historic principles of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. I oppose any recommendation to the Department of Justice or another government agency that would weaken these constitutional safeguards or encourage greater unity between religious institutions and civil government.

True religious liberty does not require the government to promote religion. It requires government to protect every person's right to worship according to conscience—or not to worship—without coercion, discrimination, or interference.

American history shows why this protection is necessary. During the colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and other religious minorities suffered fines, imprisonment, and discrimination because established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These abuses helped lead to the adoption of the First Amendment.

The experience of seventh-day Sabbath keepers, particularly Seventh-day Adventists, provides another warning. During the late nineteenth century, some were fined, imprisoned, and sentenced to chain-gang labor for performing ordinary work on Sunday after conscientiously observing Saturday as the biblical Sabbath. Their experience demonstrates that when government enforces religiously influenced observances, minority believers are often the first to suffer.

History repeatedly shows the danger of giving civil authority power over conscience. Whether through religious persecution, state-backed religious extremism, or atheistic governments that suppress faith, the result is the same: individual liberty is lost. Government should protect public order, individual rights, and equal treatment under the law. Religious institutions should advance their beliefs through teaching, persuasion, and voluntary faith—not through civil power or coercion. Genuine religion does not need the state to compel belief or observance.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to reject any proposal that weakens the constitutional separation of church and state. Every church should remain free to proclaim its beliefs, and every citizen should remain free to accept or reject those beliefs without government pressure.

The lessons of history are clear. When religious and civil power are united, intolerance and injustice follow. Please defend the First Amendment and preserve the religious liberty of every American.

Respectfully submitted,

Yolanda R.

From: Gwiin Correa <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:16:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Commission's draft report.

As a Christian, I cherish religious liberty and freedom of conscience. I believe every person should be free to worship according to the dictates of their conscience without government interference. That is why I strongly support the constitutional separation of church and state.

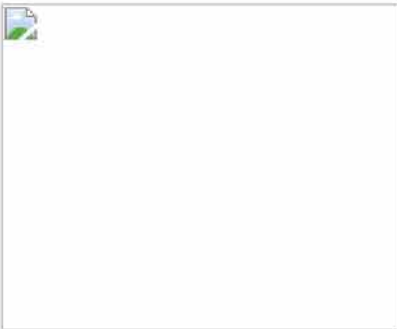
History has shown that when government and religion become intertwined, both are harmed. The church should never become dependent on government funding or political influence, and the government should never favor one religion over another. Keeping these institutions separate protects the freedom of every American, regardless of faith.

I respectfully oppose recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state, including expanding government funding for religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. These proposals risk eroding one of the foundational principles that has safeguarded religious liberty in our nation. Please preserve the constitutional separation of church and state. It is one of the greatest protections for both our government and our churches, ensuring that each remains free to fulfill its proper role.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

Gwiin Correa , MCC
Elk Grove, California



From: Josh Vazquez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:17:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States and 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!

Joshua Vazquez

[REDACTED] PII

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." 3 John 2

From: Eric Flickinger <[REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION – ERIC & HILDELISA FLICKINGER

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:17:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Trump on June 26, 2026.

Our concerns are in reference to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations and the seeming lack of consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers about the dangers of a union of church and state, and of the many lessons of history regarding such a union.

The following are five key concerns that we have about the committee's recommendations.

1. America has always benefited from keeping church and government separate.

We are concerned that the Committee's recommendations do not fully recognize why the Founding Fathers believed government and religion should remain separate. Leaders like James Madison and Thomas Jefferson understood from history that when churches gain political power—or governments control religion—both religious freedom and civil liberty suffer.

2. History repeatedly shows the dangers of mixing church and state.

Throughout history, people have been imprisoned, beaten, and even executed because governments enforced religious beliefs. Figures such as William Tyndale, Roger Williams, William Penn, and Obadiah Holmes experienced persecution because religious authorities worked hand-in-hand with civil government. These examples remind us why America adopted strong protections for freedom of conscience.

3. Separation of church and state protects everyone's freedoms.

Religious liberty is closely connected to other constitutional rights, including free speech, freedom of the press, and the freedom to express different opinions. History shows that governments tied to religious institutions have often censored books, punished dissent, and restricted open discussion. Protecting the separation of church and state helps safeguard these freedoms for people of every faith—and for those with no faith at all.

4. Churches should not become political organizations.

We oppose the recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment because it helps prevent churches and political candidates from using one another for power and influence. Jesus taught that there is a proper distinction between what belongs to God and what belongs to civil government. Keeping that distinction protects the integrity of both the church and the government.

5. We urge the Department of Justice to study this issue more carefully before taking action.

Rather than adopting recommendations that could weaken the historic separation of church and state, we ask the Department of Justice to hold public hearings and carefully examine the historical and constitutional evidence. America has enjoyed remarkable religious freedom because it has avoided combining political authority with religious authority. We believe preserving that principle remains essential to protecting the rights and freedoms of all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs.

In conclusion:

We respectfully urge the Commission to approach this issue with the utmost care and a full appreciation of its profound historical and constitutional significance. The principle of separating church and state did not arise from abstract political theory, but from the painful lessons of history. Across centuries and nations, the union of religious and civil authority has too often resulted in the erosion of individual liberty, the corruption of both institutions, and the persecution of those whose beliefs differed from those in power.

America's Founders were keen students of this history. Their commitment to protecting both religious liberty and civil government was informed by the experiences of those who suffered under systems that failed to preserve this essential distinction. Their wisdom has served our nation well for two and a half centuries.

It is with genuine respect for the Commission and the importance of its work that we express our concerns. Decisions of this magnitude should rest upon a thorough and balanced understanding of both the historical record and the constitutional principles at stake. An incomplete or inaccurate interpretation of either could have consequences extending far beyond the present moment, affecting the religious liberty and civil freedoms of generations to come.

We therefore respectfully ask the Commission to carefully weigh the testimony of history before recommending any course that could weaken one of the enduring safeguards of freedom in the American constitutional tradition.

The above is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric and Hildelisa Flickinger

From: Donna Cook <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:18:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

In Matthew 22:21 it reads, ...Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. I believe church and state should be seperate. Thank you!

From: canaryraod <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:18:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

It should be pointed out that one of the things that has made our nation great is following the principle that Jesus pointed out in Mark 12:17: "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him."

For too long, nations have tried to control conscience/religion, and it has always led to persecution. If the "Dark Ages" have taught us nothing else, it should have taught us this! God Himself has allowed freedom of choice, and He Himself still sends sunshine on the rebellious and gives food to those who hate Him.

Our nation has thrived in this atmosphere of freedom. Let's not trade our liberty for the fornication of the church with the state!

Sincerely,
Sarah Hope

From: Michael Logan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:18:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

When church and state come together, bad things always happen. I pray that history does not repeat itself. Which church will be in league with the state? The more majority? The more majority does not exist since mankind decided to give dominion of the planet to satan. God has given me the right to make decisions for myself. I do not need others to make them for me. Freedom to worship God, as I see fit in His Holy Bible.

Thank you, Michael Joaquin Logan

From: Deron Isaac <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:19:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen to respectfully ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your recent report that would weaken the separation of church and state, specifically regarding the use of government funds for religious activities and the proposed repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

History demonstrates that true religious freedom is a hard-won right. Many of the early settlers and colonists who came to what became the United States were fleeing severe, state-sponsored religious persecution.

- **Early English Colonists:** Pilgrims (1620) and Puritans (1630) fled the mandatory structures of the Church of England and royal overreach.
- **German Pietists and Lutherans:** Many Protestant groups escaped restrictive Catholic rulers and conflicts within the Holy Roman Empire, finding a haven in Pennsylvania—established by William Penn specifically for Quakers and other persecuted groups.
- **French Huguenots:** These Calvinists faced brutal violence from the French state and fled to colonies like New York and the Carolinas after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

Crucially, much of this bitter history involved Christians persecuting fellow Christians over doctrinal differences. Remembering how easily state-enforced religion breeds oppression, the Framers of the Constitution intentionally chose not to establish a state religion, designing a system to preserve true religious freedom for all.

Today, the diversity within Christianity itself illustrates why this separation remains vital. Even foundational texts are viewed differently across denominations. For instance, as the Ten Commandments are increasingly posted in public schools, we see conflicting interpretations. Depending on the tradition, the prohibition against graven images is categorized differently, and the Sabbath commandment is often altered to accommodate Sunday worship. Yet, many Bible-believing Christians strictly follow the scriptural text observing the Saturday Sabbath, as did Jesus, the disciples, and the early church for the first few centuries before Western Rome transitioned to Christianity. Who decides which version of the 10 commandments is the official one of the state?

A strict separation between church and state is not a secular attack on faith; rather, it is a vital shield that people of all faiths should passionately uphold. When churches accept government funding or immerse themselves in partisan politics, they inevitably inherit political corruption. Houses of worship end up competing for federal dollars and answering to politicians instead of to God, damaging both the church and the country.

Furthermore, for many students of prophecy, these developments raise serious spiritual concerns. The Book of Revelation warns of a future global power that uses state authority to enforce mandatory worship. While we may not be at that point today, eroding these boundaries creates a dangerous precursor. Those pushing to dismantle church-state separation may unknowingly be building the legal framework for future persecution against anyone whose faith or lack thereof, does not perfectly align with the majority.

Dismantling this separation fundamentally misunderstands Christ's character and teachings. As Jesus clearly stated in John 18:36: *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."*

Separation of church and state is a principle built by people of faith to protect faith. It is the very reason religion has remained so robust and diverse in America. Please protect the integrity of both institutions by keeping them distinct.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Deron Isaac

Austin, TX

From: Charlie <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Charles K.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:20:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am submitting my Public Comment OPPOSING the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report does not present a balanced or historically accurate assessment of religious liberty in the United States. The report presents a false premise that the constitutional separation between religion and government is somehow hostile to religion. The opposite is true. Religious liberty is protected by the Establishment Clause by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. This principle has safeguarded both believers and nonbelievers throughout our nation's history and has helped foster one of the most religiously diverse societies in the world.

The RLC draft report relies mostly on testimony from witnesses representing one side of deeply contested constitutional questions while allotting comparatively little attention to scholars, historians, civil rights advocates, religious minorities, or organizations dedicated to preserving governmental neutrality toward religion. Thus the report cannot present itself to be an objective examination of religious liberty, but rather it is an advocacy document supporting a specific political and theological movement. True religious liberty requires government restraint rather than government support and the promotion of religion.

I am very concerned about many of the report's recommendations which would further entangle government with religion rather than protecting religious freedom. I am opposed to abandoning longstanding First Amendment principles, expanding governmental promotion of religion in public institutions, weakening restrictions on partisan political activity by tax-exempt churches, creating new federal mechanisms dedicated to advancing preferred religious claims, and encouraging judicial appointments based on a particular ideological vision of religious liberty. These proposals threaten the constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and equal treatment for believers and nonbelievers alike which I support.

I respectfully urge the Commission to substantially revise or withdraw the portions of the draft report that seek to redefine the Establishment Clause, reduce governmental neutrality toward religion, or promote policies that would privilege particular religious beliefs through governmental action.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles K.,
United States Citizen

From: Cindy Bowmann [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Cynthia Bowman

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:21:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen from Shelby, North Carolina, with no institutional standing except the plain conviction that both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses rise or fall together. We stand at another one of those hinge moments our country has faced before, and I confess I feel the same unease I feel watching new technologies like artificial intelligence race ahead of our wisdom to govern them: good intentions, followed by a Pandora's box we cannot close again. God's ways are not our ways, and history has shown repeatedly that human pride convinces us we can "fix" what only invites new harm. I ask you to weigh your recommendations against Scripture and history, not merely against the wisdom of the present moment.

The deepest argument against religious legislation is not secular but Christian. When Christ said that the things which are Caesar's belong to Caesar and the things which are God's belong to God, he divided all human duty into two jurisdictions, and civil government was granted only one of them. The state may rightly ask whether an act injures a neighbor; it has no standing to ask whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical. A commission that puts government behind a religious text or observance does not overreach a secular boundary — it trespasses the very line its own Lord drew.

There is also a structural reason government can never rightfully hold this power: it was never given. Our government exists by the consent of the governed, resting on powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — he cannot appoint another to believe or worship in his place. What was never within any citizen's power to hand over could never have been received by any government. And no government will ever stand at the judgment seat to answer for a soul, so no government can rightly claim jurisdiction over one now.

This is why even a law favoring one's own religion destroys the free exercise of it. Any religious statute must define the belief it protects, and that definition will include some and exclude others — even the included now practice their faith by the law's permission rather than by conscience. A believer who welcomes government endorsement today hands the same machinery to whatever administration governs tomorrow, on convictions that may differ entirely from his own.

Our nation already settled this question once. Congress's own committees, in 1829 and 1830, when men who had lived through the founding still served, declared that ours is a civil and not a religious institution, bound to protect all faiths and determine for none. They saw plainly that if government defines one religious duty, it may claim the right to define them all, and that human power can extort outward conformity but never command the heart. That report is the precedent this Commission must answer to, not a modern court case.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Cynthia Bowman
Shelby, NC

From: Rowdy Mobile <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTn- Establishment Clausen- ROWDY SCHMIDT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:23:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen of Silverton, Idaho, who cares about getting this right, because whatever your commission recommends will shape how millions of Americans experience their government for a long time to come. I do not come to this as an opponent of religion. I come to it as someone who believes religion is too important to be handed over to legislators, school boards, or courts to define.

Start with the practical problem no establishment scheme ever solves: whose religion gets adopted? There is no generic, non-sectarian Christianity waiting to be posted on a schoolhouse wall. Even the Ten Commandments, often called common ground, are not common ground at all — Protestants and Catholics have long numbered and translated the decalogue differently, a difference one writer of the era called irreconcilable. If a state chooses which Bible, which translation, which numbering to enforce, it has not honored religion generally; it has crowned one tradition and demoted the rest by the force of law. As a congressional committee recognized as early as 1830, that kind of choice belongs to a church council, not a republican legislature, because a republican legislature exists for political purposes, not religious ones.

Some argue that strict separation is a modern invention, foreign to the founders' intent. The history runs the other way. Madison, who drafted the First Amendment, told the Virginia ratifying convention plainly that there is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. This was not an accident of drafting or a slight against faith — it was, in the words of the era, done out of respect for religion and for the rights of men which that religion inculcates. And it was churches themselves — Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, communities that had suffered under establishment — who pushed hardest for that separation. A commission that wants to claim the founders for state-sponsored religion has to explain away Madison's own words.

This is not just founding-era theory; it is settled government precedent. When Sabbatarian petitioners asked Congress to legislate religious observance in 1829 and 1830, the congressional committees that answered them — one generation removed from the founding, with men who had lived through it still serving — declared it was not the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or false, since our government is a civil and not a religious institution. They saw clearly that if government defines one point of religious duty, it may with equal claim define every point, down to the ceremonies of worship and the support of clergy. That is the precedent this commission would have to overturn — not a twentieth-century court ruling, but an official act of the very Congress that followed the founders.

Finally, consider what coercion actually produces. Force can put a body in a pew; it cannot put worship in a heart, because love for God is essential to any genuine act of religious duty. Compelling religious observance breeds hypocrisy, not faith. Madison's own survey of fifteen centuries of established Christianity found the fruits to be pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and in both, superstition and persecution. State favor does not strengthen a church; it corrupts it, trading spiritual vitality for the comfort of political protection. Grant said it well: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, and keep the state and church forever separate.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Rowdy Schmidt
Silverton, Idaho

From: Valerie Robertson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church & State – Valerie Robertson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:23:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a United States citizen I am writing to request that you reconsider the recommendation to weaken the separation of church and state. The only way we can experience true freedom is when religion and government are kept separate. Because religion is a personal issue, the government must stay neutral to protect everyone's rights to believe as they wish without interfering. Our country was founded because people were seeking to escape the tyranny of government control through the churches.

I respectfully request that you do not repeal the Johnson Amendment.

Let freedom ring! Let church and state remain separate!

Valerie Robertson
Edgewater, FL

From: John Deutschbein <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION – [John Deutschbein].

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:24:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the recommendations of the Final Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Freedom Commission. As a U.S. citizen, and lifelong Catholic, I find many things objectionable about the Commission and its report.

To start, the majority of its members have expressed opinions that reek of White Christian Nationalism. One example, Paula White, has made no secret about her support for the Seven Mountains Mandate and the New Apostolic Reformation, both of which are strongly associated with Christian Nationalism.

In the USA, Catholicism is a minority faith. However I have been free to practice as the 1st amendment guarantees my right to do so. But in this Report, the depiction of the history of religious freedom in America is seriously flawed and seems to be based more on ideology than historical fact.

The Report seems to assume that the founders intended the United States to be a "Christian Nation" and that separation of church and state was not intended and is simply not supported by the actual historical record. One need only read the words of the founders to see this (these are just a few of many):

Founder Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists (1802):

"Religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God" and that the founders intended "**a wall of separation between Church & land State.**"

Founder James Madison's Comments on the First Amendment:

"The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe with blood for centuries.

Founder John Barlow, in the Treaty of Tripoli (1796):

"The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

Suggested reading: "Liars for Jesus- The Religious Rights Alternate Version of American History. by Chris Rodda.

The 1st amendment is a deliberate attempt to create a national government devoid of specific religious authority and thereby to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society, not to diminish it. This has been well understood for my lifetime. The only religious conflicts that I have encountered in my life have been when fundamentalist evangelicals tried to force Young Earth Creationism into kids Bible study at a church I was attending. This issue was dealt with at that church. In the United States, that is how it should be. The government should stay out of those discussions. The examples of religious "oppression" in the Report seem curated to promote the Christian Nationalist agenda, not protect religious liberty.

Instead of the U.S. Department of Justice engaging in strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the DOJ should be suing Texas & other states for violating the 1st Amendment. Instead, the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism, attacking the long history of religious pluralism in the United States. This approach cannot be farther from the intent of the Founders.

I strongly support religious liberty as it allows me to safely practice my minority faith in the United States. I believe adopting the Commission's recommendations would have the opposite effect, putting the government's thumb on the scales of justice in favor of a particular brand of religious authority. The world does not need a repeat of the bloody religious wars such as occurred in Europe for the centuries after the Reformation.

I urge the Commission to withdraw its report. The Commission needs to remove the ideological bias and get a more accurate historical foundation. How about adding a few more historians to the commission? Maybe Chris Rodda is available.

Sincerely yours,

John Deutschbein

From: Sherri Sicina <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Sherri Sicina

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:24:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was concerned reading that our government wants to consider weakening the separation of church and state and repealing the Johnson Amendment. This country the USA was founded on religious liberty and having the freedom to follow the dictates of your own conscience. That's why the pilgrims came to America to leave a life that had No separation of church and state. This country has offered this freedom for 250yrs and it needs to continue. Without this, other religions can than be imposed on citizens by our Government which as a Christian I would not want to have the Muslim faith pushed on me to follow. As would a Muslim not want Christianity pushed on them. Without separation of church and state religious freedom is impossible. Removing governments ability to give preferential treatment to one religion or religion in general, helps to separate church and state and allows Americans to practice their deeply held beliefs in private and public. Ultimately, not allowing government to interfere with religion is essential for religious freedom.

Sincerely,

Sherri Sicina

Union, Maine

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:25:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious liberty commission:

I'm troubled about the separation of church and state. From history, it has always been trouble, when the Church and State combined. It is not a good thing.

Kevin Albertsen
Pittsburg, Ca

From: Rachel Lamkin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment General Comment (The Path Forward) -- Rachel Lamkin

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:26:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you so very much for the work done by the Commission! I fully support this work & pray that our nation will break the lie of "separation of church and state." This has had dire consequences for our nation. May we as a nation repent & rebuke this claim. May we reclaim our nation's heritage that religious liberty is "essential because religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society." I agree with the members of this Commission that, "religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength." With the help of Almighty God, let us, "cultivate a culture that understands why those rights exist in the first place." God bless America!

Rachel Lamkin

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From: Lucienne Cole <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] "religious liberty"

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:26:48 -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.

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.

I remain, Yours truly,

Lucienne Cole

Sent from my iPhone

From: Larvarn Jordan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:27:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

Based on the economic and political climate. I am opposed to the merging Church and State.

From: Daniel Perrin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:27:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Retain_Separation_of_Church_and_State.pdf

July 12, 2026

Email 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,
members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the United States, I read with interest the June 26, 2026 draft report released by the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. The words "Religious Liberty" are a desirable goal, an essential quality for a free people and a free nation; but when religious liberty is redefined so that the words give broad power to select religious bodies to use governmental authority to compel obedience to one version of religious doctrines, the words come to mean the exact opposite of true religious liberty, regardless of how they are hailed and promoted. Recommendations 1 and 9 of the report especially adjust the direction of religious liberty in this nation so that it will arrive at a fateful destination where liberty is only granted to those who believe or obey the religious commandments of the majority. **I request that you protect true religious liberty by retaining the separation of church and state. Please remove recommendations 1 and 9 from the report through the most direct process possible.**

While the intention to defend religious believers and organizations from discrimination is righteous, this report oversteps the natural boundary that limits the power a religious body may exert over a nation's laws. While this document appears to protect the right to hold and express faith, it will certainly be seen that it will empower a portion of religious believers to control the power of government. This combination of religious and governmental powers will ultimately be used to coerce, compel, or terrorize adherents to another faith, or no faith at all, to either hide their conviction or outwardly trade it for the religion currently possessing power. Though it is not seen in full detail where

the recommendations of this document are tending, the fruit of the plant is present in the seed. The example of what fruit will be produced is visible in the parent plant.

History has many examples of the parent plant this document will produce, examples of governments which united church and state. In their blood-stained history, we see the future of this nation if we allow any church to blend its interests with the state so that religion may wield the power of the government. When the God-given barrier separating human governments from religious institutions is dissolved, terrible will be the results for generations to follow until brave reformers finally rise up to restore what our Founding Fathers courageously carved out and preserved for us.

It was church united with the power of the state that lit the Smithfield fires of the 1580s, in which Protestants were burned to death outside the walls of London by a religious decree carried out by government authority.

It was church united with the power of the state that brought about the torments of the Spanish Inquisition in which individuals and families with God-given freewill were stripped to nothing and brutally tortured at the accusation that their secret thoughts were not in accordance with the church authorities that bent the ear of the government.

It was church united with the power of the state that burned Jan Hus as a heretic in 1415 for preaching messages unsanctioned by church authorities.

It was church united with the power of the state that strangled William Tyndale and burned him to death in 1536 for translating and distributing the Bible.

It was church united with the power of the state that whipped and hanged Quakers on this continent in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1600s for not abiding by the Puritan doctrines of worship. The Mary Dyer Memorial outside the Massachusetts State House in Boston stands today as a silent witness of the consequence of uniting church and state. Religious freedom will not be preserved; rather, it will be abridged and ultimately revoked.

It was church working through the power of the state that persecuted the peaceful Quakers of Flushing in the 1650s. The courageous citizens presented the Flushing Remonstrance in 1657 requesting the governing authorities to grant religious freedom to all faiths. This heroic document envisioning the separation of the government from the control of religious interest was memorialized on a United States postal stamp in 1957.

It was not the church alone that fined, imprisoned, and killed in the name of preserving religious purity. Nor was it the state. The church doesn't have the power, and the state doesn't have the will. These injustices have taken place when the church crosses the natural limits God has set upon faith by uniting with governments to demand what God declares must be given only by free will.

It will be a church united with the power of the state that will impose pecuniary penalties or imprisonment on those who do not worship according to the ordinances of one church body — worship in the form of imposed creeds, forced prayers, levied tithes, legislated days of rest, or laws that govern motives, intentions, and thoughts.

The record of history has shown that when church and state unite, religious forces will at some point use state authority to require submission to their religious authority. The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report, in dissolving the separation that must exist between church and state, directs this nation toward a state of affairs in which citizens will not be free to choose or to live their faith. Human nature is no different today than it has been in the past; if we unite church and state today, the result will be the same as it has always been in the past – one religious body will attempt to rule the conscience of the people through legislation, privileges, and penalties.

In this nation, religious and governmental voices are now calling for a repudiation of this nation's separation of the powers of government and religion. Those voices have variously declared that the protective wall that prevents churches from controlling state power is not found in the United States Constitution. Those expressing these claims further state that the Founding Fathers intended for the church to influence and control the state.

If it were true that the founders of this nation intended our Constitution to enshrine the right of a church to direct the government, what would we expect to find plainly stated in the Constitution? If the framers of the Constitution intended to canonize the union of church and state, what language must appear, plainly set forth?

- We would find in the Constitution a statement defining *which* god and *which* religion should have authority to implement its vision through combining with the government. Yet no god is mentioned even once in the text of the Constitution.
- We would find in the Constitution a statement as to *which* church should influence the government. There would be a delineation of which of the many opposing religious doctrines would hold preeminence in the nation. There would be an explanation of which religious doctrine holds the privileged position of directing legislation to favor its position and penalize others.
- We would find in the Constitution descriptions of the methods the chosen church could employ to protect and impose its dogmas through governmental channels.
- We would find in the Constitution references to the positions and titles of religious leaders and their interconnected role with lawmakers and executives.
- We would find in the Constitution clear statements that exalt and praise the will of the church and recommend its religious laws to be appreciated and obeyed by every citizen.
- We would find in the Constitution provisions for penalizing and punishing heretics who do not conform to the doctrines and dogmas of the favored church.

A plain reading of the Constitution reveals none of the above elements that must be present if our Founding Fathers intended church to be united with the state. Rather than clearly setting forth the union of church and state, the Constitution is notably silent on each of the statements that must be present to establish the union of those powers. If the Founding Fathers intended church to have power to influence and control the government, that principle should be clearly expressed repeatedly and without ambiguity. Instead, a religious body called "the church" is not an entity recognized by the Constitution as having any authority with government. No god is mentioned by name; no church is set forth as having power with government; no creed or command to worship is canonized; no connection is set forth either overtly or in vague language. There are many different religious bodies, some diametrically opposed in the tenets they would impose if given the power. The Constitution grants to

none of those religious bodies a privileged status of having influence over any branch of government. If one religious body were given special power to influence our government and its laws, freedom, so-called, would only be a reality for the few with power. The result would be oppression for the many who must surrender both conscience and personal freedom to the religious leaders currently in favor with legislators and executives.

"In God We Trust" is not a statement in the Constitution. Claiming that the dollar in our pocket demonstrates that this is a Christian nation and that a church should receive a flow of money from the government to finance its religious objectives, religious education, and proselytizing is a logical fallacy. Roman symbols appear on U.S. money, but this is not a Roman nation. A coin is not our Constitution. It is intellectual dishonesty that manipulates the public through false associations between what was written in the Constitution in 1787 and what was printed on a coin first in 1864.

Point #9 of the draft report calls for the Johnson Amendment to be repealed. If this recommendation were to be enacted, the resulting power-grab frenzy would be a race between opposing religious bodies to stake their claim on government power. This fatal decision will wreak havoc on the trust any citizen could place in the integrity of government leaders who are to represent the rights of *all* citizens. There would be no assurance that government leaders would not be bought by the offerings of religious bodies and become, in essence, a power-invested arm of the church with the loudest voice or deepest pocket.

In 1829, Hon. Richard M. Johnson, writing in a Senate Report, gave guidance in defining the position religion should play in relation to government. The wall of separation between church and state prevents the insertion of divine law into the body of government legislation.

"Among all the religious persecutions with which almost every page of modern history is stained, no victim ever suffered but for violation of what Government denominated the law of God. To prevent a similar train of evils in this country, the Constitution has withheld the power of defining the divine law. It is a right reserved to each citizen. And while he respects the rights of others he cannot be held amenable to any human tribunal for his conclusions."

It was James Madison who gave this wise admonition of the proper relationship between church and state in the discharge of a government's duty:

"Every new & successful example therefore of a perfect separation between ecclesiastical and civil matters, is of importance. And I have no doubt that every new example, will succeed, as every past one has done, in shewing that religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together."

(Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822).

Religion is a positive influence in this nation, and acts as a natural limiting factor to the government by allowing a moral people to elect moral leaders. Its presence and free expression in our nation is essential. Nonetheless, religion should not have a role in promoting legislation through its financial donations or influencing secular government leaders.

I raise my voice in opposition to the acceptance and implementation of this draft document as written in its intention to unite church and state, especially recommendations 1 and 9 noted

above. I am thankful for the freedom to express this opinion without threat of retaliation or retribution. I ask that the members of this council protect the rights of *all* citizens and *all* faiths to live and worship according to the dictates of their own conscience without any religious body having special power to impose its will through legislation or governmental influence. **To protect religious liberty for all, no church should be permitted to unite with government. Church and state must remain forever separate to preserve freedom for all.**

Respectfully,

Daniel Perrin, a concerned private citizen
Pullman, Michigan

July 12, 2026

Email 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

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

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It was church united with the power of the state that lit the Smithfield fires of the 1580s, in which Protestants were burned to death outside the walls of London by a religious decree carried out by government authority.

