

From: Ellen Jensen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of state and religion

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:19:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good morning.

A friend shared with me that the Religious Liberty Commission report that is getting ready to submit a report regarding religious liberty. I want to register an opinion defending this critically important constitutional principle.

When Thomas Jefferson first invoked the phrase, he explained why it was important:

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

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

I value our religious freedom in the USA.

Ellen Jensen

From: Nadia Benega <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] TO THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:24:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

"Protecting freedom of conscience is a duty of the State and the limit of its authority in matters of religion"

"Congress shall make no laws to establish a religion, or to interfere the free exercise thereof."

My request is that this freedom of
worship be guaranteed.

Thank you very much for listening to and
respecting my freedom of expression.

May God bless our leaders and grant
them wisdom.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty concern

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:25:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do everything possible to preserve liberty of conscience in the US. I understand the delicacy needed to preserve the freedom of religion guaranteed in the First Amendment while one notable faith community espouses "death to the infidel" as part of their belief system, and defines an infidel as anyone not part of their faith community, such as agnostics, atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and Jews. This list is not at all exhaustive!

Perhaps the precedent set when freedom of speech was limited to exclude one's freedom to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theater would be helpful. Any belief system that would threaten other belief systems could and should be limited. We systematically limit the liberty of those who commit violent crimes by incarcerating them. Freedoms are not absolute.

I will certainly be praying that the various government bodies will find a way to preserve our constitutional rights, including the amendments.

Thank you for reading and considering this email.

Carolyn Petty

[REDACTED PII]

From: RRR 80 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:28:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm Writing

To let members of the RLC know that I am not In favor of the government Of the united states of america Trying to dictate, legislate, or in any way coerce citizens of This great country To Have religious beliefs Dictated by government officials. The reason we have separation church in state is Soviet. Every individual can the side How to worship God in there own way. Any time any of the world's governments have forced any particular religion on any group of people's. The outcome speaks for itself. True religion and choices of how to serve God Can only Be successful When you have total freedom to choose. Anyone who has been forced to Adhere to someone else's beliefs will only be believing Out of fear of the outcome of not believing. We May as well be a communist country If we are going to try to dictate every little aspect of someone's life.

Including the ability to believe in God. I am requesting that the government deal with The Governmental portion of running our great country in a chaotic world, And allowing the freedoms which we all enjoy.

Like what religion Which is to follow. What state we want to live in what food we want to buy. These are all things that we enjoy here in america. Many countries do not have that freedom. I am asking that no laws pertaining to the freedom of church and state Be Abolished or amended in any way . Thank you for considering this matter Prayerfully. It is no accident that this country was founded and one of the base pillars was the freedom of religion.

To try to change the pillars on which our great country was founded

Would be a Travesty. As The pillars Of freedom On which a country on stands Are eroded away That country will begin to Crumble. Please do not vote in anyway Two take away the religious freedoms that we enjoy in this country As you start to take them away, just look at some countries. You can't own a Bible the witch made. You can't read and think for yourself. And there are deaf penalties in some countries. They did not start out with a death penalty.

They just slowly Change the laws about religious tolerance in their country and eventually it led to horrible atrocities.

Just look at what happened to jews during world war two . Anyway thank you for not changing our Religious liberty laws

.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Religion

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:28:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Leaders,

Please note that it would be the height of folly to have any government body try to control or dictate the worship between anyone and his God!

Historically that was what was a key factor in the "dark ages" and our nation does not need to sidle toward that path!

Regards,
Milton

From: Yuki Lewis <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Johnson Amendment

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:29:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not repeal the Johnson Amendment.

A separation of church and state needs to remain.

Yuki Lewis

cid:image001.png@01D

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

or

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

"A man shows true wisdom by using the talent of speech to produce music in the souls of those who are trying to do their appointed work and who are in need of encouragement." Ellen G. White

From: Shemeka <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:31:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm sending this correspondence to ask that you please reconsider the direction that you're going regarding the separation of church and state.

History has shown that when church and state unite, freedom of religious expression becomes more difficult if not nearly impossible for those who are not adherents of the state sponsored religion.

Please keep church and state separate for the good of all constituents. Its not a secular idea. Its necessary to protect religious freedom for all.

Shemeka Bruton,
Pearce, Arizona

From: Elvy Rolle <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Elvy Rolle

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:32:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who believes, with all my heart, that Jesus, the Creator who is all wise, gave every human being the freedom of choice. We would be wise to accept and abide by that gift rather than legislate around it. That conviction is not a modern political preference; it comes from Christ's own words. When he instructed his followers to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God, he divided all human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government enforces what we owe one another; it has no authority over what we owe God. The state's only proper question about any act is whether it injures a neighbor, never whether it is pious or impious. A commission asked to consider prayers, texts, or religious instruction sponsored by government should recognize that this crosses a line Christ himself drew, not one invented by secularists.

I ask you also to consider where rights come from. If a right exists only because a majority permits it, it is not a right at all but a favor that can be withdrawn by the next vote. The American promise is that rights are inherent, given by the Creator, and placed beyond the reach of election returns. Popular governments are instituted precisely to protect the minority, since the majority can already protect itself at the ballot box. Wide public support for a religious observance or display is not evidence that government may adopt it; it is evidence only that the minority conscience most needs protecting just then.

History and plain experience show that coercion cannot produce faith. A law can move a body into a pew; it cannot move love into a heart, and religious duty without love is not virtue but performance. Worse, when the state props up a faith, that faith is corrupted by it, drawing converts of convenience and trading spiritual power for political favor. Fifteen centuries of established Christianity left, in Madison's accounting, pride and indolence among clergy and superstition among laity. A church worth belonging to should not need Caesar's help to survive.

Finally, I ask you to weigh how these things begin. The first Sunday law, uniting an ambitious emperor with ambitious clergy, seemed modest at its start; it ended in the Inquisition and a government that had lost even the power to keep civil peace, having chosen sides in religion. As one writer 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 before you proposes persecution. No one ever does, at the first step.

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

Respectfully,
Elvy Rolle

From: Nepthali Gozo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- part 2

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:33:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious liberty commission,

I am writing to address a growing concern regarding recent rhetoric claiming that there is no separation of church and state. From my understanding, even though the text of the First Amendment does not explicitly use those exact words, the fundamental principle it encompasses undergirds the entire amendment. The primary purpose of the First Amendment is to protect citizens from any individual or organization infringing upon the right to religious liberty. It is our God-given free will and our inalienable right to worship whomever we choose, or to not worship at all.

To ground this in context, the First Amendment states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Through this principle, it is clear that the people have the right to practice faith without government intervention. If you define religion, it is a commitment or devotion to God—a personal relationship between God and humanity. Therefore, no outside entity should or can interfere with that bond. This aligns with the words of Jesus: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." If this country was indeed founded on Christian principles, then we ought to uphold these very words of Jesus, which clearly articulate a separation between church and state, implying that the two cannot be entangled.

I appeal to those reading this by reminding them that, with all due respect, we all possess the freedom of conscience. Without it, we are merely robots. That freedom is truly what makes this country great.

Respectfully,

Nepthali Gozo Jr.

From: Trey Dellinger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commission Report, Appendix B-AFA Action

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:33:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: AFA_Action_Comment_(signed_71026)_re_RLC_draft_report.pdf;
AFA_Action_Comment_(signed_7-10-26)_re_RLC_draft_report.docx

Inline-Images: image001.png

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Please find attached the public comment of AFA Action, the government affairs affiliate of the American Family Association, in support of the Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report. Herein we thank the President, Commission Members, Advisory Board, and Staff for their work producing this excellent report, and recommend some additions to Appendix B. Further details are in the attached report, which I have attached in both PDF and Microsoft Word formats for your convenience.

Thanks again for your work on this report.



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July 10, 2026

Via email to: [REDACTED] PII

Re: PUBLIC COMMENT – RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT, APPENDIX B, “12 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FOR ALL AMERICANS” AT P. 200 AND “LAW AND POLICY” SUBSECTION “LITIGATION” AT P. 211 – AFA ACTION

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

COMMENT SUMMARY

AFA Action writes to extend its heartfelt appreciation to President Trump, Chairman Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, Vice Chairman Dr. Ben Carson, Commissioners, Advisory Board members, and staff for their countless hours of tireless work in preparing the draft report. Moreover, we recommend herein specific additions to Appendix B, “12 Key Recommendations to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans” at p. 200. Specifically, we urge strengthening the Commission’s draft recommendation that the Department of Justice issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause. Further, we recommend additions to Appendix B, “Law and Policy” subsection “Litigation” at p. 211, asking the Department of Justice to support litigation to overturn certain anti-originalist precedents.

DETAILED COMMENT

By establishing the Religious Liberty Commission (“the Commission”), President Trump has demonstrated genuine vision. The Commission presents a generational opportunity to secure Americans’ First Freedom and to end decades-long governmental hostility to religion in the public square.

We further thank the President and the Commission for generously inviting public comment, for as the Lord’s word instructs, “in an abundance of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14.

At AFA Action, we work with state and local lawmakers across the country who share the President’s and the Commission’s goal of securing religious liberty and restoring religious faith to its rightful place in our public life. Through that work, we have repeatedly found that the primary obstacle to the realization of that goal is leftist weaponization of the Establishment Clause. In public schools and town halls across the nation, uncertainty regarding the proper scope of the

Establishment Clause and fear of lawsuits from anti-Christian activists has made the public square practically a religion-free zone. This atmosphere of fear is heightened by a bewildering body of Establishment Clause precedent. Originalist Supreme Court justices have “bemoaned [this] strange Establishment Clause geometry of crooked lines and wavering shapes[.]”¹ and have acknowledged that “our Establishment Clause jurisprudence is in hopeless disarray.”² This “jurisprudential confusion has led to results that can only be described as silly[.]” such as holding on the one hand that the Establishment Clause forbids a creche on public property, yet on the other hand permits an “an 18-foot Chanukah menorah placed near a 45-foot Christmas tree[.]”³ The Supreme Court has begun to right this wrong by abrogating the “*Lemon*” test, but much work remains to clear away the remnants of *Lemon* and restore an originalist Establishment Clause jurisprudence.

To this end, the Draft Commission Report recommends that the President “Instruct the Department of Justice to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state.” Draft Commission Report at 200.

This recommendation would be strengthened by specifying, as both Justices Thomas and Gorsuch have opined, that an originalist understanding of the Establishment Clause would require disincorporating the Establishment Clause. Alternatively, if the Establishment Clause continues to be applied against the states in contravention of its plain text and history, it should be understood as prohibiting only state coercion of religious orthodoxy and of financial support by force of law and threat of penalty as exemplified by the founding-era state establishments. Thus, we suggest the following two amendments to the text of the Draft Commission Report (original content of draft report shown in italics):

First, recommendation 1 on page 200 of the Draft Commission Report should be revised to read as follows, including the footnoted citations:

Instruct the Department of Justice to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause. The Establishment Clause’s text and history show that it was originally understood to prevent a federal religious establishment and to protect state religious establishments⁴ from federal interference, not to require separation of church and state in the contemporary

¹*Lamb’s Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School Dist.*, 508 U.S. 384, 398–401 (1993) (Scalia, J., concurring in judgment).

² *Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of Univ. of Va.*, 515 U.S. 819, 861 (1995) (Thomas, J., concurring).

³ *County of Allegheny v. American Civil Liberties Union, Greater Pittsburgh Chapter*, 492 U.S. 573 (1989).

⁴ “At least six States had established churches in 1789.” *Town of Greece, N.Y. v. Galloway*, 572 U.S. 565, 605 (2014) (Thomas, J., concurring).

sense.⁵ The Establishment Clause, like the Tenth Amendment, was a reservation of state power, not a restriction upon it.⁶ Thus, it did not create an individual right that could logically be “incorporated” through the Fourteenth Amendment to prohibit a state religious establishment.⁷ Any contrary interpretation lacks textual and historical support and would turn the original understanding of the Establishment Clause on its head.⁸

Alternatively, if contrary to its plain text and history, federal courts continue to apply the Establishment Clause to the states, that clause, properly understood, prohibits only state “coercion of religious orthodoxy and of financial support by

⁵ *Espinoza v. Montana Dep’t of Revenue*, 591 U.S. 464, 490–491 (2020) (Thomas, Gorsuch, JJ., concurring and demonstrating that the original meaning of the Establishment Clause was to prohibit Congress from interfering with state religious establishments; that the nature of this protection for the states “resisted” incorporation against them as it was not an individual right like the Free Exercise Clause; and that there is a lack of persuasive evidence that the 14th amendment was intended to “incorporate” this prohibition against the states.) (citing V. Muñoz, *The Original Meaning of the Establishment Clause and the Impossibility of Its Incorporation*, 8 U. Pa. J. Const. L. 585, 632 (2006)). See also *Town of Greece*, 572 U.S. at 604–607 (2014) (Thomas, J., concurring in part and concurring in judgment); *Elk Grove Unified School Dist. v. Newdow*, 542 U.S. 1, 49–51 (2004) (Thomas, J., opinion concurring in judgment); *Van Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677, 692–693 (2005) (Thomas, J., concurring opinion); *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 536 U.S. 639 (2002) (same); *Am. Legion v. Am. Humanist Ass’n*, 588 U.S. 29, 74 (2019) (same).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.* As Justice Thomas has cogently stated, when the Supreme Court in *Everson* casually opined that the 14th Amendment incorporated the Establishment Clause against the states, it did so with no precedential support:

This Court has never squarely addressed these barriers to the incorporation of the Establishment Clause. When the issue was first presented in *Everson v. Board of Ed. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1, 67 S.Ct. 504, 91 L.Ed. 711 (1947), the Court casually asserted that “the Fourteenth Amendment [has been] interpreted to make the prohibitions of the First applicable to state action abridging religious freedom. There is every reason to give the same application and broad interpretation to the ‘establishment of religion’ clause.” *Id.*, at 15, 67 S.Ct. 504 (footnote omitted). The cases the Court cited in support of that proposition involved the Free Exercise Clause—which had been incorporated seven years earlier, in *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296, 303, 60 S.Ct. 900, 84 L.Ed. 1213 (1940)—not the Establishment Clause. 330 U.S., at 15, n. 22, 67 S.Ct. 504 (collecting cases). Thus, in the space of a single paragraph and a nonresponsive string citation, the *Everson* Court glibly effected a sea change in constitutional law. The Court’s inattention to these doctrinal questions might be explained, although not excused, by the rise of popular conceptions about “separation of church and state” as an “American” constitutional right. See generally P. Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* 454–463 (2002); see also *id.*, at 391–454 (discussing the role of nativist sentiment in the campaign for “separation” as an American ideal).

Town of Greece, N.Y. v. Galloway, 572 U.S. 565, 607, 134 S. Ct. 1811, 1837, 188 L. Ed. 2d 835 (2014).

force of law and threat of penalty”⁹ as exemplified by the founding-era state establishments.¹⁰

Second, a third numbered recommendation under the heading “Litigation” at page 211 of the Draft Commission Report should ask the Department of Justice to support litigation challenging:

3. the constitutionality of legal precedents that violate an originalist understanding of the Establishment Clause, such as *Everson v. Board of Ed. of Ewing*,¹¹ the *School Prayer Cases*,¹² and that urge the explicit overruling of all the progeny of the “*Lemon test*” abrogated by *Kennedy v. Bremerton School Dist.*¹³

In closing, AFA Action again thanks President Trump, the Commission, Advisory Board, and staff for their untiring work and tenders the foregoing recommendations for your consideration.

⁹ *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577, 640 (1992) (Thomas, J., concurring). See also *Espinoza*, 591 U.S. at 491; 588 U.S., at 73–74 (Thomas, J., opinion concurring in judgment); 572 U.S. at 604 (Thomas, J., opinion concurring in part and concurring in judgment).

¹⁰As Justices Gorsuch and Thomas have noted:

Founding-era religious establishments often bore certain other telling traits. First, the government exerted control over the doctrine and personnel of the established church. Second, the government mandated attendance in the established church and punished people for failing to participate. Third, the government punished dissenting churches and individuals for their religious exercise. Fourth, the government restricted political participation by dissenters. Fifth, the government provided financial support for the established church, often in a way that preferred the established denomination over other churches. And sixth, the government used the established church to carry out certain civil functions, often by giving the established church a monopoly over a specific function.

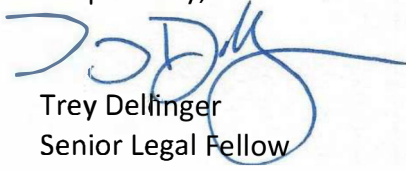
Shurtleff v. City of Bos., Massachusetts, 596 U.S. 243, 285–86 (2022) (Gorsuch, Thomas, J.J., concurring and citing M. McConnell, Establishment and Disestablishment at the Founding, Part I: Establishment of Religion, 44 Wm. & Mary L. Rev. 2105, 2110–2112, 2131–2181 (2003)); see also *Nathan v. Alamo Heights Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 173 F.4th 576, 601 (5th Cir. 2026) (citing these six traits of founding era establishments and upholding Texas law requiring public schools to display posters bearing the Ten Commandments because the requirement did not possess the traits of a founding era establishment).

¹¹ 330 U.S. 1 (1947) (holding for the first time that the Establishment Clause is incorporated against the states through the 14th Amendment and declaring an atextual “wall of separation” between church and state).

¹² *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421, 422 (1962); *School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

¹³ See Draft Commission Report at note 179 and accompanying text.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Trey Dellinger', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Trey Dellinger
Senior Legal Fellow
AFA Action



July 10, 2026

Via email to: [REDACTED] PII

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⁸ *Id.* As Justice Thomas has cogently stated, when the Supreme Court in *Everson* casually opined that the 14th Amendment incorporated the Establishment Clause against the states, it did so with no precedential support:

This Court has never squarely addressed these barriers to the incorporation of the Establishment Clause. When the issue was first presented in *Everson v. Board of Ed. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1, 67 S.Ct. 504, 91 L.Ed. 711 (1947), the Court casually asserted that “the Fourteenth Amendment [has been] interpreted to make the prohibitions of the First applicable to state action abridging religious freedom. There is every reason to give the same application and broad interpretation to the ‘establishment of religion’ clause.” *Id.*, at 15, 67 S.Ct. 504 (footnote omitted). The cases the Court cited in support of that proposition involved the Free Exercise Clause—which had been incorporated seven years earlier, in *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296, 303, 60 S.Ct. 900, 84 L.Ed. 1213 (1940)—not the Establishment Clause. 330 U.S., at 15, n. 22, 67 S.Ct. 504 (collecting cases). Thus, in the space of a single paragraph and a nonresponsive string citation, the *Everson* Court glibly effected a sea change in constitutional law. The Court’s inattention to these doctrinal questions might be explained, although not excused, by the rise of popular conceptions about “separation of church and state” as an “American” constitutional right. See generally P. Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* 454–463 (2002); see also *id.*, at 391–454 (discussing the role of nativist sentiment in the campaign for “separation” as an American ideal).

Town of Greece, N.Y. v. Galloway, 572 U.S. 565, 607, 134 S. Ct. 1811, 1837, 188 L. Ed. 2d 835 (2014).

force of law and threat of penalty”⁹ as exemplified by the founding-era state establishments.¹⁰

Second, a third numbered recommendation under the heading “Litigation” at page 211 of the Draft Commission Report should ask the Department of Justice to support litigation challenging:

3. the constitutionality of legal precedents that violate an originalist understanding of the Establishment Clause, such as *Everson v. Board of Ed. of Ewing*,¹¹ the *School Prayer Cases*,¹² and that urge the explicit overruling of all the progeny of the “*Lemon test*” abrogated by *Kennedy v. Bremerton School Dist.*¹³

In closing, AFA Action again thanks President Trump, the Commission, Advisory Board, and staff for their untiring work and tenders the foregoing recommendations for your consideration.

⁹ *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577, 640 (1992) (Thomas, J., concurring). See also *Espinoza*, 591 U.S. at 491; 588 U.S., at 73–74 (Thomas, J., opinion concurring in judgment); 572 U.S. at 604 (Thomas, J., opinion concurring in part and concurring in judgment).