It was church united with the power of the state that brought about the torments of the Spanish Inquisition in which individuals and families with God-given freewill were stripped to nothing and brutally tortured at the accusation that their secret thoughts were not in accordance with the church authorities that bent the ear of the government.

It was church united with the power of the state that burned Jan Hus as a heretic in 1415 for preaching messages unsanctioned by church authorities.

It was church united with the power of the state that strangled William Tyndale and burned him to death in 1536 for translating and distributing the Bible.

It was church united with the power of the state that whipped and hanged Quakers on this continent in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1600s for not abiding by the Puritan doctrines of worship. The Mary Dyer Memorial outside the Massachusetts State House in Boston stands today as a silent witness of the consequence of uniting church and state. Religious freedom will not be preserved; rather, it will be abridged and ultimately revoked.

It was church working through the power of the state that persecuted the peaceful Quakers of Flushing in the 1650s. The courageous citizens presented the Flushing Remonstrance in 1657 requesting the governing authorities to grant religious freedom to all faiths. This heroic document envisioning the separation of the government from the control of religious interest was memorialized on a United States postal stamp in 1957.

It was not the church alone that fined, imprisoned, and killed in the name of preserving religious purity. Nor was it the state. The church doesn't have the power, and the state doesn't have the will. These injustices have taken place when the church crosses the natural limits God has set upon faith by uniting with governments to demand what God declares must be given only by free will.

It will be a church united with the power of the state that will impose pecuniary penalties or imprisonment on those who do not worship according to the ordinances of one church body — worship in the form of imposed creeds, forced prayers, levied tithes, legislated days of rest, or laws that govern motives, intentions, and thoughts.

The record of history has shown that when church and state unite, religious forces will at some point use state authority to require submission to their religious authority. The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report, in dissolving the separation that must exist between church and state, directs this nation toward a state of affairs in which citizens will not be free to choose or to live their faith. Human nature is no different today than it has been in the past; if we unite church and state today, the result will be the same as it has always been in the past – one religious body will attempt to rule the conscience of the people through legislation, privileges, and penalties.

In this nation, religious and governmental voices are now calling for a repudiation of this nation's separation of the powers of government and religion. Those voices have variously declared that the protective wall that prevents churches from controlling state power is not found in the United States Constitution. Those expressing these claims further state that the Founding Fathers intended for the church to influence and control the state.

If it were true that the founders of this nation intended our Constitution to enshrine the right of a church to direct the government, what would we expect to find plainly stated in the Constitution? If the framers of the Constitution intended to canonize the union of church and state, what language must appear, plainly set forth?

- We would find in the Constitution a statement defining *which* god and *which* religion should have authority to implement its vision through combining with the government. Yet no god is mentioned even once in the text of the Constitution.
- We would find in the Constitution a statement as to *which* church should influence the government. There would be a delineation of which of the many opposing religious doctrines would hold preeminence in the nation. There would be an explanation of which religious doctrine holds the privileged position of directing legislation to favor its position and penalize others.
- We would find in the Constitution descriptions of the methods the chosen church could employ to protect and impose its dogmas through governmental channels.
- We would find in the Constitution references to the positions and titles of religious leaders and their interconnected role with lawmakers and executives.
- We would find in the Constitution clear statements that exalt and praise the will of the church and recommend its religious laws to be appreciated and obeyed by every citizen.
- We would find in the Constitution provisions for penalizing and punishing heretics who do not conform to the doctrines and dogmas of the favored church.

A plain reading of the Constitution reveals none of the above elements that must be present if our Founding Fathers intended church to be united with the state. Rather than clearly setting forth the union of church and state, the Constitution is notably silent on each of the statements that must be present to establish the union of those powers. If the Founding Fathers intended church to have power to influence and control the government, that principle should be clearly expressed repeatedly and without ambiguity. Instead, a religious body called

“the church” is not an entity recognized by the Constitution as having any authority with government. No god is mentioned by name; no church is set forth as having power with government; no creed or command to worship is canonized; no connection is set forth either overtly or in vague language. There are many different religious bodies, some diametrically opposed in the tenets they would impose if given the power. The Constitution grants to none of those religious bodies a privileged status of having influence over any branch of government. If one religious body were given special power to influence our government and its laws, freedom, so-called, would only be a reality for the few with power. The result would be oppression for the many who must surrender both conscience and personal freedom to the religious leaders currently in favor with legislators and executives.

“In God We Trust” is not a statement in the Constitution. Claiming that the dollar in our pocket demonstrates that this is a Christian nation and that a church should receive a flow of money from the government to finance its religious objectives, religious education, and proselytizing is a logical fallacy. Roman symbols appear on U.S. money, but this is not a Roman nation. A coin is not our Constitution. It is intellectual dishonesty that manipulates the public through false associations between what was written in the Constitution in 1787 and what was printed on a coin first in 1864.

Point #9 of the draft report calls for the Johnson Amendment to be repealed. If this recommendation were to be enacted, the resulting power-grab frenzy would be a race between opposing religious bodies to stake their claim on government power. This fatal decision will wreak havoc on the trust any citizen could place in the integrity of government leaders who are to represent the rights of *all* citizens. There would be no assurance that government leaders would not be bought by the offerings of religious bodies and become, in essence, a power-invested arm of the church with the loudest voice or deepest pocket.

In 1829, Hon. Richard M. Johnson, writing in a Senate Report, gave guidance in defining the position religion should play in relation to government. The wall of separation between church and state prevents the insertion of divine law into the body of government legislation.

“Among all the religious persecutions with which almost every page of modern history is stained, no victim ever suffered but for violation of what Government denominated the law of God. To prevent a similar train of evils in this country, the Constitution has withheld the power of defining the divine law. It is a right reserved to each citizen. And while he respects the rights of others he cannot be held amenable to any human tribunal for his conclusions.”

It was James Madison who gave this wise admonition of the proper relationship between church and state in the discharge of a government’s duty:

“Every new & successful example therefore of a perfect separation between ecclesiastical and civil matters, is of importance. And I have no doubt that every new example, will succeed, as every past one has done, in shewing that religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.”

(Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822).

Religion is a positive influence in this nation, and acts as a natural limiting factor to the government by allowing a moral people to elect moral leaders. Its presence and free expression in our nation is essential. Nonetheless, religion should not have a role in promoting legislation through its financial donations or influencing secular government leaders.

I raise my voice in opposition to the acceptance and implementation of this draft document as written in its intention to unite church and state, especially recommendations 1 and 9 noted above. I am thankful for the freedom to express this opinion without threat of retaliation or retribution. I ask that the members of this council protect the rights of *all* citizens and *all* faiths to live and worship according to the dictates of their own conscience without any religious body having special power to impose its will through legislation or governmental influence. **To protect religious liberty for all, no church should be permitted to unite with government. Church and state must remain forever separate to preserve freedom for all.**

Respectfully,

Daniel Perrin, a concerned private citizen
Pullman, Michigan

From: Juan Felipe Martin Concepcion <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:29:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Juan Felipe Martín

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-separation of church and state

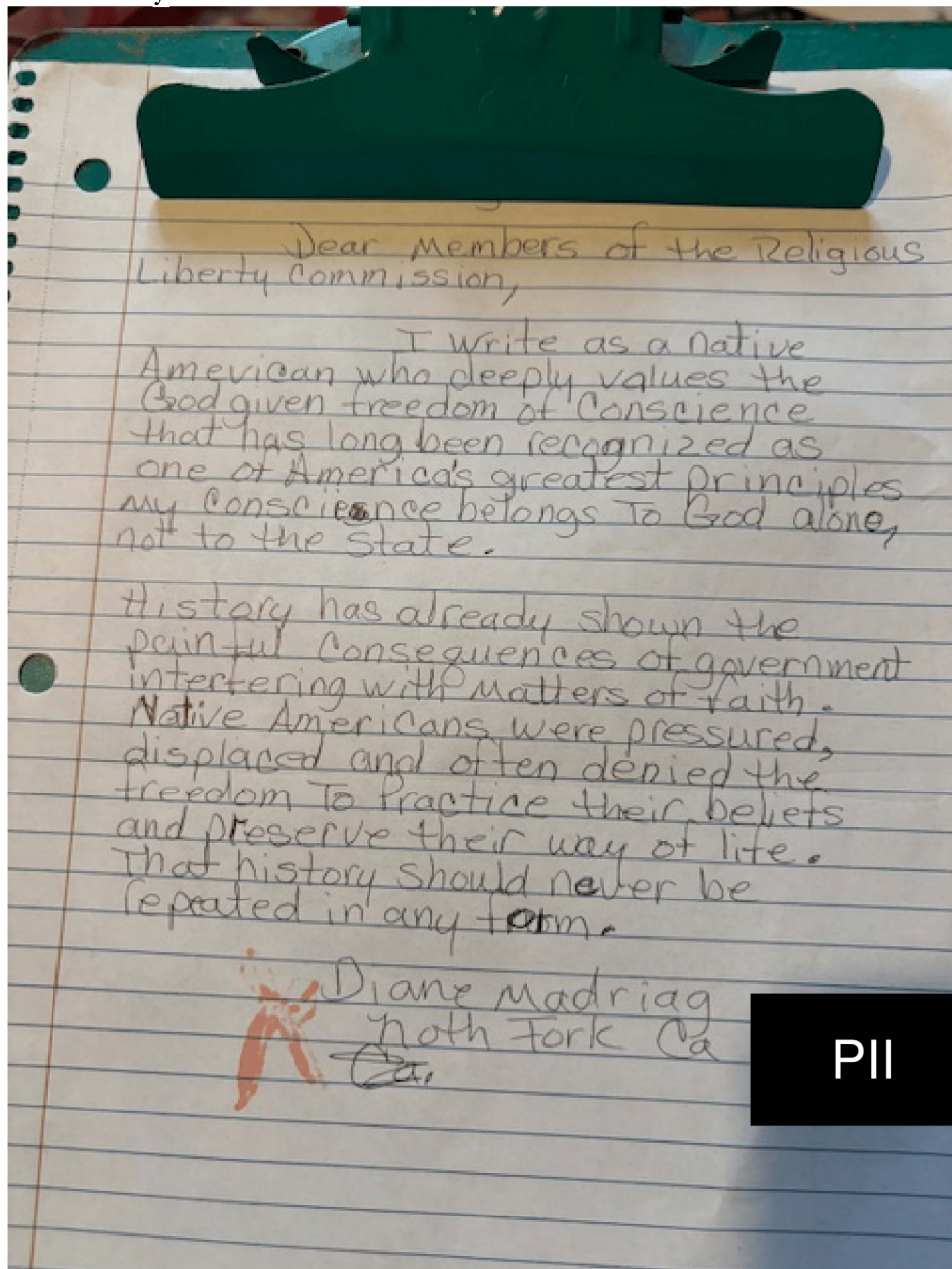
Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:29:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: IMG_8592.jpg



Sent from my iPhone



From: Sean Carney <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Deep Concerns Regarding the Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:29:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

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

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to any recommendations that erode the separation of church and state—specifically any efforts to strike this foundational phrase from public discourse.

The First Amendment guarantees the right to religious freedom by ensuring the government does not privilege one faith over another. My own family of mixed faiths all came to America to escape religious harassment. Witnessing our government begin to elevate a single religion over others—under the false pretense that our nation was founded on one specific faith—is deeply alarming. Our Founders intentionally prevented a state religion from dictating the use of public funds and governance.

True religious liberty requires keeping church and state separate. I urge the Commission to uphold our nation's diverse heritage and protect the freedom of all Americans by maintaining this vital constitutional boundary.

Sincerely,
Sean Carney
Amity, Arkansas

From: T W <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:30:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Separation of church and state protects freedom. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on everyone, leading to discrimination and tyranny.

Religion is personal. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress.

It was exactly why the USA was founded originally! The first people came here exactly BECAUSE church and state in their own countries was NOT separate.

So PLEASE, keep church and state completely separate.

Thank You for reading my letter

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

From: Sara Fitzgerald <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT--RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT
REPORT--SARA FITZGERALD

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a trained historian, a lifelong Christian and someone who has served in leadership roles in my Protestant denomination, I urge the Department to send the Draft Report of the Religious Liberty back to the drawing board for extensive revisions (if not consigning it to the dustbin) It reflects a distorted, inaccurate view of the religious history of the United States and the beliefs of those who founded our country. The report cherry-picks episodes when it contends the religious liberty of individuals was violated by certain laws designed to protect broader human rights.

In John 8:32, Jesus said "Only the truth can set us free." Tell the true story of our nation's history and assert its long commitment to a plurality of religious views.

From: David Hicks <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am troubled to read that the Commission wants to tear down the wall of separation between Church and State that has existed in my beloved country and made it great. As a devout Christian and a protestant, I value worshiping as I believe without the fear of the government or a powerful political church opposing me for my beliefs in the Holy Bible. Throughout history Christians have been persecuted and even killed when a powerful church with political clout disagrees with the fundamental beliefs of a smaller more vulnerable group of Christians. When my ancestors came to America, they were pleased to find a government without a king and a church without a pope. Let us keep it that way, please!

God Bless,

David Hicks

Colcord, Oklahoma

From: Matt Schneider <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] let Constatution stand

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

To law makers,

Please leave the Constatution alone.

Listen to our ancestors wisdom. Government has no place in Religion.

Please keep the Seperation of church and State.

This country was founded on Freedom of religion. Let's keep it that way.

Thank you for your time.

Matt

From: "Mellor, Don" <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] We object to the RLC proposed document on religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:31:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious liberty committee members,
tomorrow is the deadline for public response to your drafted document on religious freedom. The reason we object to this report is it redefines the separation between church and state and goes on to state that our constitution does not require separation between church and government. Why is this a big deal? Historically throughout earth's history whenever there was a union between church and state it inevitably resulted in persecution. Whoever was in power would use their understanding of God's word and proceed to implement coercion and force obedience. The greatest atrocities ever committed upon humanity were done because of the union between church and state. Our founding fathers understood this and took steps to try and prevent this from happening again when they wrote up our constitution and specifically addressed this issue in the first amendment. Furthermore, we believe this is so important because it completely misrepresents God who created us to be free and values nothing higher than our freedom and individuality. When James and John asked if Jesus wanted them to call fire down from heaven to destroy some people who didn't welcome them into their village, Jesus told James and John that they didn't know what manner of spirit they harbored and that He did not come to destroy lives but to save lives. We strongly disagree with the committee wanting to rewrite our country's long held commitment to keeping a barrier between the joining of church and state!!!

Sincerely,

Don L. Mellor Psy.D

Sharon J. Mellor LCSW

Sent from my iPhone

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This e-mail communication and any attachments may contain confidential and privileged information for the use of the designated recipients named above. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this communication in error and that any review, disclosure, dissemination, distribution or copying of it or its contents is prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify me immediately by replying to this message and destroy all copies of this communication and any attachments. Thank you.

From: Nicolaus Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:32:23 -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

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

Please do not build a bridge between the church and state; I am troubled by that idea. The United States is the greatest nation in the world. One of the things that has made us great is the separation of church and state. I wholly agree with Thomas Jefferson when he said "It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." We are strong because of our freedom.

Church and state need to be separate in order for freedom to permeate our society. The Johnson Amendment is necessary to maintain this separation. Jesus said in John 18 "My Kingdom is not of this world." The church needs to focus on the heavenly things, and the government needs to focus on the earthly matters. The two should not influence each other. Thank you

Sincerely,

Nicolaus Anderson

Larsen, Wisconsin

From: Lucy Mercer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:32:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a woman if faith in Jesus Christ, and he never mixed politics with religion. That's why the USA is great because we also separate church and state. Remember history? The Roman Catholic church and the dark ages? Huss and Jerome, Martin Luther, Tinsdale many of them died for their faith because of a union of church and state. Keep America free, keep separation of church and state.

From: Marty Phillips <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTn— Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:32:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT — Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

TO: Religious Liberty Commission, via [REDACTED] PII SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENTn—
Recommendations 1 and 9; Universal Protection – Marty Phillips

Dear Members of the Commission:

Greetings from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Thank you — and please convey my thanks to President Trump — for the labor behind this report. The grievances you documented are real, and I support the substantial majority of your recommendations: the "Know Your Rights" initiatives (2, 4); the military accommodation and restoration provisions (10, 11)n— with particular gratitude that the report expressly names Sabbath observance; the healthcare conscience protections; the stand against anti-Semitism (7); and the de-banking protections. I share, as sharply as any witness you heard, the grief over the erasure of religious heritage from our national memory.

I write as an American whose family has lived on this land since the Mayflower, with forebears among the Rhode Island dissenters who first planted the principle of full liberty of conscience on this continent — a Sabbath-keeping Christian in the tradition that gave this nation its conscientious medics, from the Civil War to Corporal Desmond Doss at Hacksaw Ridge.

Having spent decades serving believers in places where religious liberty does not exist, I perceive that we are at a tipping point. Written one way, its protections will endure for generations. Written as drafted, its two central mechanisms — executive-defined religious liberty (Recommendation 1) and undisclosed political money through churches (Recommendation 9) — will change hands with the next administration and be turned against the very believers who testified before you. The margin is razor-thin: a few sentences of drafting, and the window closes with this comment period. I therefore submit four requests and respectfully ask that the final report address each.

REQUEST 1 — Do not let any administration define the First Amendment by memo. Recommendation 1 places the meaning of the Religion Clauses in the executive branch — not the Supreme Court, not Congress. Whatever this administration writes, a future Department of Justice rewrites with the same pen: declaring Sabbath accommodation an "undue hardship," or deciding which gatherings count as religion at all. This is not speculation but the documented fate of guidance: the federal school-prayer guidelines of 2003 were reissued in 2020 and revised again in 2023, and the Attorney General's 2017 religious-liberty guidance was rescinded by the next administration. *Would you place this power in the hands of the administration you most fear? If not, the recommendation must say so now — it cannot be amended later.* **I request that Recommendation 1 be revised so that any guidance may only restate existing Supreme Court holdings, with citations, issued through formal notice-and-comment rulemaking** — the model of the 1995 and 1998 federal guidelines, which calmed these very disputes.

REQUEST 2 — Free the pulpit, but keep campaign money out of churches. The pastors' freedom, which your witnesses asked for, can be fully secured by statute protecting every sermon and pastoral statement made in

the ordinary course of ministry — your own Chapter 3 proposes exactly this. Full repeal of the Johnson Amendment goes further. Churches are the only charities in America exempt from public financial disclosure; every other tax-exempt organization publicly reports its officers, key employees, and finances. Open church treasuries to campaigns — deductible money in, no disclosure inside, political money out — and you create the most powerful undisclosed political vehicle in American law. Congress will not tolerate it forever; the exemption itself will fall. The political churches will survive that audit. The persecuted church will not. *Why choose full repeal, with its certain backlash, when your own Chapter 3 safe harbor delivers everything the testimony asked for?* **I request that Recommendation 9 be replaced with a codified pulpit speech safe harbor, preserving the existing prohibition on church campaign contributions and expenditures.**

REQUEST 3 — Protect worshippers; never list them. Here is my personal interest. I lead a house church movement — through a church duly registered in Tennessee, with a charter extending to the United States and beyond — serving fellowships whose believers live where public identification means death. Our registration is freely made; theirs would be fatal. We once held 501(c)(3) status and relinquished it because its public disclosure of officers and workers would have exposed our people to that fate. For millions of believers, the difference between liberty defined by *exercise* and liberty defined by *registration* is the difference between life and death — not rhetoric, but the daily arithmetic of the underground church. **I request that the final report state explicitly that religious liberty attaches to religious exercise, not to registration or organizational form — covering unregistered fellowships as fully as any incorporated church — and that no federal hotline, portal, registry, compliance program, or grant condition ever records or retains the identities of worshippers or the locations of their gatherings.** A liberty that requires believers to be counted is not liberty for those whose counting endangers.

REQUEST 4 — State the protection universally for every faith. The Commission heard testimony on Native American sacred sites and other minority-faith claims that the draft does not yet address. Do not leave that silence in the final report — for principle, and for survival. Principle: "to bigotry no sanction" must shelter the Jewish student, the Native American at his sacred site, the Muslim, the Christian, and the unbeliever alike, or it is not the Founders' standard. Survival: a report protecting only the faiths its authors know will be repealed as a party document; one protecting the faiths they *don't* know will be defended by everyone. Rhode Island's charter of 1663 sheltered even the communions its authors feared — which is precisely why its principle, and no narrower one, became the First Amendment. **I request that the final report adopt language to this effect: "The protections outlined in this report extend equally to all persons in the United States, regardless of faith or lack thereof, expressly including Native American sacred-site claims, minority-faith practices, unregistered religious communities, and non-Christian traditions."**

Each request strengthens the report; none weakens it. The attached appendix supplies precise language for all four. My family has kept the Sabbath in this country for ten generations — through the Tennessee chain gangs of the 1890s — so we know what the First Amendment protects, and what happens when it sleeps. Whether this report lasts four years or fifty is being decided in these final weeks, by exactly the details named above.

With gratitude for your labor, and prayers for your deliberations,

Blessings.

Kind regards,

Präsident nPraxis

Marty Phillips

Chattanooga, Tennessee

APPENDIX: Proposed Safeguard Amendments

Offered in support of the report's purposes — each amendment is proposed either as model statutory language or as suggested text for the final report, as appropriate. Each preserves the protection and removes only the danger of reversal: recent history has shown that guidance-based protections are redefined, diluted, or reversed with each change of administration; these amendments make the Commission's achievements durable.

Five Principles Behind Every Amendment

1. **Regulate the boundary, never the interior.** Rules may govern where church money and state money meet; they may never reach inside church governance, membership, or doctrine.
2. **Symmetry or nothing.** Every protection for religious expression must carry the twin protection against religious imposition; one-directional rules become weapons when power reverses.
3. **Courts, not departments.** Route remedies through the judiciary, where minorities win on principle — not executive discretion, which changes hands. (The executive may always bind *itself* — restraining its own data collection and programs; what it may not do is define the Constitution's meaning for everyone else. Requests 1 and 3 apply this same line from opposite sides.)
4. **Freeze the conditions.** Any program religious institutions enter must fix its terms by statute at entry, with no retroactive conditions and a no-penalty exit.
5. **Define by exercise, not form.** Protect religious *practice*, never merely organizational *form* — or the unregistered and persecuted fall outside the shield.

Request 1 in full — Recommendation 1 (Establishment Clause guidance)

- **The Restatement Rule:** guidance may only restate existing Supreme Court holdings, with citations — the model of the 1995/1998 federal guidelines — with an explicit disclaimer that it creates no new rights and binds no court.
- **The Symmetry Mandate:** every statement of protected religious expression paired with the corresponding prohibition on religious imposition (coercion, conditioned benefits, official proselytizing of captive audiences).
- **Notice-and-comment rulemaking**, not memo — so minority faiths are heard on the record, and reversal also requires process.
- **Sunset and reauthorization** every four years with a published minority-faith impact review — a short leash for the executive instrument precisely because durable rights belong in statute and judicial precedent, not memos.

Request 2 in full — Recommendation 9 (Johnson Amendment)

- **The Speech Safe Harbor (in place of repeal):** statements made in the ordinary course of a religious organization's activities (sermons, teaching, newsletters), at no more than de minimis incremental cost, are not "intervention." This secures every pastor's pulpit without opening the treasury.
- **The Financial Wall preserved:** contributions, purchased advertising, paid campaign staffing, and in-kind transfers to campaigns remain prohibited for organizations receiving tax-deductible donations.
- **The Anti-Conduit Rule:** any donation earmarked or solicited for political activity automatically loses its charitable deduction and is disclosed above a modest threshold. This disclosure attaches only to voluntary political contributions — a public act by choice — never to worship, membership, or ordinary giving, and so stands in full harmony with Request 3: political money disclosed, worshippers never.

Request 3 in full — Exercise, not form; no registries

- Religious liberty protections attach to any person or association engaged in **religious exercise**, expressly including unincorporated fellowships, house gatherings, and unregistered religious associations.
- No federal hotline, portal, registry, funding program, or reporting mechanism shall compile, retain, or require the identities of worshippers or the locations of gatherings; complaint records purged after resolution; statistics published only in aggregate.

- Existing programs that collect such information shall be revised so that participation in worship or religious assembly is never conditioned on disclosure of personal or organizational details beyond what generally applicable law requires — implemented through agency policy or, where necessary, statutory amendment.

Request 4 in full — Universal protection for every faith

- **Proposed text:** "The protections outlined in this report extend equally to all persons in the United States, regardless of faith or lack thereof, expressly including Native American sacred-site claims, minority-faith practices, unregistered religious communities, and non-Christian traditions."
- This clause shall govern every enforcement mechanism the report creates: task force dockets, litigation priorities, Know-Your-Rights materials, and funding programs alike.

Respectfully submitted for the Commission's consideration. The undersigned would welcome any opportunity to be of further assistance.

From: Randy Zerothm [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] A Concern About Protecting Liberty of Conscience

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:33:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission and United States Department of Justice,

I hope you're doing well. I'm writing because I've been reviewing the recent Presidential Religious Liberty Commission report, and one section in particular—the chapter titled “Religious Liberty: The Bridge Between God and Government”—raises serious concerns about the future of liberty of conscience in our country.

The chapter argues that religious liberty should function as a bridge between faith and government, replacing the long-standing metaphor of a “wall of separation.” While the intention may be to elevate the value of religion in public life, the practical effect of this shift is deeply troubling. The wall metaphor has historically protected all Americans—majority faiths, minority faiths, and those with no religious affiliation—by ensuring that government does not favor or enforce religious belief.

By redefining religious liberty as a connector rather than a boundary, the report encourages a model where government actively promotes, funds, and partners with religious institutions. This may sound harmless on the surface, but it fundamentally changes the role of the state. When government begins to endorse religion—any religion—it inevitably places pressure on conscience. Those who do not share the majority's beliefs can quickly find themselves marginalized, silenced, or coerced.

The chapter itself acknowledges that religion shapes identity, morality, and civic virtue. But these are precisely the reasons why government must remain neutral. When the state adopts religious language, symbolism, or priorities, it blurs the line between voluntary faith and civil obligation. History shows that whenever church and state become intertwined, the result is not greater liberty—it is greater control.

The danger is not theoretical. Weakening the separation of church and state opens the door for:

- Government-endorsed religious messages in public institutions
- Political activity from tax-exempt religious organizations
- Public funding that privileges certain faiths over others
- Social pressure on students, employees, and citizens to conform to majority religious norms

These trends directly threaten the principle of liberty of conscience, which protects every person's right to worship—or not worship—according to conviction, without fear of government influence or reprisal.

My concern is simple: when the state becomes a promoter of religion, it inevitably becomes an arbiter of religion. And once government begins deciding which religious expressions are worthy of protection, the freedom of all faiths is at risk.

I believe we must preserve the separation of church and state not because religion is unimportant, but because it is sacred. Faith thrives best when it is freely chosen, not subtly steered by the power of the state. I am praying for our dear President Trump. May God bless him and give him wisdom in this important matter.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this perspective. I would welcome any thoughts you may have.

Warm regards,

Randy Zeroth

From: Teresa Jackson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:34:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pilar of Freedom's comments, Please Implement them.

sincerely
Theresa Jackson

[REDACTED]

PII

From: Val Alves <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Establishment Clausen- VALDECYR ALVES

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:34:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen of West Palm Beach, Florida, to urge this Commission to hold the line between civil government and religious life, not because religion matters too little to me, but because it matters too much to entrust to the state.

The strongest argument for that line is not secular at all. Christ himself divided human duty into two jurisdictions when he said that what is Caesar's belongs to Caesar and what is God's belongs to God alone. Civil government exists to judge whether an act injures a neighbor; it has no authority to judge whether an act honors or offends God. That question belongs to a court no legislature sits on. Every proposal that puts government behind a religious text, display, or devotional lesson crosses the line Christ himself drew — and the objection to it is not that it is too religious, but that it violates the very faith it claims to serve.

There is a deeper reason government can never rightly hold this power: it was never given to hold. Our whole system rests on the principle that just government derives its powers from the consent of the governed, from what the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God — no one can believe, worship, or answer for another's soul. What was never within any citizen's power to hand over could never have been received by any government. And accountability follows authority: no government will stand at a final judgment to answer for any soul, so no government can rightly assume responsibility over any soul's belief. The First Amendment did not invent this limit. It only wrote down what was already true.

Some will say the public strongly favors a given religious measure, and that democratic majorities should be able to enact what most citizens want. But a right subject to a majority vote is not a right at all — it is a permission, revocable whenever the count changes. Rights, as our founding documents state, are inherent, Creator-endowed, and precisely for that reason placed beyond the reach of elections. Popular government is instituted to protect the minority and the individual dissenter, not merely to execute the will of the crowd. The conscience of one person carries exactly the same weight in law as the conscience of a whole community, or it carries none at all.

This is not only philosophy; it is precedent. Congress itself settled this question in 1829 and 1830, when men who had lived through the founding still sat in its chambers. Facing petitions to halt Sunday mail on religious grounds, congressional committees reported plainly that ours is a civil and not a religious institution, that government's proper business is to protect all faiths and determine none, and that a legislator is chosen to guard the rights of man, not to restrict the rights of conscience. Those reports warned that if government defines even one religious duty by law, it claims, by the same logic, the power to define them all. A commission proposing government-

endorsed religious observance today must overturn not a recent court ruling, but that founding-era Congress's own considered judgment.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Valdecyr Alves
West Palm Beach, FL

From: Kathleen Guagliardo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Letter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:34:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Letter.docx

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

We write as citizens from Pueblo, Colorado, who care about both halves of the First Amendment's promise: that government will not establish religion, and that it will not burden anyone's free exercise of it. I ask you to weigh a historical pattern that the record makes plain, whatever the merits of any single recommendation before you.

History shows that the first religious law is never the last. Constantine's Sunday law of A.D. 321 seemed a small thing when it was issued, but it taught a lesson the empire never unlearned: that the state could be enlisted to enforce religious observance. Ambitious clergy and an ambitious emperor found common cause, imperial favor filled the church with converts who wanted patronage rather than truth, and the state was drawn into deciding church quarrels until it became, in the words of one historian quoted in *The Two Republics*, an institution where every bishop hoped to make politics a branch of theology. Augustine then supplied the theology of righteous compulsion, and the Inquisition supplied its practice. The lesson is not that any particular measure today resembles the Inquisition. It is that the first step contains the last, because it concedes the very principle from which the last step follows: that government may define and promote religious duty. Concede that, and the rest is only application.

Coercion cannot produce what religion actually requires, which is a willing heart. A law can march a body into a pew; it cannot put faith in the man sitting there. Forcing outward observance multiplies hypocrisy, not devotion, because love for God cannot be legislated into existence. And the deeper harm falls on the favored faith itself. Madison surveyed fifteen centuries of established Christianity and found its fruits to be pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and, in both, superstition and persecution. A church that needs the state's help to fill its pews has confessed something about itself that no commission can fix by statute.

This is not merely my opinion or a philosopher's argument. Congress itself settled this question in 1829 and 1830, when men who had lived through the founding still sat in its chambers. The Senate committee plainly reported that it is not within the legitimate province of the legislature to determine which religion is true or false, since our government is a civil, not a religious, institution. The House committee went further, warning that if the government defines even one point of religious duty, it may with equal right define every point, down to the ceremonies of worship and the support of the

clergy. That is the precedent this Commission must reckon with before proposing otherwise.

Finally, the separation of powers the founders wrote into our Constitution was not an oversight or a later invention. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention that there was not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its least interference would be a flagrant usurpation. That separation was largely demanded by churches themselves, who had felt establishment from beneath and wanted no part of it again. The founders did not wait for full establishment to object; they saw the consequences of the principle and denied the principle itself.

Protect free exercise for all and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,

Robert Guagliardo

Kathleen Guagliardo

Pueblo, CO

From: Guy Coninee <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE / CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION – Guy Conine

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:35:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Guy Conine
Kingsburg, California 93631

July 12, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530
Via Electronic Mail: [REDACTED] PII

RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE / CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION – Guy Conine

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a concerned citizen of Kingsburg, California, to submit this formal public comment in advance of the July 13, 2026, deadline established by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission for public response to its Draft Report, released on June 26, 2026. I respectfully urge this Commission to examine with great care its central recommendation: the replacement of the foundational American principle of church-state separation with a model described as building "bridges between church and state." That framing, and the legal and policy implications it carries, gives me serious constitutional concern, and I offer the following observations in the spirit of honest civic engagement.

I. THE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPERATIVE OF CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution begins with an unambiguous command: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These twin clauses — the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause — were deliberately placed first among the amendments to the Bill of Rights, reflecting the Framers' conviction that the relationship between government and religion was a matter of the highest constitutional importance. The two clauses operate together as a coherent, balanced framework: one guards individuals against government-sponsored religion; the other guards the individual's right to practice faith without government interference.

The interpretive tradition of church-state separation is not a modern invention. In his celebrated 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, President Thomas Jefferson described the Establishment Clause as erecting "a wall of separation between church and state" — language that gave voice to a principle the Founders had labored to enshrine in law. That letter was not merely rhetorical; it was adopted by the Supreme Court as authoritative interpretive guidance. In *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947), the Court formally incorporated the Establishment Clause against the states and affirmed that the wall of separation "must be kept high and impregnable." Subsequent decisions reinforced this commitment. In *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962), and *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), the Court held that state-sponsored prayer and Bible readings in public schools violated the Establishment Clause. In *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971), the Court articulated a structured analytical framework for evaluating government entanglement with religion that guided Establishment Clause jurisprudence for decades. This body of precedent, spanning more than two centuries of constitutional development, represents the settled law of this nation. It is not a partisan construction. It is the constitutional architecture within which American pluralism has been built and sustained.

II. SPECIFIC CONCERNS WITH THE COMMISSION'S DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Draft Report characterizes church-state separation as a misapplied or distorted concept — a characterization that is, with respect, historically and legally unsupported. The Establishment Clause was not a judicial invention. It was ratified by the people's representatives. Its interpretation through the courts reflects the ordinary and proper workings of the American constitutional system. To frame that interpretive tradition as an error requiring executive correction misstates the source and legitimacy of constitutional principle.

I am further concerned by the recommendation that the Department of Justice reissue guidance designed to reinterpret the reach of the Establishment Clause. Directing the executive branch to issue legal guidance that conflicts with or seeks to narrow Supreme Court precedent risks a serious overreach of executive authority into the domain of judicial interpretation. The meaning of constitutional provisions is not subject to revision by agency guidance documents, however sincerely motivated. Such guidance, if issued, would create legal confusion for state actors, educational institutions, and government contractors who look to settled precedent for direction.

The substitution of "bridges between church and state" for the language of separation also introduces a dangerous ambiguity into the constitutional conversation. Bridges, by nature, facilitate traffic in both directions. Language that encourages government to "bridge" the relationship with religious institutions could readily be invoked to justify entanglement — government financial support for sectarian institutions, preferential treatment for favored faith traditions in public contracting or licensing, or religious criteria in the administration of public services. The vagueness of the proposed framing, far from clarifying religious liberty, creates interpretive openings that may be exploited in ways this Commission does not intend.

The Draft Report's approach also appears to create a hierarchy within the First Amendment itself, effectively elevating Free Exercise claims above Establishment Clause protections. Both clauses carry equal constitutional weight. A framework that consistently prioritizes one against the other is not a framework of religious liberty — it is a framework of religious preference. That preference, even when benevolently intended, carries real costs for non-religious citizens, members of minority faiths, and those whose sincerely held beliefs differ from the majority tradition.

Finally, I note with concern that the Commission's public hearings appear to have reflected a disproportionately narrow range of religious perspectives. The interests of minority faith communities, including communities that have experienced government-sanctioned discrimination, and the perspectives of non-religious Americans were underrepresented in the deliberative process that produced this Draft Report. A final report that purports to speak to the religious liberty of all Americans should, at minimum, reflect the full breadth of their voices.

III. THE INDIVISIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

Genuine religious liberty cannot be the province of the majority alone. The principle of liberty of conscience — the right of every person to form and act upon their own convictions regarding faith without government coercion — extends equally to believers, non-believers, and members of every religious tradition, however large or small. This was not a secondary consideration for the Framers; it was central to their constitutional vision.

James Madison, the principal architect of the First Amendment, made this plain in his 1785 Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments. There, Madison argued with characteristic precision that government involvement in matters of religion corrupts both: it corrupts religion by subordinating it to political power, and it corrupts government by entangling it in doctrinal disputes no civil authority is competent to resolve. Madison did not oppose religious liberty — he championed it more forcefully than almost any Founder. But he understood, as this Commission should, that the surest protection for religious liberty lies not in government partnership with religion but in government's studied neutrality toward it.

History bears this out. In societies where the wall between government and religion has eroded, it is invariably minority faiths and non-believers who suffer first and most severely. The Establishment Clause was designed precisely to prevent the American government from becoming an instrument of religious majorities at the expense of religious minorities. To weaken the structural separation that gives the clause its force is to weaken the protection it provides to those who need it most. The Commission's recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment, which would allow houses of worship to engage in direct partisan political activity while retaining tax-exempt status, compounds this concern: it would blur the line between religious institutions and political power in ways that threaten the independence of both.

IV. REQUESTED ACTIONS PRIOR TO FINALIZATION

In light of the foregoing, I respectfully request that the Commission take the following actions before issuing a final report.

First, the Commission should commission an independent constitutional review of its recommendations by legal scholars with expertise in First Amendment jurisprudence who were not involved in the preparation of the Draft Report. The constitutional implications of the proposed framework are significant, and they merit rigorous, disinterested analysis prior to finalization.

Second, the Commission should refrain from recommending or issuing any executive guidance that would purport to reinterpret, narrow, or otherwise alter the scope of the Establishment Clause as understood through Supreme Court precedent. Any substantive reinterpretation of constitutional provisions is a matter for the courts and, where appropriate, for Congress — not the executive branch acting unilaterally through guidance documents.

Third, the Commission should expand its deliberative process to include formal solicitation of perspectives from non-Christian faith traditions, non-religious Americans, and civil liberties organizations with expertise in Establishment Clause matters. A report of this magnitude should reflect the religious and philosophical diversity of the American people it purports to serve.

Fourth, the Commission should strike or substantially revise the "bridges between church and state" framing and replace it with language that honors both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause with equal fidelity. Any final framework for religious liberty must respect the full text of the First Amendment, not privilege one of its clauses at the expense of the other.

Fifth, the Commission should ensure that all final recommendations are rigorously assessed for compliance with current Supreme Court precedent, including, but not limited to, *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, 597 U.S. 507 (2022), and the limits that decision does and does not establish with respect to government-sponsored religious expression. The Commission should be precise about what the Court held and scrupulous in not overstating the scope of its holdings.

I want to be clear that these concerns arise not from indifference to religious liberty but from a deep commitment to it — a commitment that requires fidelity to the full sweep of the First Amendment, both of its clauses, and all of the people its protections serve. The separation of church and state is not an obstacle to religious liberty. It is one of its essential guarantees. I urge this Commission to honor that truth in its final report, and to produce a document worthy of the constitutional tradition it has been charged with protecting.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. I trust they will be given full and fair consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Guy Conine
Business Owner
Head Elder, Orosi Seventh Day Church
Kingsburg, California
July 12, 2026

From: Terrie Robbins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Presidential Religious Liberty Commissionnnn-Terrie Robbins

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:35:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please preserve Religious Liberty and the separation of church and state.

From: Valerie Pherson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:37:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe in Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. I also believe that the constitution speaks about the separation of church and state because our founding fathers wanted to protect our freedom of conscience and choice. Look at the dark ages and the atrocities that happened there due to lack of freedom of choice.

Delbert Pherson

Sent from my iPhone

From: Paul Ross <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:37:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with the idea that separation of church and state is not in the constitution. Without separation of church and state then what you will have is tyranny persecution and a repeat of the dark ages. The lack of separation of church and state in Europe is exactly what created this great nation of ours. It is the reason for our existence it is what allowed Christianity to spread. We have only to look in the early history of our great nation and see what a lack of separation church and state did in the New England colonies . To read our constitution and determine that separation churches state is not a part of it is to deny reality and to be self deceived. You have an opportunity now to choose freedom not religious tyranny, prayerfully consider this as I pray for you. God bless, and God bless America.

From: Lori Starr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Report - Lori Starr

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:37:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I am deeply troubled by the Commission wanting to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall was built by believers with the intent of keeping the churches free.

I support the and agree with the "Pillar of Freedom's" comments. Please implement them.

Please do not build the bridge.

Sincerely,
Lori Starr
Madison, IN

From: Linnette Mcneal <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Religious Liberty Commission Report Debra MCNeal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:38:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

- 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.
- 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.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.
- Debra Mcneal

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

From: Loretta Alonso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State. I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please keep church and state separate.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:39:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Duane Bellinger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - [Topics 1, 3 & 9] [Duane]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:40:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty for all Americans:

Topics 1 & 3; My brother, Mark, attributed his loss of Respect for the Religious Establishment to the Monday morning reading of a competing version of the New Testament by the principal of his Fairborn, Ohio public school in the 1950's.

Clarification of student rights under First Amendments and section 1 of the fourteenth Amendment would be in order.

Prior to making any changes in the permitted political activity of those organizations requesting and enjoying special tax treatment, we should review the effects of Ludwig Kaas' religious organization on the German government in the first half of 1933.

Happy Bastille Day

~Duane Bellinger

From: Nick Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 2 / Page 45 School Choice Recommendations
– Nicholas Moore

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:41:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I am submitting this formal public comment to register my strict opposition to the draft report's recommendations promoting a universal system of school choice where public tax funding follows children to private, faith-based institutions.

While the proponents pushing this voucher framework are primarily Christian organizations looking to fund their own schools, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Once the government opens the floodgates to hand out public tax dollars to religious schools, it cannot legally discriminate. Twenty years down the road, when demographics shift, these exact same tax dollars will be heavily utilized to fund Islamic schools and academies across the country. Advocates of this policy are shortsightedly setting up a system that will force the entire public to financially bankroll religious doctrines they completely disagree with.

This inevitable friction is exactly why the primary author of the First Amendment warned against the government mixing with religious funding. James Madison—the 4th President of the United States and the Father of the Constitution—specifically wrote his famous 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance* to defeat a tax intended to fund religious teachers. Madison warned that once you concede the principle and let the government touch religious funding, you lose control of the outcome entirely:

"Who does not see... that the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment, may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever?"

If the Commission wishes to uphold true religious liberty and protect taxpayers from being forced to fund religious instructions they do not align with, it must maintain a strict line of separation between public money and private religious education. I urge the Commission to remove the universal school choice funding recommendations from its final report.

By the way, as a closing thought: rejecting these religious vouchers does not mean endorsing our current public school system. Our existing public education system operates as a giant indoctrination mill designed to turn children into socialists and commies. In fact, tax-funded public school systems are explicitly aligned with Marxism, matching the tenth plank of Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, which demanded free public education for all children.

The real solution isn't shifting public funds from one failed bucket to another. Everyone should pay for their own children's education, period. Even charter schools, which market themselves as a middle-ground alternative, are still ultimately dependent on the public teat—using taxpayer money to fuel a semi-private system.

So, congratulations to the Commission: your brilliant solution to a public school system rooted in the Communist Manifesto is to expand charter schools and create a voucher system that will eventually primarily bankroll giant Islamic schools in the big cities. Instead of ensuring parents take personal financial responsibility for their own kids, you have managed to find a way to make everyone lose.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Moore

Archbald, Pennsylvania

From: Jody Schneider <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of church from state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:41:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

I address this response to those who wish to remove a freedom that was held dear and died for by many.

When looking back in history, any time church and state have been together, there has been lines crossed and tragedies have occurred. The most obvious instance that comes to mind is the dark ages. Our founding fathers left England for this very purpose. To have religious freedom from the government. What a person believes and how they worship is a personal choice, not a mandated law. Keeping church and state separate, is absolutely crucial to the foundation of this country. There is no true freedom without it. Please, leave it alone. Our children deserve to know God on their own terms, not yours.

Sincerely,

Jody

From: Lucy Segurola <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:42:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen and as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty. I appreciate the opportunity to submit a public comment on the Commission's draft report.

I believe that freedom of conscience is one of the greatest blessings our nation has. Throughout history, the separation of church and state has helped protect both religious liberty and the rights of all people, regardless of their beliefs.

For this reason, I am concerned about recommendations that could weaken that separation, including increased government funding of religious activities and changes to the Johnson Amendment. I believe churches should remain free to follow their convictions without becoming dependent on government support or partisan politics.

As a person of faith, I want my church to be guided by God's Word rather than by political influence. I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve the constitutional principles that have protected religious freedom for generations.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your

Lucy Segurola,
Miami, Florida

From: Laurie Wissink <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - Draft Report of the Presidential religious liberty - Laurie Wissink

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:42:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit a public comment to affirm the critical importance of maintaining a strict separation between church and state.

Historically, this separation has served as a foundational cornerstone of our governance, ensuring both the freedom of religious practice and the protection of government from religious overreach. Our history demonstrates that preserving this boundary is essential for safeguarding the diverse beliefs of all citizens and maintaining a fair and inclusive society.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to upholding these foundational principles.

Respectfully,

Laurie Wissink

From: Michael Hope <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:43:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world" John 18:36. History shows that when governments of this world try to mix with His kingdom then persecution and false beliefs are the inevitable result. I strongly disagree with the Religious Liberty Commission's report that there is no separation of church and state in the United States of America. The separation of church and state which is the foundation of religious liberty - the right to believe or not believe according to one's conscience, is one of the principles that has made the United States pre-eminent among the nations of the world. Any dilution of this principle will eventually bring about the loss of religious liberty and lead to the sure demise of our nation.

Sincerely,

Pastor Michael Hope

From: Whitney Stowell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:45:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am concerned by the Commission's report about removing the separation of church and state. Our country was founded by individuals fleeing persecution due to leadership having the power to enforce religious observance. This is why the constitution was written to support the separation of church and state. People should be free to worship God according to their conscience. I ask that you will please reconsider your recommendations.

Sincerely,

Whitney Stowell

From: Jean Helzn [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:47:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a physician and entered medical school because I wanted to help people, but not as a result of any religious faith. I am angry that proponents of "religious liberty" don't include freedom from religion, which is promised by our constitution. Regarding abortion, it is already established that anyone fundamentally opposed to abortion does not have to train for it or provide it. Being anti-choice is a religious position. The belief that abortion is killing rests on the belief that the embryo is a human being from the moment of conception. Does that mean that dropping a tube in the process of invitro fertilization is murder. If that is a person, is it right that that person be frozen for eternity. If life begins at conception, there is no way to defend in vitro fertilization! We would not know of a 6 week pregnancy without the modern ultrasound.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY MEANS THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ONE'S OWN FAITH OR NON-BELIEF! IT MEANS NOT MANDATING RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN PUBLIC PLACES WHICH HOLDS UP CHRISTIANITY AS THE ONE TRUE FAITH!

From: DAVID SANDERSON <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response To Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:48:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To The Religious Liberty Commission; 7/12/2026

I want to thank the commission for the due diligence in preparing this report, and I agree it is a matter of great concern for the people of the United States of American and for the entire world. What happens in America seems to always affect the world population, either in a positive or negative setting.

I have a deep concern when it comes to the phrase "Building bridges between church and state" which is located between pages 41-44 in the Religious Liberty Commission report.

All through history it has been documented that whenever church joins state in any form it has always led to persecution. The bible clearly states that history does and will repeat, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us." Ecclesiastes 1:9-10. If we use our bible as the ultimate history book it further states that when the church (Jewish nation) delivered Jesus to the state (Rome) it resulted in the death our Lord and Saviour, "And while he (Jesus) yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people...And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.....When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Matthew 26:47, 57. Matthew 27:1-2. Jesus Himself warned His church that the time would come when...."These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." John 16:1-2 This was Jesus talking about His own church persecuting fellow church members and as history has show when ever the church has resorted to this type of control it has always employed the state to do it bidding. Once again I believe the commission is sincere about the work it is trying to do for this country, I just believe because of what the bible clearly states and what history has revealed, that building bridges between church and state no matter how good it looks on the outside it will be a disaster for this country and the people. Thank you for your time and thought about this topic. God bless America and God bless you and the Commission.

David Sanderson

PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:48:28 -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:

The Presidential Commission for Religious Liberty has issued its draft report. It seems to suggest that the separation of church and state is un-American and unconstitutional. I totally disagree. The separation idea is certainly implied in the establishment clause and should be respected. It would be a very dangerous path to pursue the direction this Commission is taking. In reality, this could establish a religion and perhaps be antagonistic for the "un-recognized" minority religions.

Keep government out of the pew, please. Please maintain things as they are. It is the only way to preserve the precious religious liberty.

I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its perceived understanding regarding separation and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations.

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

Sincerely,
Dick E. Hanson
Oregon

From: Jonathan Rosengren <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect the 1st Amendment--keep church and state separate!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:48:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I also lend my voice with other Americans protecting the 1st Amendment, and the separation of church and state. The separation of church and state DOES exist in the United States Constitution.

Jonathan Rosengren

The following (below) is a friends way of saying it:

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the importance of preserving the constitutional principle of religious liberty in the United States.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides two equally important protections: it prohibits the government from establishing a religion while also protecting every individual's right to freely exercise their faith. It states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

These protections have served as the cornerstone of American liberty since our nation's founding. They ensure that no citizen is compelled to support, participate in, or adhere to any particular religion, while simultaneously safeguarding the freedom of every person to worship—or not worship—according to the dictates of their own conscience.

Although the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution itself, the principle has long been recognized as a safeguard against government interference in matters of religion. This concept protects both religious institutions from government control and government from becoming an instrument of religious authority.

Our nation welcomes people of many faiths, as well as those of no religious affiliation. The Constitution provides equal protection to all, ensuring that government neither favors nor discriminates against any religion. Public officials, like all citizens, are free to hold and express their religious beliefs. However, when acting in their official capacity, they are obligated to uphold the Constitution and govern in a manner that respects the rights of every American.

Protecting religious liberty does not require removing religion from public life. Rather, it requires that the government remain neutral in matters of faith so that every individual may freely live according to their beliefs without coercion or preferential treatment by the state.

The enduring strength of our republic lies in its commitment to liberty of conscience. Preserving these constitutional principles ensures that Americans of every faith—and those with none—continue to enjoy the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

From: Cordell Trancoso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:49:21 -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

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

As a citizen of this great country, I urge you to keep the wall, separating church and state. We have one reason we are the greatest nation on earth, is because of our church/state separation. Historically, religious persecution in Europe drove many people here to our shores seeking religious liberty. Currently, there are still people who seek freedom here in our great nation because of religious persecution.

I urge you to keep the church and state separate. We should not have churches competing against each other for political favor with the government. These organizations should be supported only by their own members. We should not have politicians looking to bestow favor on churches in the hopes for gaining support. There needs to be a clear divide between these respective organizations.

We need to keep the Johnson Amendment. This is an important tool to ensure there is clear separation. We all know that in politics, there is corruption. This is just the way it is. We do not need that corruption coming into our religious institutions. Separation of church and state will allow our great religious institutions to flourish. The government should not aid these organizations. I agree with Ben Franklin's statement: : "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... it is a sign... of its being a bad one." This is one reason the government and the church should not interfere with each other.

Sincerely,

Cordell Trancoso

Kaukauna, Wisconsin

From: Madeline Gloss <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to one of the Religious Liberty Commission findings draft:

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:50:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Representative:

Through my prophetic religious lens regarding the world conditions today, the safest course is to keep church and state separate NOT to build a bridge between the two. 2020 revealed that liberty of conscience and religious liberty were trampled upon, churches were made to close, people were imprisoned, fines were enforced, loss of employment, etc. etc. all for the "common good" as mandated by the government. As history continues to unfold and if this bifold union occurs more than it is, my religious liberty and liberty of conscience will be negatively affected as it was previously demonstrated.

When the government gets involved with the church and religious entities, history has proven that the gospel becomes secondary. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then the end shall come." Please, continue to be the champion of religious liberty and freedom of conscience for your people as biblical prophecy is being fulfilled. So, until then.....

Sincerely,

Madeline Gloss
Orlando, Florida.

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPad

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:51:40 -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!

Gwen Reeves

Sent from my iPhone

From: Brenda Pace <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:52:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a proud and blessed American, one of the core freedoms i appreciate most is the that to worship as my conscience dictates without fear of repercussions from any governmental body. PLEASE stand for a clear separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

Brenda Pace

From: Alicia Monterroso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE- ALICIA

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:52:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

One of the fundamental pillars of our nation is the freedom to make personal choices in matters of religion according to our own conscience.

History demonstrates the severe consequences that can occur when church and state unite. Past historical accounts show that millions of people have been martyred when these institutions merged.. To prevent such atrocities from happening again, it is vital that we maintain this essential separation and protect our form of government.

Our forefathers laid a very good foundation to give us liberty of conscience and have worked well to give us religious liberty for 250 years . Please keep matters of state separate from religion so we could continue to be free.

Thank you for your time and your continued work in defending religious liberty.

Sincerely,

Alicia M.

From: Sabrina Riley <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Sabrina Riley

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:53:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm speaking up in support of the separation of church and state. Our founding fathers understood the harm caused by government-supported religion. Government-supported religion always leads to persecution and discrimination. God is a God of love for all people. He does not coerce anyone into believing in Him or following Him. He wants our love and obedience of our free will. If God does not force people to obey Him, why should government do so? Faith is a personal matter between a person and God. Government should be for the good of all people. It should not force anyone to adhere to a specific set of religious doctrines. Nor should government discriminate against anyone who chooses to be other than Christian. Our founding fathers desired a nation open to and tolerant of people of all religious beliefs as long as those beliefs did not hurt anyone else. I urge you to preserve our tradition of separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Riley

From: Carol Stuck Rhodes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with The Pillar of Justice and their argument to preserve the separation of Church and State that this blessed nation was founded upon.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:54:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Mrs. Carol Rhodes

[REDACTED] PII

From: Erica Bailey Ketts <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment of Dr. Erica Bailey

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

This topic is very important to me, which is why I am taking the time to send this email.

I would like to request that you ensure the Religious Liberty Commission's final report reflects the vital role church-state separation plays in protecting religious freedom for all Americans.

The separation of church and state gives us the right to practice any religion or no religion as long as we don't harm others.

Church-state separation protects religious freedom for everyone—religious and nonreligious people alike. It ensures that the government cannot impose religious beliefs on anyone or favor one religion over another. Our Founders recognized that both religion and government flourish when they are separate.

Separation of church and state guarantees that students and families—not government officials—can make our own decisions about religion and religious education. I consider this to be foundational to our country and one of the many reasons that the United States is unlike any other country.

Church-state separation protects houses of worship from intrusion by the government, guaranteeing their independence and allowing them to remain free from political control and interference.

Church-state separation protects our public schools by keeping coercive prayer out of classrooms. It ensures schools are welcoming for students of all backgrounds and beliefs, even if they are not the same as mine.

Church-state separation protects taxpayers from being forced to fund religion. Taxpayer dollars should be used for public purposes that benefit everyone.

Church-state separation ensures equal treatment under the law. The government must serve ALL people fairly, regardless of what they believe or whether they practice a religion, and taxpayer-funded religious groups must not use religion to discriminate.

Thank you,

Dr. Erica Bailey

--

Dr. Erica Bailey, OD

[REDACTED] PII

From: Mel Pond <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

As a citizen of the United States I am categorically opposed to any action that would compromise the separation of church and state. We enjoy our religious freedom and do not want that to change. History has demonstrated that when the government becomes involved in the church and suppresses religion it leads to oppression and persecution. Freedom to worship, or not, as our conscience dictates must be preserved for all people.

I believe that the government and the church are two different systems and should be kept separate so they can function the way they were established to operate. Government was never commissioned to direct the spiritual lives of their citizens.

Respectfully submitted,
Mel Pond from Washington

From: William Pellow <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

William Pellow, OD

[REDACTED] PII

Dear Religious Liberty Commission at [REDACTED] PII

I am very concerned that under President Trump I stand to lose the religious liberty that our country has stood for for 250 years. The first amendment says that Government should not tell US citizens how, where, or when to worship their God and should leave us free to worship as our conscience. That is true liberty! The RLC is about to turn that around and make a law that we must unite in worshiping only on Sunday and must work on every other day of the week. My problem is that the Bible, which I use as my supreme authority, says that Sabbath is the 7th day of the week, Saturday. This has been kept by Jews since the 10 Commandments were given until today. The Lord who gave the 10 Commandments is my Lord and my God. Jesus claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath, which is Saturday (see Mark 2:27). Yes! I keep the Lord's day! The Roman Catholic Church has claimed to have changed the Sabbath day to Sunday following Constantine's Sunday Law. But Constantine was heathen as were most of his subjects. Sunday was the day that they kept because of the Roman god Sol Invictus, a Roman idol or false god! Thus Sunday is the day that Satan has set up, not God! Because the Catholic Church received political and religious power from Rome this day has been popularized. Satan works in many ways to lie to people, but God has never changed the Sabbath day. This is admitted by Rome's challenge to Protestants. They challenged Protestants' honesty & fidelity to the Bible alone because they mostly also keep Sunday holy, though it never was and still isn't holy! Do you think that God is happy to have His day co-opted by Sunday? Yet you are rejoicing that religion in the US has increased lately! Who's religion is increasing? Do you also keep Satan's day? Sunday removes it from being God's day and the first three words of God's commandment are "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." It goes on to say that God created this world including mankind and "rested on the seventh day and blessed it and made it holy." That is NOT Sunday! (See Gen. 2:1-3) This is obviously a command by an idol god and that idol god (Sol Invictus) is really none other than Satan!