¹⁰As Justices Gorsuch and Thomas have noted:

Founding-era religious establishments often bore certain other telling traits. First, the government exerted control over the doctrine and personnel of the established church. Second, the government mandated attendance in the established church and punished people for failing to participate. Third, the government punished dissenting churches and individuals for their religious exercise. Fourth, the government restricted political participation by dissenters. Fifth, the government provided financial support for the established church, often in a way that preferred the established denomination over other churches. And sixth, the government used the established church to carry out certain civil functions, often by giving the established church a monopoly over a specific function.

Shurtleff v. City of Bos., Massachusetts, 596 U.S. 243, 285–86 (2022) (Gorsuch, Thomas, J.J., concurring and citing M. McConnell, Establishment and Disestablishment at the Founding, Part I: Establishment of Religion, 44 Wm. & Mary L. Rev. 2105, 2110–2112, 2131–2181 (2003)); see also *Nathan v. Alamo Heights Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 173 F.4th 576, 601 (5th Cir. 2026) (citing these six traits of founding era establishments and upholding Texas law requiring public schools to display posters bearing the Ten Commandments because the requirement did not possess the traits of a founding era establishment).

¹¹ 330 U.S. 1 (1947) (holding for the first time that the Establishment Clause is incorporated against the states through the 14th Amendment and declaring an atextual “wall of separation” between church and state).

¹² *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421, 422 (1962); *School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

¹³ See Draft Commission Report at note 179 and accompanying text.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Trey Delinger', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Trey Delinger
Senior Legal Fellow
AFA Action

From: Abimael Bejarano <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- [SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE]j-
[ABIMAE].

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:33:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my sincere support for the continued defense of the constitutional separation of church and state in the United States. As a Mexican citizen, a resident of Mexico, and a Protestant Christian, I offer an international perspective on how this foundational American principle has protected religious minorities—not only within the United States, but also by inspiring democratic reforms beyond its borders.

I do not write to interfere in your nation's legal or political affairs. On the contrary, I wish to express my gratitude to the United States for the enduring example it has provided and for the many ways it has contributed to the advancement of liberty throughout the world. The American experiment demonstrated that a nation can flourish when civil government remains neutral in matters of religion and is governed by the rule of law rather than by the doctrines of any single faith. That example inspired many nations, including my own, to pursue a similar path.

For centuries, in Mexico, to be Mexican was both legally and culturally associated with being Roman Catholic. Religious minorities faced significant legal and social barriers, and one religious institution exercised considerable influence over public life. Inspired in part by the principles of liberty of conscience exemplified by the United States, President Benito Juárez led a series of landmark reforms known as the **Leyes de Reforma (Reform Laws)**, which established the foundations of a modern secular republic and guaranteed equal rights for citizens of every faith.

Among the most significant reforms were:

- **The Juárez Law (1855):** Eliminated special ecclesiastical courts, ensuring that all citizens were equal before the civil law.
- **The Nationalization of Church Property Act (1859):** Reduced the political and economic dominance of a single religious institution and strengthened the independence of the civil government.
- **The Civil Marriage and Civil Registry Acts (1859):** Placed marriages, births, and deaths under civil authority, allowing families of all religious backgrounds to receive equal legal recognition.
- **The Freedom of Worship Act (1860):** Guaranteed every individual the right to practice his or her religion freely, enabling Protestant communities to worship openly, establish churches, and preach without fear of legal persecution.

Because of these reforms, Protestant Christians in Mexico today enjoy the freedom to worship openly, serve in public office, participate fully in civic life, and practice our faith without government discrimination. These freedoms are blessings that many generations before us did not enjoy.

As a Christian, I deeply appreciate when government leaders seek to uphold values that are consistent with the teachings of Christ—justice, compassion, honesty, and the inherent dignity of every human being. At the same time, I believe these very principles require us to defend the freedom of conscience for every individual, regardless of religious belief or affiliation.

Faith, by its very nature, must be freely chosen. When belief is compelled or favored through the power of the state, it ceases to be an authentic act of conscience. Genuine religious liberty exists only when every person is

free to embrace a religion, to change religious convictions, or to practice no religion at all, without fear of coercion or discrimination.

As you consider matters affecting religious liberty, I respectfully encourage you to preserve the constitutional principles that have made the United States a model for nations around the world. Defending the separation of church and state does not weaken religion; rather, it protects the integrity of both religious institutions and civil government. It allows faith to flourish through conviction rather than coercion.

From my perspective in Mexico, I can testify that the American commitment to liberty of conscience has influenced generations of leaders and has helped expand religious freedom far beyond your borders. By preserving a government that remains neutral in matters of religion, you continue to safeguard the rights of religious minorities, strengthen democratic institutions, and uphold a legacy of freedom that has benefited millions of people around the world—including my own community.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your thoughtful consideration of this important issue.

"El respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz."

"Respect for the rights of others is peace."

— **Benito Juárez**

Respectfully,

Abimael Bejarano

Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico

From: MzTi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- Separation of Church and State - TIJUANA T. SWANN

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:37:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a citizen, I am writing to request that you reconsider the recommendations in your report that could negatively impact the separation of church and state. The use of government funds for religious activities sets a troubling precedent, as history demonstrates the significant issues that arise from merging government and religious institutions.

Throughout our history, people from all over the world have come to our country to seek freedom, to live, to work, and to worship. Government funding and the politicization of religious education, clubs, and activities pose a real danger to the freedom to worship according to one's conscience.

Additionally, I ask that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced to ensure that religious entities maintain appropriate boundaries regarding government and political endeavors.

Sincerely,
TiJuana T. Swann
Washington, DC

From: Newton States <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Religion Draft Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:37:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of Freedom of Religion Committee:

Separation of church and state is important because it protects our religious freedoms. The government should not be telling us how to worship. It is personal and the government should be neutral in this matter.

Our founding fathers intended this should be separate because of their personal experience when the government was involved in their own lives.

Please keep the church and state separate here in America!

Sincerely,
Newton States

Sent from my iPhone

From: james burden <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION – JAMES BURDEN III

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:39:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated at the formal release of the Committee's recommendations that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis.

With all due respect, I believe that Dan Patrick is mistaken and has misinterpreted many of this nation's founding father's position concerning the separation of church and state. Father of the Constitution, and fourth President of the United States of America, James 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."

Unless Committee Chair, Dan Patrick wants to re-write history or send our beloved country back into a time where persecution was rampant in the name of a church and state alliance, I believe the idea he has put forth is dangerous and moves us back instead of promoting forward progress.

I respectfully request that the Committee return to the study of the separation of church and state, and America's history and reconsider their first recommendation of clarifying church and state relations.

Sincerely,

James Burden III, USMC Veteran

From: Ashley Isaac <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:39:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Church and state needs to remain separate. Both the Constitution and the Bible speak on keeping them separate.

Who are we to dismiss what God has to say.

History should not repeat itself especially when it can affect life in a negative manner.

Sincerely,
Ashley Isaac
Austin, TX

From: Tracie Alonso <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- separation of church and state- Tracie Alonso

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:40:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

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 likely 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.

Thank you for your attention and reconsideration in this matter,

Tracie Alonso

From: Linda Longmire <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] CHURCH & STATE

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:41:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Rights Commission,

I write with deep appreciation for the responsibility entrusted to your commission to protect one of America's most cherished principles—the freedom of religion.

Throughout our nation's history, religious liberty has served as a safeguard for people of every faith and conviction, allowing individuals to worship according to conscience without coercion from the states.

It is my sincere appeal that our nation continue to uphold the historic principle of the separation of church and state. This principle has not weakened religion; rather, it has protected both the church and the government from exercising authority that does not belong to them.

History reminds us that whenever governments have become involved in enforcing religious practice or favoring one faith over another, countless generations have suffered. Men, women, and children have endured persecution, imprisonment, discrimination, and even death because they chose to remain faithful to the convictions of their conscience. These lessons should never be forgotten.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are especially mindful of this history. Our church has long advocated religious liberty for all people, regardless of their faith or beliefs. We recognize that, in times and places where Sunday observance was enforced by civil authority, faithful Sabbath observers experienced legal penalties, discrimination, and other forms of persecution because they honored the seventh-day Sabbath according to their understanding of Scripture. These historical experiences reinforce the importance of protecting the God-given right of every individual to worship freely according to conscience.

The United States has long stood as a beacon of religious freedom because it has recognized that faith cannot be compelled by law. Churches must remain free to proclaim their beliefs without government interference, and government must remain neutral in matters of religious doctrine and worship. Likewise, no citizen should ever be compelled by civil authority to participate in or refrain from religious observance contrary to the dictates of conscience.

True religious liberty protects everyone. It safeguards the rights of the majority while also preserving the freedoms of minority faiths and those with no religious affiliation. It ensures that every American may worship—or not worship—without fear of coercion or discrimination by the state.

I respectfully urge the Commission to continue defending the constitutional principles that have preserved religious freedom for generations. May our nation remain steadfast in protecting the sacred rights of conscience so that every person may live and worship according to their sincerely held beliefs, free from governmental interference.

Thank you for your service and your continued commitment to preserving religious liberty for all.

Respectfully,

Linda Torres Longmire

From: Kathleen Geraty <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Maintain Religious Liberty in These United States

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:42:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Date: July 13, 2026

To: The Religious Liberty Commission

Re: Religious Liberty in these United States

It is of great and crucial importance to me, my family, friends of church (and those of no church), to have USA maintain clear boundaries and stay firm in the "separation of church and state." PLEASE make sure this is a freedom that is ensured. Thank you.

Please confirm receipt. Thank you.

Kathleen Geraty

Sent from my iPhone

Sent from my iPhone

From: Benjamin Pirv <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state a Must

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:42:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in response to the Religious Liberty Commission's recommendation to bridge the gap between Church and State. I understand that this is being recommended with good intentions, but the results could be detrimental to Religious Liberty!

I am a Christian and value high moral standards, but some standards should never be legislated.

When it comes to our civil duties between humans, there should be laws against killing, stealing, lying under oath, etc., but when it comes to our relationship with the God that we choose to serve, the government needs to stay out of that in every way!

For instance, I have heard a lot of discussion about bringing back blue laws, which creates the establishment of a holy day on Sunday. I know from studying Bible prophecy, eventually there will be legislation regarding keeping Sunday, the first day of the week as a holy day, even when the Bible specifically and clearly states that the seventh day is the Sabbath.

Even though I know this will happen in the future, I will do what I can to fight it in order to spread the truth and help people to realize how important it is to obey God rather than men!

If you would take the time to research history of how Sunday became a day of worship, you would find that the day was changed by the Roman Catholic Church and now it has become a tradition for many Christians.

Please do not adopt the recommendation to bridge the gap between the separation of Church and State! Doing so will only cause division and persecution as it always has in the past!

Thank you for your consideration.

Benjamin Pirv

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Ron Keller

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:43:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm sending this letter to ask that you do not tear down the wall between Church and State.

Also, please do not repeal the Johnson Amendment. I urge the commission to uphold the constitutionally mandated separation of Church and State. Please do not attempt to build a bridge. The wall between Church and State is a foundational protection for religious freedom in America. Allowing government endorsement of religious organizations risks politicizing faith and compromises the separation of Church and State.

Sincerely,

Ron Keller

From: Shelly James <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns of your recommendations to President Trump

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:43:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chairman Patrick, Vice-Chairman Carson and all members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing this letter to voice my total disagreement and objection to your recommendation that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment be reinterpreted to diminish the historic separation of church and state.

Separation of church and state is one of the main reasons our great country is so great! This country was formed because people fled countries where they could not worship and conduct life based on their own consciences. Our Founding Fathers put together our Constitution based on the desire for us to truly have religious freedom and the only way for that to happen is to guard the laws written by those who had lived under the oppression of having

worship dictated and enforced. The words, "Government possesses no rightful authority to establish, direct, or compel religious observance" are powerful and thoughtfully written to protect ALL of us and insure that we will be able

to enjoy religious freedom according to our own conscience. We must remember the words of James Madison and keep "religion beyond the jurisdiction of civil governments because the duty owed to God precedes the authority of

the state itself." Jesus gave us our answer to the extent of civil authority in Matthew 22:21 where He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" Only when the

government is forbidden from deciding questions of religious truth can we protect the consciences of EVERYONE EQUALLY. This is true freedom!

So, I am respectfully asking you to please make no reinterpretation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. And I also ask that you do NOT repeal the Johnson Amendment. Churches/Religions should have nothing

to do with politics, those things should also be left to the consciences of each individual citizen of these great United States of America. If we truly are "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" then we must

work hard to hold on to the principles that those words are based on.

Thank you for listening. You are all in my thoughts and prayers. God bless you and give you wisdom and ears to hear His truth.

Sincerely,
Shelly James

From: Linda Moorei<[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] National Sunday Laws vs Religious Freedoms

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:43:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

It has been posted that the US constitution does not contain anything against our Government making laws regarding Religion or Church and State connection.

I judge this as false information and I object to our government making any laws prohibiting trying to control my right to Religious Freedom.

The separation of church and state is firmly rooted in the first amendment to the Constitution.

I quote:

"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"

I object, our governments committees deciding which groups are considered cults and which groups are acceptable Religions.

The government was created by the people for the people to protect us from what you are trying to do.

Linda J Moore

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Leila Pimenta <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comentário

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:44:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Pesquisa

Enviado do meu iPhone

From: JimiZeismeri<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Coment -Seperation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:45:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom this Concerns:

This country was founded on the understanding that we as Americans have the freedom to to choose whom we worship and when we worship. I am thankful for this freedom. However there seems to to be a push to involve the government in this private right. I believe this to be a mistake and should NOT be implemented. Therefore I wish to state my objection to this type of action. My religious worship is between me and God. Therefore the government should stay out of this.

Thank you for this platform to express my concerns.

Jim Zeismer

From: Bryce Ivey<[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The members of the White House religious liberty commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:45:33 -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,

Bryce Ivey
State of Michigan

From: John Quade <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION AND REPORT
RECOMMENDATIONS – JOHN QUADE

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:45:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission: Thank you for providing the public with an opportunity to comment on the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. I write as a Christian minister and an American citizen who is deeply committed to genuine religious liberty. I support efforts to protect people from discrimination, coercion, retaliation, or loss of opportunity because of their sincerely held religious beliefs. These protections must extend equally to Christians, Jews, Muslims, members of every other faith, and those who profess no religious faith. However, I strongly object to the draft report's attempt to weaken the historic separation of church and state and replace it with the idea of a "bridge" through which religious institutions and government are expected to strengthen and support one another. Religious liberty does not require the government to finance, promote, organize, or politically empower religion. It requires government to protect the freedom of conscience while remaining neutral in matters of faith. I am particularly concerned about the following recommendations:

1. Government funding of religious organizations The report recommends that faith-based organizations be encouraged and assisted in competing for federal grants, contracts, and funding, and that partnerships between government and religious institutions be expanded. Religious charities perform valuable work, but receiving government money inevitably brings government supervision, regulations, political pressures, and dependence. Churches and ministries should remain free to serve according to conscience without becoming financially entangled with the state. Equal access to ordinary public services is one matter. Government financing of religious missions and institutions is another. The latter places both religious independence and public neutrality at risk.
2. Public financing of religious education Parents unquestionably possess the right to choose a religious education for their children. Nevertheless, the right to choose a religious school does not necessarily create a right to have that religious education financed by taxpayers. The report's proposals for universal school choice, combined with efforts to ensure that public funds may be used at religious schools, would require citizens to financially support religious teachings with which they may profoundly disagree. It would also invite increasing government involvement in the curriculum, employment practices, accreditation, and internal affairs of religious schools. What government funds, government will eventually seek to regulate.
3. Repeal of the Johnson Amendment Religious leaders already possess broad freedom to preach about morality, justice, public policy, and the responsibilities of government. The Johnson Amendment does not prevent ministers from addressing moral and political questions. It prevents tax-exempt charitable organizations from becoming partisan campaign organizations. Repealing it would encourage political parties, candidates, and wealthy donors to use churches as channels for tax-subsidized political activity. It would also pressure ministers and congregations to take sides in partisan elections, dividing churches along political lines and weakening their spiritual mission. The church should be able to speak prophetically to every political party without becoming an instrument of any political party.
4. Preferential governmental protection Discrimination against Christians is wrong and should be addressed. So should discrimination against Jews, Muslims, minority faiths, and nonbelievers. Government programs or offices focused upon protecting one favored religious constituency can create the appearance—and eventually the reality—of unequal treatment. Religious liberty must never become a means of giving one religion privileged access to government power. The government's responsibility is to administer neutral laws that protect every conscience equally.
5. Government-directed religious-liberty education I am also concerned about the recommendation that government agencies create and distribute posters, educational materials, training programs, and toolkits teaching the Commission's interpretation of religious liberty. A genuine "Know Your Rights" campaign would need to explain not only the right to religious expression, but also the Establishment Clause, the rights of religious minorities, and every citizen's right to be free from government-sponsored religious coercion. Government should not use public schools, government offices, or federally produced educational materials to promote the Commission's contested theory that

the church-state boundary should function as a “bridge.” The historical American position was stated clearly by President Ulysses S. Grant: “Declare church and state forever separate and distinct; but each free within their proper spheres.” The Christian preacher Charles Spurgeon expressed the same principle even more simply: “Christ wants no help from Caesar.”

These and other historical statements are collected at AmericaInProphecy.com. They demonstrate that separation of church and state was not created out of hostility toward Christianity. It was designed to protect faith, conscience, civil government, and religious peace.

Religion is damaged when it becomes dependent upon public money, partisan political influence, or civil enforcement. Government is likewise damaged when religious organizations are invited to use governmental power to advance their beliefs. The issue is not whether sincere Christians should participate in public life. They should. Christians have the same freedom to speak, vote, serve, petition, and advocate as every other citizen. The danger arises when religious institutions seek governmental financing, preferred status, partisan power, or civil assistance in advancing religious objectives. I respectfully ask the Commission to substantially revise the report by:

- Affirming that church and state must remain separate and distinct, with each free within its proper sphere;
- Removing the “bridge between church and state” framework;
- Rejecting preferential or direct governmental support for religious institutions and religious education;
- Preserving the nonpartisan character of tax-exempt churches and religious organizations;
- Ensuring that religious-liberty protections apply neutrally and equally to every faith and to those of no faith; and
- Revising any public-awareness materials so that they teach both Free Exercise and Establishment Clause protections.

America’s religious liberty has endured because the government has no authority over the human conscience. Faith should advance through truth, persuasion, service, and love—not through government financing, partisan political machinery, or civil power.

Please do not adopt the draft report in its present form.

Respectfully submitted,

John Quade AmericaInProphecy.com

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

From: Simon Fotev <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:45:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

The First Amendment and Religious Liberty in America:

OUTLINE

The First Amendment protects religious liberty by preventing the establishment of religion and guaranteeing free exercise, reflecting the belief that true faith must be freely chosen and demonstrated through individual conduct rather than imposed by law.

- I. Religious liberty influenced the founding of America.
 - A. The Pilgrims migrated to America to escape religious persecution.
 - B. Diverse religious beliefs in the colonies required tolerance.
 - C. Biblical principles influenced early American views of religious liberty.
- II. The First Amendment establishes and protects religious liberty.
 - A. It prohibits the establishment of a national religion.
 - B. It protects the free exercise of religion for all individuals.
 - C. While it prohibits enforced religion, laws influenced by religious principles may raise concerns about the free exercise of religion for some groups.
- III. Key advocates of religious liberty warned against the union of church and state.
 - A. Roger Williams promoted religious freedom and opposed government control of religion.
 - B. James Madison argued that religion must be left to the individual conscience.
 - C. These leaders recognized that forcing religion could corrupt both faith and government.
- IV. True religious liberty requires both freedom of belief and personal responsibility.
 - A. Religious influence should come through personal example rather than government force.
 - B. Forcing religion through law contradicts both biblical principles and American ideals. society.
 - C. Individuals should reflect their beliefs in their actions to influence society positively.