Notice the prophecy by Daniel, in Dan. 7:25 where the fourth beast (remember Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) that the fourth beast (Rome) would "Speak out against the Most High and intend to make alterations in times and in law." They did this with the Sabbath day, the only one of the Ten Commandments that involves time! Also notice that this Roman "beast" would "speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One." So, if you are going to try to force me to keep that day holy and to desecrate Saturday which God made holy, I will have to pick God instead of Trump or the US Government or Roman Catholicism. Rev. 13 foresees a beast (nation) coming up out of the earth (lightly populated land, v. 11) a fit description of the rise of the US, but this beast would eventually exercise "all the authority of the first beast" (Roman Catholicism) and that the US would speak "as a dragon" (Satan). It predicts that the USA would give people a mark so that "no one will be able to buy or to sell" unless he has the mark. The Catholic church claims Sunday as their "mark of authority!" So you are going to try to force the "Christian" world to choose Satan instead of Christ and You believe that this will cause the US to be blessed by God! I strongly disagree based on the Bible. I will allow You to kill me by whatever means you use to force me to keep Satan's day instead of the Lord's day (Saturday. And yes, Saturday is the Lord's day (Ex 20:8-11 & Mark 2:28) as I have already pointed out. Only you can prevent this persecution that you are creating.

Your ideas of enforcing Sunday Worship, which You will try with little enforcement at first, but You will escalate it as time progresses. This is a deception (see Rev. 13:14). I compare eternal life with any punishment that You can invent and clearly see that I must render my loyalty to my God who spoke and wrote the Ten Commandments. Nowhere in the Bible can be found a command to keep Sunday holy. Israel lost their special status as God's chosen people by not recognizing Jesus, the Messiah. That is not worth it for me! This is how You will bring persecution to the USA. I plead with you to honor the first amendment of the US constitution and do not allow the US government to force its way into the loss of all of God's blessings. I love this land and hate to see you destroy it!

Sincerely,

William Pellow, OD

From: dena brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bridging Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:55:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

It was brought to my attention that the Commission wants to replace the wall that separates the Church and State by bridging them to where they would work together. By Bridging Church and State it seems to me that it would weaken and dismantle the separation of Church and State. Not good! As it states in the Bible, pay Caesar what is owed to him and pay God what is owed to Him. Don't mix them together. I have seen when the State steps in to private entities things don't go too well. May God's will be done!

Sincerely,

Dena Brown

Sent from my iPad

From: JONATHAN SANDERS <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:57:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe Church and state should be separate!

J.

From: Immanuël Isaac <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:57:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Revised%20letter%20from%20Immanuel-1.pdf

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington,
DC 20500 United States of America

Date: April 15, 2026

From: Faithful Members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church

To: the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Dear Sir or Madam,

We write as faithful Seventh-day Adventists Christians to respectfully, yet firmly, express our deep concern and clear opposition to the recent conclusion of the religious liberty commission associated with the administration of President Donald J. Trump, held on April 13 in Washington D.C., which concluded that there is no true or absolute separation between church and state.

We do not agree with this conclusion.

Our position is grounded in the enduring principles of Scripture, the Constitution of the United States, and the consistent testimony of history. Together, these affirm that liberty of conscience can only be preserved where there is a clear and firm distinction between the authority of the state and the authority of God. The Bible establishes this boundary plainly. Christ declared,

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). In this statement, two distinct realms are identified.

I. The government is entrusted with responsibilities such as maintaining public order, administering justice, collecting taxes, and governing civil relations among individuals.

II. In contrast, God alone holds authority over worship, conscience, and the loyalty of the soul.

Conscience belongs to God. Therefore, no human government has the right to force belief, compel worship, or regulate religious practice. This principle later became central to the concepts of freedom of religion, the separation of church and state, and the protection of individuals against religious coercion. Any attempt by the state to enter this domain is an overreach of authority. True faith cannot exist without freedom. The gospel calls, it does not compel.

Truth and duty to God are not determined by vote or the majority. Faith must be voluntary and no other man or state has jurisdiction over conscience. The moment the state supports, enforces, or favors religion, it steps into God’s domain, corrupts the religion, and leads to a destructive backlash.

In Europe, centuries of alliance between church and state led to the suppression of conscience and widespread persecution. The French Revolution can be attributed to the loss of religious liberty. The abuse of religious authority united with civil power produced instability, violence, and the rejection of religion itself.

Many who came to America, including the Pilgrims, sought freedom from state-controlled religion. Their struggle laid the groundwork for a new principle that faith must be free. This protestant principle matured and found lasting expression in the founding principles of the United States. As articulated in the Declaration of Independence: “All are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which is liberty.” This understanding shaped the constitutional

commitment that the government must neither establish religion nor interfere with the free exercise thereof.

For this reason, we affirm clearly:

A. We Support Religious Liberty.

We affirm that religious liberty is an inherent and unalienable right, grounded in the moral responsibility of every individual before God. Civil authority is limited to the regulation of outward conduct and cannot rightfully govern inward conviction. As James Madison articulated, religion is a duty owed to the Creator alone. Scripture confirms this principle: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). Because accountability is personal before God, liberty of conscience must remain inviolable before the state. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15). True allegiance to God must be freely chosen, never compelled.

B. We Support the Free Exercise of Faith.

We uphold that the free exercise of faith is essential to both religious integrity and civil peace. Faith, by its nature, must arise from conviction rather than coercion. The use of civil power in matters of religion undermines sincerity and produces only outward conformity. As Benjamin Franklin observed, a religion that requires the support of civil authority reveals its own weakness. Scripture likewise affirms: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). Authentic faith is the work of the Spirit, not the product of force. William Penn wisely stated, force may produce hypocrites, but never true converts. The Bible declares: "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). God desires willing hearts, not coerced obedience.

C. We Support the Separation of Church and State.

We maintain that the separation of church and state is essential to the proper functioning of both institutions. Civil government is ordained to administer justice and preserve order, while religion addresses the conscience and the worship of God. Christ Himself established this distinction: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). As Thomas Jefferson affirmed, this separation serves as a safeguard for both civil liberty and religious purity. John F. Kennedy affirmed, "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute," recognizing that liberty of conscience can only be preserved when government remains free from religious control and religion remains free from government interference.

D. We Oppose Any Union of Church and State.

We respectfully oppose any union of church and state on the grounds that such a union inevitably leads to the corruption of religion and the infringement of conscience. Civil enforcement of religious principles constitutes an overreach of governmental authority into a domain reserved for God alone. Scripture itself provides clear evidence that the union of religious and civil authority leads to injustice and persecution. The trial and crucifixion of Christ stand as the clearest example. The religious leaders claiming spiritual authority lacked the legal power to execute Him, and therefore brought Him before the Roman governor,

Pontius Pilate, to secure a civil sentence (John 18:28–31). Though Pilate found no fault in Him, he yielded to religious pressure and authorized His crucifixion (John 19:12–16). Thus, Christ was condemned through the combined action of church and state. This tragic union demonstrates that when religious authority employs civil power to enforce its will, it results not in righteousness, but in the violation of justice and the suppression of truth. As Christ Himself declared, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36) Therefore: Civil power cannot advance Christ’s kingdom. Any attempt to do so is a denial of Christ’s own words.

We also respectfully clarify that while individuals of the Seventh-day Adventist faith may serve in governmental or advisory roles, they do not represent the convictions of all believers, nor does any group of individuals represent the entire body of the church. Any position supporting a union of church and state does not reflect our beliefs or the historic teachings of our faith.

For these reasons, we respectfully reiterate our conviction that the preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining a clear and principled separation between civil authority and religious expression. Any departure from this boundary risks undermining both constitutional freedoms and the sacred rights of conscience.

As the Scriptures declare: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man” (Psalm 118:8). Guided by this principle, we affirm our unwavering commitment to liberty of conscience and our respectful but firm opposition to any union of church and state.

We offer this statement in a spirit of respect and sincerity, and we remain open to constructive dialogue. We would welcome the opportunity to further share the biblical, historical, and constitutional foundations for our convictions.

We respectfully urge your office to uphold the principles that protect liberty of conscience and preserve the rightful distinction between civil authority and the authority of God.

With respect and sincerity,

Immanuel Isaac Jamunapersad

Joanna de Bruyn

William Pitt

Tim Hayden

Mark La Rose

Dennis Page

From: Scott Barnes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:58:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please

implement them. The separation of church and state should stay in place.

Scott C. Barnes

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Jacob Chapman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:58:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

Separation of church and state is biblical. I agree with those who want to keep it separate. Please read "The Great Controversy" for biblical perspective on these issues and other important ones. God bless!

Jacob Isaiah Chapman

From: Richard Parker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:59:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the United States of America, and as a Christian, I appreciate the attention being drawn to the prejudice against Christians within the United States. No one should be persecuted or removed from the public square because of their beliefs. However, the remedy does not lie in creating a "bridge" between church and state but in acknowledging that secularism also operates similarly to a religion and treating it the same as any other religion. Religious liberty was a hard-fought and hard-won liberty in our nation, and we should not give it up.

The concept of the separation of church and state has existed within our nation from the very beginning. The Declaration of Independence declares that the basis of legitimate government is derived from the consent of the governed by delegating some of their natural rights to the governmental body. But as religion is what is owed to the Creator nothing pertaining to religion can be delegated to the government.

On October 24, 1776, the Hanover Presbytery, supported by the Baptists and Quackers, petitioned Virginia's legislature against religious taxation (the government providing funds to religious institutions) and an established religion. In it they stated thus: "Certain it is that every argument for civil liberty gains additional strength when applied to liberty in the concerns of religion, and there is no argument in favor of establishing the Christian religion but what may be pleaded with equal propriety for establishing the tenets of Mohammed by those who believe the Al Koran; or, if this be not true, it is at least impossible for the magistrate to adjudge the right of preference among the various sects that profess the Christian faith without erecting a chair of infallibility which would lead us back to the Church of Rome." Please read the entire Memorial of Hanover Presbytery. Thomas Jefferson championed the cause of liberty and right in this affair; on December 6, 1776, after nearly two months of what he called the most sever contest in which he was ever engaged, all colonial laws and penalties prejudicial to dissenters in Virginia were repealed.

After the Revolution concluded, the question of an assessment (tax) for the support of religion was again raised in Virginia. James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, rose to the occasion to champion religious liberty. On June 20, 1785, he issued his Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments. In it he embodied all that could be said upon the subject. Please read Madison's writings on this topic. Here is a portion: "[I]t 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. 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?" The assessment was not brought up for a vote, and on January 16, 1786, Virginia enacted a

Statute for Religious Freedom instead. After this Madison wrote to Jefferson: "I flatter myself we have in this country extinguished forever the ambitious hope of making laws for the human mind."

During Virginia's constitutional ratifying convention, Madison argued that the proposed federal government had no delegated jurisdiction over religion whatsoever. When discussed in Massachusetts' ratifying convention in 1788, the question of religious tests was directly addressed. Massachusetts ratified the Constitution with the one sole reference to religion being that "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."

The people did not see this as enough protection of their rights. Humans have always, throughout all history, sought to gain power and assert that power over their fellow human beings. Knowing this, we the people demanded an explicit prohibition of government interference in religion. In 1791, the Bill of Rights was completed, the very first Amendment dealt specifically with protection of religious liberty. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Religion, the duty one owes to one's Creator (even if someone believes that is primordial soup), shall not be preferred or prohibited within the United States.

No bridge should be created between the church and the state. Instead of trying to remedy the preference of secularism by replacing it with Christianity, we should stop the preference of secularism and government interference in religion completely.

Sincerely,

Richard Parker

Sandpoint, Idaho

From: Wayne Smith <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Personal Comment on Religious Liberty in the US

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:59:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs/Madams,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts regarding religious liberty. The United States has been blessed with religious liberty to a large degree. But, historically, it has failed to preserve the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience and has enforced religious observance contrary to the beliefs of certain Christian religions. I agree that the morality of our country has plummeted, but making laws to enforce worship is contrary to the will of a loving God who accepts offerings from the heart and more akin to Satan who forces worship. My understanding of the role of government is to preserve the rights of the individual and not to take sides with any particular religion. The constitution may not specifically mention "separation of church and state," but it does provide for the right of the individual to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness without the government interfering with the mode of my worship. Roger Williams spoke of the separation of enforcement of the 1st table of the law from the second table of the law. The first 4 commandments refer to the personal worship practices between myself and God while the second table preserves societal norms. Those who don't learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. European history is rife with examples of the loss of personal freedom of worship. America is a country without a king and without a pope. I would like to keep it that way. Thank you for making and enforcing the 2nd table laws that protect us. Please avoid making and enforcing laws that relate to the first table relating to the worship of God.

Sincerely,

Wayne E Smith

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Regina Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission - Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 21:59:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The God of heaven is a God of liberty. He does not force us to worship Him. Our relationship with him is based on His willingness to let us choose if we want to love and worship Him. The government should not interfere in a person's personal salvation. Allowing the union of church and state is the government's way of controlling a person's relationship with our Lord and Savior. Keep politics out of church! Our Constitution has already laid the foundation for the rights of American citizens concerning their religion. You deceive yourselves if you think God is pleased with the government mandating worship. When people come willing to God, they are more apt to change their sinful ways because they want to. Forcing a person to worship only changes the outward demeanor, while the inner heart is still unconverted. It is not the government's responsibility to convict a person to come to God, it is the Holy Spirit's. Stop trying to do the Holy Spirit's job. The saving of souls is for God. Allow politics to provide order for the American government and let God provide order for his government. He is omnipotent and does not require the assistance of mankind unless he chooses.

Please keep church and state separate!

Sincerely,

Regina M. Williams

From: Earline Phillipse [REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:00:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I object to getting rid of separation of church and state.

Earline Phillips

From: David Grams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keeping the wall

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:00:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

I appreciate your efforts to lift up Christian values as the cornerstone of our great county. But I am more than concerned with some of your assertions about the “wall” between church and state .

You rightly condemn the lack of morality in the public sector. But the effective solution throughout history has never been to wed church and state; but rather, to support a “state” that itself supports the rights of ALL religions to follow God according to their own convictions.

Without fail, whenever the state exalts the authority of just one kind of beliefs, the result has always been to denigrate those of the “wrong religion”—an unfortunate scenario that historically has always led to the ugliest outcome of all...persecution against those who don’t belong to the state sponsored religion.

America’s greatness has been predicated on freedom of religion for ALL citizens, not just the right kind of “Christian.” Anything less than this is a betrayal of the noble experiment called American democracy. And if we tear down the wall of church/state separation, then, like all other nations who’ve done the same, we’ll plunge into the morass of alienation and unspeakable cruelty.

Keep on lauding “righteous living”! And keep on promoting Biblical values!
But in the Name of God, never stoop to prostituting the state into the position of “choosing” one religion over another....

With utmost sincerity and hope,

David Grams

From: Ploni Almoni <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission – P. Almoni

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:02:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern at the U.S. Department of Justice:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the Religious Liberty Commission's draft Report, made available to the public for a 15-day comment period.

In overview, I find that the Report is a Conservative political project masquerading as a project to defend "Religious Liberty". This is not surprising given its origins (Executive Order 14291) and the politically and religiously unbalanced and biased Commission and its several Advisory Boards. None of it is objective, and all of it is partisan. In fact, Section 2 of E.O. 14291 is a direct consequence of the Religion recommendations for Presidential action in *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise* (Project 2025: Presidential Transition Project), particularly the second item: [1]

- **Provide robust protections for religious employers.** *America's religious diversity means that workplaces include people of many faiths and that many employers are faith-based. Nevertheless, the Biden Administration has been hostile to people of faith, especially those with traditional beliefs about marriage, gender, and sexuality. The new Administration should enact policies with robust respect for religious exercise in the workplace, including under the First Amendment, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), 8 Title VII, and federal conscience protection laws.*
- **Issue an executive order protecting religious employers and employees.** *The President should make clear via executive order that religious employers are free to run their businesses according to their religious beliefs, general nondiscrimination laws notwithstanding, and support participation of religious employees and employers as federal contractors and in federal activities and programs.*
- **Clarify Title VII's religious organization exemptions.** *Congress should clarify Title VII's religious organization exemptions to make it more explicit that those employers may make employment decisions based on religion regardless of nondiscrimination laws.*
- **Provide Robust Accommodations for Religious Employees.** *Title VII requires reasonable accommodations for an employee's sincerely held religious beliefs, observances, or practices unless it poses an undue hardship on the employer's business. These accommodation protections also apply to issues related to marriage, gender, and sexuality.*

Unless the Supreme Court overrules its bad precedent, Congress should clarify that undue hardship means "significant difficulty or expenses," not "more than a de minimis cost" as the Court has previously held.

The current President, as the Republican Presidential nominee in July 2024, disavowed any knowledge of Project 2025. [2] His disavowal was a response to a claim by his political opponents (Democrats) that he supports Project 2025 and is going to use it as his Presidential playbook. As part of his disavowal, he denied being an "extremist", claiming to have "great common sense", and then said that "some on the Right, the severe Right, came up with this Project 2025". He called them "very very Conservative", "sort of like the opposite of the Radical Left" ("The Radical Right"), and said that some parts of Project 2025 (not clear which) were "seriously extreme". He claimed that he did not know anything about Project 2025 and did not want to know anything

about it. (I do credit the President for stating the truth that Project 2025 is “seriously extreme”, even though he did not intend to do so, but it did serve his need to put distance between himself (“great common sense”) and Project 2025 (“seriously extreme”) to get elected.)

Consistent with the above, the Commission uses the excuse of “Religious Liberty” to justify all manner of abusive and coercive activities by the THIS Department of Justice and other parts of THIS Federal Executive Branch.

As a Jewish American, I am highly distressed by the Commission’s “carte blanche” use of religion (as an unreviewable, uncheckable excuse) to pursue numerous illiberal political objectives and to take actions that may be illegal or un-Constitutional.

Further distressing is the Report’s focus on only one type of religious bigotry—Anti-Semitism. Why is that? (One footnote (86) does mention “Anti-Christian Bias”. Report at 44.) Once again, political use of Jews puts Jews in the United States in an awkward (if not perilous) position—“guilt by being associated” with THIS to the extent that we Jewish Americans did not ask for THIS. We are being used as a political pawn that will ultimately be used to attack us from the Left and the Right. Experience over more than two thousand years verifies this. This situation was anticipated by our ancient wisdom in *Chapters/Ethics of the Fathers* (2:3): “Beware of rulers, for they befriend someone only for their benefit; they act friendly when it benefits them, but they do not stand by someone in his time of need” (also by Ex. 23:2).

Worse yet, the Report focuses on Anti-Semitism from only the political Left, mainly in the aftermath of Hamas’s horrific pogrom on October 7, 2023 and the Israeli government’s military response to that horrific pogrom. According to the Anti-Defamation League, “Incidents with elements related to Israel or Zionism made up slightly less than half of all incidents in 2025 (2,847 or 45%), a smaller proportion than the 58% (5,452) Israel-related incidents in 2024. By comparison, between 2020 and 2022, only about 10% of antisemitic incidents were Israel- or Zionism-related.” [3]

The Report turns a blind eye to “deeply held religious” Anti-Semitism from Christian Nationalists and other-motivated (perhaps in addition to religion) Anti-Semitism by the KKK, Nazis, and similar domestic groups; many of these (if not most or all) support this President, who has never denounced these groups and their Anti-Semitism (and racism) unambiguously. Members of some of these groups were pardoned for their participation in the January 6, 2021 assault on the U.S. Congress as it was counting electoral votes and certifying the result of the 2020 Presidential Election. [4] Also, THIS Department of Justice, as part of a wider effort by THIS Executive Branch, has largely stopped maintaining awareness of their Anti-Semitic activities. [5]

I wonder if the Commission would allow and condone Anti-Semitic behavior if such Anti-Semitism were a “deeply held religious belief” (Report at 146) or a “deeply held conviction” (107) (more on this below). What other discriminatory and potentially illegal or un-Constitutional behavior would the Commission tolerate (if not condone) as long as it was based on a “deeply held religious belief” or “deeply held conviction”? For instance, would a religious group for whom proselytizing is “deeply held religious belief” be legally allowed to require hungry people seeking a hot meal from the group to be subjected to the group’s religious messages (e.g., worship or sermon) before, and as a condition of, receiving a hot meal? Do the “deeply held religious beliefs” of the hungry people matter at all in this? Does not just feeding hungry people alone (without conditions) fulfill a religious purpose or imperative? Does it matter whether the group’s offering of hot meals to the hungry is privately or publicly funded, or happens on private or public land?

Related to this, I do not believe that I have the right to compel a random bakery to provide baked goods that meet my standards of Kashrut if the bakery does not do so; on the other side, if I were a baker, I do not think that I could be compelled to make an inherently unkosher cake (e.g., with lard) because someone demanded it (it is hard to see how use of lard is a “deeply held religious belief”). In my view, both of these cases include an

outrageous demand to “prove some point”, and the Report encourages such outrageous demands under the cover of “Religious Liberty” (e.g., “Know Your Rights” (Report at 22; Recommendation #2) ... so that you can deprive others of their rights). If I were somehow involved in a situation similar to that in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, 584 U.S. 617 (2018), I would give the customers what they wanted, based on II Kings 5:17-19 in which Na’aman is forgiven by Elisha (arguably on behalf of God) for the part of his job that appears to conflict with his own newly found religious belief in God (a widely misunderstood situation).

If Samuel Johnson was correct in his assessment of certain political figures of his era that “patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel” (i.e., that certain politicians wrap themselves in patriotism but do so only in the pursuit of self-interest), then the Commission seemingly demonstrates that “religion” follows up as a close second to “patriotism”, wrapping themselves in “Religious Liberty” in the pursuit of political self-interest. [6]

I would hold the Commission in higher regard if it had made the argument that the First Amendment ties the hands of Congress only; the Executive Branch is free to do whatever it wants based on the policy preferences of the President of the United States. However, that is not what the Commission did. Instead, it twisted facts and provided numerous misleading (if not effectively false) examples, often admittedly extreme (Report at 133), to make a claim that “Religious Liberty” can only and must be protected through a slate of its preferred Conservative policies and actions. Many of its preferred policies have nothing to do with defending “Religious Liberty”, but rather are intended to protect specific political behaviors/actions that the Commission prefers, even if (or perhaps especially because) those behaviors/actions adversely affect a greater number of people than the number of people engaging in those behaviors/actions (e.g., a person using religion as an excuse to not get vaccinated when otherwise required, but subsequently infecting numerous other people against their will and without their consent).

The Commission and Report represent exactly what Thomas Jefferson feared concerning coercive government power via religion, as described in his Letter to the Danbury Baptists, dated January 1, 1802: [7]

“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. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.”

It is breathtaking that the Commission refuses to accept Jefferson’s articulation of the purpose of the Constitutional phrase “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” as “building a wall of separation between Church & State”, relatively soon after ratification of the Constitution with its Bill of Rights. It is almost funny that the Commission leans on the weak argument: “But the ‘wall of separation’ phrase does not appear in the First Amendment or anywhere else in the Constitution.” Report at 210 Many words do not appear in the Constitution; does that render such words inoperative respecting the Constitution and its meaning? Of course not. If that is the best argument, then it fails spectacularly.

The Report also makes an outrageously false claim to delegitimize the two-century old concept of a “wall of separation” between church and state. It first notes “(t)he idea that (the First Amendment) does allow—or even require—a ‘wall of separation’ only took off in the mid-twentieth century, when the Supreme Court began citing Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association”. The Report then states that this two-century old idea is somehow a modern concept (because it was cited much later) and thus has no persuasive power. Report at 22. This is like saying that an ancient artifact does not represent the time in which it was created because it was discovered today. That “reasoning” is completely nonsensical.

Following that false claim is a dubious claim that “church and state strengthen and support one another”, presumably in some benign sense. Report at 22. This describes a theocracy at one extreme (e.g., Iran) and at the other a country like England (its King/Queen being head of the Anglican Church); the latter the United States chose NOT TO EMULATE. Theocracies never provide religious liberty to all (perhaps only to few or even none).

If we as Americans believe as the Declaration of Independence states (Report at 38)--

“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. —That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

--it necessarily follows that “religious liberty” is independent of and not established by the government.

Government’s role, via consent of the governed, is to ensure that all people have access to and can exercise their rights, including religious liberty. This is not a one-way street as the Commission seems to suggest with religious liberty for some, which is to say theirs, but not for others.

Concerning the First Amendment and its intended application, it is better to consider its author, James Madison. The Commission presents a biased perspective (towards their own prejudices) of James Madison’s view of religious liberty, which is ultimately a false representation. Report at 28, 39. As much as the Report cites his pamphlet, “Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments”, it fails to tell the real story of the pamphlet. The pamphlet argued against a Virginia bill that would both impose a “general tax to pay Christian teachers a modest salary” and make “Christianity the established religion of the state”. [8] “Madison considered the bill a ‘dangerous abuse of power’; he reasoned that if government could establish Christianity over other religions, then it would also have the power to elevate one Christian group over another. Madison believed that religion was a matter of individual conscience and that giving legislators control over religious belief would inevitably lead to violation of other basic rights: ‘It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties.’” [8]

What James Madison opposed then is essentially what the Commission seeks to create now via the Report. As an ethical matter, it matters not which branch of government is wielding abusive and coercive power via religion. The Commission leans heavily on the First Amendment as giving legal primacy and coercive power to anyone with a religion-based grievance based on “deeply held convictions” (Report at 18), “deeply held conviction” (105), or “deeply held religious beliefs” (146). How is a “deeply held conviction” distinguished from a ‘less-deeply held’ “conviction”, or just a “conviction”, or any reason whatsoever? How deep is “deep”? Does “held” mean obtained and retained for 10 minutes, 10 hours, 10 days, 10 weeks, 10 months, 10 years...continuously? Who decides any of this? Much of the resistance to “vaccine mandates” is a political act (egged on by political actors) dressed up as “deeply held religious beliefs”. This reminds me of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*: “When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” This is what the Commission effectively endorses, and it does not seem anything like a “rightly ordered relationship” between church and state. Report at 12. This “messiness” is but one reason that the Report should be rejected.

The Commission seems not at all concerned that different people may have conflicting “deeply held religious beliefs” and seems poised to support the person whose “deeply held religious beliefs” align with their own. So much for “Religious Liberty”. The Commission seems to think that “religious liberty” is obtained when at least some of the people have access to it, that it does not matter whether some people’s “religious liberty” tramples that of other people, or other rights of other people.

This is where the Ninth Amendment seems to play a role: “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” [9] Also authored by James Madison, the Ninth Amendment is arguably intended to ensure that the exercise of rights by some does not impede or negate the exercise of rights by others, even if the rights in question between the groups are the same (e.g., religious liberty) or not explicitly stated in the Constitution.

To conclude, with reference to the Prophet Micah (7:19), the Report should be sent “into the depths of the sea”-- the place where we ask God to cast our sins--never to be seen, visited, or remembered again.

PoAlmoni

References

- [1] https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULLL.pdf
- [2] <https://www.c-span.org/clip/campaign-2024/donald-trump-disavows-project-2025/5124900>
- [3] <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2025>
- [4] <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2025/01/22/camp-auschwitz-jan-6-rioter-trump-pardoned/77884230007/>
- [5] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>
- [6] <https://interestingliterature.com/2021/05/patriotism-is-the-last-refuge-of-the-scoundrel-meaning-origins/>
- [7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>
- [8] <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/james-madison/>
- [9] <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CONAN-2002/pdf/GPO-CONAN-2002-9-10.pdf>

From: William & Nancy Fowler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Commission on Religious Liberty proposal re separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:02:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

Nancy Fowler
Carmichael, CA

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: RONALD FITZGERALD <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:03:11e0400

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,
Ron Fitzgerald

From: John Krum <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Re: RLC-report Re: John Krum

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:03:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear sirs,

I would like to voice my concern over the recommendations made in the RLC report. The net effect of the recommendations would be to weaken, not strengthen the separation of church and state that has undergirded the freedoms given to ALL religions and individuals within the US.

I have read and agree with the Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. History proves that the first step in the direction of removing this wall has never ended with more peace, prosperity and freedom.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,
John Krum
Montana

From: Sandra Unsworth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:04:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for your work to help address issues of concern regarding religious freedom.

I am a Christian and I'm very thankful to be a citizen of the USA which gives me and people of all faiths so much religious freedom.

I respectfully ask that you uphold the separation of church and state as defined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. (Although not stated in the words "separation of church and state" the same concept is clearly there). When the state interferes with religion, bad things can happen and when religion gets too close to the state, bad things can happen. I realize that in recent years, in the United States, Christians have been banned from speaking about Jesus in public schools and from speaking against LGBTQ issues. I believe many of these instances are probably examples of government overreaching in regards to religion and not allowing "the free exercise thereof." If public schools are allowed to teach about other religions they should also be allowed to teach about Christianity.

I appreciate your support of Christian's having the right of free speech, etc. There are two clauses in the First Amendment regarding religion, the first clause which guards against Congress making laws regarding the establishment of religion and the clause regarding Congress making laws against the free exercise of religion. I respectfully ask that you uphold both clauses—the establishment clause and the free exercise clause which will help uphold the balanced concept of separation of church and state which our founding fathers held.

"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." - T. Jefferson

In history we see painful examples of what has happened when church and state have united. When church and state were united during the Middle Ages, the state church killed and persecuted millions of Protestant Christians for not following the state religion. In our day, we see communist countries where the state makes laws against religion and Christians are persecuted for following and teaching the Bible.

I believe this is also an example of dangers resulting from not having separation of church and state. We also see the example of Muslim countries where church and state are united and Christians are persecuted because there are state laws against practicing religion contrary to the state religion.

Thank you for reading and considering my comment and request to uphold the separation of church and state as found in the First Amendment of the Constitution—the separation of church and state that Thomas Jefferson and Roger Williams taught. Thank you for your work to help uphold the Constitution and uphold the freedoms that our founding fathers fought for.

May God bless continue to bless The United States of America!

Sincerely,

Sandra Unsworth

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Douglas G Pratt <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION REPORT

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:04:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my disagreement with the unpinning of your arguments set forth in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission report and your recommendations contained therein.

While the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution or Declaration of Independence, the foundational underpinnings of the concept are present.

As you noted, Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptists: "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" (January 1, 1802).

Before Jefferson, Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island on the concept of religious tolerance. At the same time, the other colonies were theocracies with state sponsored churches, often funded by tax payers. When the "wall" of separation is missing, the slide to theocracy begins.

Jesus provided a demonstrated the "separation" model in Matthew 22:15–21. He said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and [separately] to God the things that are God's." When Jesus said this, the Rome was the civil authority and Judaism was the Church. They were separate.

When a man came to Jesus asking Him to arbitrate a legal dispute (Luke 12:3, 4), Jesus asked, "Who made Me a judge over you?" If Jesus, who, according to prophecy, will eventually judge everyone who has ever lived still opted not to weigh in on worldly legal issues, why should the United States government? Jesus recognized the separation of Church (His gospel ministry) and the State (civil legal matters).

Jesus also said, "My kingdom is not of this world" and "I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world" (John 18:36, John 12:47). The model established by Jesus is that Church and State should be separate entities.

From the Declaration of Independence we get the statement, "All men" ... "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." The signers recognized that our rights come from God, not the State. Thus, the State should not impose on these rights by dictating our religious experience or encourage one religion, denomination, or set.

What is the outcome when the State manages or imposes the religious experience? The Bible provides two case studies, both from the book of Daniel. In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar, the "State," enforced false worship. In Daniel 6, King Darius, the "State," banned true worship.

A forced faith is no faith at all and results in an outward compliance while the heart is not changed. The essence of Christianity that God dwells in us through the Holy Spirit to effect change in the life. The State cannot and should not be involved in this work. God wants an authentic heart-based spiritual experience, which State laws will never achieve.

Sometimes, when driving, we realize that the road we're on is not where we want to be. When this happens, the best course of action is to backtrack to the correct route. While the scenery on the wrong road may be enjoyable, it is nevertheless not the destination that is desirable.

As a commission, you, no doubt, have learned much about our great country. However, your conclusions are not supported by thousands of years of history and countless results of state imposed religion. You may say, “Imposed religion is not one of our recommendations,” but that’s the wrong road you’re on, leading to the inevitable result of one group dictating what, when, and where others should worship.

Please stand down as a committee and return to your individual, personal pursuits.

Thanks you,

Doug Pratt

Check out my blog: <http://NotesForLearning.com>

IG: @88notes2happiness

From: Tyrone Tyrone <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty in America.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:05:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a young christian, I don't have many years practicing the faith, though I was raised in the church I never in my heart followed God. I credit many of those wasted years to how my church, at the time treated unbelievers. It was very legalistic and condemning, even if the ones judging were guilty of the same sin.

The only thing that has led me to Christ has been my religious liberty. My freedom to privately worship Jesus Christ without the scrutiny of those who don't know Him themselves.

To repeal or lessen the separation of church and state would only ever make a wider gap between the unbeliever and the church, and everyone in between.

I humbly ask that you take into consideration all the young christians whose leaders might be misguiding them, who aren't sure of what they believe, who earnestly need time alone with Christ. Not legislated, but as a free will offering to God.

Thank you for reading my message, This is Stacy Puckett from the Free SDA Little Flock Church.

From: Gloria Pierson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of church and State - Kenneth W and Gloria Pierson

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:06:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

We are very concerned that the Commission is considering weakening the wall of separation between church and state. We have witnessed firsthand, when we lived in Africa for 13 years, what happens when the state begins to offer funds to religious organizations. Not only do the churches start competing for those funds but they soon become dependent on them and lose all autonomy and become controlled by the government that is funding them. To think that any Government would offer to provide funds for 1. Religious non-profit activities, 2. Religious education and religious clubs is a far cry from what the framers of our country intended. And to think that the commission is considering the repeal of the Johnson Amendment rather than fully enforcing it is a direct attack on religious liberty which is fundamental to our country. As people of faith, we pray that those who are promoting the weakening or removing the wall separating church and state in the United States of America are thoroughly defeated by those who do not want to see the loss of freedom in our great country.

Sincerely,

Kenneth W and Gloria Pierson
Visalia, California

From: melissa davis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:06:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026.

I may not be a lawyer or of some high and lofty position in this world, but I am a concerned Christian, mother, educator, and citizen of the United States of America. I understand the concern of so many that our nation seems to be flooded with immorality and darkness, because it is. However, I am alarmed that those in governmental power believe that the solution is to impose their ideas of morality on every citizen of this country by eroding the separation of church and state as is stated in the Religious Liberty Commission's recent report. The United States of America proclaims freedom at every turn, but it seems to be less and less free as we allow fear to control our land.

Amendment I (1791) "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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." The document states, "Nothing in the First Amendment allows the government to create a "wall" between an individual's personal faith and our nation's public life" (p.42). Please be careful that you do not rewrite the constitution in your zeal to see your country look the way you want it to. The first amendment says "NO LAW" ... that's the "wall"... that the government is to be respectful of... Our faith as Christians should affect the way we live our lives. It makes us kind and thoughtful of others and desires their eternal salvation. Our personal faith does not mandate the other citizens of our nation to believe and act in the way we do. Our personal faith invites those struggling with moral living to choose of their own free will to accept or reject Jesus and the

transformation that brings about the individual change of heart that is needed in our country at large.

IF the government starts funding humanitarian aid and religious programs they are on a slippery slope to controlling religious entities. There needs to be boundaries to protect freedom, such as the Johnson Amendment states, in order to keep government money out of churches to prevent corruption. I am concerned if unchecked, our government will repeat and enlarge the atrocities of other governments in history.

As Christians we need to follow Jesus's example of reform. Jesus was the best citizen and moral leader. There was corruption all around Him, but He never tried to force everyone to conform to His way. He invited, He was a complete gentleman, He rebuked in order to help others see their need, but He NEVER asked the government to fix or legislate morality. Why? Because true change starts with meeting Jesus and having a true conversion experience in the individual heart. Jesus does the work on the heart that loves our neighbor as ourselves and creates the caring citizens our country needs. This can NEVER be determined by some outside force.

Please leave the "wall" of separation between church and state intact, and let's work more diligently as Jesus followers to change the pulse of our country's morality one heart at a time without any government dictates or interference.

Sincerely,

Melissa Davis

Entiat, Washington

--

Melissa Davis

Have a BLESSED Day!

From: E Wright <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please do not take away the separation of church and state!

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:07:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

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.

Please do not destroy the liberty we have in this country to worship God according to our conscience, by removing the foundation of our freedoms and going against our beautiful constitution.

Sincerely - Ethan Wright

From: Ricardo Segurola <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:07:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen and as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty. I appreciate the opportunity to submit a public comment on the Commission's draft report.

I believe that freedom of conscience is one of the greatest blessings our nation has. Throughout history, the separation of church and state has helped protect both religious liberty and the rights of all people, regardless of their beliefs.

For this reason, I am concerned about recommendations that could weaken that separation, including increased government funding of religious activities and changes to the Johnson Amendment. I believe churches should remain free to follow their convictions without becoming dependent on government support or partisan politics.

As a person of faith, I want my church to be guided by God's Word rather than by political influence. I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve the constitutional principles that have protected religious freedom for generations.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your

Ricardo Segurola,
Miami, Florida

From: "n" [REDACTED] PII

To: " [REDACTED] PII " [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT on Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty recommendation

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:08:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The pilgrims and the founding fathers of this great nation suffered and fled religious persecution enforced by state powers and we should never forget that. To remove the separation of church and state or to weaken this separation in any way is going back to the dark ages of allowing our freedom of conscience to be trampled upon by the dictates of a religious power using the might of the state.

Please do not let this happen.

Sincerely,

Angeline Huang
Fairfax, VA

From: Timothy Shives <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:08:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's draft report.

I write as an American citizen, a person of Christian faith, a veteran of the Iraq War, a career military officer who has served on both active duty and in the Reserve Component, and a federal civilian who has spent much of my professional life supporting the defense of the United States. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, I chose to serve because I believed our Nation stood for liberty—including the freedom of every American to practice their faith, or no faith at all, without government coercion or favoritism.

Throughout my military career I have served alongside Americans of many different faith traditions, as well as those with no religious affiliation. In combat, in deployed environments, and in joint operations, what united us was not a common religion but our common oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. That Constitution protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits governmental establishment of religion. Those two principles have worked together for generations to preserve both religious liberty and civil liberty.

I appreciate the Commission's concern that Americans should never be forced to abandon their sincerely held religious beliefs when serving their communities or participating in public life. I have personally seen the tremendous value that military chaplains and religious accommodations provide to service members, particularly during deployments where access to civilian religious communities is impossible. Protecting the free exercise of religion remains an important national interest.

However, I am concerned by recommendations that appear to weaken the long-standing principle of institutional separation between church and state. My concern is not that religion should be excluded from public life, I believe the First Amendment makes it clear that it should not. Rather, my concern is that government should avoid placing itself in the position of favoring, funding, or influencing religious institutions in ways that could ultimately diminish their independence.

History demonstrates that religious liberty is strongest when government neither establishes religion nor becomes entangled in directing or financing religious activities. Churches should remain free to speak with moral authority rather than becoming dependent upon political influence or public funding. Likewise, government best serves all citizens by remaining neutral among religious traditions while vigorously protecting every individual's right to worship according to conscience.

I am also concerned about proposals to repeal the Johnson Amendment. While reasonable people may disagree about its current implementation, preserving clear boundaries between tax-exempt religious organizations and partisan political campaigning helps protect both our democratic institutions and the integrity of our houses of worship. Americans should never wonder whether a church's message is motivated by conviction or political patronage.

My perspective is shaped by years of military service. Around the world I have observed that one of America's greatest strengths is that citizens of different faiths—and those with none—can serve our Republic together under one Constitution. That unity is possible because government protects everyone's religious liberty equally rather than elevating one faith tradition over another.

As someone who has worn the uniform of our Nation in both war and peace, I believe we should continue to preserve that constitutional balance. We can vigorously defend religious liberty while also maintaining the institutional boundaries that have allowed religious communities in America to flourish independently for two and a half centuries.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your service on the Commission.

Respectfully,

Timothy Shives

From: Kim Layon <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:08:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to respectfully express my strong opposition to any effort that would weaken or remove the vital wall of separation between church and state.

The separation of church and state is one of the foundational principles that protects the God-given right of every person to worship according to the dictates of his or her own conscience. This principle is deeply rooted in the Constitution and has safeguarded religious liberty for generations. Once government gains authority over matters of faith, both religion and civil government are weakened.

True faith cannot be produced by force. It must be the result of a free and willing response to God. Whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, atheist, or any other belief, every individual should have the freedom to worship—or not worship—according to conscience, without coercion from the government or interference from man. Freedom of speech and freedom of religion stand together, protecting the liberty of every citizen regardless of their beliefs.

History has repeatedly demonstrated that whenever church and state unite, the result is oppression, persecution, and the loss of religious freedom. Government exists to protect the civil rights of its citizens, while the work of the church is to win hearts through truth, love, and persuasion—not through legislation or civil enforcement.

The Scriptures also teach a distinction between the responsibilities of civil government and the things that belong to God.

Jesus declared:

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."
— **Matthew 22:21 (KJV)**

Christ also said:

"My kingdom is not of this world." — **John 18:36 (KJV)**

The apostles affirmed that our highest allegiance belongs to God:

"We ought to obey God rather than men." — **Acts 5:29 (KJV)**

The Bible teaches that each person is individually accountable before God:

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." — **Romans 14:12 (KJV)**

The Apostle Paul further reminds us:

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." — **Romans 14:4 (KJV)**

These passages demonstrate that matters of conscience belong between the individual and God, not between the individual and the state.

I respectfully urge the Religious Liberty Commission to continue defending the constitutional protections that preserve freedom of conscience for all people. Please oppose any measure that erodes the separation of church and state or grants government authority over matters of faith.

Religious liberty is not only a constitutional principle—it is a biblical principle. It safeguards the rights of every individual and allows faith to remain voluntary rather than compelled.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to protecting the freedoms that have long been a blessing to our nation.

Respectfully,

Kimberly Layon

City Exodus Ministries

Heart of the Desert Wellness & Health

From: Cheri Windemuth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Repot - Tim & Cheri Windemuth

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:09:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

We are in opposition to this report and its recommendations. Fully support separation of church & state as directed by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

From: Marjorie Crawford <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:10:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my opposition to the union of church and state. I believe that the separation of these two institutions is essential for protecting the liberties of all citizens.

History demonstrates that when church and state are unified, religious oppression often follows. Maintaining a clear distinction between them is vital to ensuring lasting freedom and preventing such outcomes.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Crawford

From: Chris Spinolo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Attack on the First Amendment - Michael C. Spinolo

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:10:59 -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 First Amendment.

History demonstrates, without deviation, that when civil government prescribes religious practice, or when the church acquires civil powers, that people will die, eventually by thousands of thousands, due to religious persecution. These unions of church and state sometimes occurred suddenly and oppressively, but most often build gradually over time. The well known "4 stages of the Sunday Law" (ref, Wikipedia or Google) illustrate the persecution brought about by progressive development of a "day of rest" to a prescribed day of worship.

The Committee itself demonstrated the dangers of government engagement (interference) in religious practice with 1) the quick dismissal of Carrie PreJean Bowler for exercising her Freedom of Speech. Because her *questions* did not conform to conclusions the Committee was attempting to establish. 2) the special treatment given Jewish people and the state of Israel. The report is full of rhetoric calling for the protection of religious expression in the workplace or in government activities, but when the very Commission calling for more religious expression in government finds the expression of one of its own members objectionable, it takes swift action against the offending member. This illustrates how uniting church and state inevitably leads to the state being forced to decide religious doctrine.

I believe that the freedom of conscience, especially in regards to religious practice falls under the "certain unalienable Rights" cited in the Declaration of Independence. The Religious Liberty Commission recommendations propose that government must usurp these rights, "endowed by their Creator" - rights given by God, not government.

I find the revisionist tone of the Commission towards the history of separation and the omission of critical facts (e.g. Jefferson did not originate the expression "a wall of separation between the Church and State". A persecuted Puritan minister, Roger Williams did) in order to establish their position is also disturbing.

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, so that churches answer to politicians rather than God. The wall protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,
Michael C Spinolo
Pioneer, Tennessee

From: Eric Buvronn [REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:11:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The support of the separation between church and state is extremely important to uphold and to prevent the take over of the church by the state. With no separation of church and state, state sponsored religious directives would be issued to its people instead of the principles of religious liberty clearly expressed in the US constitution and historically in America by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and by 17th century Baptists and 18th century evangelicals.

Furthermore, with incorrect doctrines such as a 1st day “sabbath” (Sunday was instituted by the Catholic church as a mark of their authority only) instead of the actual, biblical 7-day Sabbath (the Sabbath of the Lord instituted by God), made for all of mankind (not only for the Jewish people), established during creation (Genesis 2:3) and defined in Exodus 20:8-11, these incorrect doctrines will be pushed by the State if the separation of church and state is removed. Such incorrect doctrines like the 1st day “sabbath” which goes against the will of God (Exodus 20:8-11 / Revelation 14:12), will further be expanded by facilitating the propagation using state funds to support churches and religious education supporting these erroneous doctrines. Also, political favors from the church to the state will occur with money flowing into state funded churches.

It is more important now than ever before that the separation of church and state is upheld to focus the nation on proper Christian doctrines by keeping churches independent of the state in preparation for Jesus Christ's soon return.

Sincerely,

Eric Buvron

Uniondale, NY

From: Ellsworth Quinton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:11:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am seriously troubled by the Commission's desire to replace the "WALL" of separation between the Church and the State with a "BRIDGE" between the Church and the State. A bridge may allow cross-pollination between the Church and the State that may be detrimental to both the Church and the State. The Church of Jesus Christ is expected to use PERSUASION to convince men and women of the power of the gospel. The State uses COERCION to ensure its goals are met. Using religious liberty as a bridge between the Church and the State often results in the COERCIVE elements dominating the PERSUASIVE elements, creating confusion. This kind of confusion was seen during the Dark Ages, when the coercive elements dominated the persuasive elements and great suffering and persecution resulted.

I believe the separation of Church and State has been an important contributor to America's success and tremendous growth, separating America especially from its European neighbors where the Church and the State are not separated. Additionally, this separation idea did not originate with Thomas Jefferson or the Supreme Court. During the 17th century, Roger Williams suffered after he suggested the idea of the separation of Church and State. His separation ideas led to the establishment of the state of Rhode Island.

From my perspective, neither Jesus nor his disciples used the government to aid Christians in the development of the fruit of the spirit or to ensure Christians never experienced difficulties as they lived or shared their faith. Saint Paul in his second epistle to Timothy, chapter three and verse twelve states, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution".

Please reconsider eliminating the separation of Church and State. Keep the Church and the State separate and encourage churches and other religious organizations to focus their efforts on the Gospel and its power to change human hearts and lives.

Sincerely,

Ellsworth Quinton
Villa Rica, GA

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Ellsworth Quinton

From: "Verna E. MacKay" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Verna E. MacKay

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:11:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I have learned that the Commission wants to dismantle the wall of separation between church and state and to repeal the Johnson Amendment. I find this quite troubling.

The secret of the power and prosperity of the United States lies in its Constitution. God has blessed our nation above all other nations on earth. The Constitution of the United States is the best constitution of any country.

Because of the separation of church and state, millions have sought our land of liberty, where they have the freedom to worship according to their desires and where freedom of speech is welcome.

If church and state become united, it will lead to the persecution of those who do not go along with the requirements of both entities, and history will be repeated. For example, Roger Williams had to flee for his life during the early years of this country because he stood up for religious liberty and the separation of church and state. He believed that people should have the freedom of conscience. This freedom, which we now enjoy, could be torn down, and persecution would certainly follow.

Please reconsider the course you are on, and do not build a bridge to unite church and state. The government should also not fund churches or any religious institution. This is a grave mistake that will have a tremendous negative impact on the United States of America and also the rest of the world.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message.

Yours truly,

Verna E. MacKay
Flintville, TN

From: Heidi Kremic <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:12:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a devout Christian who finds my faith to be a tremendous blessing and priority in my life. I am a firm believer in the Bible. I am thankful that others feel likewise and would wish that those who do not know the Lord would find Him. However, my understanding of God through reading my Bible informs me that God placed such a priority on freedom of conscience, that He was willing to risk the consequences of allowing this freedom and the whole 'sin problem' mess, because **LOVE NEVER** uses force. I also know from history that when church and state unite, persecution, and a decided LACK of Religious Liberty follow. As a matter of fact, a very large percentage of the early pilgrims came to this country because of a desire to be able to follow their conscience in how to worship God.

I sincerely and prayerfully ask that the Religious Liberty Commission does NOT pursue tearing down the wall of separation of Church and State. Please examine history. Understand what Roger Williams and others like him realized. Religious Liberty and the freedom to worship God according to our individual conscience has been one of the greatest blessings of the United States of America. Please understand that when governments are given an inch, they take a mile. Please do not tear down this fundamental freedom from the citizens of this great nation.

Praying and trusting HIM.

Thank you.

Heidi Kremic

From: Carolyn Scott <[REDACTED] PII>

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

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

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:13:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Presidential_Commission_on_Religious_Liberty_Reconsideration_Request.pdf

Please consider the attached document in response to the Commission on Religious Liberty's draft report.

Thank you,
Carolyn Scott

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. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the work the Commission has put into this draft report. I am writing to share some concerns about the report's proposal to replace the "wall of separation" between church and state with a "bridge." I believe this shift moves away from a principle that has long been central to American freedom, and I hope the Commission will consider the following points as it continues its work.

I would like to offer a few thoughts on why I hope the Commission might reconsider its current direction:

- A fuller historical picture: The report describes the "wall of separation" as a modern invention or a single metaphor from Thomas Jefferson. I would gently note that this concept actually dates back to 1644, when Roger Williams articulated it, and that it played a central role in the early "experiments" in religious liberty in colonies like Rhode Island and Pennsylvania.
- A foundation many people of faith helped build: The separation of church and state was not a secular imposition. It was championed by people of faith, including Baptists, whose support for the Constitution depended on the inclusion of the First Amendment.
- A concern about funding and independence: I worry that increased government funding for religious activities could, over time, entangle churches in the political process in ways that are not good for them. Public money tends to come with public expectations, and I fear this could pressure religious institutions to adjust their beliefs to keep their funding.
- A respectful request on the Johnson Amendment: I would ask the Commission to reconsider its recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment. I'm concerned that doing so could turn churches into vehicles for partisan politics, opening the door for wealthy interests to influence religious causes in ways that could erode their spiritual integrity.
- A historical success worth remembering: Alexis de Tocqueville, writing in the 1830s, observed that both clergy and laypeople credited the growing influence of religion in America to the complete separation of church and state. I think that history is worth keeping in mind.

I do not see the "wall" as something that separates religious people from public life. I see it as a safeguard that protects both religious and civil institutions from each other's overreach. I respectfully ask that the Commission take another look at its historical account and reconsider the recommendations that could put this important principle at risk.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Scott

From: "Eric C. Hughes" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Sham Report - Eric Hughes

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:13:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a humanist and 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.

And, it's formatted and written like a sophomore term paper.

Disrespectfully,
Eric Hughes

From: Jon Gusky <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - E Jonathan Gusky

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:14:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

I am troubled by the recommendations of the commission and would encourage you to reconsider at least (2) of the major findings:

1) Repealing of the Johnson Act. I believe this will negatively affect any churches ability to work out by faith. By being able to support a candidate/representative, a church can receive favors, and in many cases, this can have churches to battle for funding - this is not the way a church should run, should always be operated by faith of believers to effect changes, not to potentially battle for bucks

2) Removing the wall of separation and building a bridge. The specific language of a "wall of separation" is not found in the constitution, but the 1st amendment does show that congress shall not establish nor prohibit religious beliefs, which is what a wall of separation is. It also goes on to demonstrate freedom of speech. This goes hand in hand with religious freedom. When you are free to speak your mind - you are by default not told what to say and that freely demonstrates that you are not told what to or how to think.

America is great because American is good. A moral society will preserve the republic (yes, we are not a democracy, but a constitutional republic - thank God for that, we enjoy freedoms and protections that were only dreamed of by any other country in the world's history). The State bears the sword to punish wrong doers, this constitutes the last 6 commandments - the church is to provide means for you to love God - you cannot keep the first 4 any other way. If the state uses the sword to create a moral state, it will find fearful morality will not produce a great society. We do have history in the world showing what can happen when the state gets involved in prescribing faith for the common good of all. Biblically, Daniel 3 and 6 are examples of the state and religion combined. Daniel 3 shows government determining what the tenants of religion will consist of while Daniel 6 shows what prohibiting the free exercise results in. We also have the dark ages as an example.

I do understand the fear of America becoming more immoral, but a moral person cannot be made by fear of punishment.

I am a strong person of faith. I would never choose to vie for funding for projects, help with education programs, church bailouts, or supporting candidates. I do believe, as a Christian, that we should take the words of Jesus in consideration - Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God, the things that are God's. I believe He understood the best way for governance. I believe going against this will weaken both the Church and the State.

Thank you for maintaining the freedom we have by providing an outlet for public comments on you findings,

Kindest Regards, Jon Gusky
Berrien Center, Michigan

From: Wayne Lee <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Regarding Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:14:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a United States citizen and have been since the time of my birth. I cherish the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and to try and change or alter any of it is unconstitutional. Religious freedom is guaranteed and the State has no part in it, the two are separate as the Constitution reads. Do not tamper the Constitution.

Sincerely

Wayne Lee Keller

From: Marques McBride <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-seperation church/state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:15:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of religious liberty commission:

I was trouble to read that the religious liberty commission wants to replace the Wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect , I do not agree or support this change. As a person of faith, I find the idea alarming.

I would like to keep my religious freedom, exactly the way it is for the exact reason the separation was created in the first place. I hold dearly to my believe that as an American, i have full religious liberty and freedom without any government say.

Thank you for concidering my concerns.

Marques McBride

From: "PII" <PII>

To: "PII" <PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response Letter to RLC 7/12/26

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:16:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_RLC.docx

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for allowing the opportunity for dialogue and feedback.

Attached it my letter for consideration by the Committee.

Respectfully,

Mark Ranzinger

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

Thank you for your work in revisiting the subject of religious liberty and how it should best function in our republic, with an eye to continue its arc as longest functioning republic in the history of the world. In the words of President Reagan “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We don’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.” These words being but an echo of an earlier founding father, “The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.”

President Trump is to be lauded for seeing and sensing the threat of an incipient ideological progressive atheism every bit destructive as the overt Soviet communism. His words and actions show he understands the grave menace this represents to the nation bequeathed to us by the founding generation.

The two great horns of our power as a nation have been Republicanism (we the people) and Protestantism (by every word of that proceeds from the mouth of God, without king or pope). These principles are the distillation of Jesus’ teaching on the subject sublimely encapsulated in one sentence, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.” These distinct but mutually beneficial and reinforcing spheres have been the source of America’s great power for freedom and good at home and abroad.

In the sphere of the state is the responsibility for maintaining civil order, protecting life and property, administering justice and preserving the rights of the citizens. In the sphere of the church lies the responsibility for proclaiming the gospel, teaching God’s Word, making disciples and the care of people’s spiritual needs.

In this division the government should not establish nor control the church, the government should not compel religious belief, worship or observance and should not appoint ministers or determine religious teaching. It certainly should not use governmental power to enforce doctrine or punish heresy and its main job is to defend religious liberty such that it is protected equally for believers of all faiths and for those with no faith. Government should protect the churches freedom to worship, own property and preach without interference.

The churches and other religious institutions should encourage citizens of these United States to be honest, law-abiding, charitable and responsible which will greatly benefit society and humanity. The churches and other religious institutions should provide education, disaster relief,

and food assistance, and charitable services that complement governmental efforts. Religious leaders should also speak to the moral issues affecting society, while recognizing that government is tasked with making laws for all citizens rather than enforcing or empowering any one denominational or religious persuasion.

The concept of separating religion from political power emerged from the religious wars in Europe, the sectarian violence that resulted from powerful denominations, and from the abuse of divine authority by monarchs and institutions. Church-state separation was and is not anti-religion; it was anti-theocracy. Only too clearly do we see in Iran the danger of a merged and non separated religion and state.

Contrary to popular belief, magnified and distorted by a secular atheism, separation does not mean banning religion from public life, enforcing atheism, or silencing religious expression. Rather it means no religion controls the state, no state enforces religious doctrine and laws apply equally to all citizens. Belief remains free but power to coerce does not. The government is not to hinder the church nor help it. It is free as it should be.

The last 1000 years of history has fearfully warned us the result of mingling church with state. How many millions over this millennium were discriminated against? How many lost livelihoods, were imprisoned, tortured and killed for their religious faith whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim? The mind and heart recoil at the brutality of this period. The terms used to describe this period range from the Golden Age to the Dark Ages depending on which religious class you belonged to and which end of the stick you were on - the giving end or the receiving end.

Separation has served us well the last 250 years until the current moment of sexual revolution and revision, the undermining of authority, the loss of faith, and increasing atheism. The means to address these are what they always have been - the preaching of the gospel. That worked for the early Christians at a fearful cost but it overcame the then known empire. And they did this all without the aid of the state, yea with the state actively persecuting them unto death. As a matter of record both Jesus and Paul died from religious men influencing the governmental power to their ends.