THESIS

Since the founding of the United States, religious liberty has played a central role in shaping the nation's identity. Many early settlers, including the Pilgrims, came to America seeking the freedom to worship according to their conscience. Their desire for religious freedom helped influence the development of a society that valued individual belief and expression. This foundation is reflected in the First Amendment, which protects religious liberty by preventing the establishment of religion and guaranteeing free exercise, reflecting the belief that true faith must be freely chosen and demonstrated through individual conduct rather than imposed by law. Before 1620, the Pilgrims, as they later became known, were originally members of the Church of England and were subject to its authority. However, when religious practices were imposed upon them in ways that conflicted with their consciences, they chose to separate and seek a place where they could worship freely. Before establishing their colony, they created the Mayflower Compact, stating that their journey was undertaken "for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith" (Mayflower Compact). While religious liberty was a primary motivation for the Pilgrims, they were not the only group to travel to America. Others joined them in search of economic opportunity and a new life, creating an early diversity among the settlers. This mixture of differing beliefs and purposes required cooperation and tolerance from the very beginning. As the colonies developed, this diversity continued to grow, reinforcing the need for a society that respected individual conscience. The desire for freedom of belief helped shape the principles that would later define the nation. In time, laws were established to protect these freedoms and ensure that they were not taken away or abused. While early American thought was influenced by biblical principles, the Founding Fathers sought to preserve religious liberty by allowing moral influence without enforcing a national religion, recognizing that faith must remain a matter of

personal conviction rather than government control.

As stated in 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.” (First Amendment). Two things are noted especially here by the Founding Fathers. First, the understanding that Congress will not enforce a law biased toward any religion. This ensured that the persecution, such as from the Church of England, would not be repeated in their new nation and that all Americans would have the freedom to worship any god or deity as their conscience guided them. In addition to ensuring a religion-free government, the Founding Fathers also ensured that the practice of every kind of religion would be permissible in the United States without any censure or prohibition, as long as the peace was kept and all were treated equally. However, because of the way the amendment was written, the laws that can be passed by Congress without bordering on removing religious freedom can sometimes border on a slippery slope. For instance, laws that restrict how individuals express their beliefs or practice their convictions may conflict with the Founding Fathers’ intention to protect freedom of conscience. Even if a law is simply only biblically inspired and meant for the bettering of society, if it is going to place certain people in situations that would hinder their freedom of expression of conscience, then it already goes against what the Bible and America stand for.

Throughout early American history, several key figures strongly advocated for religious liberty and warned against the dangers of uniting church and state. One of the earliest figures was Roger Williams, who, as described in historical accounts, openly opposed government control over religion and believed that faith must be a matter of personal conviction. His views at the time were considered strange and new, and led to his banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He, however, went on to establish Rhode Island as one of the first colonies to promote the separation of church and state, offering complete religious freedom where individuals could practice their beliefs freely.

Later, leaders such as James Madison, in his Memorial and Remonstrance, argued that religion must be left entirely to the individual conscience. Madison believed that any attempt by the government to support or enforce religion would violate this fundamental freedom. His ideas, along with those of other leaders, helped shape the religious liberty that the United States maintains to this day.

These leaders understood that when religion is forced by law, it not only restricts individual liberty but also weakens the sincerity of faith itself. By separating church and state, they sought to preserve both the purity of religion and the rights of the individual, ensuring that belief would remain a voluntary and meaningful choice rather than an imposed obligation.

True religious liberty requires that freedom of expression, particularly in matters of faith, remain rooted in the individual conscience. Each person must be free to determine what they believe to be right and wrong without coercion. Laws exist to maintain order and protect the rights of all individuals, ensuring that the expression of one’s beliefs does not infringe upon the freedoms of others. This principle is reflected in the biblical teaching often referred to as the Golden Rule: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12). In this way, liberty is preserved equally for everyone.

If the government were to favor a specific religion or ideology through law, it could undermine this balance and limit the freedom of others. Such actions would conflict with both American ideals and the broader principle that faith must remain voluntary. When individuals are placed in situations where their beliefs result in social or economic disadvantage, the principle of free exercise becomes more complex and requires careful consideration. Biblical teaching further supports the idea that faith should not be forced. Throughout his life, Jesus emphasized choice rather than compulsion, calling individuals to follow Him willingly. This reflects the principle that belief is most meaningful when it is expressed through personal conviction and demonstrated through one’s actions. In a society that values religious liberty, influence is most effectively achieved not through authority or enforcement, but through example. When individuals live according to their beliefs while respecting the freedom of others, they contribute to a society that upholds both liberty and mutual respect.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“First Amendment to the United States Constitution.” 1791.

Madison, James. Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments. 1785.

“Mayflower Compact.” 1620.

“Roger Williams.” Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The Bible. King James Version.

Sincerely,
Simon Fotev,
Toronto, Ontario

From: Wes Youngberg <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Wes Youngberg

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:48:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who believes the Constitution's protections of speech and religion mean what they say government has no right to mandate the exercise of religion, in any direction, for any faith. I ask you to consider four arguments that together explain why.

The first is the deepest. American government exists by the consent of the governed, which means it holds only the powers the people delegated to it. But no person can delegate his relationship to God to anyone else, not even to a government he trusts. A man can authorize an agent to manage his property; he cannot authorize anyone to believe, worship, or answer for his soul. What could never be given was never received. And accountability follows this logic in reverse: no government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer for any individual's faith, so no government can rightly assume responsibility in matters of religion. Whoever claims jurisdiction over another's belief claims a prerogative that God himself declines to exercise.

Second, our rights do not originate in majority approval, and this Commission should be wary of any argument that leans on the popularity of a religious policy as its justification. A right subject to a vote is not a right but a permission, revocable by the next vote. Our tradition holds instead that rights are inherent, Creator-endowed, and placed beyond electoral reach precisely so that minorities need not depend on the goodwill of majorities. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can already protect itself at the polls. Man's first allegiance is to his Creator, and that domain lies outside the reach of civil authority, however many citizens might wish otherwise.

Third, I would ask the Commission to weigh a hard truth: it is impossible to write a law favoring religion that does not also confine it. Any law touching religion must define which religion, whose observance, whose doctrine counts, and that definition excludes some believers while reducing even the favored ones to practicing their faith by permission rather than by right. A believer who welcomes state endorsement of his own creed today is surrendering, without noticing, his freedom to change his convictions tomorrow, and handing future officials a precedent that may just as easily be turned against him.

Fourth, this separation was not an oversight or a modern imposition; it was deliberate, and it was urged by the churches themselves, out of respect for religion rather than hostility to it. Madison told Virginia's ratifying convention there was not a shadow of right in the general government to intermeddle with religion, and that its slightest interference would be a flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for establishment to take root before opposing it; they resisted the principle at its very first appearance, refusing to let precedent entangle the question. Any commission revisiting this history bears the burden of answering 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,
Wes Youngberg
Temecula, CA

Sent from my iPhone

From: Victor Gouge <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:49:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not proceed with the removal of our freedom to choose to worship how we want to.

--

Victor Gouge

[REDACTED] PII

From: Mimi Pirv <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:49:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Here is the letter I sent:

To Whom it may Concern...

I am writing in response to the Religious Liberty Commission's recommendation to bridge the gap between Church and State. I understand that this is being recommended with good intentions, but the results could be detrimental to religious liberty! I am a Christian and value high moral standards, but some standards should never be legislated.

When it comes to our civil duties between humans, there should be laws against killing, stealing, lying under oath, etc., but when it comes to our relationship with the God that we choose to serve, the government needs to stay out of that in every way!

For instance, I have heard a lot of discussion about bringing back blue laws, which creates the establishment of a holy day on Sunday. This is not right to do because not everybody keeps the same holy day. I know that from studying Bible prophecy, eventually there will be legislation regarding keeping Sunday, the first day of the week as a holy day, even when the Bible specifically and clearly states that the seventh day is the Sabbath.

Even though I know this will happen in the future, I will do what I can to fight it in order to spread the truth and help people to realize how important it is to obey God rather than men! If you would take the time to research the history of how Sunday became a day of worship, you would find that the day was changed by the Roman Catholic Church and now it has become a tradition for many Christians.

Please do not adopt the recommendation to bridge the gap between the separation of Church and State! Doing so will only cause division and persecution as it always has in the past!

**Thank you for your consideration
Migdonia Mimi Pîrv**

From: Lucille Kelm <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] FREEDOM BETWEEN STATE & CHURCH

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:50:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 13, 2026

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Lucille Kelm

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a Citizen of the United States of America, 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.

My plead is to please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Lucille Kelm of Rogue River, Oregon

From: d djami <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Establishment Clause – Daniel Djami

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:51:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen from Wildwood, Georgia, who cares about getting this right, because once government starts deciding religious questions, it can just as easily decide them against my faith as for it. Start with a simple test: if a right can be granted by majority vote, it can be taken away by majority vote, and then it was never a right at all, only a permission. Our whole system rests on the opposite premise — that rights are inherent, not handed down from election returns, and that constitutions exist to place certain things beyond the reach of the ballot box. That is why popular government is instituted to protect the minority, not just to enact the will of the many; the majority hardly needs protecting, since it can already prevail at the polls. However many Americans might favor an official religious observance or display, that popularity cannot be the basis for religious policy, because faith was never among the things submitted to a vote.

Look deeper and the reason becomes clear: government could never rightfully hold power over religion in the first place, because no citizen could have delegated it. We can authorize someone to manage our property or represent our interests, but no one can authorize another person to believe, worship, or answer for his soul on his behalf. Since that power was never given, it could never be received. And no government will ever stand accountable at a final judgment for anyone's soul — not even its own — so no government can rightly assume responsibility in matters of religion. The Establishment Clause did not invent this boundary; it simply recorded a limitation that already existed.

Some argue that strict separation is a modern invention read into a Constitution that never intended it, but the historical record contradicts that claim. The push for separation came from the churches themselves, and 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 even its least interference would be flagrant usurpation. The founders did not wait for a full establishment to take root before objecting; they resisted the principle at its very first appearance. Any commission that invokes the founders for state-sponsored religion must reckon with Madison's own words.

Congress itself settled this question while men of the founding generation still served. Its 1830 report on Sunday legislation declared plainly that our government is a civil and not a religious institution, and that it is not the legislature's place to determine what religion is true or false. That same report warned that once government defines one point of religious duty, it may just as readily claim authority over every religious obligation. And it drew the line that still distinguishes us: what other nations call religious toleration, we call religious rights. A right needs no one's permission.

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

Respectfully,
Daniel Djami

Wildwood, Georgia

From: Sherril Bridgeforth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:56:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of Religious Liberty Commission

I am concern with the replacement of state and church. As a person of faith this is alarming. The bridge will not strengthen the church but have a backdoor for political favors in the church. Please keep church and state separate, This is how both can be free.

Sincerely,

Sherril
Huntsville, AL

From: L G <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment for Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:56:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Committee Members,

I would like to respectfully ask, that you vote to stand with our Constitution, as it already establishes the separation between church and state.

Our nation was founded on these separation principles and we have been truly blessed by God as the greatest nation in the world. Please don't dissolve this separation that our forefathers put in place.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Lisa Goforth

From: David Kingma <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT :

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:56:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

Thanks for this opportunity to respond to your draft report.

I think it is very important to retain the SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE as it has been practiced in US history up until now. I don't think public money should go to religious schools of any type - Christian or otherwise. I absolutely disagree that public schools should be allowed to teach the Bible as part of their curriculum.

We are a country of many religions and each of them deserve respect not just the Christian religion. The only way to avoid falling into a theocracy is to jealously guard the wisdom of separation of church and state which was part of our founding principles.

In solidarity for the public good,
Norma Kingma

From: SusaniAstablefordi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty - Susan Astleford

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:57:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Americans must protect their God-given right to worship as they please, by keeping Church and State separate.
That's what the Founders intended!

From: LIZETTE CARABALLO <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposition to the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:57:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Lizette Caraballo

[REDACTED] PII

July 13, 2026

Re: Opposition to the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

I am writing to formally submit my strong opposition to the recommendations presented in the Religious Liberty Commission's recent draft report delivered to the President. While the stated goal of the Commission is to safeguard religious freedom, a rigorous look at the specific proposals reveals a trajectory that threatens the very foundation of American liberty: the strict separation of church and state.

This nation was uniquely founded on the revolutionary principle that the realms of religious faith and civil governance must remain independent. By dismantling this boundary, the Commission's recommendations—such as promoting state-sponsored religious displays in public schools, funneling public tax dollars into sectarian entities, and encouraging the federal government to actively favor specific religious viewpoints—do not protect freedom. Instead, they build a dangerous bridge between church and state.

History and human nature provide a clear, unyielding warning about what happens when the cross and the sword unite: *** **The Inevitability of Persecution:**** When the state aligns itself with a preferred religious framework or elevates faith-based institutions into positions of state-supported privilege, it inherently creates classes of citizens. The inevitable result of a church-state alliance is the marginalization, silencing, and eventual persecution of dissenters, religious minorities, and those of no faith at all.

*** **National Ruin:**** True religious vitality thrives when it is entirely voluntary and independent of government coercion. Forcing a union between civil authority and religious doctrine corrupts both institutions. It invites sectarian division into the halls of governance, replaces democratic neutrality with theological favoritism, and ultimately brings national ruin to a pluralistic society.

The true genius of the American experiment is that by keeping the state out of the church, and the church out of the state, ***all*** citizens are guaranteed the absolute right to follow their own consciences. The Commission's report abandons this secular neutrality.

I urge the administration to reject these suggestions, honor our foundational principles, and preserve the vital wall of separation that has kept America both free and at peace.

Respectfully,
Lizette Caraballo

From: Leny Souza <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:57:53 -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. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Leny Souza

From: "Alibaba.com" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The separation of Church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:59:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To put it simply the government has the responsibility of managing the civil authority of the people that it govern but when it come to religious matters that belongs to God. The God of the universe and of the Bible never forces He gives man the choice to follow Him or not to follow Him and the results of the man choices is left to God not to man. This is called the judgement which will take place for all men that have ever lived. He is coming again read Matthew 24 and His reward will be given at that time. God will handle His own. Separation of Church and State.

Thanks Much,
Verna

From: Carolyn Sánchez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 10:59:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

I absolutely want to let my voice be heard in objection to the idea that there is no separation between church and state. Although the exact wording may not be there, but the principle is in the Constitution, we shall make no laws.... And we may not be making laws at this time, but Revelations. Chapter 13 tells us that is exactly where we are heading. A time when he

This United States, the lamb like Beast shall cause all to receive a mark. And whoever does not receive this mark shall not buy nor sell. May God give us all wisdom. And may God bless his people and protect them.

From: Leland Raymond III <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- Establishment Clause – Leland R. Raymond, III

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:01:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Jesus never used the government to support His religion and neither should we. We need to remember what happened during the dark ages when church and state were united. 🙏

Leland R. Raymond III

<http://gnc.org>

Sent from my iPhone

From: Lyn Wright <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Jack & Lyn Wright

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:02:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

It has come to our attention concerning the idea that the Religious Liberty Commission wants to change the long-standing wall of separation between church and state, which is what made America great, by guaranteeing our religious liberties. If passed, it will severely threaten those liberties, and from there it will be just a few short steps to religious intolerance, similar to that which took place during the Dark Ages under the oppression of Rome. We must learn from the past so we don't repeat it.

The Lord has done more for the United States than for any other country upon the earth. Here in America He provided an asylum for His people fleeing from the old world from the persecution caused by civil and religious powers united. This persecution was still fresh in the minds of our forefathers when they drafted our Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Thus, America became "The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave! Living with these freedoms has blessed all those who have been privileged to live here and it is the reason why so many people are seeking to come.

In conclusion, we believe the Johnson Amendment should not be repealed.

For further study on this subject matter, we recommend reading the book by Alonzo T. Jones "Civil Government and Religion, or Christianity and the Constitution." 1889

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,

Jack and Lynette Wright

Huntsville, AR

From: Daniel Mandell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Dan Mandell

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:02:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Commissioners:

Since the 1980s I have studied and taught the history of early American culture, including the shifting relationships between religion, society, and law. Unfortunately, the elements of your draft *Report* that refer to or rest on American history would get a failing grade in my class. Perhaps it would have helped if one or more American historians had been included in the Commission, but at the very least you should have sought the testimony of several knowledgeable scholars instead of relying on ideologues or “pop” figures like Dr. Phil and David Barton.

For example, on p. 117 (and elsewhere) your report condemns public health mandates for vaccinations, but such measures have a long history going back to the British colonies and continuing through the 19th and 20th centuries in the U.S., including George Washington requiring soldiers in 1777 for Continental soldiers to be inoculated against smallpox. Religion has NEVER been acceptable as an excuse to endanger public health in this country.

Also, the report gets James Madison’s influence and ideas very very wrong. George Mason wrote the Virginia Constitution, not Madison, and references to “the Creator” were customary platitudes with little or no substance influence on policy and law. Madison in fact worked throughout his career to keep religion and government separate: he opposed military chaplains; as a Virginia legislator in 1785 wrote the Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments that helped defeat a tax bill that would have funded Christian teachers, and the next year helped pass Jefferson’s Statute for Religious Freedom, which (yes) created a wall to separate church and state in Virginia; of course wrote the First Amendment, and later rejected federal prayer and fast days.

Another obvious mistake, on p. 165: the phrase “In God We Trust” was not used by “our Founding Fathers” but only became part of American culture in the 1860s when it was placed on coinage, and it was not until 1957 that it was placed on currency.

More generally (and significantly) calls to “be one nation under God” and for public schools and institutions to “engage in religious expression” are, in reality, the path to END liberties for religious minorities in communities, states, and indeed the nation. encourage schools. That is one of the lessons of our country’s history, how religious liberty EXPANDED (along with other rights) as religious and ethnic diversity grew and the separation between church and state became better defined. Perhaps that lesson would have been better understood and reflected in your report if the Commission's membership had been more diverse.

Sincerely,
Daniel Mandell
Emeritus Professor of History, Truman State University

Author, *The Lost Tradition of Economic Equality in America, 1600-1870*; *King Philip's War: Colonial Expansion, Native Resistance, and the End of Indian Sovereignty*; *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880*; and *Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts*.

From: Wendell and Cathy Carlton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT - JOHN CARLTON

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:03:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for reading my comments. I will be brief.

Let me assure you: I am a believer in liberty of conscience for all people in the world. I support the civil rights of everyone – even those with whom I disagree. But I have grave concerns about some of the recommendations and conclusions of the Religious Liberty Commission.

First, I believe the repeal of the Johnson Amendment would be hurtful to the religious people of America. The Johnson Amendment has served to restrain religious leaders from choosing sides in politics while still allowing them to comment on the moral and spiritual issues facing its members and the country. The repeal of the Johnson Amendment would open the way for political partisanship to destroy spiritual unity.

Second, I am strongly opposed to the idea suggested on p. 3 of the *Presidential Religious Liberty Commission DRAFT – Frequently Asked Questions*. The commission begins with a quote from Justice Thomas that “actual legal coercion was a hallmark of historical establishments of religion” and then continues, “not public displays of a community’s religious culture.”

That last phrase did not include the word “majority,” but it is strongly implied. What is meant is “a community’s *majority* religious culture.” The First Amendment’s religion clause is there to protect the religious practices of the minority from the tyranny of the majority. Once the idea of “majority rule” in religious expression of a community’s – or a country’s – religious majority culture takes root, persecution of the minorities will follow. In matters of conscience, the majority has no say.

Presidential Religious Liberty Commission DRAFT- Frequently Asked Questions, p. 3

Rather, as many scholars and judges, like Justice Clarence Thomas, explain, that conclusion is an “ahistorical generalization ... substitut[ing] for careful constitutional analysis.”¹⁰ The text and history of the First Amendment itself show that what the Constitution prohibits is “the type of actual legal coercion that was a hallmark of historical establishments of religion,” like establishing a church as the official religion of a state and requiring worship at that church—not public displays of a community’s religious culture.¹¹

¹⁰ *Am. Legion v. Am. Humanist Ass’n*, 588 U.S. 29, 74 (2019) (Thomas, J., concurring) (citing Phillip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State*, 391-463 (2002) (tracing the relationship between nativism—particularly, anti-Catholicism—and the “modern myth of separation” as part of the Constitution)).

¹¹ *Id.* at 73-74 (Thomas, J., concurring).

From: Geraldine Rowland <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Public Comment

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:03:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

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

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am concerned by some of the Religious Liberty Commission's (RLC) recommendations. I do not believe the government should provide funding to religious organizations to deliver aid to people in need. When religious institutions receive and spend public funds in this way, they risk becoming an arm of the government. Based on what we have seen, this type of funding often lacks accountability and blurs the line between church and state.

The Johnson Amendment should not be repealed; it should be enforced. This important safeguard helps preserve both religious freedom and the integrity of our democratic process by keeping tax-exempt churches from becoming partisan political organizations. When churches endorse candidates or take official political positions, they risk dividing their congregations, weakening their spiritual mission, and pressuring members to conform politically rather than worship freely. A healthy democracy depends on strong families, strong communities, and churches that remain places of faith, conscience, and service—not extensions of political campaigns.

I urge the Commission to reject any recommendations that weaken the separation of church and state, to support full enforcement of the Johnson Amendment, and to ensure that public funds are not used in ways that compromise religious independence or government neutrality. Please protect the rights of all Americans by keeping government and religion separate, accountable, and free from political influence.

Sincerely,

Gael Rowland

Sedro Woolley, WA

From: Joshua Bandeli <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Executive Summary – Joshua Bandel

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:04:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit a comment.

I previously submitted comments regarding Recommendation 9. I would also like to offer this separate comment concerning the Executive Summary's discussion of the relationship between church and state.

I respectfully disagree with the recommendation to replace the idea of a "wall of separation between church and state" with a "bridge" between them. I believe the separation of church and state has protected the religious freedom of all Americans for generations, regardless of their beliefs. In my opinion, weakening that principle could put those freedoms at risk.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my comment.

Sincerely,

Joshua Bandel

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From: Emily Hester <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:05:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

From: Leny Souza <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of church and state -Leny Souza

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:06:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

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

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

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the protections, it ultimately protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Leny Souza

Phoenix, AZ

From: Henry Ostrowski <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Religion

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:07:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_Religious_liberty_commission.docx

Please read attached Letter about our Freedom of Liberty, Freedom of Conscience...

Thank You,

Henry Ostrowski,

Camarillo, CA

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

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

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:08:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

I would like to express my comments and first my thankfulness for a platform to express my feelings and opinions concerning separation of church and state.

I value my freedom to worship as I would like. And to be able to express my devotion to God on the day that he commanded in the Word of God in Genesis 2:2, 3.

Doing away with the separation of church and state, would undoubtedly change my ability to do so. History shows that eventually government interference in supporting the churches ends up with laws that prohibit the free expression of certain religions .

Separation of church and state is definitely a part of our constitution, whether people acknowledge it or not.

Sharon Zeismer

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)

From: Olivia Summers <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Comments on Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission - American Center for Law & Justice

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:08:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: ACLJ_Comment_on_Religious_Liberty_Commission_Report_.pdf

To Whom it May Concern:

Please find attached the ACLJ's comments on the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's report.

Sincerely,

Olivia F. Summers
Senior Litigation Counsel
Admitted in VA & DC

[REDACTED]
PII
PII

CONFIDENTIALITY & METADATA NOTICE:

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July 13, 2026

Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Re: Public Comment on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Dear Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Carson, and Members of the Commission:

The American Center for Law and Justice (“ACLJ”) respectfully submits these comments on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. We commend the Commission for producing a comprehensive examination of religious liberty in America and for inviting public comment before finalizing its recommendations. The report thoughtfully examines the legal, historical, and cultural foundations of religious liberty while identifying practical steps that the federal government can take to strengthen protections for the free exercise of religion.

For more than three decades, the ACLJ has defended religious liberty, free speech, parental rights, and other constitutional freedoms through litigation, appellate advocacy, public policy, and public education.¹ Our attorneys have represented religious and educational organizations, as well as individuals, whose constitutional rights were burdened by government action.

The Commission rightly observes that conflicts involving religious liberty continue to arise in areas of public life. Too often it is because officials view religious expression as constitutionally suspect rather than constitutionally protected. The ACLJ agrees that improving public understanding of the First Amendment is essential to preventing these disputes before litigation becomes necessary.

The Commission also correctly recognizes that protecting religious liberty requires more than defending constitutional rights after they have been violated. The government should proactively

¹ See, e.g., *Pleasant Grove City v. Summum*, 555 U.S. 460 (2009); *Livingwell Med. Clinic, Inc. v. Becerra*, 138 S. Ct. 2701 (2018); *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org.*, 142 S. Ct. 2228 (2022); *June Medical Servs. v. Russo*, 140 S. Ct. 2103 (2020); *Nat'l Inst. of Family & Life Advocates v. Becerra*, 138 S. Ct. 2361, 2368 (2018); *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, 579 U.S. 582 (2016); *Gonzales v. Carhart*, 550 U.S. 124 (2007); *Schenck v. Pro-Choice Network*, 519 U.S. 357 (1997); *Groff v. DeJoy*, 600 U.S. 447 (2023); *Trump v. CASA, Inc.*, 606 U.S. 831 (2025), *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, 145 S. Ct. 1123 (2025); *Medina v. Planned Parenthood S. Atl.*, 606 U.S. 357 (2025); *Olivier v. City of Brandon*, 607 U.S. 552 (2026); *Students Engaged in Advancing Tex. v. Paxton*, 2026 U.S. LEXIS 2917 (July 6, 2026).

educate and provide guidance on existing law. Additionally, it should enforce statutory protections consistently to ensure religious institutions and people of faith receive the same treatment that is afforded to everyone else. The ACLJ strongly agrees with this approach—preventing constitutional violations is far preferable to remedying them after citizens have already suffered injury, particularly in practicality.

I. Strengthening Federal Guidance and Coordination

One of the report’s greatest strengths is its emphasis on practical implementation. Rather than limiting itself to broad constitutional principles, the Commission repeatedly recommends that federal agencies provide guidance, improve training, coordinate enforcement, and educate public officials regarding religious liberty. The ACLJ believes these recommendations deserve priority consideration because they address the underlying causes of many constitutional disputes.

Public servants routinely confront questions involving religious liberty without access to practical guidance reflecting current Supreme Court precedent. As a result, decisions are often made based upon outdated assumptions about the Establishment Clause or an overly restrictive understanding of the Free Exercise Clause.

The ACLJ therefore recommends that the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) publish a comprehensive Religious Liberty Guidance Manual that consolidates existing federal guidance into a single, publicly available resource. Rather than requiring public officials to navigate multiple memoranda issued over many years, the Department should provide one authoritative guide reflecting current constitutional doctrine and federal statutory protections. Its guidance should include practical examples addressing recurring issues involving student religious expression, Equal Access Act compliance, religious accommodations in public employment, faith-based organizations participating in government programs, healthcare conscience protections, military accommodations, houses of worship, and religious expression in public settings. Practical examples will provide significantly greater value than abstract legal standards, and these examples will assist government officials in resolving questions before constitutional disputes arise.

The ACLJ also supports the Commission’s recommendation that federal agencies expand public education concerning religious liberty. Americans cannot effectively exercise constitutional rights they do not understand. The DOJ should therefore develop standardized “Know Your Rights” materials tailored for different audiences in various fields, like education and the military. These materials should explain constitutional protections in plain language, summarize applicable federal statutes, identify available administrative remedies, and direct individuals to appropriate sources of assistance. Similarly, the ACLJ supports the Commission’s recommendation that federal agencies establish reporting mechanisms for alleged religious liberty violations.

The Commission has produced a thoughtful framework for strengthening religious liberty through executive action. The ACLJ respectfully offers several additional recommendations that would further assist implementation.

The DOJ should:

- 1) Designate a senior official within the Civil Rights Division to coordinate religious liberty matters across the Department. Centralized leadership would improve consistency in litigation, guidance, interagency coordination, and public outreach.
- 2) Establish a regular process for reviewing and updating religious liberty guidance following significant Supreme Court decisions or statutory changes. Constitutional doctrine continues to develop, and federal guidance should evolve accordingly. Periodic review will reduce reliance upon outdated legal standards while also promoting greater consistency across the federal government.
- 3) Continue its use of Statements of Interest in cases presenting significant questions concerning the Free Exercise Clause, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, religious accommodations, and equal treatment of religious organizations. Early participation by the United States often assists courts while promoting consistent interpretation of federal law.
- 4) Develop voluntary model policies addressing recurring religious liberty issues encountered by state and local governments. Practical guidance concerning student religious expression, public employment, religious accommodations, interactions with faith-based organizations, and houses of worship would assist government officials while reducing unnecessary constitutional disputes.
- 5) Create a centralized Religious Liberty Complaint Portal within the Civil Rights Division capable of directing complaints to the appropriate federal agency or Department component. A centralized intake process would simplify access for citizens, improve coordination among agencies, and enable the Department to identify recurring patterns of religious discrimination.
- 6) Periodically report on implementation of the Commission's recommendations. Public reporting will promote accountability, allow policymakers to measure progress, identify areas requiring additional attention, and ensure that the Commission's work continues to inform federal policy beyond publication of the final report.

Taken together, these recommendations would significantly improve implementation of the Commission's report. These steps will prevent many constitutional conflicts before they arise and strengthen protection for religious liberty across every area of public life.

II. Religious Liberty in Education

The Commission correctly identifies public education as one of the areas in which religious liberty is most frequently misunderstood. Despite decades of constitutional precedent, disputes involving

student religious expression, equal access, parental rights, and religious accommodations continue to arise in educational institutions from elementary schools to colleges. In many instances, these disputes do not result from uncertainty in the law, but from persistent misconceptions about the relationship between the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause.

The ACLJ agrees with the Commission that the federal government should prioritize educating school officials about existing constitutional protections. Students do not surrender their First Amendment rights when they enter the schoolhouse gate.² They remain free to engage in voluntary prayer during noninstructional time, organize religious student groups on the same basis as other student organizations, distribute religious literature where comparable materials are permitted, and express religious viewpoints in classroom assignments and discussions when relevant to the subject matter.³ These are constitutional guarantees entitled to the same protection afforded to every other form of protected expression.⁴ Yet, all too often, the ACLJ finds itself representing Americans who are denied their most basic religious liberties.

The Commission appropriately recommends updated guidance for school districts, increased educator training, and strategic enforcement where constitutional violations occur. The ACLJ supports these recommendations and encourages the DOJ to publish comprehensive guidance addressing the issues that most frequently generate disputes in public schools.

That guidance should address, at a minimum:

- Student prayer and voluntary religious expression.
- Equal Access Act compliance for student religious organizations.
- Distribution of religious literature.
- Religious expression during graduation ceremonies and extracurricular activities.
- Equal access to school facilities by religious organizations.
- Religious accommodations for students.
- Released-time religious instruction programs.
- The distinction between government speech and constitutionally protected private religious expression.

Providing practical examples alongside legal standards would significantly improve compliance while reducing unnecessary litigation. The ACLJ has repeatedly represented students and parents whose constitutional rights were violated because school officials misunderstood or ignored longstanding First Amendment principles. These matters have included student Bible clubs that

² See *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969) (“It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”)

³ Shaheryar Gill, *Know Your Rights: School Prayer*, ACLJ (Feb. 22, 2023), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/know-your-rights-school-prayer>.

⁴ See *id.*

were denied equal access to school facilities,⁵ students who were prohibited from expressing religious viewpoints in classroom assignments,⁶ and students who were disciplined for engaging in constitutionally protected religious expression.⁷

In 2025 alone, the ACLJ represented multiple students who wanted to start Christian clubs at their public high schools but were met with hostility as opposed to neutrality:

- A Minnesota public high school prohibited a student from hosting prayer gatherings and charged her Christian club rental fees to use school property while freely granting access to secular student groups.⁸
- A New York public high school treated a student Christian club, called the “Good News Club,” with similar hostility by removing the club’s posters from school hallways and forcing the club to change its name, remove all religious imagery from its posters, and submit all religious content to the school for review.⁹
- Another New York public high school continuously delayed the approval of a Christian club called the “Jesus Club” for nine months. Meanwhile, a secular club that applied at the same time was approved within days. The school also compelled the group to change its religious name because it wasn’t “inclusive” enough and denied it equal access to meeting times granted to secular groups.¹⁰

Many of these disputes were resolved after school officials received a clearer explanation of their legal obligations, demonstrating the value of proactive guidance before litigation becomes necessary. On other occasions, the ACLJ has been forced to revisit repeat violations in a single school district. Just this past month, a sixth-grade girl had her religious liberties violated by a Washington middle school for the third time. As a second grader, she had her Bible and Gospel tracts confiscated. Earlier this year, she was scolded for talking to her classmates about Jesus. Now, she was forced to return to an assembly that she believed violated her religion. Whether judicial intervention ultimately becomes necessary or the ACLJ’s demand letter¹¹ leads the school to

⁵ Letter from the Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to Jay C. Lebrun, Superintendent of Schs., Plattsburgh City Sch. Dist. (Nov. 6, 2025), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-demand-letter-to-plattsburgh-school-district-superintendent>.

⁶ Abigail A. Southerland, *ACLJ Assists College Student After English Professor Refuses to Accept Her Essay on Jesus*, ACLJ (Dec. 14, 2021), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-assists-college-student-after-english-professor-refuses-to-accept-her-essay-on-jesus>.

⁷ Nathan Moelker, *ACLJ Wins Major Victory on Behalf of 9-Year-Old Students Banned from Sharing Easter Eggs with Bible Verses in Them*, ACLJ (May 9, 2024), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-wins-major-victory-on-behalf-of-9-year-old-students-banned-from-sharing-easter-eggs-with-bible-verses-in-them>.

⁸ Letter from the Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to Chris Swenson, Superintendent of Schs. of Holdingford Pub. Sch. Dist. (Oct. 1, 2025), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-demand-letter-to-holdingford-public-school-district>.

⁹ Letter from the Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to Dr. Erin Meehan-Fairben, Superintendent of Schools of Carmel Central School District, (June 9, 2025), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-demand-letter-on-behalf-of-censored-christian-student-club>.

¹⁰ Letter from the Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to Jay Lebrun, Superintendent of Schs. of Plattsburgh City Pub. Schs., (Nov. 6, 2025), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-demand-letter-to-plattsburgh-school-district-superintendent>.

¹¹ Christina Compagnone, *“YOU HAVE NO CHOICE” – After Backpack Searches for Bibles and Scolding for Mentioning Jesus, School District Forces Christian Girl to Violate Her Faith*, ACLJ (June 18, 2026),

reverse course, cases such as this clarify that public school officials need further guidance on the First Amendment rights of their students.

The Commission emphasizes the importance of accountability when school districts fail to respect students' constitutional rights. The ACLJ agrees that federal agencies should continue investigating credible allegations of unlawful religious discrimination and, where appropriate, pursue enforcement actions to ensure compliance with federal law. This past month, the ACLJ filed a Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") Request¹² demanding answers as to whether the Biden Administration's Department of Education ("DOE") systematically targeted Christian colleges and universities while ignoring comparable misconduct at secular universities. A report by the American Principles Project revealed that approximately 70% of enforcement actions were directed at faith-based or career-education schools.¹³ Yet not a single Ivy League university faced an enforcement action.¹⁴ The ACLJ is demanding answers for why Christian colleges and universities were targeted by DOE investigations and enforcement actions.

At the same time, enforcement should remain coupled with technical assistance. Many disputes can be resolved through education and voluntary compliance before formal litigation becomes necessary. The ACLJ has dealt with several conflicts that were successfully resolved after clear guidance was provided. One such conflict involved Southern Illinois University ("SIU") forcing a pastor to relocate to a designated free speech zone just for sharing his faith with students. This pastor had been peacefully sharing his faith with willing participants on SIU's public campus for thirty years, but in 2021, he was threatened with arrest and forced to relocate if he wanted to continue to engage in religious conversations. However, after the ACLJ sent SIU a demand letter¹⁵ educating them on the pastor's First Amendment rights, the university backed down.

Educational employees likewise retain constitutional protections, subject to the unique responsibilities of public employment. The Commission correctly notes that educators often face uncertainty regarding the scope of their own religious expression and accommodations. For example, the ACLJ recently represented Staci Barber,¹⁶ a public-school teacher in Texas, who was told by the school principal that she was not allowed to pray anywhere students might see her. This was after she was seen quietly praying at a "See You at the Pole" prayer event before the school

<https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/you-have-no-choice-after-backpack-searches-for-bibles-and-scolding-for-mentioning-jesus-school-district-forces-christian-girl-to-violate-her-faith>.

¹² Letter from Jordan Sekulow, Exec. Dir., Benjamin P. Sisney, Senior Litig. Couns., and John A. Monaghan, Senior Litig. Couns., of the Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to the Off. of the Deputy Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of Educ. (June 23, 2026), http://media.aclj.org/pdf/ACLJ-FOIA-to-DOE-Final_Redacted.pdf.

¹³ Jon Schweppe, *The Department of Education's Office of Enforcement: The Obscure Agency Leading a Crusade Against Christian Colleges and How New Data Proves the Bias*, AM. PRINCIPLES PROJECT 14 (Nov. 2024).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Letter from Garrett Taylor, Assoc. Couns., and Nathan Moelker, Senior Assoc. Couns., of the Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to Austin A. Lane, Chancellor S. Ill. Univ. (Jan. 15, 2026), http://media.aclj.org/pdf/1.15.26-ACLJ-Ltr.-to-SIU_Redacted.pdf.

¹⁶ Brief of the American Center for Law and Justice as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners, Staci Barber v. Bryan Scott Rounds, 169 F.4th 577 (5th Cir. 2026) (No. 25-20125).

day began. The fifth circuit, relying on *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*,¹⁷ held that the principal imposed an unconstitutional, visibility-based prohibition on Staci's private religious expression—a ban with no basis in law.¹⁸

Updated guidance should therefore include practical instruction regarding employee religious accommodations, and personal religious expression outside official duties. Guidance should also distinguish between private speech and government speech. Clear standards will benefit educators and school districts alike by reducing uncertainty and promoting consistent application of the law.

Public colleges and universities deserve similar attention. Institutions dedicated to the free exchange of ideas should not treat religious viewpoints as disfavored perspectives. For example, the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant Program (“VTAG”) provides tuition assistance to students in Virginia who are attending private universities, unless those students are pursuing degrees where the primary purpose is “religious training or theological education.”¹⁹ The restriction does not exclude one type of degree; it excludes entire institutions. Students at Liberty University are challenging this unconstitutional exclusion at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. The ACLJ has filed an amicus brief defending the students at Liberty University,²⁰ saying the government cannot exclude individuals from a public benefit because of their religious beliefs.

Campus policies should be administered in a viewpoint-neutral manner that affords religious organizations the same opportunities available to secular organizations. Federal agencies should continue monitoring compliance with these constitutional requirements and should provide guidance to public institutions when recurring legal issues emerge.

The Commission also appropriately emphasizes the central role parents play in directing the upbringing and education of their children. A recent ACLJ case illustrates how government officials have attempted to take control of a child's moral and religious upbringing, effectively replacing the child's parents.²¹ A Massachusetts parent requested that the school allow his kindergartener to be excused from certain class lessons that went against his family's deeply held religious beliefs. He additionally requested that the school give him the opportunity to review the curriculum. The school, however, failed to provide the parent with the curriculum and forced the

¹⁷ *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, 597 U.S. 507 (2022).

¹⁸ *Barber v. Rounds*, 169 F.4th 577, 584 (5th Cir. 2026) (“*Kennedy* clearly established that school officials may not impose categorical, visibility-based restrictions on an employee's private religious expression or exercise outside official duties.”).

¹⁹ 8 VA. ADMIN. CODE § 40-71-10 (LEXIS through June 4, 2026).

²⁰ Brief of Amici Curiae the American Center for Law and Justice and Joshua Davey in Support of Plaintiffs-Appellants and Reversal, *Johnson v. Fleming*, No. 26-1437 (4th Cir. 2026), http://media.aclj.org/pdf/JohnsonvFlemingAmicusFiled_Redacted.pdf.

²¹ Olivia Summers, *Massachusetts School Violates Parental Rights by Ignoring Religious Opt-Out Request*, ACLJ (Oct. 7, 2025), <https://aclj.org/school-choice/massachusetts-school-violates-parental-rights-by-ignoring-religious-opt-out-request>.

child to participate in the lessons. But this is not the school's decision to make; parents have a constitutional right to direct the upbringing of their children.

Religious liberty and parental rights are closely connected constitutional principles. Parents seeking to raise their children consistent with their religious convictions depend upon transparent communication with public institutions and meaningful opportunities to participate in important decisions affecting their children. The ACLJ therefore supports the Commission's recommendation that the DOJ issue guidance concerning parental rights and work with the Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS") to improve coordination across the federal government.

Any guidance concerning parental rights should emphasize several fundamental principles. Parents should receive timely notice regarding significant educational decisions affecting their minor children. Public schools should also encourage meaningful communication with families and recognize parents as partners in the educational process. Requests for religious accommodations should be evaluated with appropriate consideration for the important role parents play in directing the religious upbringing of their children. These measures strengthen public confidence while reducing unnecessary conflict between families and schools.