While it is true that the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the U.S. Constitution there is an equivalent to it. The separation of church and state is rooted in the First Amendment's Establishment Clause "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". This is how Jefferson understood the first amendment.

His famous letter thus 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 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."

The plain reading of his words shows that he understood the Establishment clause to be the

equivalent of a wall. And that phrase is in the Bill of Rights. Furthermore he speaks of “that act of the whole American people” and of “the supreme will of the nation” indicating these were not his sentiments or understanding alone. He indicates this to be the desire of the nation, or at least a majority, at the time of these events. James Madison concurs: “Religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.”

The idea of separation of church and state was in existence in the colonies more than 100 years before the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Roger Williams used these very words but more importantly put this concept into action in his colony.

Thus let us play a thought experiment. Two colonies paint a vivid contrast of colonial life as it developed over the same period of time. On the one hand we have Massachusetts Bay colony with its harsh and severe punishments, its religious persecutions, eventually cumulating in the Salem witch trials of 1692. Church and state were hand and glove in this colony.

On the other hand, we have Rhode Island, a colony who welcomed Jews, Indians and Quakers, who taught no one should be forced to join a church or be forced to pray, and who passed a law to abolish slavery (1652), not to mention caring deeply about women’s rights. This colony early on made it a principle and practice to separate church from state.

Back to the thought experiment. If any member of this committee were made to spend 10 years with their family in one of these colonies, which would they choose? And which system is more reflective of the US system of laws and governance today?

Now in regards to the specific proposals given by the Committee. In reference to support of philanthropic organizations, let the churches appeal to the people directly and receive from the people directly. Our founding words are “We the people” and so it should be, not “We the government.” The government inevitably cannot support every organization equally and therefore will place its thumb of the scale. Let the free market of ideas and persuasion be the source of its income, not the purse of the government, which given its indebtedness may be the prudent thing as well.

It does not speak well of the churches that they are going hat in hand to the government. Does not the gospel teach its followers the need for giving, sacrificial giving, for the gospel and the poor? This issue speaks to the poverty of the churches in terms of following the instructions of our Lord. “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows liberally will also reap generously.”

A recent study from 2026 reported average giving to churches among evangelical Protestants was 1.66% of household income. If the Biblical precedent of tithe were taken seriously would there not be enough money for the philanthropic endeavors? Why should the government support what the churches are unwilling to do themselves? Is this the government’s problem?

Ben Franklin on this matter: “ 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, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”

Now in regards to education, if there were a blind trust that gave to parents directly and equally for the education of their children, whether religious based or not, such an arrangement may not be prohibited. But it must be equal and the government, once the money is given, can have no further say in the matter. Is this even possible? This again opens up the church to entangling alliances (to use a metaphor from another context) that leave it unable to pursue its mission single heartedly.

In regards to the Johnson amendment, please allow the church to be the church and not become entangled in political labyrinths. This advocacy will change the nature of the church and has the potential to split congregations. To speak to the great moral issues of the day - yes. To support specific candidates will use precious church time to advocate for feeble men when that time could be spent extolling the virtues of our Lord and the gospel which is the only solution for the troubles of our time. The church is not to be the handmaiden of the government. They are the handmaiden of the Lord. And you cannot serve two masters with first loyalty.

The document speaks of a bridge between church and state. All right then, let there be a bridge. But make it a narrow way, a foot path, where Uncle Sam and the bride of Christ show deference and mutual respect to the others position and responsibilities as they pass on their way to their respective duties. Let it not be a bridge wide, a broad way, wide enough to carry cartloads of clergy or wagons awash in cash. This will be the spoiling and corruption of both. Let the Uncle not take advantage of the betrothed women nor the women compromise her vow nor sully her garments white.

My parents both escaped a war torn Europe to come to this country. They could kiss the ground of this beautiful land of freedom. Many were the stories I heard at the table growing up of the old world and its way. They knew there religious discrimination and desired their new home to ever remain free of its taint. I choose America – the land of the free and the home of the brave, not the land of the dependant and the home of the craven.

How deeply I love this country and its freedoms. How I love its Declaration, its Constitution and its Bill of Rights. Let us be ever so careful to preserve this legacy for the generations unborn.

May we be eternally vigilant in denying the robbers of our freedoms so dearly purchased, whether from a not so well meaning secular left or a well intentioned religious right. Let us, I pray you, avoid this untried adventurism. Let us not allow the camel to put its nose in our tent.

God bless you and God bless America.

Respectfully Yours,

Mark Ranzinger

From: "Ernesto Layon, Jr." <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:16:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully oppose any effort to weaken the separation of church and state. Religious liberty is a God-given right that must remain protected for every person, regardless of their beliefs.

Whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, atheist, or of another faith, every individual should have the freedom to worship according to the dictates of conscience, without coercion from the government or interference from man. Faith cannot be legislated or forced by civil law.

Jesus Himself taught the distinction between civil and religious authority: *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matthew 22:21, KJV). Christ also declared, *"My kingdom is not of this world."* (John 18:36, KJV).

Please continue defending the constitutional protections that preserve freedom of conscience and oppose any efforts to erode the separation of church and state. Religious liberty protects us all.

Respectfully,

Ernesto Layon Jr.

City Exodus Ministries
Heart of the Desert Wellness & Health

From: Richard Davis <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Richard Davis

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:16:53 -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 because that's how we keep them both free. Keep the current wall in place. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Richard Davis

Entiat, WA

From:" [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

To:" [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Emailing Guide to Responding-2(1).pdf

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:17:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Guide_to_Responding-2(1).pdf

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<https://adobeacrobat.app.link/Mhhs4GmNsxb>

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

GUIDE TO COMMENTING ON THE DRAFT REPORT of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Executive Summary of this document:

1. **Make yourself familiar with the Report**

2. **Write a comment.**

If you don't have time, just write "I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them."

3. **Email your comments to [REDACTED] PII by July 13, 2026, 5pm EDT.**

Detailed Guide:

On Friday, June 26, 2026, the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty released its draft report, which President Trump accepted in the Oval Office. The report was the product of seven hearings, and included both basic summaries of the hearings and recommendations. At the beginning and end of the report there is an editors note that "for the benefit of the public, the draft will be open to public comment," until July 13, 2026.

There are many critical issues that should be of concern for citizens of the United States, as well as all the inhabitants of the world, as the United States commonly sets the standard for freedom that other

nations aspire to. **The most critical issue by far is the Commission's effort to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state.**

The Commission's attempt is marked by making two primary types of recommendations that should alarm everyone. The first is the repeal of the Johnson Amendment which will further politicize America's churches, and the second is the expansion of funding of religious organizations engaging in religious activities. Both of these recommendations are counter to the separation of church and state as provided for by the Constitution.

In making its recommendations, the Commission relies upon faulty history. Feel free to read Pillar of Freedom's response which is at pillaroffreedom.org that addresses the relevant American history and the recommendations that are of concern.

You can make difference by filing your own comment. Comments are to be sent by email by July 13. [assume 5pm Eastern Daylight Savings Time] The Department of Justice website states:

Comments may be emailed to [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] The Commission has requested that the subject line use the following format:

PUBLIC COMMENT – [TOPIC OR CHAPTER NUMBER] – [NAME]

Please remember that public comments are open to public inspection. Do not include personal addresses or other sensitive personal information.

For a complete record of the hearings, got to:

<https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/resources>

The Executive Summary fails to mention some of the report's central recommendations.

In drafting your comment, it is important that you use your own words. The best comments will be sincere and heartfelt. Issues you may wish to address in your comment could include:

1. Objections to funding religious non-profit activities.
2. Objections to funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.
3. Objections to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities.
4. A request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.

5. Objections to the special treatment given Jewish people and the state of Israel, and whether you desire complete neutrality in the government's relationship with religion.

Perhaps one of the best comments you could make would be to tell a story of your personal benefit from the separation of church and state, or perhaps religious persecution you may have experienced in a foreign country because there was no separation. Personal stories that would be good tell might include:

1. If your ancestors came to America to escape religious persecution. Many of us have ancestors who did that, whether to Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, Delaware, or some of the other colonies, such as South Carolina which promised freedom of worship.
2. If you came to America to escape religious persecution that was the result of a union of church and state.
3. If you ever suffered religious persecution because in America because there was inadequate separation of church and state.
4. The history of your religious denominations fight for religious freedom and the separation of church and state.
5. If you ever were denied a visa or other right because of your religious beliefs.

When making your objections and telling your personal story, support the commission on key issues that you agree with them on. If you are a person of faith, express that. Let them know what your faith is.

If you are feeling ambitious, point out that the Commission's own conduct proves the need for separation of church and state. You can do so by familiarizing yourself with Carrie Prejean Bollern—often referred to simply as Carrie Prejean, the former Miss California USA. Carrie Prejean was removed after the Commission's February 9, 2026 hearing on antisemitism. During that hearing, she pressed witnesses on whether criticism of Israel or anti-Zionism should be treated as antisemitism, asked whether opposition to Zionism made Catholics antisemitic, and questioned Israel's conduct in Gaza. Prejean also quoted 1 Thess 2:14-15, which stated that the Jews killed Jesus. This text is widely condemned as antisemitic, as it has been used as a rallying call to persecute the Jews in the past. Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, the Commission chair, announced her removal and said no commissioner had the right to "hijack a hearing" for a personal or political agenda. But this raises an interesting point. The report is full of rhetoric calling for the protection of religious expression in the workplace or in government activities, but when the very Commission calling for more religious expression in government finds the expression of one of its own members objectionable, it takes swift action against the offending member. This illustrates how uniting church and state inevitably leads to the state being

forced to decide religious doctrine. The easiest way to familiarize yourself with her side of the story is to listen to Tucker Carlson interview her on March 13, 2026. After understanding the facts, you can chastise the commission for what they did which by their own stated standard is an act of religious intolerance towards Prejean or you can chastise them for disproving their claim that religious expression in government should be protected. Better yet, chastise them for both.

Your goal is probably not to write a comprehensive critique of the Commissions report, but rather to make a pointed criticism or two, share a story of the importance of the separation of church and state, and let them know that you object to their report. Your second goal should be to get as many of your friends to do the same thing. Consider throwing a little party where each of you send a comment.

We would like to see your comments. Please send us a copy at [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]. By sending it to us, we can review it, and perhaps post it on our website as a model comment to inspire others.

It is important to stand up for our religious liberty rights. Religious liberty is the bedrock of all of your liberties. As Benjamin Franklin famously said, "We must all hang together, or most assuredly we will all hang separately."

EXAMPLE RESPONSES

Please change the wording of these emails so that the Commission will know that you are sending genuine response, and not merely copying other thoughts.

Email to: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Your Name] Tyrone Murray

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,

[Your Name] Tyrone Murray

[City, State] Huntingdon, Tn

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Your Name] Tyrone Murray

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,

[Your Name] Tyrone Murray

[City, State] Huntingdon, Tn

***Share this with everyone you know that might
have an interest in our freedoms.***

Please consider making a donation at:

pillaroffreedom.org

From: Bob Stone <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:18:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Committee,

I want to thank you for the time you have put into this most important work. I want to thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

My family has been deeply involved in the founding of this great nation and I take my families heritage of supporting and defending this wonderful nation from suppression of the freedoms that we hold so dear to be very serious. My relatives include Gorge Washington, and singers of the Declaration of Independence.

Now that I have introduced myself I would like to get to the point. I agree with the Pillar of Freedom's comments and I ask you to take them seriously. I believe that the strength of our country is greatly related to our separation of church and state. I don't say this because I agree with the anti God segment of society. I myself am a conservative Christian. I believe in putting God first in everything. I believe we should have Christians in government. I am greatly pleased when we have governors that pray. Gorge Washington was a praying man. But to create a bridge between the church and the state has never led to anything good. Just read history.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely

Robert Stone

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for iOS.

From: joshua saladino <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:19:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

Please refrain from any bridge building between church and state. Roger Williams agreed that there should be a wall protecting religion, protecting the conscience. I agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments, please implement them.

Thanks,

Joshua Saladino [REDACTED] PII

From: Pastor Hal Mayer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to the findings of Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:20:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 26.7.10_Presidential_Religious_Liberty_Commission.docx

Please find attached my Response to the Commission's Findings.

Respectfully Submitted

Pastor Hal Mayer
Keep the Faith Ministry

July 12, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

PII

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 Presidential Religious Liberty Commission has admirable motives in its desire to push back the tide of secularism and its attendant evils that has come onto America. I deeply share that desire.

However, the Commission has overlooked or ignored substantive history in its quest to make America a "Christian" nation. A long line of presidents, Supreme Court justices and other political leaders have declared the separation of church and state to be very important. Separation of church and state is not a myth. It has been part of the U. S. Constitution, without using those words, since its first amendment was adopted.

To declare that the United States of America is a Christian nation necessarily means that laws will be needed, eventually, to support Christianity as the state religion. Laws require enforcement. And this is where the trouble comes. The Commission wants to protect Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and others, but if it identifies a preference for Christianity, eventually, with the problems that this raises for equality of all citizens before the law, the government will necessarily have to abandon protecting these minority religions in favor of protecting the majority Christian religion. Christianity makes exclusive claims, therefore, it will become inevitable that other religions will be discriminated against and may even be eventually persecuted.

Many countries do not provide a separation between the majority religion and the state, and they are all entangled in various levels of discrimination and persecution. To have a Christian religion as the state religion will eventually, maybe sooner than later, lead to the same result only under the color of Christianity. And this has happened before. European states allied to the church persecuted non-conforming Christians, not to mention Jews, Muslims and others.

To state that America was founded ON the Christian religion is manifestly false. Though Christian people were involved in establishing the nation, it is a different thing from establishing a "Christian" nation. They created the separation of church and state in its constitution. While they had a sense of the moral obligations resting upon them by their understandings of the word and law of God, they had come from the old world with its persecutions of minority religions and could not allow the same environment to arise again. They knew from history that whenever the state establishes a religion, this leads to discrimination, censorship and even outright persecution of minority viewpoints.

Jesus Himself separated our obligation to the state from the church. He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's," Matthew 22:21. While the state has been given the right to regulate the last six of the Ten Commandments, which have to do with human relationships, laws in relation to them are the foundation of a just and free society. The state should never presume to control the conscience regarding their citizens' solemn and sacred duty to God, which is enshrined in the first four commandments.

When the state professes Christianity, what version of Christianity do they profess? The wide diversity of forms of Christianity makes it impossible to fairly and equally give all of them the same level of respect before the law. Therefore, the state has to choose which theology or doctrine it is willing to support. If the government wants to align itself with Christianity and make laws to support it, what form of Christianity would those laws support. It will be necessary to formulate laws that support that certain aspect of Christianity which is common to most. And when a conflict arises, they will always choose to support the majority version. This will naturally leave out those which are not common. And there are very different viewpoints between Christians, such as over which day is the Sabbath, what is the state of man in death, understandings concerning the end-time prophecies, immortality, etc. Even the main branch of Christianity has wide differences, such as church authority, the role of works and faith, sexuality and sexual identity, etc. Historically, many of those minority Christians were eventually persecuted by the majority when the state assumed the supposed "obligation" to regulate the consciences of men and establish a state sponsored religion.

No civil power has the right to invade the consciences of man. It should be neutral to religion. But if laws are made to support Christianity in the nation, which is the goal of the Commission, it will have the opposite effect on the liberty of those that hold a Bible understanding that is different from the mainstream of Christianity in America. America's founders were very concerned about this and talked and wrote about it extensively.

To enforce upon men laws regulating Christian faith, is nothing more than an attempt to compel them to be Christians, and does, in fact, compel many to be hypocrites. The civil government does not have the right to command the conscience. If it does, the government will first make minority viewpoints unequal before the law. Eventually laws will be made that will censor minority viewpoints and drive them underground as in other nation states that have a state religion, or the religion of atheism. This is only a short step from outright persecution.

In the age of high-tech surveillance and censorship it becomes especially crucial to maintain the separation between church and state because they can be used to persecute minority viewpoints and are already active in the public square.

It will be easy to dismiss these concerns as an overreaction to the Commission's recommendations. But if the Commission wants to protect Judaism and Israel, there is only one style of Christianity that can do this, namely Christian dispensationalism and Christian Zionism. The removal of Carrie Prejean Boller from the Commission for asking questions and making comments informed by what she believed to be traditional Catholic teachings on Judaism, is an example of the intolerance of minority viewpoints of at least some on the Commission. To remove her, the Commission was forced to use ad hominem and paint her religious beliefs as antisemitic. This reveals the unsavory underbelly of the union between church and state that will play itself out in other arenas when the legal steamroller gets a head of steam.

One final point, funding, largely derived from taxes, will become necessary to support Christian institutions, which will lead those Christian entities to comply with government policies (and ideology) to receive those funds, thus prostituting the church to the state. This will strip Christianity of whatever vital power it still has left.

Respectfully with Christian Sincerity,

Pastor Hal Mayer

Madison, VA

From: Callis Rowe <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:21:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam:

Please vote no on the issue of church and state union. It always in the end leads to persecution.

Sincerely,
Callis L.

From: Bill Rousen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:21:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the separation of church and state and believe it is my constitutional right to choose to worship or not to worship when or where I want, as my conscience dictates, not as my government dictates.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: David and Daniela Giangrande <[REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response Statement

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:21:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Respected members of the Religious Liberty Committee

I would join the voices of concern regarding the idea that there is no separation of church and state in our Constitution. Our founders, such as Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin, have stated clearly that the secular government should not legislate religion and that religion should not steer the government to legislate with favoritism toward any particular religion. When religion pushes for secular power, as we see in certain Islamic states where Sharia law prevails, the minority groups suffer. Many examples abound in today's world. Our founders were well acquainted with the religious persecution that occurred in Europe for centuries as well as the same intolerance that was part of Colonial America. They set up our founding governing documents to prevent anything like that happening in our republic.

What has made our nation great was a populace that understood what our Constitution and our Bill of Rights meant. These values were taught to their children at home. Respect for law and the rights of others was learned at home, in civics classes at school, and in houses of worship. The secular government allowed the church to instill religious values, and the church was content to have the civil government maintain the civil codes, the rights of private property, and public safety.

What is needed today is for people to respect those values and teach their children to do so as well. People should act out of personal and moral conviction and not governmental force and coercion. Our elected representatives should lead by example. Our laws are just fine. However we have a large segment of our society that has not learned to respect what is currently in place.

History shows that when religion influences the state, even with the best of intentions, it always ends up persecuting those in the minority. That is the opposite of what this commission is supposed to be setting in place, which is religious liberty for all. Please take into account the principles I have laid out in this email. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

David Giangrande

--

[REDACTED]

PII

From: Robert Buletti <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom :I object to the taking away of religious freedom. It is a God-given right it is also in the constitution not in so many words. first beast in revelation is the papacy or papel Rome the second beast is the when religious liberty is taken away and Church and State merge together. Persecution of the people of God **will** take place. This has all been prophesied study the book of Daniel and Revelation and you will find the answers. This message is sent from Santa Rosa, California.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:22:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Jessica Thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State-Jessica T

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:22:47 -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. Furthermore America is known to be the land of the FREE and the HOME of the BRAVE! We are free to choose what we believe in as much we are free to choose who we believe in. I'm a Christian and I know that a Christian is really a true Christian when they follow Jesus Christ. Jesus NEVER forced anyone to worship him and Jesus IS GOD. He gave EVERYONE the OPPORTUNITY to choose him or not. WHO is man that he should step over the guidance of God? What Christian man or woman can require another man or woman to obey their God when the true and living God never ever did that or wanted that? We can prove this BIBLICALLY. It is against human rights to force them to worship. We have free will which is a gift from God. Church must be separate from the state. There is no such thing as freedom or free will in America if we enforce religion on the public and in the public spaces. Jesus didn't allow money changers in the temple. He said render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's and render unto God the things that are God's! The church is to be ruled by God and the state is to be ruled by state. Individuals have the right to decide what they believe. Any change to that is not in harmony with the Word of God.

Sincerely,
Jessica T
Greensboro, NC

From: Ann Harshbarger <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Ann Harshbarger

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:23:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good evening,

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Thank you,

Ann Harshbarger

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)

From: Lawrence c Raglione <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:23:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am in full support of the commissions reversal of separating religious constitutional beliefs from government life. I support holy the commissions reversal of supporting the religious influences and structure of our US Constitution. There should not be the separation that has been for the last 70 years. It's about time it was reversed and put back into it its proper orientation. Thank you.

LARRY RAGLIONE

From: "Bryant & Joy Davidson" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:23:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

7/12/2026

TO: The Department of Justice – Religious Liberty Commission

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

I appreciated the opportunity to express my views to the commission, I am very thankful for the freedom of speech afforded in this country by means of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. However, I am very concerned, no, **ALARMED** at some of the recommendations of the Commission. Specifically, the first recommendation that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." Commission Chair, Dan Patrick, publicly stated "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and the phrase has no constitutional basis."

This would imply either that the commission knows better what the framers of the constitution meant when they wrote the amendment than the framers of the amendment knew themselves, or that the commission itself is participating in "revisionist history" that the Right so adamantly accuses the Left of. The Commission is encouraged to review the statements of the framers of the constitution.: James Madison (one of the framers of the constitution, and 4th president), "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." And Ben Franklin, "When a 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 Power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one." And Thomas Jefferson, "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."

The principle of "Separation of Church and State" as outlined in the First Amendment has been a guiding light for this country for nearly 250 years. We need only look history to understand the doleful results of the bridging of Church and State. It was the "Religious Right" that convinced the Roman State to crucify Jesus Christ. Moving on to the Dark Ages, any opposition to the Roman Church-State power was met with severe punishment, often Death, i.e., Tyndale, Huss, Jerome, and countless others. Many of our early settlers were fleeing from religious persecution, because they raised the voice of decent. Unfortunately, many set up their own governments suppressing decent themselves. Thus William Penn, Roger Williams and others fled to establish their own colonies. So it was with this background that the framers put in the First Amendment the principle of the "Separation of Church and State."

But one need not go back so far to see the dire consequences of the State meddling in matters of conscience. We need only look at the history of the former Soviet Union and other Communist countries to see the results as millions were sent to prisons, labor camps or death because they did not ascribe the Atheistic tenants of the State. And currently we only need to look at the Islamic block countries to see the results of a State supported Religious system, where if one is suspected of being an Infidel, his life is in immediate danger and the accusation alone is sufficient for incarceration or death. I could go on but I think you can see my point.

I am a Bible believing, Sabbath keeping, Christian, but clearly in a minority. The Bill of Rights, with the First Amendment including the Separation of Church and State, is there to guarantee the rights of the minorities in deference to the voices of the majority. Those minorities to be protected include, but are not limited to the Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Atheists.

This also seems to be a backdoor attempt to redefine the first amendment without the due process outlined in the Constitution for Constitutional change.

I also adamantly object to the proposal of the Commission to remove the Johnson Amendment. It has been said that “Money Talks”. Thus if Religious organizations are allowed to support specific politicians or lobby their causes by monetary or other support, they will potentially sway the judgement of the politician and thus the policies of the land. Again, promoting the allowance of the Church controlling the State.

I respectfully request that you seriously consider the points above, and those of similar input, and leave the First Amendment and the Johnson Amendment intact with no further clarification needed beyond the original script of the framers of the Constitution.

Sincerely,
Bryant Davidson
Oklahoma

From: Julie Hyde <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT~~n~~- Separation of Church and State – Julie Hyde, Ph.D.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:24:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a U.S. citizen, I have the privilege to worship as I choose without the interference of the government. Separation of church and state protects religious liberty of conscience. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on all individuals which can lead to discrimination and tyranny.

Worship and religion are personal choices. Government must stay neutral to protect everyone's right to believe without interference. History proves religious states oppress. The United States was founded to protect liberty of conscience. The first pilgrims came here because church and state in their own countries were NOT separate. So PLEASE, keep church and state completely separate.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views with the commission.

Kind regards,
Julie Hyde, Ph.D., CPA

From: Donna Fitzgerald <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to RLC report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:25:34 -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,
Donna Fitzgerald

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From: Greg Jones <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] respond letter

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:25:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: responding_to_religious_liberty_commission.docx

Goodnight, thank you so much for this opportunity to give a response to the religious committee. I pray that all would be understood in this letter.

God bless you all and praying for your final decision.

To Whom this may concern,

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,

[Eld. Gregory Jones]

From: "Joy Davidson" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:25:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

7/12/2026

TO: The Department of Justice – Religious Liberty Commission

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

I appreciated the opportunity to express my views to the commission, I am very thankful for the freedom of speech afforded in this country by means of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. However, I am very concerned, no, **ALARMED** at some of the recommendations of the Commission. Specifically, the first recommendation that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." Commission Chair, Dan Patrick, publicly stated "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and the phrase has no constitutional basis."

This would imply either that the commission knows better what the framers of the constitution meant when they wrote the amendment than the framers of the amendment knew themselves, or that the commission itself is participating in "revisionist history" that the Right so adamantly accuses the Left of. The Commission is encouraged to review the statements of the framers of the constitution.: James Madison (one of the framers of the constitution, and 4th president), "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." And Ben Franklin, "When a 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 Power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one." And Thomas Jefferson, "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."

The principle of "Separation of Church and State" as outlined in the First Amendment has been a guiding light for this country for nearly 250 years. We need only look history to understand the doleful results of the bridging of Church and State. It was the "Religious Right" that convinced the Roman State to crucify Jesus Christ. Moving on to the Dark Ages, any opposition to the Roman Church-State power was met with severe punishment, often Death, i.e., Tyndale, Huss, Jerome, and countless others. Many of our early settlers were fleeing from religious persecution, because they raised the voice of decent. Unfortunately, many set up their own governments suppressing decent themselves. Thus William Penn, Roger Williams and others fled to establish their own colonies. So it was with this background that the framers put in the First Amendment the principle of the "Separation of Church and State."

But one need not go back so far to see the dire consequences of the State meddling in matters of conscience. We need only look at the history of the former Soviet Union and other Communist countries to see the results as millions were sent to prisons, labor camps or death because they did not ascribe the Atheistic tenants of the State. And currently we only need to look at the Islamic block countries to see the results of a State supported Religious system, where if one is suspected of being an Infidel, his life is in immediate danger and the accusation alone is sufficient for incarceration or death. I could go on but I think you can see my point.

I am a Bible believing, Sabbath keeping, Christian, but clearly in a minority. The Bill of Rights, with the First Amendment including the Separation of Church and State, is there to guarantee the rights of the minorities in deference to the voices of the majority. Those minorities to be protected include, but are not limited to the Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Atheists.

This also seems to be a backdoor attempt to redefine the first amendment without the due process outlined in the Constitution for Constitutional change.

I also adamantly object to the proposal of the Commission to remove the Johnson Amendment. It has been said that “Money Talks”. Thus if Religious organizations are allowed to support specific politicians or lobby their causes by monetary or other support, they will potentially sway the judgement of the politician and thus the policies of the land. Again, promoting the allowance of the Church controlling the State.

I respectfully request that you seriously consider the points above, and those of similar input, and leave the First Amendment and the Johnson Amendment intact with no further clarification needed beyond the original script of the framers of the Constitution.

Sincerely,
Joy Davidson
Oklahoma

From: Natasha Prince <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Don't forget the past- keeping church and state separate

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:26:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

[Good](#) evening members of the religious liberty commission

Thank you for the privilege to be able to reach out and share my concern with you. America the land of the free and the home of the brave was founded on freedoms; freedom of religion, freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom to petition. As a woman of faith, I'm compelled to write on the matter of repealing aspects of the Johnson amendment and also removing the precious wall which creates a division between church and state. The early pilgrim and puritans came to America in search of the current freedoms we all currently hold dear. These freedoms are at stake with the breakdown of the wall between church and state. In accordance with constitution, Americans should be able to choose their religion and worship freely without the influence of the state. I ask that you please reconsider the decision that is being made as it will tear down the very foundations of what America has been built upon for so many years.

N. Prince
Huntsville,

From: Jonathan Fitch <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:26:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the President's Religious Liberty Commission

My desire is to continue to worship God according to the dictates of my own conscience.

Roger Williams and William Penn reasoned well on the issues of religious liberty. Please understand that while it is the duty of the government to enforce the last 6 of the commandments of God the first four are of a personal nature between God and the believer. Freedom of conscience should never be abolished. The First Amendment prevents Congress from establishing religious laws or limiting the free exercise of religion.

I sympathize with your effort to bring moral guidance to our nation. I sincerely hope that you can recommend enforcing the morals of God's Holy Law without returning to the state-Church alliance of the Middle Ages.

Religious persecution will certainly be the result. We can not afford to forget that in Europe a corrupt church persuaded secular governments to kill untold millions and that for more than a thousand years!

Also: The Church that cannot support itself by the donations of the members is not a very good Church.

For the state to fund the church only produces a church bureaucracy unaccountable to the gospel commission of Christ. Like Revelation seventeen's Harlot that commits fornication with the kings of the earth. That is not the way to God's favor.

Idea: Protect the freedoms of law-abiding citizens by prosecuting law-breakers.

Jonathan Vanoy Fitch

[REDACTED] PII

P.S. I LOVE President Donald Trump

From: Mark Ray <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:26:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that the four fathers intended that the government has no say so in religious matters and a religious body's of any kind, has no say so in the government. This is how it's been for 250 years and worked well. Morality can not be mandated or in forced.

From: Melendez Family <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience – Michele Melendez

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:27:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious liberty is the God-given freedom of every person to seek, worship, or decline to worship according to the convictions of conscience without coercion. Throughout Scripture, God invites rather than compels (Joshua 24:15; Revelation 3:20). True faith, a heartfelt faith cannot be produced by legislation but by the work of the Holy Spirit. I encourage the Commission to preserve and strengthen protections for the freedom of conscience of all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs, so that no citizen is compelled in matters of worship as they are matters of the heart.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
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From: Kwang-Pill Sung<[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Kwang-Pill Sung<[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep the Constitution and keep the separation of church and state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:27:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Keep the Constitution and keep the separation of church and state

From: Jack&Judy <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Chapter 14 - Jack Odell

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:28:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I find the document to be satisfactory in its entirety as is. I encourage the draft document be adopted as is without any modification.
Jack Odell

From: David Hor <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:28:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty.
RE: PUBLIC COMMENT on Religious Liberty.

Dear Sir/Madam:

I believe and urge the U.S. GOVERNMENT to maintain complete neutrality with all profit and non-profit religious organizations. Also, that the U.S. GOVERNMENT do not fund their activities on public campuses.

In addition, please fully enforce the Johnson amendment.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

David Hor

Milpitas, California

From: Michael Fifer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:28:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Dr Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

To begin, I will state that I am against building a bridge between church and state.

The draft proposal where you are suggesting our government should disregard the first amendment, and build a bridge between church and state, needs revising. Please revise and protect our first amendment.

Religion is a private matter, if government gets involved it will try to make every one believe the same. Forced religion is not God's way.

Thank you,

Michael Fifer

From: Jeanette Mott Oxford <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT DRAFT REPORT: Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:29:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission, US Department of Justice,

I am disappointed in the draft report recently published by the Religious Liberty Commission, and I fear that it may lead to weaker protections of religious liberty. The founders of the U.S. were determined not to establish a national religion and to protect both freedom OF religion and freedom FROM religion. Religious tests for office are prohibited in Article VI.

I am especially concerned that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is encouraged to conduct strategic litigation in support of state laws requiring the Ten Commandments to be displayed in public school. I was born in 1954, and we took the U.S. Constitution seriously when I was a child in rural southern IL. Forcing schools to display the Ten Commandments comes very close to promoting a state-sponsored religion which violates the Bill of Rights.

It is important that we tell the whole truth about our history. The report smells more of religious ideology connected to White Supremacist Nationalism than careful historical scholarship. Much that you claim is settled historical fact is still vigorously debated by serious scholars.

I know that my vigorous defense of the religion of my best friend - a sect of Hinduism - is one of the best defenses of my own religion as an evangelical Christian (of the Evangelical and Reformed branch of the United Church of Christ, born of the merger of multiple churches in 1957. The U.S. is not "a Christian nation." We must ensure that religious liberty is available to every U.S. resident.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Jeanette Mott Oxford
State Representative, 2005-2012

[REDACTED]
PII . PII

From: Hector Puig <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Hector Puig

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:29:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to you today as a citizen deeply concerned about the recommendations outlined in your recent report. Specifically, I feel compelled to speak out against the proposals to weaken the separation of church and state, such as repealing the Johnson Amendment and increasing government funding for religious organizations.

To be honest, I find the idea of turning that wall of separation into a "bridge" incredibly alarming. In my view, that wall wasn't constructed to keep religion out of the public square; it was established to ensure that our faith institutions could remain independent and true to their own missions. When churches become dependent on government grants or start navigating the messy world of partisan politics, they lose their autonomy. They end up answering to politicians and budget requirements rather than to their own core values. History has shown us time and again that when the church and state join hands too closely, it's rarely a positive outcome for either one.

I really urge the Commission to rethink these recommendations. **We** need to maintain a government that is neutral and respects the healthy distance between our religious and political lives. Please, keep the wall of separation intact—it is one of the most effective tools we have for ensuring that both our religious and political institutions can thrive freely.

Sincerely,
Hector Puig
Montgomery, Alabama

Sent from [Mailspring](#), the best free email app for work

From: FRANK MARIETTA <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:30:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Keep the separation of church and state to protect religious freedom!
Sent from my iPhone

From: Len Fast <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Ferrin Fast

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:30:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am no attorney and that is itself proof that one does not need to be an attorney to see that the provisions of the constitution does in fact effectively provide a wall of separation between the church and the civil government. The current national rhetoric criticizing the "wall" is evidence of a lack of understanding of the meaning of the phrase that "government shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". To hear our leadership claiming that there is no provision for this division between these two domains is alarming in the extreme. This freedom to worship according to the dictates of one's own conscience or to not worship at all has been the backbone of American strength for the past 250 years.

Even a brief and cursory review of history will reveal that every time the church turns to civil authority for support, persecution of dissenters is the inevitable results and we will return our nation and even the world to the horrors of the dark ages when Papal authority reigned supreme and slaughtered 100 - 150 million people simply because they disagreed with the church's doctrines or conclusions on traditions. Is this the objective of our "Make America Great Again" leadership, to return this great nation of religious freedom to the feet of the Roman Pontiff by making an image of the beast and following in the footprints of Rome, killing our own citizens if they don't agree with the government's opinion of God or worship? The honest actors in this drama do not understand where their feet are treading and are swept along in a narrative that sounds productive today, but will end in tyranny. The planted operatives that answer to a different authority than the American People do understand the agenda. Rome has always hated our constitution that allows every person to determine for themselves their relation to God, and has stated this position plainly in print.

I don't have the training to address this issue as befits the authorities of the presidential commission that will be reviewing my comments, but there are others much more skilled and well trained for that than I, and I hereby express my support for the response provided by PillarOfFreedom.org.

I do appreciate with great American zeal, the work and strength of President Trump and I also agree that the American people need God. Where I have to part ways is in using civil government to enforce religious teaching, traditions or the exercise thereof. Force is the last resort of every failed religion. Forced worship is not really worship. Legislated morality is not really morality.

I recommend the film, Freedom 250 by JudgmentHour.org at https://youtu.be/Rz379tIx7J8?si=h0_QRB1ElCG8SDZt

Ferrin Fast

From: Keyla Isabel Nuñez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- I SUPPORT OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
COMMISSION - KEYLA NUNEZ

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:31:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a person who emigrated from the Dominican Republic at 7 years old, and was Naturalized as a US citizen over 20 years ago, I studied in this country and learned that the whole reason this country came to be was because our founders wanted the freedom to be Christians without persecution. Sadly, this is not where our country is at today! We desperately need to go back to God as our nation's ruler and guide.

May God bless you,
Keyla Isabel Nuñez

From: "Harold & Sandra Merriman" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Harold Merriman

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:31:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a person of faith, religious liberty is extremely important to me. For example, I agree with the commission that it is critical for parents with traditional beliefs to be able to have their rights respected when their children are educated in public schools.

However, I am deeply concerned that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." 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. Specifically, Roger Williams who was a Puritan minister in the 1600s championed separation of church and the state of Rhode Island flourished because of this separation. A bridge won't strengthen the church; it will open the door for government money, political favors and control. The Johnson amendment is a very wise policy which should be protected and not repealed.

History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and the results are tragic for both. The US was founded by religious groups fleeing the European model of a state established church. Please don't build that bridge, which will actually severely weaken the mission and influence of the church.

Sincerely,
Harold Merriman
Waynesville, Ohio

From: Brenda Jobe <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Commission Report - Brenda Bosque

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:31:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with the findings of the committee. Our Constitution guarantees, in the most explicit terms, the inviolability of conscience: "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States." "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

From: Tiff Wright <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Don't take away the separation of church and state.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:32:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a Christian who believes fully in the separation of church and state. We do not need or want a government run religion. This, like in all history, will lead to persecution of all who do not kneel to the new government religion.

I am going to give a rather extreme example as to not waist time; While I myself do not believe that groups like Satanists should be worshipping the one that is directly against our Lord Jesus Christ, I do believe they have a human right given to them by God to choose who they will follow. This sediment goes for all groups, as long as it is not impending on another humans rights.

We have that right protected within the bill of rights. Who are we to take away others rights to choose? It will be argued that choice will still be ours. These arguments will be brought by men and women who have no idea of the historical context of the separation of church and state. This country has been beautiful because of this separation, it has kept America safe for all religions to come in and make it home. If this is followed through and church and state is brought together history will repeat itself and it will be horrific.

Christ didn't force himself on anyone, and we shouldn't be using His name to force anyone into a religion or a relationship with him. God is not about force Satan is, and this is just opening the door for him to come in and destroy our religious freedom in this country.

- Tiffany Wright

From: Alan <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State-Alan Stowell

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

My name is Alan Stowell and I am concerned by the fact that the Commission is making the claim that there is no such thing as a separation of church and state. First of all, the First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; 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." If the separation between church and state is removed, then these rights in the First Amendment could eventually be torn down, because laws could be made "respecting an establishment of religion." In history, we can see what happened when the government was involved in the way people worshipped. People were persecuted if they did not agree with the way they were being told to worship God. I would hate to see history repeat itself. As George Santayana stated "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." I believe that force and persecution will happen again if the separation is removed. The books of Daniel and Revelation reveal that the joining of church and state will bring about persecution. This is exactly what was happening in Europe whenever the Pilgrims fled to come to America. They were being persecuted for the way they worshiped and lived. That is why they left looking for a better land where they could be free. They were searching for a land and they found it. It is known as the United States of America. They came here because they wanted to have the freedom to worship how they wanted and live how they chose and not to be controlled by the state. They left because they didn't have freedom to worship or live normal lives. The principles of what America is known for is the Land of the Free. If the separation of church and state is removed, America will fall and it will no longer be known as the Land of the Free. I STRONGLY recommend keeping the wall of separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

Alan Stowell

From: Ken Merrick <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good day to you. I hope I am not too late in reacting to the recklessness of the proposed combination of church and state. Our country was founded on the separation of church and state, and any deviation from this principle is not only anti-Christian but creeping closer and closer to government controlled religion. My opinion is to cast my vote against any combination of church and state and putting religion toward the highest bidder is completely absurd.

Sincerely,

Kenneth, a concerned legal citizen from Louisiana

From: JOHNiD <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to respectfully express my concern regarding the protection of my First Amendment right to religious freedom and freedom of conscience.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects both the free exercise of religion and the right to be free from government coercion in matters of faith and conscience. These protections ensure that every individual is free to follow his or her sincerely held religious beliefs—or to hold no religious beliefs at all—without government pressure, favoritism, or discrimination.

My request is simple: that your agency carry out its responsibilities in a manner that respects these constitutional protections. Government has an important role in serving the public fairly and impartially, while remaining neutral in matters of religion. This neutrality protects people of every faith and those with no religious affiliation alike.

Freedom of conscience is a foundational American principle. It means that individuals should not be compelled to act against sincerely held religious convictions except where the law clearly and constitutionally requires it. Likewise, government should avoid policies or practices that unnecessarily interfere with the free exercise of religion or give the appearance of endorsing or discouraging any particular faith.

I respectfully ask that your agency review its policies and actions to ensure they fully comply with the protections guaranteed by the First Amendment and other applicable federal and state laws. I also ask that any decisions affecting me be made with careful consideration of my constitutional right to religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

This request is not intended to seek special treatment, but rather equal protection under the law. Our Constitution was designed to safeguard the rights of every citizen, regardless of religious belief or practice, and I trust your agency is committed to upholding those principles.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Respectfully, John Delsid

From: Jack Odell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 14 - Judy Odell

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

The "Separation of Church and State Clause", we were told, was a "wall of separation" that prevented religious leaders from bringing any of our values or opinions into the public arena. President Trump's Religious Liberty Commission has tackled this issue with a draft to rectify this situation. I am in agreement with what the Commission has written.

From: CATHY KNEPP <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Separation of Church and State - Mary Knepp

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:33:50 -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.

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.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Mary Knepp
Greenland, Arkansas

From: Glenn Henderson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:34:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

From: DONHELLR [REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:34:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

"Congress shall make no laws respecting the establishment of religion..."

The genius of America's success has been the separation of the civil and ecclesiastical powers. We have enjoyed this freedom for 250 years. Don't fiddle with it now.

The Constitution has worked successfully for 250 years. Politics and religion do not mix. Don't fiddle with them now.

Let religious forces play out against themselves without federal or civil legislation imposing political controls in any direction. Don't fiddle with it.

The various religions and denominations all have their own sets of guidelines and definitions of behavior. Secular government has no place in interfering with the freedom of conscience to believe as one chooses. Power is not given to civil government in this realm. God protects the righteous not a government of civil laws or a commission of religious liberty.

Don't fiddle around trying to fix what isn't broken.

From: Elizabeth Frazao <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTS - chapter 10 (vaccines) - revised - Elizabeth Fraza

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:35:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I thought the report did a good job of describing the fact that “vaccines carry significant theological implications” although the report mentioned the problem often arose because “of the ways in which vaccines are researched, developed, and administered.” However, the report ignored the bigger issue that vaccine mandates (such as the childhood vaccine mandates and vaccine mandates for the military) is theologically wrong, since it removes our unalienable God-given right to liberty, that is, our right to choose and decide for ourselves and for our children, whether or not we want certain medical procedures or treatments.. By MANDATING vaccines, the government has decided IT has the right to decide what is best for some groups of people. Medical and religious exemptions are partial attempts to deal with this problem, but they do not change the fact that mandating any vaccine, medical treatment, or procedure is theologically wrong, it is coercion, and it also goes against the Nuremberg Code’s requirement of informed consent.

The problem could be eliminated by making ALL vaccines voluntary. Given full information, parents would likely get their children vaccinated if they believed it would be ethical, and medically beneficial to their children. To be consistent with religious liberty AND the Nuremberg Code, the Commission should recommend that ALL vaccines be voluntary.

In the meantime, I would also like to see a recommendation that the procedures for obtaining a religious exemption should not be burdensome or attempt to indoctrinate the religious believer. For example, the State of Mississippi recently allowed religious exemptions for vaccines. However, the procedure to obtain a religious exemption for children’s vaccinations is onerous and seems designed to indoctrinate or punish/coerce the parent into giving up! After obtaining the religious exemption form online, a parent requesting a religious exemption for their child MUST 1) make an appointment at the County Health Department, 2) watch a Vaccine “Education” video, and 3) be subjected to a “presentation” about the benefits and risks of immunizations - WHY? Why not simply allow the parent to complete the religious exemption form online and submit it online, particularly since the form already provides some disclaimers, and the Mississippi Dept of Health website states that any religious exemption requested will be accepted.

The Commission should also broaden Chapter 10’s last recommendation (p. 150). Rather than recommending an ethically acceptable vaccine - which, if mandated, would still meet the religious objection that the State is forcing decisions that belong to the child’s parents - the Commission could recommend a broader set of ethically acceptable and voluntary alternatives, including approaches that strengthen the immune system or effectively treat the disease. It should be noted that some study findings suggest that mild childhood diseases help prime the immune system and lead to better health in later years.

From: Calogero <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:35:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have seen that the liberty commission, is trying to take away the separate of church and state. As a Christian, I find this troubling, because, history has shown, that when church and state unite, persecution arises, for a certain sect of people. I hope that you will keep the separation of church and state, so that all people of any religions, may have the freedom, to practice their faith, according to their conscience. And not have any religion, have the government power, to oppress, those who are not of their faith. Thank you your time to read

From: Bruce D <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - [Bruce Wolpin]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:35:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I have read statements from our founding fathers that make it clear to me that they believed in the separation of church and state. I believe the concept is in the Constitution, though the exact wording may not be there.

History is replete with the suffering through imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom as a result of the union of church and state. Although there are many, many documented accounts that could be cited, I mention two here. We read about it in the Bible account of the crucifixion of Christ and in Fox's *Book of Martyrs*--numerous instances of voices of conscience brutally silenced from the time of Christ to the time of the Reformers. It is estimated that between 50 million and 150 million people met the fate of martyrdom. Church and State do not make good bedfellows.

I believe that the "bridge" being proposed that opens the door for the government funding of religious non-profit activities and religious education is actually a slippery slope. First, I do not believe the government can remain objective in deciding which religious organizations to fund and the amount to be funded. What will initially engender political influence in organized religion can easily devolve to more egregious involvement on the part of government; i.e. making laws respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, using coercion as the means to an end. This is a road we should not embark upon.

I am convinced that the separation of church and state has been a bulwark against authoritarianism in America. It should be maintained to keep America the greatest country the world has ever seen.

Thank you for considering my deeply held views.

Sincerely,
Bruce Wolpin

From: John Dawson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:36:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm writing you to let you know that I'm appalled at even the idea of combining religion and government. This country was founded on religious freedom where anyone could worship anyway they saw a fit or not. All we have to do is look in history to see what kind of persecution and murder takes place when you combine religion and government. Government should never dictate any religion and any religion should not dictate government. My ancestors came to this country to escape religious persecution. I have a great, great, great, great great grandfather that moved from England to Ireland and then Canada to escape religious persecution please leave our constitution alone and don't marry Government and religion. There needs to remain a wall between government and religion. Thank you for doing the right thing. John Dawson. From Walla Walla, Washington.
Sent from my iPhone

From: Sharon Dustin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Consideration of Discontinuation of Separation of Church and State by Religious Liberty Commissioners Report (Discussion) of June 26, 2026

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:36:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the proposed elimination of the separation of church and state as traditionally established by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

As a grateful American and a descendant of ancestors who fled religious persecution by state authorities in Europe in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, I am writing to strongly oppose any removal of the protections provided by the First Amendment. Specifically, I support the continued upholding of the two essential clauses: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Notice that the establishment clause prevents government from having authority over religion, while the free exercise clause protects each citizens right to worship according to conscience.

I believe these protections remain vital to the practice of every religion or the freedom to practice none, and must be preserved.

Sincerely,

Sharon Dustin

From: Rachel Cottle <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:37:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I DEFEND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

From: Marie <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report – Marie Kaniecki

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:37:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

This administration's continued efforts to undermine the constitutional separation of church and state is deeply concerning and goes against everything the founding fathers stood for when creating our government. America always has been and always should be a democracy, not a theocracy. **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. After the Revolutionary War which created our nation, our early government embraced the phrase *E pluribus unum* over 170 years before it was supplanted by the overtly religious motto "In God We Trust" in 1956. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control, and that is the American tradition we should carry forward.

As a historical researcher, I am disappointed to see how **the report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Thomas Jefferson himself supported separation of church and state in his **letter to the Danbury Baptists** (1802), which emphasizes "that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God" and references "a wall of separation between Church & State." Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.

The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. For example, the Freedom of Religion doctrine that has been upheld as one of America's greatest values differs significantly from the French principle of Freedom **from** Religion, which minimizes the visibility of all religion in public life. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

I stand with other historians, educators, and American citizens in denouncing this draft report. I hope that those who are currently in positions of power do their duty to the American people - protect Freedom of Religion in America as enshrined in our constitution.

From: Lisa Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:37:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Religious Liberty Commissioners:

We need to keep the separation of church and state. Individual choice of who we serve is what gives us freedom. Please don't take it away.

Sincerely,
Lisa Johnson

Sent from my iPad

From: Jan Webb McQuistan <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty—America's First Freedom

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:39:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 11, 2026

To the Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

My husband and I are writing to formally submit our comments and outline several pressing legal concerns regarding the draft report, "Americans' First Freedom." While the Commission's dedication to preserving the First Amendment is evident, the proposed recommendations raise significant constitutional issues, particularly regarding the delicate balance between the Establishment Clause and general free speech limitations.

The report advocates for a sweeping reinterpretation of the separation of church and state, specifically targeting policies that prevent government-funded institutions from imposing religious doctrines on the broader public. While protecting the internal, faithful mission of religious organizations is a bedrock constitutional principle, we must be highly cautious of how the Commission's proposals might inadvertently expand free speech restrictions in the public square.

By recommending that institutions receiving federal funding operate with expansive exemptions from established civil rights, healthcare, and educational standards, the state risks effectively deputizing private religious enforcement. This creates a fraught legal environment where the free speech and conscience rights of dissenting citizens, employees, and students could be severely restricted under the guise of an institution's overarching religious liberty. True religious freedom ensures the government does not silence individuals, but it cannot be weaponized to silence others in publicly funded arenas.

Furthermore, the recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment fundamentally alters the statutory nature of tax-exempt entities. Removing this restriction does not merely protect the pulpit; it risks transforming houses of worship into unregulated conduits for partisan political campaigns. This policy shift would heavily entangle the state's tax apparatus with religious and political speech, blurring the lines of government endorsement.

Our constitutional framework relies on a vital, historical balance. It absolutely guarantees that the state will not suppress individual religious exercise, but it equally demands that the government does not establish, fund, or coerce religious orthodoxy. I strongly urge the Commission to reconsider and revise its recommendations to ensure that efforts to protect religious liberty do not inadvertently foster state-sanctioned free speech restrictions for the broader American public.

Sincerely,
Janet M. Webb
John R. McQuistan

[REDACTED] PII

From: Johnathan Chang <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Johnathan Chang

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:39:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who believes both religion clauses of the First Amendment stand together, and I would like to lay out why, drawing on arguments that predate the Constitution's modern defenders and come instead from Christian reasoning itself. Christ himself divided all human duties into two jurisdictions when he said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. That line was drawn by the highest authority Christians recognize, not by a secular committee. As Jones put it to a Senate committee weighing a national Sunday law, "the principle upon which we stand is that civil government is civil, and has nothing to do in the matter of legislation, with religious observances in any way." The test that follows is simple: government may ask whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or irreligious. Every recommendation that places government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the line Christ himself drew, and the objection to it is not secular hostility to faith but faithfulness to what Christianity actually teaches about the two jurisdictions.

I also hold that rights come from the Creator, not from majorities, and this matters enormously for what this Commission recommends. If a right can be granted by a vote, it can be taken away by the next vote, which means it was never a right at all but a permission. Man's first and highest allegiance is due to his Creator, and that domain is one no human government, of one or of many, has authority to invade. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can protect itself at the ballot box. As Jones told a Senate committee weighing exactly this kind of majoritarian claim, "the people, I care not how many there are, have no right to invade your relationship to God, nor mine." Widespread public support for prayer in schools or religious displays on public property cannot supply the missing authority, because religion was never among the things submitted to the vote in the first place.

A still deeper argument is that religion is non-delegable, so government never received it to begin with. Our government rests on the consent of the governed, meaning on powers the people delegate. But no person can delegate his relationship to God; a man can authorize another to manage his property, never to believe or worship in his place. Since that power could never be given, it could never be received, and the Declaration of Independence therefore excludes religion from the jurisdiction of every government that flows from it. No government will ever stand at the judgment seat to answer for an individual's soul, and therefore no government can rightly assume responsibility for it. The First Amendment did not invent this boundary; it merely recorded a limit that already existed.

Finally, I would urge the Commission to weigh that any law touching religion, even one meant to favor it, destroys free exercise. Jones called this a flat impossibility: "it is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion." Any such law must define the religion it favors, and any definition excludes someone while turning even the favored believers into people who practice their faith by legislative permission rather than by right. Believers who welcome government endorsement today are building a precedent that a future administration, with different convictions, will inherit and wield.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Johnathan Chang

From: PII PII

To: " [REDACTED] PII " <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report Comments

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:41:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 13_July.docx

PII

13 July,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 a concerned believer I would like to make comment on the very important issue of "The Separation of Church and State" and its validity in this current modern world.

I state at the outset that I am a committed Christian and have been for the last 36yrs. Before that I came from a place of unbelief and self-serving; and am eternally grateful to Almighty God for opening my eyes to the reality of His existence and to the peace and hope we find in a knowledge of His great love for us all.

I would like to base my comments along the lines on which my mind runs on a daily basis, that being lines that are based on high Biblical principles for living; even in the midst of what is becoming a more and more morally corrupted modern world. This can be a challenging position to hold at times, yet a position that conscience compels me to take, knowing that to turn from such a position will inevitably lead me to compromise my own convictions, which is to betray one's own self; something I am unwilling to do.

Regarding "The Separation of Church and State", there are several situations recorded in the Bible narrative I believe are relevant to this topic and worth paying close attention to, for, as we all have heard "History Repeats".

a) The tragic account of what happened to the Lord Jesus Himself, sadly carried out by those He called "His Friends", the leaders of His own chosen people. Because His actions and words at times did not seem to marry with the understanding of the Scribes and Pharisees view of "their laws", a growing hatred of the Savior was cherished in their hearts, which lead ultimately to His betrayal and death. The

religious leaders (Church) dragged Him before the Civil Power, namely, the Roman Governor Pilate (State), to be falsely accused, tortured and finally crucified. This is the most terrible example of what can happen when the Church goes to the State to enforce her own religious dogmas and judgements.

It is worth noting that Jesus said numerous times, including to Pilate, that His kingdom is “not of this world”. He never instructed His followers to approach the Civil powers to further the Kingdom of Heaven.

To Peter in the garden of Gethsemane, after Peter had drawn His sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, servant of the High Priest, Jesus told Peter to put away his sword for “All who take up the sword will perish by the sword”. The “Sword” is symbolic of the Civil power! Paul said that “the weapons of our warfare are not of this world”, but are spiritual weapons, the most powerful of which is the “Sword of the Spirit”, which is the Word of God. Jesus Himself clearly illustrated this fact when tempted in the wilderness after His baptism; every time He was approached by the enemy with his various temptations, the response of our Lord was “It is written”.

Paul also said that we should live according to the civil laws where we live because “He who holds the sword does not hold it in vain”. But the Church is never to use the Civil sword to advance the Gospel! Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you”, and it “does not come with outward display”. The Kingdom of God is advanced by the working of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men to “convince them of sin, of righteousness and of judgement” Jesus said. It can never be profited by the engagement of civil legislation.

The authority Jesus spoke of that the Church would wield is a “Spiritual Authority” over spiritual powers in high places, not a Civil authority to be exercised with the Civil sword.

b) In the story of Esther is brought out an example of one who was receiving false worship, Naman, going to the Civil power (King Ahasuerus), to bring persecution upon those who would conscientiously keep the commandments of God and not bow down to a man. Naman was given the King’s signet ring and was able to draft legislation that decreed all Jews would be executed. Thankfully God had a plan to counteract this wicked scheme and disaster was averted. The blaringly obvious lesson to be learned from this story is that worship should never be compelled but rather offered freely to God “in spirit and in truth”. Worship enforced by the State can only be a false form of worship to be avoided at all cost.

c) Finally we must draw our attention to the most terrible scenario in the Bible, presented in the 13th of Revelation, the “Mark of the Beast”; and the also obvious

drawing of our attention to the experience of three faithful young men in Ancient Babylon. This account is given in Daniel chapter 3.

King Nebuchadnezzar, displeased with Daniel's interpretation of his dream in Daniel chapter 2, decides to set up a golden image of himself on the plain of Dura and declares that when the music plays all must bow down and worship, or be cast into a burning fiery furnace. This is what happens when religion (Church) is controlled by the Civil power (State), and this is what Bible prophecy declares will bring about the last great crisis this world will face. The Beast from the earth will "force all, great and small, rich and poor, to receive a mark" and to worship the image to the first beast, or they shall be unable to buy and sell and eventually killed.

I would have thought that if there was a country on the face of this planet that would understand this, it would be the United States of America, for she was founded by a people who fled from just such a condition of things in the old world, where the Church had influenced the civil powers to commit unspeakable atrocities, along with herself, for centuries. Do we really want to take even one step in the same direction? God forbid!

Might the Church of God rely on the power of God to perform the will of God is my prayer. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

Anonymous.

From: Ranger's Wife <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State- Cindy Petersen

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:41:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen I am writing 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.

My fear is that my religious convictions will be disregarded due to sentiments such as "the good of the community." In that case, if many people in my community do not believe the way I do, my freedoms would end. This is not how America has treated its citizens throughout our history.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them--and American citizens--free.

I am attaching a copy of the "Pillars of Freedom" comment on this subject, and I am in agreement with its sentiments.