The ACLJ also supports the Commission's recommendation that federal agencies explore reporting mechanisms through which students, parents, and educators may seek assistance when constitutional rights are violated. Any reporting system should serve not only as an enforcement tool but also as an educational resource. Individuals seeking assistance should have immediate access to guidance explaining their rights and available avenues, as well as model policies, for informal resolution where appropriate. Providing accurate information at the outset may prevent many disputes from escalating into litigation.

Finally, the ACLJ recommends that the DOJ periodically review educational guidance to ensure it reflects current constitutional doctrine. School administrators frequently rely on training materials that remain in circulation long after significant developments in First Amendment jurisprudence. Regular review and revision of federal guidance will help ensure that educators receive accurate legal instruction while reducing reliance on outdated constitutional interpretations.

The Commission correctly notes that schools are often where Americans first encounter the practical meaning of the First Amendment. When students, parents, and educators understand both the rights and responsibilities protected by the Constitution, religious liberty is strengthened not only within our educational institutions but throughout American civic life.

III. Religious Liberty for the Public Good

Religious liberty protects the ability of individuals and institutions to live out sincerely held religious convictions while serving their communities. These institutions and individuals all

contribute immeasurably to the public good. Their continued participation depends upon a legal framework that respects religious exercise while allowing the government to pursue legitimate public interests through constitutionally appropriate means.

The Commission correctly observes that many recent conflicts have arisen because religious organizations and individuals have been asked to choose between remaining faithful to their religious convictions and continuing to participate fully in public life. The ACLJ agrees that the government should seek reasonable accommodations and equal treatment whenever possible rather than creating unnecessary conflicts between public service and religious conviction.

A. Faith-Based Institutions

Faith-based organizations have long served communities through countless charitable programs. These institutions often provide services that government alone could not effectively deliver, while remaining motivated by religious convictions that define their missions and identities. However, such institutions have continuously been the target of hostile government action.

In Colorado, for example, a local ordinance targeted three church ministry programs to aid the homeless. The churches gather on Tuesdays and Thursdays in a local park to provide meals for the homeless accompanied with Bible study and worship. In July 2024, the local Chief of Police shut down the distribution of food. After a meeting was called with local pastors, the churches were notified of a new ordinance that prevented them from distributing meals to the homeless. The ACLJ has filed a federal lawsuit against the city to strike down this ordinance, stating that it directly violates the First Amendment by targeting church activity.²²

Additionally, a federal court decision in Phoenix recently reinforced that the First Amendment does not allow cities to punish groups or individuals for simply exercising their faith. Like the local ordinance in Colorado, the Phoenix ordinance prevented a local church from continuing its weekly assistance for the homeless. The church held meetings in a public park that gave meals to the homeless in tandem with a Bible study and worship. The Phoenix federal court issued a temporary restraining order, blocking the enforcement of this ordinance.²³ The court stated that the ordinance directly targeted the church and, therefore, the church would likely succeed on its First Amendment claim. This decision not only has a direct impact on the ACLJ's lawsuit in Colorado but also reinforces an important principle: laws that single out conduct based on religious motivation are unconstitutional.

The ACLJ has also represented churches and religious ministries facing zoning restrictions, unequal treatment under local land use regulations, and limitations on religious gatherings. Mr.

²² Complaint at 9, *Baca v. City of Northglenn*, No. 1:25-cv-03678 (D. Colo. filed Nov. 14, 2025).

²³ Garrett Taylor, *Phoenix Tried to Silence a Church Ministry—Ruling Could Bolster ACLJ's Defense of Pastors in Colorado*, ACLJ (June 17, 2025), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/phoenix-tried-to-silence-a-church-ministry-ruling-could-bolster-acljs-defense-of-pastors-in-colorado>.

Grand, an Orthodox Jew in Ohio, applied for a permit to host a minyan—a prayer quorum of 10 or more—in his home. Mr. Grand was met with a severe government pressure campaign including neighbor surveillance, antisemitic intimidation, and quasi-judicial hearings. The pressure was so intense that Mr. Grand removed his application. The Sixth Circuit ruled against Mr. Grand, instructing him to use the administrative process to seek relief²⁴—the very same process that administered a pressure campaign against him. After Mr. Grand appealed, the ACLJ filed an amicus brief asking the Supreme Court to reverse the Sixth Circuit decision against him and grant relief.²⁵ The Supreme Court recently granted the petition for writ of certiorari,²⁶ which reinforces the Commission’s conclusion that equal treatment, rather than special treatment, remains the governing constitutional principle.

The Commission appropriately concludes that these organizations should not be excluded from public programs or denied opportunities solely because they maintain a religious identity. Equal participation by religious organizations is not a governmental preference for religion. It is a constitutional requirement that the government not discriminate against religious exercise.

One recent case further illustrates this: the Ninth Circuit upheld a California regulation that requires religious schools to allow students to opt out of religious services and activities.²⁷ This regulation undermines the purpose of religious schools—to teach according to their faith. Further, it creates unconstitutional government entanglement with religion by requiring state inspectors to evaluate religious practices, communal worship, and spiritual formation to determine whether the students feel free to opt out of the religious activity. Entanglement such as this is a violation of the Establishment Clause and goes against the holdings of *Hosanna-Tabor* and *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, which protect the right of religious institutions to decide who teaches the faith and, therefore, what is being taught.²⁸

The ACLJ therefore supports the Commission’s recommendation that faith-based organizations be permitted to compete equally for public benefits without being required to abandon their religious character. Federal agencies should review existing grant conditions, regulations, and guidance documents to ensure that religious organizations receive the same treatment afforded to similarly situated secular organizations.

To promote consistency across the Executive Branch, the ACLJ recommends that the DOJ develop model nondiscrimination policies for agencies administering federal funding programs. Those

²⁴ *Grand v. City of Univ. Heights*, 159 F.4th 507, 512 (6th Cir. 2025).

²⁵ Brief for the American Center for Law and Justice as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners, *Grand v. City of Univ. Heights*, 159 F.4th 507 (6th Cir. 2025) (No. 25-802).

²⁶ *Grand v. City of Univ. Heights*, No. 25-965, 2026 U.S. LEXIS at *2901 (June 30, 2026).

²⁷ *Foothills Christian Ministries v. Johnson*, 148 F.4th 1040, 1048–49 (9th Cir. 2025).

²⁸ See *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & Sch. v. EEOC*, 565 U.S. 171, 196 (2012) (“The church must be free to choose those who will guide it on its way.”); *Our Lady of Guadalupe Sch. v. Morrissey-Berru*, 591 U.S. 732, 762 (2020).

policies should clearly explain that religious organizations remain eligible to participate in generally available public programs while continuing to operate in accordance with their sincerely held religious beliefs, consistent with applicable constitutional and statutory protections.

The Commission also recommends greater transparency when government officials allege that religious expression violates applicable law. The ACLJ supports this recommendation. Requiring written explanations that identify the specific constitutional or statutory basis for enforcement decisions promotes accountability and improves public confidence. This requirement would also encourage careful legal analysis before a government action burdens religious exercise. This would also require regulators to evaluate their proposals when demanding such regulations on the religious exercise of our nation's heroic service members.

B. Religious Liberty in the Armed Forces

The country asks extraordinary sacrifices of the men and women who serve in uniform. Those who volunteer to defend the Constitution should not be required to surrender their constitutional freedoms they have sworn to protect. Religious liberty and military readiness, when properly understood, reinforce one another by strengthening morale, integrity, and trust within the armed forces.

The ACLJ agrees with the Commission that the Pentagon should continue improving its religious accommodation process and provide updated guidance to commanders and Judge Advocate General officers regarding applicable constitutional and statutory protections. For example, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the largest military medical facility in the country, issued a cease-and-desist order preventing the Franciscan Order, a Catholic group, from providing religious services to U.S. military personnel, their families, and the staff at the hospital just two days before the start of Holy Week.²⁹ The Franciscan Order had provided pastoral care at Walter Reed National Medical Center for 20 years.³⁰ This decision left thousands without religious care, because they are unable to travel to church for services due to medical treatment. The Franciscans were told their contract expired, there was no intention of renewing, and there was no plan for Mass or confessions for the entirety of Holy Week. Instead, the contract was given to Mack Global, which does not employ a Catholic priest. The ACLJ filed a FOIA Request³¹ demanding answers regarding why the U.S. Defense Health Agency ("DHA") did not renew the Franciscan Order's contract and instead hired a secular, for-profit business. This decision leaves service members,

²⁹ Wesley Smith, *Is Walter Reed National Medical Center Violating Free Exercise of Religion?*, ACLJ (Apr. 20, 2023), <https://aclj.org/us-military/is-walter-reed-national-military-medical-center-violating-free-exercise-of-religion>.

³⁰ Jordan Sekulow, *ACLJ Files Urgent FOIA Demand After Christian Clergy Blocked From Ministering to Soldiers at Walter Reed at Easter, Replaced by Secular, For-Profit Service Provider*, ACLJ (May 3, 2023), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-files-urgent-foia-demand-after-christian-clergy-blocked-from-ministering-to-soldiers-at-walter-reed-at-easter-replaced-by-secular-for-profit-service-provider>.

³¹ Letter from Jordan Sekulow, Exec. Dir., Benjamin P. Sisney, Senior Litig. Couns., and John A. Monaghan, Senior Litig. Couns., of the Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to the DHA FOIA Service Center (Apr. 28, 2023), http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Walter-Reed-Request_Redacted.pdf.

veterans, and their families without religious services just days before the most important week of the year for Catholics. Consistent standards promote fairness for service members while providing commanders with clear expectations when evaluating accommodation requests.

The Secretary should establish uniform procedures governing requests for religious accommodation across all military branches, including reasonable timelines for decisions, written explanations supporting approvals or denials, and meaningful opportunities for administrative review. Such procedures would improve consistency while preserving the flexibility necessary to address unique operational requirements. The ACLJ recently represented a service member who faced threats of disciplinary action, including termination, because he wanted to be exempt from answering a single training question that violated his deeply held religious beliefs during the Biden-era. Now under the Trump Administration, the United States Army has now signed a binding legal document stating the service member did not engage in any discrimination and expunged the incident from his otherwise unblemished 22-year service record.³²

The Commission also appropriately emphasizes the indispensable role that military chaplains play in supporting the spiritual well-being of service members. Chaplains serve personnel from many faith traditions while remaining faithful to the religious traditions that endorse and commission them. Preserving both responsibilities strengthens religious liberty throughout the Armed Forces.

Finally, the ACLJ recommends incorporating practical instruction regarding religious liberty into professional military education programs. Commanders regularly confront questions involving religious exercise. Early education will better prepare military leaders to resolve these matters consistently while reducing avoidable disputes in the armed forces' critical missions. This further applies to the frontlines of healthcare.

C. Religious Liberty and Conscience Protections in Healthcare

Healthcare presents some of the most sensitive questions involving religious liberty because medical decisions frequently implicate deeply held moral and religious convictions. Congress has long recognized that preserving diversity within the healthcare profession requires protecting the rights of individuals and institutions whose religious beliefs prevent participation in certain medical procedures.

The ACLJ has represented healthcare providers and filed comments opposing federal regulations that inadequately protect religious conscience rights. Our experience demonstrates that clear administrative guidance and consistent enforcement reduce conflict while protecting patients and providers alike. The ACLJ therefore supports the Commission's recommendation that federal

³² Nathan Moelker, *ACLJ Wins Major Religious Liberty Victory: Army Employee Vindicated After Years of Fighting for His Faith Against Biden Administration*, ACLJ (Mar. 4, 2026), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-wins-major-religious-liberty-victory-army-employee-vindicated-after-years-of-fighting-for-his-faith-against-biden-administration>.

agencies strengthen enforcement of existing conscience protections and restore specialized expertise within HHS dedicated to religious liberty and conscience rights. Healthcare professionals should not be forced to choose between faithfully practicing their profession and faithfully practicing their religion.

The Commission also recommends expanding educational resources and reporting mechanisms for healthcare workers. The ACLJ agrees that these measures would significantly improve awareness of existing federal protections while encouraging early resolution of disputes before litigation becomes necessary.

To complement the Commission's recommendations, the ACLJ encourages HHS to publish a comprehensive guide explaining the principal federal conscience statutes, including the Church Amendments, the Weldon Amendment, the Coats-Snowe Amendment, and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. A single reference document would assist healthcare institutions in understanding their respective rights and obligations.

Healthcare institutions participating in federal programs should likewise be encouraged to adopt transparent procedures for evaluating requests for religious accommodation. Institutions that establish clear internal policies are often able to resolve concerns through dialogue and reasonable accommodation rather than litigation. Finally, federal agencies should provide regular training for investigators, compliance personnel, and attorneys responsible for administering federal conscience protections. Consistent enforcement depends upon a thorough understanding of both the constitutional principles and statutory frameworks governing religious accommodations in healthcare.

Recent victories secured by the ACLJ further demonstrate the real-world impact of robust conscience protections. For instance, the ACLJ successfully advocated for five ultrasound technicians at a New Mexico hospital who faced pressure to assist in abortion procedures contrary to their religious beliefs.³³ Following a demand letter, the hospital granted full religious accommodations to each technician, allowing them to continue their professional roles without violating their faith.

Similarly, at Baptist Health Lexington, two nurses—Judy and Amy—faced requirements to participate in abortion-related procedures, including Dilation and Evacuation (“D&E”) processes. With ACLJ support, both received comprehensive religious accommodations. Judy obtained a full exemption aligning with her calling to heal rather than harm, while Amy was relieved from any involvement in D&E procedures, including post-procedure tasks that conflicted with her Christian

³³ Olivia Summers, *ACLJ Sends Demand Letter to Hospital to Prevent 5 Ultrasound Technicians From Being Forced to Assist in Abortions*, ACLJ (Feb. 18, 2025), <https://aclj.org/pro-life/aclj-sends-demand-letter-to-hospital-to-prevent-5-ultrasound-technicians-from-being-forced-to-assist-in-abortions>.

convictions.³⁴ These outcomes highlight how proactive legal advocacy and institutional cooperation can resolve conflicts without litigation.

In addition to those victories, the ACLJ currently represents medical professionals still facing discrimination because of their religious beliefs.

Dr. Gennaro Polverino was denied a job for refusing to refer patients for an abortion. Dr. Polverino is a licensed medical professional with eight years of experience at Rochester Regional Health (“RRH”). As part of his faith, he does not perform or refer patients for contraceptives, abortion-inducing drugs, or abortions. Dr. Polverino sought to return to RRH, where he saw a clause in his employment agreement that required him to refer patients to another medical professional when there was a conflict with his religious beliefs. He requested this clause be removed or that he be granted a religious exemption. A new contract had an identical clause. Dr. Polverino refused to sign the contract, and his employment start date was canceled. The ACLJ has filed a formal complaint with the HHS’s Office for Civil Rights.³⁵ Preventing unlawful discrimination begins with understanding the law. Accordingly, the Department should continue publishing practical educational materials explaining reasonable religious accommodations, prohibited religious discrimination, and available administrative remedies.

A parallel case underscores ongoing challenges in federal facilities. The ACLJ filed a formal complaint with the HHS Office for Civil Rights on behalf of a board-certified internal medicine physician at a Veterans Affairs (“VA”) medical center. The physician, who holds sincere Christian beliefs opposing participation in abortion-related activities, faced coercion and retaliation—including rescission of a return offer—after invoking federal conscience protections.³⁶ These incidents illustrate how even highly qualified professionals can be forced out or blocked when institutions fail to honor statutory safeguards such as the Church Amendments and Weldon Amendment.

Faith-based healthcare institutions also face increased pressure when government actors disregard federal conscience protections. The ACLJ recently filed a complaint with the HHS Office for Civil Rights on behalf of A Woman’s Concern, doing business as Your Options Medical, a Christian nonprofit pregnancy resource center and licensed medical clinic in Massachusetts. The complaint challenged actions by state officials who targeted the organization because of its religious beliefs and pro-life mission, including efforts to pressure healthcare providers and affiliated institutions

³⁴ Olivia Summers, *Victory: Second Medical Professional at the Same Hospital Receives Life-Affirming Religious Accommodation*, ACLJ (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://aclj.org/pro-life/victory-second-medical-professional-at-the-same-hospital-receives-life-affirming-religious-accommodation>.

³⁵ Letter from Olivia Summers, Senior Litig. Couns., and Nathan Moelker, Senior Assoc. Couns., Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to the U.S. Dep’t of Health and Hum. Servs. (June 3, 2026), http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Polverino-Complaint_Redacted.pdf.

³⁶ *ACLJ HHS Complaint Regarding VA Facility Forcing Physician Out Over Conscience Objections on Abortion*, ACLJ (May 20, 2026), <https://aclj.org/pro-life/aclj-hhs-complaint-regarding-va-facility-forcing-physician-out-over-conscience-objections-on-abortion>.

to sever relationships with the clinic. These actions threatened the ability of a faith-based medical provider to continue serving women and families in accordance with its religious convictions. The matter underscores the importance of vigorous federal enforcement of conscience and religious liberty protections, not only for individual healthcare professionals but also for religious healthcare organizations whose ability to participate in federally funded healthcare programs depends upon equal treatment under the law.³⁷

Preventing unlawful discrimination begins with understanding the law. Accordingly, the Department should continue publishing practical educational materials explaining reasonable religious accommodations, prohibited religious discrimination, and available administrative remedies.

Faith-based healthcare professionals and organizations have served American communities for generations. The report correctly notes that religious liberty within these institutions is not simply a matter of individual rights; it also preserves a diverse network of organizations and professionals whose service has long strengthened communities throughout the Nation. The ACLJ encourages the Commission to retain these recommendations while emphasizing practical implementation through clear guidance, consistent enforcement, and ongoing education across the federal government.

IV. Combating Religious Discrimination

The Commission appropriately concludes that protecting religious liberty requires more than safeguarding constitutional rights in the abstract. Those protections must be enforced consistently and applied equally to Americans of every faith. The ACLJ therefore supports the Commission's recommendations addressing religious discrimination and antisemitism, while encouraging continued emphasis on education, coordination, and faithful enforcement of existing law.

The Commission correctly identifies the rise in antisemitism as one of the most serious religious liberty challenges confronting the nation. Jewish Americans should be able to participate in every aspect of American life without fear of harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or violence.

A recent ACLJ case illustrates the hostilities Jewish Americans face.³⁸ Our client—a student at a prestigious New York law school—faced discrimination, harassment, and exclusion based on her Jewish identity and Israeli heritage after the October 7 attack. The school environment became hostile and she became uncomfortable sharing her identity as she watched student organizations

³⁷ *ACLJ Complaint to HHS Regarding Discrimination Violation at A Woman's Concern d/b/a Your Options Medical Centers*, ACLJ (Apr. 21, 2026), <https://aclj.org/pro-life/aclj-complaint-to-hhs-regarding-discrimination-violation-at-a-womans-concern-dba-your-options-medical-centers>.

³⁸ Jordan Sekulow, *MAJOR VICTORY: New York Law School Orders Removal of Antisemitic Social Media Posts Following ACLJ Representation*, ACLJ (Oct. 22, 2025), <https://aclj.org/battling-antisemitism/major-victory-new-york-law-school-orders-removal-of-antisemitic-social-media-posts-following-aclj-representation>.

celebrate Jewish deaths and glorify Hamas. School administrators took minimal action to help—not even explicitly condemning the actions of Hamas immediately following the October 7 attack. It took significant pressure from Jewish students for the administration to condemn Hamas, but still nothing was done about the rampant antisemitism spread by student organizations. The ACLJ stepped in and represented our client through an investigation with outside counsel before the school recognized these posts as problematic and ordered the organizations to take them down or face consequences. The federal government has both the authority and the responsibility to enforce existing civil rights laws vigorously where unlawful conduct occurs.

The ACLJ supports the Commission's recommendations that the DOJ strengthen coordination with federal, state, and local law enforcement, to improve the collection of reliable data concerning antisemitic incidents and ensure prompt enforcement of applicable federal law. Accurate reporting and consistent enforcement will improve public safety while providing policymakers with a clearer understanding of emerging threats.

The Commission also recommends improving enforcement of Titles VI and VII and expanding educational resources concerning religious discrimination. The ACLJ agrees that many employers, educational institutions, and public officials would benefit from additional guidance regarding their obligations under existing law.

Recent ACLJ cases demonstrate that religious discrimination in the workplace remains a persistent concern. For example, the ACLJ filed a charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) on behalf of a Christian employee who alleged that Timken terminated his employment after he sought a religious accommodation and raised concerns regarding the company’s treatment of his faith-based beliefs.³⁹ In another matter, the ACLJ represented a hospital employee who was prohibited from leading a voluntary Bible study during nonworking break periods, despite the absence of any evidence that the activity disrupted hospital operations or interfered with patient care.⁴⁰ Following ACLJ intervention, the hospital reversed course and permitted the employee's religious activity. Likewise, the ACLJ secured a favorable resolution for a United States Postal Service (“USPS”) employee who sought a religious accommodation allowing him to attend Sunday church services.⁴¹ After initially denying the request, USPS ultimately granted the accommodation, enabling the employee to continue both his employment and his religious observance. These cases illustrate that many religious-liberty disputes arise not

³⁹ Kelsey E. McGee, *ACLJ Files EEOC Complaint After Timken’s Retaliatory Firing of Christian Employee and “Ghosting” the ACLJ*, ACLJ (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-files-eeoc-complaint-after-timkens-retaliatory-firing-of-christian-employee-and-ghosting-the-aclj>.

⁴⁰ Garrett Taylor, *Major Hospital Bans Employee from Having Bible Study During Break Time – ACLJ Prepares for Lawsuit If They Don’t Back Down*, ACLJ (May 3, 2024), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/major-hospital-bans-employee-from-having-bible-study-during-break-time-aclj-prepares-for-lawsuit-if-they-dont-back-down>.

⁴¹ Abigail A. Southerland & Nathan Moelker, *Victory for Religious Freedom: USPS Backtracks, Grants Our Client Religious Accommodation to Go to Church on Sunday*, ACLJ (June 3, 2025), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/victory-for-religious-freedom-usps-backtracks-grants-our-client-religious-accommodation-to-go-to-church-on-sunday>.

from uncertainty in the law, but from a failure to properly apply longstanding protections against religious discrimination and to reasonably accommodate sincerely held religious beliefs.

Increased education regarding Title VII obligations, coupled with consistent enforcement, would help prevent many of these conflicts before they require administrative complaints or litigation. At the same time, enforcement efforts should remain faithful to the Constitution's dual commitment to religious liberty and freedom of speech. Vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws and robust protection of constitutional freedoms are complementary objectives. Both are essential to preserving a society in which individuals of differing religious beliefs may participate fully in public life without fear of discrimination or governmental overreach.

V. Religious Liberty in the Public Square and the Private Sector

The Commission correctly recognizes that religious liberty challenges increasingly arise not only from direct government action but also from the growing influence of private entities that control access to modern channels of communication, commerce, and public engagement. As public discourse moves onto digital platforms and private companies exercise unprecedented control over advertising, content distribution, and public visibility, religious organizations and people of faith face new forms of discrimination that can substantially burden their ability to participate in public life.

The ACLJ agrees with the Commission that religious liberty protections must account for the realities of the modern public square. While private companies generally possess their own constitutional rights, concentrated control over essential communication platforms creates opportunities for viewpoint-based discrimination that can silence religious perspectives and exclude faith-based organizations from public discourse. Such discrimination is particularly concerning when dominant platforms apply policies inconsistently or selectively against religious viewpoints while permitting comparable secular speech.

The ACLJ has repeatedly confronted such concerns. Recently, the ACLJ called upon Congress to investigate evidence that major technology platforms, including Google and TikTok, systematically censored Christian content through opaque moderation practices and advertising restrictions. These platforms increasingly serve as the primary means through which religious organizations communicate with the public, raise awareness regarding their missions, and engage in protected religious expression.⁴² When access to these platforms is restricted based upon religious viewpoint, the practical effect can be the exclusion of faith-based voices from significant portions of modern civic discourse.

⁴² Nathan Moelker, *ACLJ Calls on Congress to Confront Google and TikTok's Systematic Censorship of Christian Content*, ACLJ (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/aclj-calls-on-congress-to-confront-google-and-tiktoks-systematic-censorship-of-christian-content>.

The ACLJ similarly urged congressional oversight regarding evidence that pro-life pregnancy resource centers were being systematically suppressed by major technology companies through search engine practices, advertising restrictions, and content moderation decisions. Pregnancy resource centers provide lawful services and constitutionally protected speech, yet many have faced obstacles that limit their ability to communicate with women seeking assistance. The selective suppression of faith-based and pro-life viewpoints undermines the principles of viewpoint neutrality that are essential to a free society.⁴³

Discrimination against religious viewpoints is not limited to online platforms. The ACLJ recently secured a victory after a billboard company reversed its decision to prohibit advertisements promoting Abortion Pill Reversal.⁴⁴ The company initially rejected the advertisements based on disagreement with the message despite permitting other advocacy-oriented content. Following ACLJ intervention, the company reversed course and approved the advertisements.⁴⁵ This matter illustrates how private entities that control significant channels of public communication can effectively silence religious and pro-life viewpoints when policies are applied selectively or inconsistently.

The Commission appropriately emphasizes the importance of preserving a public square in which religious viewpoints receive equal treatment. The ACLJ therefore encourages federal agencies and policymakers to continue examining discriminatory practices by dominant private actors, promote transparency in content moderation and advertising decisions, and ensure that religious organizations are not excluded from modern channels of communication because of their faith-based perspectives. Religious liberty cannot be fully protected if people of faith are free to speak in theory but are systematically denied meaningful access to the forums where public discourse now occurs.

Conclusion

Religious liberty does not require new constitutional protections. It requires faithful application of the protections Americans already possess. The Commission's report offers an important opportunity to improve that application through better guidance, more consistent enforcement, and

⁴³ Letter from Jordan Sekulow, Exec. Dir., Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., & Olivia F. Summers, Senior Litig. Couns., Am. Ctr. for L. and Just., to Jim Jordan, Chairman, House Comm. on the Judiciary (Oct. 15, 2025), http://media.aclj.org/pdf/10.15.25-ACLJ-Letter-to-Chairman-Jordan-of-the-House-Judiciary-Committee_Redacted.pdf; Olivia Summers, *ACLJ Calls on Congress and the White House to Confront the Systematic Censorship of Pro-Life Pregnancy Centers*, ACLJ (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://aclj.org/pro-life/aclj-calls-on-congress-and-the-white-house-to-confront-the-systematic-censorship-of-pro-life-pregnancy-centers>.

⁴⁴ Olivia Summers, *Victory: Billboard Company Reverses Course, Allows Lifesaving Abortion Pill Reversal Ads*, ACLJ (Apr. 24, 2026), <https://aclj.org/pro-life/victory-billboard-company-reverses-course-allows-lifesaving-abortion-pill-reversal-ads>.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

renewed commitment to the First Amendment. Citizens should not be required to vindicate well-established constitutional rights only after suffering preventable violations.

The ACLJ appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments and stands ready to assist the Commission and the Department as they continue this important work.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mark Kelly
Director of Government Affairs
**AMERICAN CENTER FOR
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From: Kent Millard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation Between Church and Government

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:08:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear RLC members,

In confidence of your very best intentions, I earnestly request that you maintain the separation between church and state, and that you uphold the Johnson Amendment as it was given to the American people. When government becomes involved with the exercise and enforcement of religion it always results in persecution. It was the religious leaders of Christ's day and the Roman government that put Him to death - and this everlastingly proves that church and government combined for the support and enforcement of religion is a bad combination.

George Washington the 1st U.S. president stated:

"Every man who conducts himself as a good citizen, is accountable alone to God for his religious faith, and should be protected in worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience."

As our constitution guarantees us:

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

And as one writer stated:

"It is the duty of the state to protect liberty of conscience, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion."

The solution to our moral problems in America is not government power and enforcement - but the preaching of the Bible and the presence of the Spirit of God.

Romans chapter 13 upholds the authority of governments as ordained of God, but carefully quotes from the last half of the ten commandments and not at all from any of the first 4 Commandments which deal directly with a man's relation to his God.

It is a clear by this and many other passages in the Bible that our first duty is obedience to God:

"We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:32

If church and state/government becomes united in our country as some wish to have - the result will be loss of freedoms and the override of conscience, and a terrible repeat of the persecutions of the past - history always repeats itself.

In all respect

Kent Millard

From: KimiAherni <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:08:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

1. I object to taxpayer dollars being used to fund religious non-profit activities.
2. I objection to taxpayer dollars being used to fund religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.
3. Please **DO NOT** repeal the **Johnson Amendment**, which restricts church's political activities; rather **FULLY ENFORCE IT**.

Although the phrase "separation of church and state" is not word-for-word in the U.S. Constitution, the principle definitely is there. Our founding fathers created this framework on the heels of extreme religious persecution in the Old World during the Dark Ages, when the dominant church of the day controlled the kings and the people. The people had not freedom to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience. Our unalienable rights were given by God and not a state power or church power.

If you do not stop this combining of church and state, it will result in national ruin. Separation of church and state IS what has truly made America great.

Thank you for listening,
KimiAhern
Proud Citizen of the United States of America

From: Paul Sergio <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Johnson Amendment

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:09:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a deeply concerned citizen to ask you to please 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 into the church.

Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of God — that's negative for the church and the country alike.

Separation wasn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here in the United States of America!

Please keep church and state separate.

That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Sergio, D.D.S.

From: Laurel M <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Laurel Mauldin

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:09:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my opposition to the Commission's report, *America's First Freedom*. While I support the constitutional right of every person to practice their faith freely, I am concerned that the report advances a vision of religious liberty that risks undermining the equally important constitutional principles of government neutrality, religious pluralism, and the rights of those who hold different beliefs or no religious beliefs at all.

The report repeatedly argues that religion is indispensable to a flourishing society and suggests that government has a role in affirmatively supporting religious participation in public life. It also characterizes concerns about the separation of church and state as a "myth" or misunderstanding. However, the constitutional commitment to church-state separation exists not to suppress religion, but to protect both religious freedom and democratic equality. Government should neither favor nor disadvantage any faith tradition.

I am particularly concerned that many of the report's recommendations appear to elevate certain religious claims above other fundamental rights and public interests. Religious liberty is a vital constitutional protection, but it should not be used to justify discrimination, deny access to healthcare, weaken public education standards, or diminish protections for people whose beliefs differ from those of a particular religious community.

The United States is home to people of many faiths, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Indigenous traditions, and those who are nonreligious. A healthy understanding of religious freedom must protect all of them equally. Government neutrality toward religion is not hostility toward faith; rather, it is what allows people of every belief system to live together as equal citizens.

I urge the Commission and policymakers to reject approaches that blur the line between religion and government or grant preferential treatment to particular religious viewpoints. Instead, our nation should continue to uphold a vision of religious liberty that protects individual conscience while preserving equal rights, democratic institutions, and the separation of church and state.

Thank you for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,

--

Laurel Mauldin, M.N.M., B.S. Advertising

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:13

From: Loren Munson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns regarding the Religious Liberty report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:10:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the report you recently released to the public. I appreciate the willingness to let the American people speak.

As a conservative Christian, I would love to see the United States of America "Get back to God". However, the only way that could happen is for individuals to surrender their lives to God and willingly allow Him to change them. A true religious awakening can NEVER be imposed by the government or any other organization.

Your report contains some admirable concepts. However, I must speak out against the idea that we need to remove the separation of church and state and form a "Bridge". Every time in history that the government has cozied up to the church it has resulted in persecution. During the 1260 years that the Church of Rome wielded oppressive power in cooperation with the civil powers, approximately 200 million people lost their lives. True religious liberty must protect EVERYONE, not just the majority.

I am concerned about any taxpayer funds going to religious organizations or even NGO's. Humanitarian and parochial educational services should be funded by donations, not taxpayer money. The Johnson Amendment is an important protection that prevents our churches from becoming political action committees, and needs to remain in effect.

In summary, I ask that you not chip away at the vital separation that exists between the government and religious organizations. We do not need a bridge between the two. We need individual Americans to come to the foot of the cross and give their lives to Jesus. Let us preserve the right to do that, or to choose not to do that, without government interference or influence.

Respectfully,

Loren Munson

From: Krista [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:16:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

It is important that as Americans we continue to keep church and state separate as our founding fathers intended, so that we don't fall back into the main reason we left England in the first place. If we do then we are no better off than we we started.

Krista

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:18:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I agree that we need to have religious liberty in our country, but we need to keep church and state separate.

The church is not to govern the state or be a political voice for the government. Politics and religion don't mix. Jesus stayed out of politics when

He lived here on Earth.

The government is not to rule over churches and what they do or believe. We are to have the freedom to worship God as we desire without

mandates on how or when we are to worship.

I agree with the points brought up in Pillar of Freedom's response to you on July 6, 2026.

Thank you for considering my opinion.

Kind regards,

Denise Carter

From: Michael Olivier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] State support of churches

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:19:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I don't think efforts to encourage and promote state sponsorship of churches is a good idea.

I wish to have you consider the detriment to the genuine expression of Christianity that state support to churches and religious organizations poses.

When the church leans on state support to uphold its standards, Christianity suffers in several ways:

1. By state endorsement, there is the risk of encouraging heartless compliance and raising doubts that Christ Himself draws and renews people. In this way, genuine fellowship with Christ --the desire to be with Him and like Him which naturally flows from realizing His character of love--is lost. The inertia, apathy, and hollowness likely to ensue from state prodings would be burdensome to the state and unappealing to the church.

John 12:32 "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

1 John 1:7 "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

2. It limits advancement in spiritual knowledge and maturity. The church members cannot so easily adjust to a better understanding of God's will after a state-sponsored ideal is established on first impressions. This is the liability of replacing God with the state for moral guidance.

Proverbs 18:17 "The first one to plead his case seems right, until another comes and cross examines him."

Proverbs 3:5, 6 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Acts 5:29 "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

3. State endorsement of religion risks misuse of it for political advantage. That is, people might falsely claim to be Christians for popularity and promotion in worldly affairs. Church visitors or newcomers may in turn suffer corruption by the influence of such insincere members with worldly motives.

1 John 2:15 "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

2 Peter 2:13-15 ". . . Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you, . . . an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; . . . Which have forsaken the right way, . . . who loved the wages of unrighteousness."

In the interests of preserving the genuine expression of Christianity, I plead with you to cease and desist from your efforts to encourage state support of churches.

Sincerely,

Michael Olivier, M.D.

PII

Hot Springs, North Carolina

From: Kaylene Venegas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Topic Response

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:20:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear President Trump and Members of the Religious Liberty Committee,

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 agree with the above statement, voicing my concerns.

Yours truly,

Kaylene Venegas

From: Kim Haworth <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Kim Haworth

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:21:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as one of We the People, from San Rafael, California, to urge this Commission to root its recommendations firmly in both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses, not just the half that is politically convenient this year.

Consider first an argument that is not secular at all, but Christian. When Christ said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's, he divided all human duties into two jurisdictions. Civil government enforces duties owed to fellow men; it has no authority over duties owed to God. A. T. Jones pressed this point before a U.S. Senate committee in 1888, arguing that civil government is civil and has nothing to do, in legislation, with religious observances in any way. The test that follows is simple: the state may ask only whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or heretical. Any recommendation that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the line Christ himself drew. That is not an attack on Christianity; it is a defense of what Christianity itself teaches about the two jurisdictions.

Second, rights come from the Creator, not from majorities. If a vote can grant religious liberty, a vote can revoke it, and then it was never a right, only a permission. As one religious liberty tract put it, that which is subject to the will of a majority is not a right; a right is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons. Popular government exists to protect the minority, since the majority can already take care of itself at the polls. When told that most Americans wanted Sunday legislation, Jones answered that the people, however many, have no right to invade another's relationship to God. Even Congress's own 1829 committee agreed, holding that the Constitution regards the conscience of the Jew as sacred as that of the Christian. Popularity may justify a highway bill. It cannot justify a religious one.

Third, any law touching religion, even one meant to favor it, ultimately destroys free exercise. It is impossible to frame a law on religion that does not end up restricting the free exercise of religion, because such a law must define which religion it favors, and definition means exclusion. Jones warned that no man can safely support legislation favoring his own faith, because in doing so he surrenders his right to change his mind later if persuaded otherwise. Believers who welcome state sponsorship today are handing a tool to whoever governs tomorrow, including those who may turn it against them.

Finally, this is not a new argument invented by modern courts. Congress itself settled it in 1829 and 1830, one generation after the founding, when men who had lived through it still sat in the chamber. The Senate report declared that it is not within 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. The House report warned that if government may define one point of religious duty, it may with equal propriety define every part of divine revelation. And it drew the American distinction in nine words: what other nations call religious toleration, we call religious rights. This Commission is not being asked to overturn a mere court precedent, but an official act of Congress from the founding generation itself.

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

Respectfully,
Kim Haworth
San Rafael, CA

Sent from my iPhone

From: VALERIE WARNER <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter to RLC

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:24:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

From:
Valerie Warner

[REDACTED] PII

Thomas Jefferson letter to Danbury, Connecticut 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, 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."

From: crisiRoyi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religous liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:26:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not change our freedom to worship the One True God of our choice, by altering the separation of Church and State guaranteed in the First Amendment. Any time you mix Religion and Government will end in persecution to an minority. Render on to Ceaser what is Ceasars and unto God what is God's. Leave it alone, freedom of religion is what makes this country the great country it is. Thank you.

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

From: Duane Leker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:27:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

I would like to make it known that I agree with the words of Thomas Jefferson who stated:

“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.”

I believe that government has no authority to tell me what to believe, or how to worship, and that government lacks authority over religion. I value my religious freedom.

Cynthia Leker
Sent from my iPhone

From: K <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:27:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Beverly Walker<[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Liberty of Conscience

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:28:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Members of Faith Council, And to Whom it may concern, When Christ, our Lord and Savior decided to come to earth to reconcile mankind with our Father, He descended not to force worship, but in love and free will. He did not overthrow the Roman government. He came to make sons and daughters by love and free will only. A heart cannot be forced into true love and to worship God. For this is not the method of worship God desires.

The method of forced worship according to a governmental system has been attempted before. As we can look backward into a period called the dark ages where this method was attempted. It only brought forth death and destruction. And this was not ordained by God. God desires, freedom for all to choose life in him or death to live by the world standards.

Man can only assist God in returning to this earth by methods of evangelism and making disciples of other people. This is the method that Christ Sanctioned his disciples to use. (Matthew 28:19-20) And his disciples, the apostles evangelized the known world at that time. This is the only way to make disciples, saints of God through love and the individuals free will.

Shall we obey man, or shall we obey God?

Acts 5:29. Amen

Submitted in the love of Jesus,
Beverly Walker

From: Shelia Drummond <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT %2[REDACTED] Establishment Clause %2[REDACTED] Shelia M Drummond

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:29:27 -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 weigh four arguments that together persuade me that government religious sponsorship is not a minor policy option but a real wrong.

The first argument is Christian, not secular. When Christ said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's, he divided human duty into two jurisdictions. Civil government enforces what we owe each other; it has no authority over what we owe God. As the old Senate testimony against the Sunday bill put it, "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: the state may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or heretical. Any commission recommendation that puts government behind a religious text or lesson crosses a line Christ himself drew, and does so in the name of the very faith it claims to protect.

Second, rights come from the Creator, not from majority vote. If a majority can grant religious liberty, a majority can revoke it, and then it was never a right at all. Constitutions exist precisely to protect the minority from the majority's momentary preferences, not to ratify them. When told that most Americans wanted Sunday legislation, one witness answered that the people, however numerous, have no right to invade another's relationship to God. Popular support justifies a highway bill; it cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never submitted to the vote.

Third, history shows that the first step contains the last. Constantine's first Sunday law, issued while he still held a pagan priestly title, seemed modest. It led, step by logical step, to imperial partisanship in church quarrels, to Augustine's theory of righteous compulsion, and finally to the Inquisition. As one writer put it, if the first step is taken, the last is already taken, for the last step is in the first. No one today proposes an Inquisition. No one ever does, at the beginning. The danger is not that this Commission's recommendations are the final step, but that they concede the very principle from which the final step follows.