Respectfully,

Cindy Petersen
Yellville, AR



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 ofrBody.—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...”¹⁴

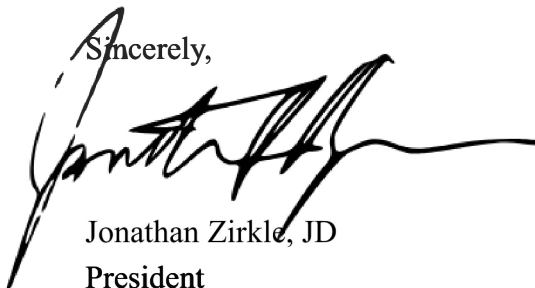
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

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: Susan Talley <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Committee on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:42:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Committee,

I am grateful and appreciate the religious freedoms that myself and the people of the United States have been able to experience throughout our country's history.

To exercise our rights comes from our 1st Amendment from our Forefathers and I cherish our freedoms.

To combine church and state would be a violation of our Religious Freedoms, as before mentioned due to our 1st Amendment rights.

Respectfully,

Susan Talley

From: Chares Osadchuck <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state committee

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:43:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Dr. Carson and Members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the recommendation that the establishment clause of the 1st Amendment be reinterpreted to diminish the historic separation of church and state. Such a recommendation is inconsistent with the text of the founding fathers. These two protections were designed to work together. Thomas Jefferson was describing a principle that was embedded, within the 1st Amendment. The duty to God is stronger than the duty to civil government.

The dangers of abandoning are not just theoretical but real. Religious liberty can not be secure if only ONE religion holds sway.

Government is at its best when it maintains proper boundaries between church and state.. Please do not reinterpret the clauses on separation of church and state from the Constitution as well as the clauses on freedom of conscience. They are important and they helped us for 250 years to allow people to worship God according to their convictions. We are praying for wisdom to let it be!!

Blessings for remembering this is a government of people by people and God requires you to listen and obey the Bible, since you say "we trust in God, we must allow people to choose how they worship and protect that right as a fundamental truth that can help make America great again!"

Sent from my iPhone

From: North bay Shalom <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] From Nick to the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:43:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Respected Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

There is nothing more I appreciate in my life than my personal and religious freedom. The day I first stepped onto American soil in NYC in 1997 until today as a naturalized citizen I value protestant principles.

I pledge allegiance to this country where the separation of church and state is a necessary prerequisite for every citizen's freedom and foundation of our constitution.

I humbly appeal to keep it this way.

With gratitude to God for the opportunity to contribute to a better society in the United States,

Nick L.

From: Paula Wolfe <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State - Paula Wolfe

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:44:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the U.S.A. it saddens me that that the Commission is planning to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. Why was there a wall? To keep the church free from government influence which includes money and political favors and whatever else it wants to use to control the church, including corruption. Please keep the wall and protect all churches. The bridge needs to be excluded.

Sincerely,

Paula Wolfe
Muncy, PA

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPhone

From: Brenda Washington <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:44:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

It was troubling to read about your Commission's Report advocating a joining of state and church.

The founding leaders of these United States rebelled and cut ties with England for the freedom to govern themselves and to worship as they pleased within a structure of the political system separate from the Church.

I applaud their efforts and appeal to this Committee to continue this process which has worked for our Republic thus far.

I advocate maintaining a separation of church and state.

Respectfully
Brenda Washington

From: Pat <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Patsy Arrabito

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:44:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for receiving comments from the public on the draft report. I write to ask the Commission to uphold the separation of church and state — the arrangement that has kept faith in America both free and strong. My reasons are these:

Christ himself divided human duty into two jurisdictions: what we owe our neighbors belongs to civil law; what we owe God lies beyond it. As A. T. Jones told the United States Senate in 1888, “civil government is civil, and has nothing to do in the matter of legislation, with religious observances in any way.” I urge the Commission to keep every recommendation on the civil side of that line.

Religious liberty is a right, not a majority’s permission. “A right is something which, in its very nature, is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons.” Popular support can justify a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never among the things submitted to the vote.

The two religion clauses are one shield. As Jones warned the Senate in 1888, “It is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion.” A law favoring religion today is a precedent controlling it tomorrow, and the machinery now proposed comes with no guarantee about who will operate it next.

America has already run the experiment of sincere majorities enforcing religion — Salem in 1692, and Tennessee in 1892, where Sabbath-keeping farmers were jailed and marched in a chain gang for quietly working on Sunday. As B. O. Flower wrote, “A nation can sometimes afford to err on the side of mercy, but no nation can afford to be unjust to her lowliest citizen.”

Individual conscience is precious and should be protected at all cost. A state church or state-sponsored religion is incompatible with religious liberty. The two cannot exist simultaneously.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Patsy Arrabito

From: Jose Bosque <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Commission Report - Jose Bosque

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:45:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with the findings of the committee. Our Constitution guarantees, in the most explicit terms, the inviolability of conscience: "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States." "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

From: Anne Bloomenthal <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 11 - Anne Bloomenthal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:46:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on this draft report.

As a Jew, I am well aware that my people have suffered from religious discrimination for centuries. Religious liberty was one of the reasons that my ancestors came to the United States. But this is not a valid reason for singling out antisemitism in a document on religious liberty, as is done in Chapter 11 of this report.

There has been religious discrimination against people of a myriad of faiths - and of no faith - since long before the founding of the United States. Even though one of the founding principles of the US is religious liberty, we know all too well that religious discrimination, against Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, various Christian denominations, and others, persists to this day. Thus, the existence of a chapter devoted exclusively to the subject of antisemitism is, itself, a form of religious discrimination against practitioners of other faiths who have been persecuted for their faith (or even appearance of faith, such as turban-wearing Sikhs).

One only has to look at the news to know that Islamophobic incidents have also been pervasive in recent years (in addition to antisemitic ones). I haven't been able to find explicit statistics, but I found a report from VOA about 2023 that said:

"The number of reported antisemitic incidents in the U.S. increased by 388% in the four weeks after October 7, according to the Anti-Defamation League, or ADL, while the number of Islamophobic incidents in the U.S. increased 216% during the same timeframe, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR."

<https://www.voanews.com/a/antisemitism-islamophobia-surge-in-2023-watchdogs-say/7407451.html>

If, as it appears from the draft report, commission hearings were focused exclusively on antisemitism, to the exclusion of all other religious discrimination, then additional hearings should be held to present a full picture of the current state of religious discrimination in the US, and the report updated to include this additional perspective, as background for how to combat it.

It's also important that any examination of religious discrimination must clearly adhere to the principle that criticism of the actions of political entities (e.g. governments of Israel, Muslim countries, or other countries strongly associated with a particular religion) is protected speech, and must not be conflated with abuse of practitioners of the related religious.

Please reframe the discussion of antisemitism into a broader look at all types of religious discrimination and intolerance in the US, and then help us understand how to combat that.

Thank you,
Anne Bloomenthal
Lawrenceville, NJ [REDACTED] PII

From: Millie Algarin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of State and Church

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:46:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

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I am a Christian and I am aware of what the government wants to do regarding the clause in the First Amendment which prohibits the government from establishing a national religion or interfering with religious practices.

Our forefathers worked endlessly and diligently to put together our Constitution which was meant to protect the rights of "The People"

They were intelligent individuals who understood what could happen to a persons rights if not stated in the Constitution. The separation of church and state is essential in allowing us to worship freely. Not having the government telling us what faith or day we worship.

We have seen what happens to religious institutions when the government gets involved.

This country was founded by pilgrims seeking freedom of religion. Without them seeking this freedom would we be the USA of today? A country that opened the gateway to many immigrates seeking some sort of freedom.

Our country has changed immensely, and in many ways not for the good; but it is still the country that we love.

From: Anne Bloomenthal <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 2 - Anne Bloomenthal

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:46:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on this draft report.

Much of the purported "history" in Chapter 2 is distorted, but I am not a historian, so I will leave it to the historians to offer comments on those details. But as a lay person, it is quite clear that the inaccurate history ends up derailing the whole chapter, because the conclusion that it reaches is quite the opposite of the constitutional basis for religious liberty.

Of course, the definitive definition of the place of religion with respect to our federal government is in the first amendment to The United States Constitution (1789) reading:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

But by the time Chapter 2 reaches its final section, it has turned the constitution on its head, to say "Where We Are Now: **Building Bridges Between Church and State.**" Clearly, any **bridges** between church and state are the antithesis of "no law respecting an establishment of religion." The intervening history is really immaterial. The examination of terminology about a "wall" is also immaterial. A "bridge" is clearly what is excluded by the first amendment.

The remainder of this report is built from this invalid conclusion reached in Chapter 2, and thus none of it satisfies the requirements of the first amendment to the constitution.

Please correct the erroneous conclusion of Chapter 2, about "bridges," and reorient all subsequent parts of the report that promote government involvement in support of specific religious beliefs and practices, such as forming partnerships with faith-based institutions, and acting in support of laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80).

Thank you,
Anne Bloomenthal
Lawrenceville, NJ

[REDACTED] PII

From: Linda Carney <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep church separate from state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:47:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Please maintain the wall of separation between church and state.

The 1st Amendment explains the separation that the Constitution implies.

The Constitution does not mention religious freedom but the Constitution implies it.

The Commission's report seems biased about the balance between religious liberty and government involvement.

The first amendment guarantees us the right to freedom of conscience.

Please consider my dissent before pursuing removal the phrase “separation between church an State”.

Sincerely,
Linda Carney MD from Arkansas

From: Sara <[REDACTED] PII >
To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >
Cc: Father Mike Schmitz <[REDACTED] PII >, [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >, [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >, [REDACTED] PII <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty in Healthcare - Sara Pedro

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:49:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

Catholics do not inherently possess superior intellect to others. But sin darkens the intellect. So we believe that when someone does not have access to the sacraments and is not living a devout Catholic life - their sin decreases their cognitive function. History reveals this.

One of the most important things not mentioned in this report is that one of the worst forms of religious discrimination occurs when a Catholic is competent and others who are incompetent are exposed and/or threatened by the competence and skills of the Catholic.

For example, I filed a religious discrimination lawsuit against Duke University Hospital. During my employment there, I had a patient who came in with a broken jaw after being assaulted with a brick to his face. He was put up for discharge but I raised concern to the attending physician. They re-read his x-rays and discovered he did, in fact, have a broken jaw and he was taken to surgery.

I have struggled with an overwhelming amount of religious discrimination for being Catholic.

The most common form of discrimination occurs because I am competent and although I never try to make anyone else look less than - my competence from being Catholic naturally exposes the incompetence of non-Catholics.

This needs to be recognized and understood.

Sincerely, Sara Pedro

From: Annette Fales <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My thoughts on the religious liberty commission's report 2026

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:50:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

These are my thoughts on the religious liberty commission's report:

- * 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.

Thank you for time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Annette L Fales

[REDACTED]
PII

DII

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: First Name <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:51:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen and a person of faith, I am deeply troubled by the Commission's proposal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge" between the two. The First Amendment's Establishment clause dictates that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion". It is very clear we need to continue to uphold to this. There should be no need to reinterpret, modify or change that which we have upheld for the past 250 years. If any changes, modifications, or reinterpretations are made, we will be treading down a path of tyranny and not of freedom.

This wall was built by believers to keep the church free, not by secularists to restrict religion. A bridge opens the door for government funding and political influence, forcing churches to compete for grants and answer to politicians instead of to God. History demonstrates that the blending of church and state is detrimental to both and will result in our liberties being stripped away. This is why it is of utmost importance not to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

In addition, not a single point of the 12 points should be put into action. We, as the public, are not being informed of the details and were not included in the initial stages of these meetings.

The public requires ample time, information, and discussion to understand what is being proposed.

I urge you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken this separation and not move forward on any single point — specifically, using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. When churches engage in partisan politics or accept government funding, they inherit political corruption. Separation protects faith, which is precisely why religion has remained strong in our country.

Please maintain the separation of church and state and do not repeal the Johnson Amendment - that's how we keep both free.

Respectfully,

Daniel Barragan

From: QUINTERO2007 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation church state

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:53:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep church and state separately in our country, the history shows that that is not a good equation, the results are contrary to what this country is founded under
Thanks

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Alanna Rodriguez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:53:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States, Alanna Rodriguez. 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!

From: Engel Yoder <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Your Draft Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:54:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

It appears that the Commission is rejecting the golden principle [in the United States] of the separation of church and state. If this principle is formally rejected it will spell the doom of religious freedom in our country. What a disaster! Please, do not go in this direction as it will surely have precisely the opposite effect from what you intend. The Commission may have good intentions, but it is actually opening the floodgates to the persecution of religious minorities. What a disaster that the nation that thrived largely because of its religious-freedom principle will repudiate the very principle that in large part made it great! By doing so, the American experiment in government by and for the people will be proven to have failed, and history will show that the Commission will have marked a critical turning point in the failure.

Engel Yoder
Marquette, KS

From: Krinstin Joe <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:55:04 -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,

Dr. Krinstin Joe, Pharm.D. of South Dakota

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Gladys Bazemore <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 22:57:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the chairman and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully disagree with the conclusion that there is no separation between church and state.

History reveals the results of such a plan over and over. It always leads to oppression, persecution, and destruction of Liberty rather than promoting freedom.

Please do all you can to preserve this wall of separation between church and state. In matters of conscience the state has no right to compel the individual choice before God.

We must all have the freedom to study God's Word for ourselves to answer the question, What does God require of me of how and when to worship Him?

We honor our country, but we must worship our God according to our own convictions.

Sincerely,

Gladys Joy Bazemore

From: Michael Belnavis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Religious Liberty Commission's Report

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:00:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I would like to share an insert of our stance on The Separation of Church and State

Religious Liberty Department

This branch of our work was first organized in the year 1888 as the National Religious Liberty Association. It became the Religious Liberty Department of the General Conference when the various departments within our denomination were organized in 1901. The occasion for the original formation of a Religious Liberty Association was the introduction into Congress in 1888 of the famous Blair Sunday Bill. A hearing was given on the merits of this bill, and Sunday law advocates occupied practically all the time. A Seventh Day Baptist minister was granted a few minutes, but he weakened his cause

by admitting the right of Congress to legislate on the subject, and asked only an exemption in favor of observers of the seventh day as the Sabbath.

At this point Seventh-day Adventists asked for a hearing and were granted some time. A. T. Jones spoke, making it very clear that Adventists were not seeking an exemption clause, and that they would oppose the bill just as readily with such a clause as without it, because they regarded the whole principle of legislation in behalf of a religious institution as fundamentally wrong. Thus, for the first time Seventh-day Adventists were brought into prominence as advocates of religious liberty.

About the same time that the foregoing Sunday bill was introduced, an amendment to the Constitution of the United States was proposed which would place the name of Jesus Christ in the Constitution, and would declare that the laws and usages of Christianity must be a part of the fundamental law of the land.

The National Religious Liberty Association opposed this measure on the ground that such an amendment would be clearly a union of religion and government.

Our Religious Liberty Department has one object and one only ; namely, the preservation to every man, regardless of his creed, of those inalienable rights with which mankind has been endowed by the Creator.

Civil power may properly enact laws regulating the relationship of man to his fellow man, but it has no right to pass measures which have to do with man's relationship to God or to religion.

Years before the organization of the Religious Liberty Association, Adventists had taken the position, based upon the prophecy of Revelation 13:11-17, that there would arise in the United States a hierarchy similar to the Papacy of the Middle Ages, which would use the civil power of the government to accomplish its own ends. As evidences of the working of just such a power began to be seen, it

The Blair Sunday Bill was the first to be introduced into Congress, but since that time almost every session of Congress has witnessed the introduction of proposed Sunday legislation.

This national issue, as well as legislation in many States and cities, has been consistently opposed by our Religious Liberty Department. The enforcement of religious legislation, whether the revision of the old colonial blue laws or the passing of new legislation in some States, has led to real religious persecution. The prosecutions were so severe in one State that even the sympathy of the State legislature was awakened in favor of the persecuted, so that an exemption clause was enacted, granting religious liberty to those who observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. In some places, however, where such an exemption clause has not existed, Sabbathkeepers have been torn from their families and forced to work in the chain gang with criminals, all because they chose to "obey God rather than men."

Aside from defending the cause of religious liberty, it has been the constant aim of the Religious Liberty Department to educate the general public in principles of justice."

"The Great Advent Movement 108-110.

Sent from my iPhone

From: String Bean <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Coment re: uniting Church and State will usher in the end of U.S.

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:02:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of Church and State is clearly indicated in the 1st Ammendment's "Establisment Clause"n Removing the infered wall of separation of Church and State and replacing it with misconstrued United paradigm will bring desolation from God as it apes the Church of Rome that brought the world the destruction of millions of church designated heretics throughout the Dark ages. Revelation 13's Lamb like beast which I believe to be the U. S. MAKES an image of the dark ages church state paradigm by creating legal structures that establish the institution of Rome being the establishment of 1st day, Sunday worship, instead of Creation and 10 Commandments 7th Day Sabbath. Rome declares her attempted change of God's 7th Day Sabbath to the first day, to be her Mark of authority because most of her Protestant daughter church's adhere to. Revelation 13:11-17.

Revelation 14:6-12 describes the destiny of those who receive the Mark of the Beast/Rome's Day of the Sun, in contrast to those who remain faithful in vs.12 Here is the Patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. James 2 declares that the 10 commandments are both the Royal Law of God as well as The Law of Liberty. He further states that to break one is to break all, and finally it is the standard that each will be judged by God in the final Judgment.

The attempted change of the Commandment was prophecied by Daniel in Daniel 7:25 several hundred of years in advance of Romes attempt that fully struck out the 2nd commandment regarding idol worship, moving the 4th place 7th Day Sabbath Commandment into the 3rd place commandments. Then realizing their attempted altering of the Law of Liberty resulted in only 9 commandments, Rome split the 10th commandment regarding covetousness into two anti coveting commands. Thus their sleight of hand preserved the number, preserved image worship in the Roman paradigm that was clearly forbidden directly from the Lord.

So who should we honor? A Churc-State decreed counterfiet 1st day Sun worship thousands of years old, or the words of Command written by the finger of God of enduring tables of Stone reaffirming the 7th day Holy from Creation onward? The choice must be personal and not coerced. This is why church and state can not succeed but to ruin the greatest nation build heavily on freedom and liberty of conscience.

In conclusion if you choose church and state union, it will lead to establishing the persecuting dark ages character under protestant-state union. The legislation will sift the faithful from the unfaithful by causing the later to receive the Mark of the beast and the undiluted plagues that hamper their attempt to exterminate God's true faithful. Much like the plagues hindered Pharaoh at the Exodus, except this time the plagues end with the sky rescue of the 2nd Coming! 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Rev 1:7, etc and the destruction of the unfaithful Psalms 50:3-6; Matt 24:20-31; Rev. 6:14-17; Revelation 19:11-21.

Fortunately a 4th angel in Revelation 18:4 is instructed to call the faithful out of the confusion of church state corruption and stand with the faithful and avoid the awful scourge of undiluted plagues falling upon tha adulterous church and state crowd that attempt to wipe God's true Commandment keepers via grace and the New Covenant off the realm of the living.

I pray that the commission heed the Law as written by God and not man; and not cause the church betrothed to the Saviour to fornication of union with the state. See Rev 17.

Uniting of church and state can only lead to ruin as it historically has! Check out the Decree Of Nantes...lasted 100 years and made the nation prosperous. If the course the committee remains set to call the establishment clause a lie, prepare for national ruin via natural disasters, economic collapse, because God stops intervention and allows Satan to turn the globe into Rev 19 gory supper for the carrion eaters.

May God Bless the USA with wisdom from His Word and Spirit, that more souls may be won before the Coerced crisis of the Mark of the Beast vs the Commandment keepers and those that follow the unadulterated faith of Jesus.

Your's truly,

From: Elsy Niebles <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:02:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a Christian, and citizen of the United States of America, I am asking you to reconsider the decision to remove the boundaries protecting my right, as well as the right of all human beings to decide who, when, and where to worship. Religious liberty is what our forefathers fought to provide this nation. We must do all we can to preserve the Constitution they brought forth.

Jesus gave us the free will to choose whom we will serve. He never forced himself on his creation. He healed, forgave, blessed, and served everyone while He was on earth. As a follower of Christ, I wish all would come to accept Jesus and be saved. But that is a personal decision. I know that God judges the heart. Many who might not have had the opportunity to learn about Him will be saved because they lived the light they had.

Let's continue to spread the good news and let the Holy Spirit do His work in the hearts of people.

Thank you for your time.

Blessings,

Elsy Niebles

From: Reiner Kremer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Alice Kremer

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:03:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for receiving comments from the public on the draft report. I write to ask the Commission to uphold the separation of church and state — the arrangement that has kept faith in America both free and strong. Please keep the business of religion out of the government business. **We are not a theocracy. My reasons are these:**

Separation was the founders' deliberate design, urged on them by the churches themselves. Madison told the Virginia ratifying convention: "There is not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it would be a most flagrant usurpation." I ask the Commission to honor that design, not explain it away.

The founding generation's own Congress already examined this question. The reports of Richard M. Johnson's committees, adopted in 1829 and 1830, declared: "It is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false. Our government is a civil and not a religious institution." I ask the Commission to align its report with that precedent.

Force can make hypocrites, never Christians — and state sponsorship corrupts the faith it favors. President Grant said it plainly in 1875: "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the State and Church forever separate."

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together.

Respectfully,
Alice Kremer
Franktown, CO

From: Shawn D'Abreu <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 2: Religious Liberty and the American Story – Shawn D'Abreu

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:04:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

"When a religion is good, I conceive 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 help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."- Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to Richard Price. October 9, 1790.

Separation of church and state is a Christian idea which has proved it's success over the 250 years of our nation's history. Otherwise the United States would not be the most religiously diverse country in the world.

The sectarianism promoted in this report threatens the success and diversity of the American Experiment by interjecting incomplete storytelling and flawed analysis into our national narratives no different than Lost Cause myth-making.

The omissions within the report are glaring.

For example the report's second mention of James Madison reads,

"When Virginia drafted its first constitution, called the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776,^L Madison, then just 25^L years old, came forward and tirelessly advocated for the fullest religious liberty protections for his fellow Virginians.⁶² The result was language very similar to that which would become the First Amendment of^L the U.S. Constitution, drafted eleven^L years later and adopted thirteen years later."

The religious liberty which Madison advocated for in Virginia included non-establishment of religion and separation of church and state. Even though these protections of liberty of conscience insures that the vast majority of people in this country are never and have never been harassed, sanctioned, or prosecuted for their beliefs or non-belief, the report is filled with an undercurrent of grievance which is bitter but without basis or reason.

Elsewhere the report blames separation of church and state on "secular" people who don't believe in God. But Madison served as a deacon in his church. While it is true that the first amendment largely reflects the Virginia Declaration the report's survey of history makes no mention that Madison and Jefferson steadfastly worked to prevent the kind of religious license advocated for in this report.

The report mentions the Virginia Declaration but not the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* which is a basis for the First Amendment to the Bill Rights.

There is no mention of *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, no mention of the lineage of the idea of non-establishment through the experiences and advocacy William Penn and Roger Williams. These were the spiritual and intellectual forebears of non-establishment not "God is dead" philosophers.

There is also silence regarding the "no religious tests" clause in the Constitution. Why would a prohibition against privileging Christians in elected office be included if the original intention was for the United States to form a Christian nation?

The relationship between church and state has always been "rightly ordered" so long as we adhere to the principles of the Constitution and to Jesus' declaration that "My kingdom is not of this world."

The power of the gospel does not come via legislation or tax support by governments. This report is validating the notion that the Holy Spirit can be replaced with state power, that our hope can be built on something less.

Non-establishment works in tandem with "free exercise" so the church can operate in a public square free of government intrusion *and* politically connected sectarianism. Since the gospel is spread via persuasion not state favoritism or coercion, an unencumbered public square where there is also freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, and the right to petition the government is the best environment for Christian ministry and witness.

Religious liberty does not mean that magisterial denominations or sects repining for the political power to funnel state funds into their treasuries and to punish dissent from their dogmas should be allowed to bend the Constitution and our civic institutions to their will.

Religious liberty and religious freedom insures that churches and other religious communities don't have to engage in political competition to safeguard the liberty of conscience of their members.

"No state aid" to any religion, a principle explicitly incorporated in many U.S. state constitutions, is not persecution of denominations which insist on state aid. Where there is no entrenched political advantage *for* any group there is no targeted disadvantage *of* any group. The public square is where the contests of ideas to win hearts and minds should be won or lost. This report recommends allowing certain religions to rewrite the rules and rig the contest in their favor.

When there is disagreement or conflict, churches can be heard like any other institution in the courts which, in our system, should be neutral toward religion. These religious groups have the same rights but not exclusive access and a license for impunity.

This report is attempting to sacralize political grasping for power by sectarian interests under the guise of victim-hood and persecution. The report engages in dissemination and sly omission which fails to reach the Biblical standard of honesty and integrity.

These attacks on separation of religion and state for political advantage will result in long term damage to our democratic republic and to religious institutions. You are attempting to hand power over to influences that will use the United States to do to the world what magisterial churches did to Europe for more than a thousand years.

Let the churches, already in a privileged position, be satisfied and let God make up the difference. If these entities really trust in God then it is no hard thing for Him to fund their ministries, build their institutions, and convince people by a godly example and the truth "as it is in Jesus" to repent and be baptized.

If they can't do this, then Franklin has accurately described their condition and we should not subsidize their inadequacy and lack of faith. True religion does not need state power favoritism it to be successful.

Abandon this effort to destroy the foundations of our republic by repudiating the principles which have made us strong and successful as a nation. Those promoting combining church and state have the

lost argument; they lost at the Founding, they lost in the Constitution, they lost in the Civil War, they lost in the courts, they lost in state legislatures over and over again.

The rehashing and rewriting of history this report engages in illustrates Franklin's picture of bad religion all too well.

It is impossible to maintain free exercise of religion "for all" without limits on the political power of religious institutions to *establish* their dogmas via public policy, budget appropriation, and legislation. Any religion or coalition of religions striving for power to control the purse and the sword will soon attempt to control consciences and bodies as well.

Establishment of religion, which this report is endorsing, has always resulted in corruption, incompetence, hypocrisy, and persecution. Leaving our liberties and freedoms intact is the surest path to national revival. Degrading them is the surest path to national ruin.

Choose wisely.

Grace to you,
Shawn D'Abreu

From: raulrihistory <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – RELIGIOUS LIBERTY - REBECCA ULLRICH

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:05:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a historian and I submit the following comment on the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report.

While the report correctly asserts the importance of religious liberty within the culture and communities of the United States, it assumes a dominant Christian faith that should appear in government-funded activities and institutions.

The founders were quite clear that religious tolerance - and tolerance of religious diversity - were critical to the new republic. The United States has seen a variety of debate and consideration of the complexity of what religious liberty looks like in a free society. these discussions and arguments have repeatedly landed on the notion (verified by the Supreme Court repeatedly) that maintains the central principal that the government (federal or state) should not privilege or favor one set of religious beliefs or practices over another.

This means that the government, while allowing religious expression both public and private for all faiths, does not directly fund, support, or display the religious artifacts, tenets, doctrines, or beliefs of any particular faith. Children may pray in public schools (indeed, many probably due, especially on test days), but the public school may not direct prayer or inculcate prayers or religious views in the students it teaches.

Please move away from this notion of have the government (federal or state) press for or advocate religious expression. Please move away from the urge to use taxpayer dollars (provided by taxpayers of all faiths) to support particular religions and their expressions. Let the citizens practice and celebrate the faiths of their choosing. Do not impose any faith's views upon them.

Thank you for your time,
Rebecca Ullrich

From: Kyle Henry <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Chapter 2 – Where We Are Now: Building Bridges
Between Church and State

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:05:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

As much as the visualization of a "wall" between church and state may be perceived by the honorable Religious Liberty Commission as implying the mutual opposition between the church and the state, building bridges is not the best way to proceed. Influence on the two from each other is a given, but there must still be a pronounced separation between church and state. The Dark Ages was characterized partially by [Roman] church control over the state, and it led to the persecution of many. Conversely, the state that was the Soviet Union took over and suppressed the church, removing it from many citizens' lives in Russia. America's forefathers came from the former situation to establish a place where people would be free to practice their own religion and not have any religion imposed on them, which was secured by the First Amendment, which you very well know. The English approved translation of the Treaty of Tripoli says this: "[t]he Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." Let the observant travel through to both sides, but if you want a real comparison, consider a wall with doors and many watchmen on the top, ready to call out who will immigrate to the other with foreboding intentions.

From: Brett McAllister <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom is Paramount

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:06:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I applaud the commissions work on its final report to the President (Trump) to bring to the forefront a clearer understanding of the language of separation of church and state and its meaning for USA citizens and The Department of Justice. The important principles of religious freedom rights for individual believers, as well as faith based organizations, must always be an unrestricted choice in our great land

Sincerely,

Brett McAllister

From:JB T <[REDACTED] PII >

To:"[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sun, 12 Jul 2026 23:06:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar Of Freedoms response. We need to keep church and state separate. This is what our founding fathers fought and died for.

God bless

Jadran Turina