Fourth, coercion cannot produce faith, and state favor corrupts the faith it favors. A law can compel a body into a pew; it cannot put belief in a heart. Fifteen centuries of established Christianity, by Madison's own account, produced mostly pride and indolence in the clergy and superstition among the laity. Grant said it plainly: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private support, and keep state and church forever separate. State sponsorship would not strengthen faith; it would hollow it out while handing its content to whichever majority holds office next.

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

Respectfully,
Shelia M Drummond

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

From: M Alexander <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:29:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to respectfully advocate for the steadfast preservation of the foundational principle of separation between religious institutions and governmental affairs. This crucial tenet, conceived by the visionary intent of our nation's founders, was designed to guarantee that every citizen retains the unencumbered liberty to practice their faith, or no faith, as their conscience dictates, free from government imposition or endorsement.

Our Founding Fathers, having witnessed centuries of religious strife and persecution, painstakingly established a framework that champions individual religious freedom by ensuring the government remains neutral concerning matters of belief. This delicate balance is paramount not only for protecting diverse spiritual paths but also for maintaining a cohesive and equitable society where no single faith is privileged or suppressed by the state.

It is my fervent hope that our nation continues to uphold these cherished liberties, ensuring a truly free and pluralistic society for generations to come.

Sincerely

M. Robinson Alexander

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-separation of church and state-Eric Nielson

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:29:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious liberty commission: as a citizen of the United States of America and as a Christian I believe the separation of church and state is invaluable to the freedom of conscience for all Americans whether they believe in God or not. Though the language of separation of church and state is not found in the Constitution the principle is deeply embedded in the first amendment of the Constitution also known as The Establishment clause. Politics is rife with corruption and has no place in religion. Nobody should control the consciences of men for we are a free people. The first colonists came from Europe to escape religious persecution because of the control of the state by the church. Has the commission forgotten the millions whose blood was spilled on European soil because the Roman Catholic Church would not grant religious liberty and to allow individuals to believe as one's conscience dictated. Some of the first colonists arrived in America because they wanted a nation without a king and without a pope. It is a slippery slope when religion and politics start to mix. Let not history be repeated.

Sincerely, United States citizen

From: "ARKuta" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:30:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

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

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

I view the divisive nature of Christian churches in competition with each other to become a voice as an influencer of the civil government as a time tested and proven tactic to systematically destroy all churches, starting with the smallest and weakest and progressing until only one church remains as established by the state.

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

My prayers and best regards,

Alan Kuta

Huntingdon, TN

From: Claudia Shaw <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:31:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep our country separated in church and state. It's what we wanted whether it's specifically stated or not. It's there in other connotations. We do not want persecution again. We messed up and did our own persecution after we settled here. That was a mistake!!!

Everyone has a right to freedom of choice. GOD even allows that. He allows us to choose whether we want Him or not. He's going to come back and make this right, but first he allows freedom. Don't take that away from us!

Sandpoint Idaho

Claudia and Les Shaw

From: Anastazia L Nordby <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:33:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a Christian and I want to send you my comments in regards to the commission's recommendations regarding: 1. Reframing the establishment clause away from the principle of separation, and 2. repealing the Johnson amendment.

Religious liberty is strongest when the government is strictly neutral. I urge the commission to revise its recommendations and to affirm strong free exercise of religion and to preserve the establishment clause's separation principle and the Johnson Amendment's guardrails.

Thank you for serving and being willing to accept feedback on this important issue.

Anastazia N

From: Jonathan Taylor <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Jonathan

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:33:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write from Beersheba Springs, Tennessee, as a citizen who takes both halves of the First Amendment seriously, and I want to open with what matters most to me as a Christian: God alone changes hearts, and no act of legislation can do what only grace can do. A government-endorsed religion will not fit a single soul for heaven. It can produce compliance, but it cannot produce faith.

That conviction rests on Christ's own words, not merely on secular caution. 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 governs the duties we owe each other; it has no authority over the duties we owe God. This is not a modest suggestion that the state should be neutral out of politeness — it is a boundary drawn by the highest authority a Christian recognizes. It should mean something to everyone who professes the name of Christ. The state's only legitimate question about any act is whether it is civil or uncivil, whether it injures a neighbor. It has no business asking whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical, because that judgment belongs the court of heaven. A court the state was never given a seat on.

I also ask the Commission to remember that rights which depend on a majority vote are not rights at all, only permissions that can be withdrawn by the next vote. Our system was built the other way: rights come from the Creator, government exists to protect them, and popular constitutions exist precisely so that a minority's conscience cannot be overridden by however many people disagree with it. It does not matter if the great majority of Americans favor some religious measure. The majority has no right to say what any person renders to God, and no commission empowered by majority sentiment can rightly claim otherwise.

There is also a practical problem the Commission cannot escape: there is no generic religion for government to adopt. The moment officials choose a version of the Ten Commandments, a translation, or a set of officially approved teachings drawn from Christianity for a classroom, they have picked a side in a dispute that Christians themselves have never settled — Protestant against Catholic, one numbering against another, one Bible against the hundreds of communities that claim to build on it. That is not neutral heritage. It is the state ruling on theology, and whichever version it enforces becomes, in practice, the government's own creed.

Finally, this is not new ground. In 1829 and 1830, Congress itself, with men who had lived through the founding still serving, ruled on this exact question when Sabbatarians demanded Sunday legislation. The committee reports declared plainly that it is not the legislature's business to determine what religion is true, that government is civil and not religious, and that human power may extort outward observance but cannot command the affections of the heart. Any recommendation this Commission makes toward defining or favoring religious duty must reckon with the fact that it would be overturning not a recent court opinion but the founding generation'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,
Jonathan
Beersheba Springs, Tennessee

-Jonathan

Psalms 121

From: W A <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:34:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

W A has sent you an email via **Gmail confidential mode**:



PUBLIC COMMENT

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From: dapphney vlijter <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:34:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As an American citizen and a woman of faith I feel compelled to write to you on the matter of dismantling the precious wall of division between Church and State. I feel it necessary to address the building of a bridge to connect the two entities. This wall of separation was erected by our founding fathers to protect both Church and State. To scale, remove or attempt to dismantle that wall and or build a bridge to permanently connect Church and State, I believe would be a dreadful mistake. One of the reasons our country risen to such heights in a short period of time, is because our founding fathers recognize the success of Rhode Island under Roger Williams leadership. There was a complete separation of church and state that made it so successful and so our founding fathers decided to follow his lead. It worked!!

I object to the suggestion of funding none- profit religious activities and religious education and clubs on public campuses. For a religious entity to go to the State for financial support for their personal matters, especially as they already are tax exempt, to Me shows a lack of faith and or a spirit of indolence. Government assistance would only encourage an attitude of entitlement. It will also often lead to demands from the financial donor which can ultimately change the focus and purpose of the religious organization. Hopefully it is to be a help and not a hindrance in this dark world. For more than 250 years churches have planned, worked, saved and sacrificed to do the work of God's bidding. What joy and increase of faith it brings to all who participate, to see their joint efforts with God bringing positive changes to the world around them and in their own lives and families. To bring church and State together would mean a bringing together of the beliefs of one or more religions and no matter how hard one may try, someone's rights and freedoms of conscience will be trampled. How would you feel if that someone is you?

I object to the repealing of the Johnson Amendment and respectfully request that it be fully enforced. People are often like sheep and we follow where lead. It is the role of the clergy to lead the people to Christ if they are Christian and hopefully to some sort of improved life if not but not into politics. Politics and religion have never been a good mix. It's like oil and water. It tends to bring dissension and conflict among the parishioners and competition, pride and degradation among the leaders. We don't need laws to change the moral decline. That has never worked. We need changed hearts, and starting with our leaders.

I have served in different communities in several capacities including disaster relief, and feeding the homeless, among others. I have taught my children to do this as well. We were not placed in this world to only receive but to give back. I have served not for recognition or gain but out of love for my LORD and Savior and love for our fellow man. Love cannot be coerced or demanded. If so, it would not be love. God only accepts service of love because any other service breeds anger, resentment, selfishness and pride.

I have also been in the position on numerous occasions where I was ask to work or dress in a manner contrary to my conscience. I am so thankful that I live in a country where I do Not have to live according to someone else's standards. My country was built on respecting the rights of others. A country where even the minority have a voice and receive the same respect as the majority. This is one of the reasons our country stands apart and has truly made it great.

In conclusion, Church and State should never be joined. For either the Church will rule the State or the State will rule the Church. Our examples in history show us that they end in disaster and bloodshede Cases in point, France and the 1260 years of the dark ages.

I am thankful for my country and concerned for its future. I also appreciate the fact that your work is not an easy one nor is your responsibility light. I pray that our Creator God will guide each of you in your decisions.

Sincerely,

Daphney Vlijter
Huntsville, Alabama
Sent from my iPhone

From: M MS <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:34:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a citizen of the United States of America, I am for the separation of church and state. To unite the two would be wrong. I pray that those who are involved with the thought of dismantling the separation of church and state will seriously consider what they will cause in our country.

To some it may sound like a good and innocent thing for this union of church and state to occur, however it will be one of the worst things that can happen to our country. I pray that they will open their eyes to what other countries in the world have as a result of having united church and state.

Please don't be deceived by what may seem innocent and good for it is nothing of the sort.

Mms from ar

From: William Cusick <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:35:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious liberty commission,

The Americas were settled by people seeking religious liberty.

The history of Church run states is replete with religious persecution, wars and tyranny.

The founders of this country carefully constructed a constitution to protect Americans from such a system.

It is the diversity of this great country, which gives it distinct character. Any attempt to legislate that diversity is contrary to the spirit and character of this great nation.

I respectfully requested you seriously, consider this matter and protect the religious liberty of all individuals and not the interest of leadership or even a "majority".

Freedom of religion is a God-given right which no government should meddle.

Thank you,

William Cusick

Sent from my iPhone

From: Nercy Manez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:36:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state is part of our country's foundation, built by people of faith to protect faith. Pls do not remove it. Let's uphold the freedom that the US of A has fought for since its conception.

With Deep Sincerity,

Nercy J. Mañez
US Citizen By Birth

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From: Laura Fuller <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:37:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I had a dream last night that I was at a big church meeting. The government would not allow us to sing at our meetings. I cried because I knew the government was taking away our religious freedoms. When I awoke, I was relieved to know it was only a dream. But I think the dream was brought on by my fear that the government will remove the separation of church and state which for many years has protected religious freedom. Many god-fearing people in years past have been persecuted and worse when a church combined with the government to promote their particular creed.

The following sentiment, expressed by another person, reflects my own perspective on the subject as well:

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.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and consider a different perspective than the one being promoted the Religious Liberty Commission.

Sincerely,

Laura L Fuller
Noblesville IN

From: crisiRoyi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Religous liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:37:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not change our freedom to worship God of our own choosing. By altering separation of Church and State, guaranteed in the First Amendment. If this amendment is altered will cause great suffering in our freedom to worship according to our conscience. Give to Ceaser what is his and give to God what is His. Freedom of religion is what makes this Country great and safe for all Americans. Thank you.

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

On Mon, Jul 13, 2026 at 10:26 AM, cris Roy

<[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

Please do not change our freedom to worship the One True God of our choice, by altering the separation of Church and State guaranteed in the First Amendment. Any time you mix Religion and Government will end in persecution to an minority. Render on to Ceaser what is Ceasars and unto God what is God's. Leave it alone, feed on of religion is what makes this country the great country it is. Thank you.

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

From: Roger Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Roger and Joyce Brown

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:37:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

We are very concerned about your proposal to remove the separation between church and state! As persons of faith and citizens of the United States of America we have studied the history of the formation of the USA which created a strong separation of church and state to protect the citizens of this country from government tyranny, especially to the citizens of faith in the God of Heaven.

We strongly recommend that each one on your committee read two chapters in the book "Great Controversy" which was written 140 years ago. Chapter 35 is titled 'Liberty of Conscience Threatened' (some printings of the book will title the same chapter 'Aims of the Papacy') and chapter 36 is titled 'Coming Crisis'. . The insights are powerful and the predictions will come true.

We also want to affirm the letter written by Pillar of Freedom. Please read the comments, which we agree with, and realize the solemn impact of your decisions on the communities, churches, government and ultimately the individual citizens of the USA. We encourage you to implement the suggestions put forth in the letter written by Pillar of Freedom.

Respectfully,
Roger and Joyce Brown

From: Dave Vincent <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:38:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members Religious Liberty Commission:

I believe that the separation of church and state is to be absolute. I believe that true religious liberty is achieved when the state has no mingling in anyway with the state. Separation of church and state results in a free church and a state not controlled by anyone's personal religious views. Furthermore, as a Christian I submit to the words of Christ that clearly teaches this principle, "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's". Matthew 22:21.

Dave M. Vincent

From: "Dr. Kevin Jenkins" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: Religious Liberty Commission <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:41:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Commission_.docx

Sent from my iPad

**Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty and the Separation of Church and State –
Dr. Kevin Jenkins**

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a pastor and a person of faith, I was deeply concerned to read the suggestion that the historic wall of separation between church and state should be replaced with a “bridge.” Respectfully, I believe this reverses one of the most important protections ever established for both religion and government.

The separation of church and state was not created to weaken faith or silence religious voices. It was established largely by believers who understood that the church flourishes best when its loyalty belongs to God alone and not to political power.

History repeatedly demonstrates that when church and state become intertwined, both institutions suffer. Government seeks influence over the conscience, and the church risks exchanging its prophetic voice for political privilege. The church should speak truth to power, not become dependent upon it.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we cherish religious liberty not merely as a constitutional principle but as a Biblical conviction. Freedom of conscience is sacred. Faith that is compelled by government is not faith at all. The kingdom of Christ advances through conviction, witness, service, and the work of the Holy Spirit—not through legislation, political favors, or government dependency.

Bridges between church and state may appear beneficial in the short term, but they can lead to financial dependence, political entanglements, and pressures that compromise spiritual integrity. Churches should answer first to God and His Word, not to political parties, elected officials, or government agencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve the historic safeguards that have protected both religious liberty and the independence of the church. The wall of separation has served our nation well because it protects the freedom of conscience for believers and nonbelievers alike.

Please preserve that protection for future generations.

Respectfully,

Dr. Kevin Jenkins
New York, NY

From: Geraldine Rowland <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Public Comment July 12, 2026

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:41:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

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

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for your service on the Religious Liberty Commission. I respectfully urge the Commission not to weaken the long-standing separation of church and state, which has served our nation well and remains essential to protecting religious liberty for all Americans.

As a Christian, I believe churches should remain independent from government influence and should not seek public funding for religious education, religious clubs on public campuses, or religious nonprofit activities. Public funds come from taxpayers of many different faiths and beliefs, and using those funds to support religious activities would raise difficult questions about fairness, eligibility, oversight, and government involvement in matters of faith.

Our government should not establish, favor, or mandate religious practices, beliefs, or traditions. History shows that when church and state become too closely aligned, religious minorities and dissenters are often placed at risk. The separation of church and state protects both religious institutions and individual conscience by ensuring that faith remains free from government control and political pressure.

The Johnson Amendment should also be preserved and fully enforced. This important safeguard helps prevent tax-exempt religious organizations from becoming partisan political entities, while allowing churches to continue their vital spiritual, charitable, and community work. Protecting this boundary helps preserve the integrity of both religious institutions and our democratic process.

I urge the Commission to reject any recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state, compromise religious independence, or use public funds in ways that undermine government neutrality. Please preserve these protections so that Americans of all faiths, and those of no faith, may continue to live according to conscience without government preference or interference.

Thank you for your time and prayerful consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Geraldine Rowland

Sedro Woolley, WA

From: Eva Plessinger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:41:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Is the new law Church and State going to keep me from going to church on Sabbath which is on Saturday morning and evening. Please let me know. I want you to know I don't want you to stop letting me go on a Saturday so I want to know the law that Trump is tabling now.

From: Lorna Levy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Bridging the Gap Between Church and State - Lorna Levy

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:41:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a concerned citizen. I am aware of the objectives of the religious-liberty commission to bridge the gap between church and state. I am also a student of history, History tends to repeat itself. I am alarmed of the proposal and I object to the following:

1. the funding of religious non-profit activities
2. the funding of religious education and religious clubs on public campuses
3. the repealing of the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities.

All throughout history, when church and state were united, there was persecution of those who did not align with the state religion. Sincere christians, in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries had to flee Europe (they came to America) so they would not be killed for their beliefs. Your proposal to bridge the gap between church and state will take us back to those terrible times.

The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States carries the exact same legal weight and authority as the original document (the Constitution itself). The Freedom of Religion section of the First Amendment:

1. Prohibits our government from establishing an official religion or favoring one religion over another.
2. Protects individuals' right to practice their religion freely (subject to reasonable limits)

Bottom line, the government's position on religion is to maintain neutrality.

So, I am asking that this effort to bridge the gap between church and state be immediately stopped.

Sincerely,

From: Angelo DelloBuono <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:43:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State and the Origins of the First Amendment – Angelo Dello Buono

To the Members of the Commission:

I write concerning the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, released June 26, 2026, and in particular its central contention: that the separation of church and state is a misreading of the Constitution — a "wall" to be torn down and replaced by a "bridge" between the two powers. That claim collapses the moment one asks not merely what the First Amendment says, but why it was written at all.

History answers plainly: it was written because of religious persecution, and it was written to end it.

The men who framed it were not theorizing in the abstract. They remembered a Europe that had soaked its own soil in blood over rival creeds for more than a century, and they had watched the same spirit cross the ocean.

Massachusetts banished Roger Williams and hanged Quakers on Boston Common. Virginia, in the decade before independence, jailed Baptist preachers for the crime of preaching without the state's license. James Madison saw those jailings in his own county, and never forgot them.

Out of that memory came a deliberate design: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Two clauses, one purpose — to separate the powers of church and state so that neither could be turned into an instrument of persecution by the other. The framers wrote the same conviction into the body of the Constitution, forbidding in Article VI any "religious Test... as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." This was never hostility to religion. It was the hard-won safeguard of a people who had felt what follows when the two powers are joined. That is the history the report reverses. To recast the wall as a "bridge," to repeal the restraints on political entanglement, and to open the public treasury to religious activity is to draw the bolts the founders deliberately set — and to invite back the very evil the Amendment was built to keep out.

Persecution was the disease; separation was the cure. One does not abandon the cure merely because the memory of the disease has faded.

I respectfully urge the Commission to withdraw the recommendations that erode this separation, and to honor the First Amendment for what it is: not an obstacle to faith, but the shelter under which faith has been left free.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelo James Dello Buono

From: leilani stowell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] religious freedom

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:43:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that everybody should have their choice on when and how and where they wanna worship. No one should tell you how to do worship or what to worship. We are all individuals and we should have the freedom if choice.

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From: Dan Olsons <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:44:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep our Church and State separated.

Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

From: james Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State Concern

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:44:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Members of the RL Committee

I am exercising my freedom of speech to express my concern about the Commission's possible decision to bridge Church and State.

It is very scary to think that I am at risk of losing the freedom that I have held so dear for the last 40 years to freely worship God as my conscience has led me to do.

I have always believed that the separation of Church and State has been our special right since our founding fathers drafted and signed the Constitution of our nation in 1787, even though it does specifically use the phrase "Church & State, the principle is there. History confirms that our nation was built on freedom. The Pilgrims that left the Old World to come to America were escaping persecution due to the Church being united with the State. Millions of Christians lost their lives because they wanted to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

I want the separation of Church and State to remain as it has stood since 1787 and I plead with you that you do not make this a law of the land here in America. I can guarantee you that if your Committee decides to carry through with their decision to dismantle the separation of Church and State it will result in persecution of those of us who have for so long enjoyed the freedom that we have to worship God.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments on this extremely important matter. GOD Bless America, the Land of the Free!

From: Helen Grayi<[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:45:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious liberty commission,

As a Christian citizen I believe in liberty of conscience and the upholding of the US constitution, I am therefore obligated to ask you to reconsider your stance on the subject of separation of church and state. It is indeed how the writers of the constitution intended it and the Creator intends it. Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God that which is God's. We are followers of Christ by choice, He does not want forced worship. Thus freedom to practice our various religions according to our beliefs should be protected.

Sincerely,

H. Gray

From: Carla B <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:46:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State and the Origins of the First Amendment –
Carla Dello Buono

To the Members of the Commission:

I write concerning the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, released June 26, 2026, and in particular its central contention: that the separation of church and state is a misreading of the Constitution — a "wall" to be torn down and replaced by a "bridge" between the two powers. That claim collapses the moment one asks not merely what the First Amendment says, but why it was written at all.

History answers plainly: it was written because of religious persecution, and it was written to end it. The men who framed it were not theorizing in the abstract. They remembered a Europe that had soaked its own soil in blood over rival creeds for more than a century, and they had watched the same spirit cross the ocean.

Massachusetts banished Roger Williams and hanged Quakers on Boston Common. Virginia, in the decade before independence, jailed Baptist preachers for the crime of preaching without the state's license. James Madison saw those jailings in his own county, and never forgot them.

Out of that memory came a deliberate design: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Two clauses, one purpose — to separate the powers of church and state so that neither could be turned into an instrument of persecution by the other. The framers wrote the same conviction into the body of the Constitution, forbidding in Article VI any "religious Test... as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." This was never hostility to religion. It was the hard-won safeguard of a people who had felt what follows when the two powers are joined. That is the history the report reverses. To recast the wall as a "bridge," to repeal the restraints on political entanglement, and to open the public treasury to religious activity is to draw the bolts the founders deliberately set — and to invite back the very evil the Amendment was built to keep out.

Persecution was the disease; separation was the cure. One does not abandon the cure merely because the memory of the disease has faded.

I respectfully urge the Commission to withdraw the recommendations that erode this separation, and to honor the First Amendment for what it is: not an obstacle to faith, but the shelter under which faith has been left free.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla Dello Buono

From: 川上シーラ <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of church and state - Sheila Kawakami

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:47:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the important work that you are doing. I pray that your efforts will be made in the right direction. I'm concerned about the idea of repealing the Johnson act, and the government funding of religious organizations. Breaking down the wall of separation between church and state has never worked well in the past, and I don't think it will lead to good outcomes if carried out today. As a Christian, I have learned that the reason many people came to this country in the first place was to find a place where they could worship God and carry out their religious activities in accordance with their consciences. I would like to see future generations also be able to do that.

May God bless you with heavenly wisdom to make right choices in your important positions of great responsibility.

Sincerely,
Sheila Kawakami
Us citizen residing in Japan

From: Michael Kelleher <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:48:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

History has proven the joining of church and state will only prove disaster to our Republic. Maintaining this separation is essential.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Carole Kelleher <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:48:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state has been beneficial to all who have used this method to preserve the nations. No government has the right to dictate my conscience. Carole Kelleher

From: Reg Harrelson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposed to Bridge between Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:48:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Honorable Religious Counsel,

Please note that both my wife and I are OPPOSED to the bridging of church and state!

We do not see where a bridge would enhance religious freedom. We see it as having just the opposite effect and eventually leading to an enforcement of a single religion.

I would suggest that Christ implied that we should give God his worship as we see fit not as dictated by the government. We believe in the scriptures quoted below that Christ was not only talking about money, but ALL aspects of life.

Matthew 22:15–22

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” ²¹They answered, “The emperor’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

We also Have the parable about the wheat and the tares where the master instructed the servants to let both the wheat (believers) and the weeds (unbelievers) to grow together until the final judgment. Interpreters historically view this as an instruction for human institutions to leave matters of spiritual judgment and belief to God

Matthew 13:24–30

²⁴He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ ²⁸He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

Again we are both Opposed to a bridging of Church and State!

--

Reg & Ruthann Harrelson

From: K Holloway <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATEi- K. HOLLOWAY

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:49:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Committee,

I am writing to you today as a concerned citizen to respectfully share my perspective on the foundational importance of maintaining the separation of church and state.

The principle of the separation of church and state is not merely a political construct, but a foundational safeguard that protects both the integrity of civil government and the sanctity of individual conscience.

By maintaining this separation, we ensure that the state does not impose religious dogma, and that religious life remains a matter of voluntary conviction rather than legal coercion.

Our Founding Fathers recognized that religious liberty is an inalienable right that thrives best when shielded from government interference.

- **Thomas Jefferson:** "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." (1802, Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association)
- **James Madison:** "The religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right." (1785, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*)
- **John Leland:** "Government has no more to do with the religious opinions of men than it has with the principles of mathematics. Let every man speak freely without fear – maintain the principles that he believes – worship according to his own faith, either one God, three Gods, no God, or twenty Gods." (1791, *Right of Conscience Inalienable*)

The Bible consistently illustrates that God respects the agency of the individual. Faith that is forced or mandated by human authority lacks the sincerity and devotion that God desires.

- **Respecting Individual Choice:** "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15, KJV)
- **An Invitation, Not a Command:** Jesus did not force his will upon others; he invited them to follow him of their own volition. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28, KJV)
- **Ministry Without Compulsion:** In the New Testament, leadership in the faith is explicitly described as a voluntary act, not one of force or lording over others. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2–3, KJV)

- **The Nature of Christ's Mission:** Jesus emphasized that his kingdom was not of this world, nor was it to be established through the power of earthly governments. "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, KJV)

The beauty of a free society and the path toward genuine faith lies in the freedom to choose. When we protect the wall between church and state, we are honoring both the democratic wisdom of our founders and the biblical principle that belief must be a free act of the heart.

Sincerely,

K. Holloway
Concerned Citizen

From: Wanda Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:50:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Religious Liberty Commission

As a proud American and a Christian, I'm concerned about the legislation being considered to join church and state.

This country was formed because of religious persecution in another country. The people fled to this country to be free to worship according to our conscience. I'm afraid if this passes we will lose that freedom of choice. Please do not pass this!

Sincerely, Wanda S. Smith in Virginia
Thank you

From: Tim Bonnlander <[REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:50:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please repeal the Johnson Amendment!

From: Charles Scriven <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Cc: "brianbidwell@hotmail.com" <brianbidwell@hotmail.com>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Johnson Amendment

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:51:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religion is trivialized and needlessly fractured when pastors or other leaders take explicit sides in the competition between specific candidates for public office. Please keep the Johnson amendment in place.

Religion should be the conscience to the nation and engage fully in policy discussion related to its defining moral commitments. This right has full constitution protection. But to grant religious institutions tax-exemption while allowing them to endorse particular candidates gives such institutions unfair advantage over secular counterparts and (what is equally disturbing) assures partisan division within communities whose prophetic calling includes the modeling of civil conversation among people of varying political backgrounds.

Charles Scriven

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Joan Holbrook Payne <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church of State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:51:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a former US History and Government teacher for high school students, I know well the intent by the founding fathers of this country when the 1st Amendment to the Constitution was written. And, when considering their history living in countries where there was no separation of Church and State; the intent when these documents, Constitution and Amendments, were drafted was to provide protection FROM the state dictating religious practices and observances.

PLEASE continue with this practice and DO NOT support the push to bring religion into the goals and objectives or the operations of our government.

KEEP the separation of Church from the State.

Thank you for your consideration and support. Joan Holbrook Payne

From: Marilyn Oliver <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:51:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

RE: Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

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

We are writing to express our deep concern about the draft recommendations suggesting that the separation of church and state should be weakened or removed. We are Seventh-day Adventists, and we believe strongly that our Religious liberty is one of the greatest freedoms protected by our Constitution. It allows people of faith to worship freely, follow their convictions, and participate in society without government interference. Just as importantly, it protects everyone from having religion used as a tool of government power.

The founders understood the importance of this balance. The First Amendment was created to protect both the free exercise of religion and the freedom of government to remain neutral toward religion. These protections have allowed people with many different beliefs to live side by side with respect and dignity. The separation of church and state is not an attack on religion. It is a safeguard that protects faith itself by keeping government from favoring, directing, or controlling religious expression.

We respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this essential constitutional protection. Strengthening religious freedom should mean protecting the rights of all people—not changing the balance that has helped safeguard those freedoms for generations.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

Ben and Marilyn Oliver

[REDACTED] PII

From: Mark Hoover <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Separation of church and state-Mark Hoover

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:51:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a concerned citizen in regards to the commissions desire to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge between the two. This would be a step backward for religious liberty and for the nation as a whole. History has shown us over and over through the centuries that when church and state unite, persecution in any of its many forms is sure to follow. Our founding fathers knew this first hand and were very intent on creating a place where religious persecution would not exist. I believe they made that perfectly clear in their wording of the constitution and bill of rights. Please do not undo what has been given to us at such great a cost through the lives laid down and sacrifices made throughout the past 250 years. Please do not build that bridge.

I would also strongly encourage the Johnson Amendment to be fully enforced. As a man of faith I do not want to see churches become just another political entity, which would undoubtedly divide us further as a nation. For the purity of religion please keep politics out of church and for religious liberty keep the church out of politics.

Sincerely,
Mark Hoover
Fort Jones, CA

From: Areleen Stevenson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT on separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:52:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am opposed to this action and would appreciate you reconsidering this. After all this is part of our constitution. This is nonsense.

Areleen Stevenson
Priest River, IDAHO 83856

From: Julie Hoing <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please maintain separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:53:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

It is vital to our God given inalienable rights to retain liberty of conscience by retaining separation of church and state. It is not the role of government to enforce religious matters of any kind, it is to protect the rights of all citizens, including the minority. The great principle of separation of church and state is to 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's' Matthew 22:21. Church should have no control in government and government should have no control in church/religious matters. Period. To fix the ills and moral decay in our society is not to legislate morality, it is only in the power of God to change the hearts of man. Government should have no control over who/what/where/when to or not to in religious matters. It's called religious freedom and liberty of conscience.

This principle of separation of powers is what has made America great, like no other nation. Please look at history to see the persecution that follows when the church uses the civil government to enforce any kind of religious matters. This is not of God, God will never force obedience, he draws them by his love because of what He has done for them.

Thank you for taking comments from "we the people" on these very important matters regarding our religious liberty.

Let freedom ring,

Julie Hoing

From: Flamngo Gry <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:55:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Separation of church and state is one of the constitutional rights that this country was founded on, and what this country should continue to abide by. A wall of separation between church and state allows freedom for all citizens to have and to practice their personal beliefs and convictions without government actions that may infringe upon them. A bridge between church and state could ultimately take that freedom away and lead to violation of our fundamental human rights as citizens of the United States. Please keep church and state separate!

Sincerely,

Danae Steele
Chattanooga, TN

From: Rusty Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:57:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

RLC,

While there have been abuses, and these abuses have been very frustrating, it is not best to tear down the "wall of separation between church and state." Yes, it is a metaphor, and while misunderstood should rather be redefined. The wall of separation is NOT freedom FROM religion, but rather freedom OF religion.

Freedom of religion harmonizes with the language of the First Amendment as you quoted on page 41, "What the First Amendment does say is that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In practical terms, that means the government may not take over the functions of a church or coerce religious observance."

We must exercise caution here. The danger in tearing down a "wall" of separation, while well meaning, to fix the legitimate harmful issues that have created freedom from religion, potentially can negate the "free exercise" of the minority. Simply put, the religion of the majority, well meaning as this might be, can harm the minority who hold similar, but distinctly different views.

A brief look into history and you will find Sunday blue laws, still on the books, where many Seventh-day Adventists have been jailed for working on Sunday.

Please exercise caution, and realize that Religious Freedom is freedom of religion for everyone, including the minority.

Pastor Rusty Williams

From: Sean Wycliffe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opinion Submission: Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:57:32 -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.

From: Remy Albertsen <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State (Remegia Albertsen)

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:58:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am just against the separation of church and state for so many reasons. I hope and pray that you would take into consideration to have a peace country.

Thank you so much,
Remegia Akbertsen

Pittsburg, California [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Hernan Vazquez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:58:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image001.gif

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

My name is Hernan Vazquez, I'm 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 or out of government. 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. A present exemple is China, the state control the church completely.

I urge you to please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall!

It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Hernán Vázquez
[REDACTED] PII

From: Lynn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Church & State Separate!

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 11:59:01 -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.

The government does not and should not tell people how and when to worship, etc.

Thank you!

Lynn Morell

[REDACTED] PII

From: "c. sid" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – “Preserve Separation of Church and State” – Christian Sidney

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:00:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent government from establishing or favoring religion. In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Christian Sidney

From: Teresa Hargreaves <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concern

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:00:52 -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.

Blessings,

Teresa Hargreaves
Rapidan, VA

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep the separation please

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:01:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Example_Replies.pdf

Sent from my iPhone



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 11, 2026

The following are example responses that have been submitted with copies sent to Pillar of Freedom. Please do not just copy and paste, but it is our hope that these can be inspirational to you. A special thank you to everyone who submitted examples, and our apology for not being able to include everyone.

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."

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.

I urge you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken this separation—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 - that's how we keep both free.

Dear Committee Member,

I want to express that I am adamantly opposed to the public or government funding of religious non-profit activities on public campuses, such as religious (universal or unique) clubs, schools, and . I believe instead, that specific church or religious denominations, and it's members should pay for their own activities through private freely offered donations. Tax payers should not be obligated to pay those expenditures.

I also believe religion is a private and personal matter and is **not** one size fits all. A person should be free to pursue (any) faith or no faith, but there should **not** be a state established coerced universal faith, religious practice or tradition. In fact, I believe the government should maintain neutrality in its relationship to (any) religion. History has shown the detriment, brutality, persecution, imposed isolation, denial of liberty and the pursuit of happiness that occurred to the public, and people of faith during the Dark Ages. The founding fathers of colonial American fled Europe for this exact cause. Please uphold separation of church and state. It was a good idea then, and it still is a good idea. The concept of religious liberty is in the U.S. Constitution for a sound reason.

Thank you for your time in reading my letter.

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Please seriously consider revising your draft proposal in which you suggest our government should further disregard the traditional and longstanding principles of our first amendment: Keeping the government out of running churches and keep the churches out of running government.

It is precisely because a bridge has been built that further erosion is felt to be necessary: Because the state has acknowledged atheistic, evolutionary secular humanism (which is a religion being based solely upon subjective speculation and belief) as the primary established belief system that we now find ourselves in a position where we feel we need to extend that power to other religious philosophies, taking us directly back into the dark ages the founders of this country sought to exit through removing any religion from establishment while allowing every citizen and public official to directly influence the nation through the maintenance and expression of their personally held beliefs and their character.

If a philosophy is viable it does not need the government to fund, promote and force it upon the citizenry. Government involvement in religion cannot help by become coercive.

Why should public tax funds support any religious organization? If the adherents do not have sufficient conviction to support it themselves, why should the nation as a whole? We allow a tax deduction for religious contributions already. Why should a tax payer that believes in one thing have

to support an organization that believes another?

If we want to further support religious choice in education, simply exempt people who do not use the public school system from that portion of taxation.

Also, who decides orthodoxy? The majority? The politically and financially powerful? This completely undermines the basic premise of our constitution that a minorities's rights have the same protection as the majority (within civil bounds). I spent a number of years serving in a pastoral capacity in the Republic of Ireland. I observed through their history and current social atmosphere that established churches only lead to oppression and the loss of personal freedom. We see this history repeated in Europe through the Roman Church and then in Ireland through the Church of England. In the end government establishment of both churches led to the same types of human rights violations, in varying degrees. We see this in the former Japanese empire with it's established Shinto religion and in the communist countries with their established form of leader and government worship.

Our foundational principle of the separation of church and state dates back to Roger Williams and Rhode Island. It is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a recent doctrine. Any church/state coalition, like Dr. Frankenstein's creation in Mary Shellys literary allegory, becomes a beast that consumes all we hold dear.

If there is anything history has taught us it is that a government establishing religion (belief system based on philosophical or metaphysical principles) of any kind leads to severe suppression of minorities and chilling abuse of the power that attends the government establishment. I believe we are seeing this now with the establishment of the evolutionary, secular humanist, religion as the accepted social norm in our education, government and institutions. Please, do not further weaken our first amendment but strengthen it. I believe, informed by the testimony of history, that any move toward bridging religion with government will only further weaken the already tottering basic human right of liberty of conscience and freedom of speech we believe is an inalienable human right.

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

After reading through 60-70% of the religious liberty draft report I have to agree with the Pillar of Freedom response to this draft report. The checks and balances in order to deter corrupt political meddling in reference to government funding of religious entities and repealing the Johnson Amendment would be daunting at best and destructive at worst (I lean toward the latter). It is in the best interest of all to not try to fix what is not broken. I ask you, please refrain from bridging the gap between church and state.

Sincerely,

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Committee,

As a citizen of the United States of America and a student of church history, I am writing to express my concerns with your recent statements on the wall of separation of church and state being replaced with a bridge, as well as my concerns with using government money for non-profit religious activities. History repeatedly shows that when churches become closely aligned with state power, the rights of religious dissenters are often diminished, leading to their persecution.

This happened in medieval Europe when the Catholic Church aligned with the state; thousands were killed as a result. The Church of England also followed in the Catholic Church's footsteps. Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, and so many others died at the hands of those who claimed to follow the humble Jesus who rebuked His disciples when they wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village that didn't accept Him. In Switzerland, Germany, and the Low Countries, Anabaptists were persecuted by secular authorities motivated by both Protestant and Catholic forces. In America, Rhode Island was founded by Roger Williams who was forced to flee in the dead of winter because of his religious views, including his belief that church and civil government should remain separate. Rhode Island became an early model of religious liberty, and those principles later influenced the American commitment to religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

Others have written to you with deeper and better explanations of this topic, I am sure, but I wanted to express my concerns as well. I urge the Department to preserve the constitutional principle that protects both religious liberty and civil government by maintaining separation between church and state and to retain the Johnson Amendment, which helps preserve both the integrity of religious institutions and the independence of government.

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.

From: Gwen Sanders <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:01:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I agree with Pillars of Freedom's comments. **PLEASE** implement them.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Washington-Sanders
Duck River, Tennessee

From: Lisa Quade <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- PROTECTING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FOR
FUTURE GENERATIONS – LISA QUADE

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:01:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for allowing the public to comment on the Commission's draft report.

I am writing as a Christian, an American citizen, and the mother of four children. I care deeply about the kind of country my children will inherit and whether they—and their children—will continue to enjoy true freedom of conscience.

I strongly support the protection of every person's right to worship, believe, speak, and live according to sincerely held convictions. Those protections must apply equally to Christians, members of other religions, and those who do not profess a religious faith.

However, I am deeply concerned that several recommendations in the draft report would weaken the separation of church and state rather than strengthen religious liberty.

True religious freedom does not come from government funding, political power, or special treatment. It comes from protecting every individual's conscience and preventing the government from favoring, financing, or controlling religion.

As a mother, I am especially concerned about the long-term consequences of the proposals contained in this report.

Expanding government financial support for faith-based organizations could make churches and ministries increasingly dependent upon government money. With government funding eventually comes government oversight, political pressure, and regulation. Religious organizations should remain free to serve others without becoming dependent upon the state.

I am also concerned about using taxpayer money to finance religious education. Parents should certainly have the freedom to choose a religious education for their children, but citizens should not be compelled to financially support religious teachings with which they disagree.

Government funding also creates the danger that government will eventually seek greater control over the curriculum, beliefs, employment practices, and policies of religious schools.

Repealing the Johnson Amendment could turn churches into political campaign organizations. Ministers are already free to preach about moral principles, justice, government, and public issues. Churches should not become instruments of political parties or candidates.

As a Christian, I believe the church must be free to speak truth to every political party. It should never become controlled by or identified with one political party.

I am also concerned about any policy that singles out one religion for special government protection or influence. Discrimination against Christians is wrong, but so is discrimination against Jews, Muslims, minority faiths, and nonbelievers.

Religious liberty must protect everyone equally. Government should not create favored and disfavored religious groups.

I also object to the use of government resources to promote a disputed interpretation of religious liberty through posters, public-school materials, training programs, and government-sponsored educational campaigns.

Any public education about religious liberty should teach both the right to freely exercise religion and the right to be protected from government-established or government-promoted religion.

My husband and I have studied the history of religious liberty and have collected historical quotations at AmericaInProphecy.com. One statement that expresses the principle clearly comes from President Ulysses S. Grant:

“Declare church and state forever separate and distinct; but each free within their proper spheres.”

The preacher Charles Spurgeon expressed a similar truth:

“Christ wants no help from Caesar.”

These statements are not hostile toward Christianity. They recognize that Christianity is strongest when it advances through truth, love, persuasion, and service—not through government funding or political power.

History shows that whenever church and state become closely united, religious minorities and dissenters eventually suffer. A government that has the power to promote religion also has the power to control, redefine, or suppress it.

I want my children to grow up in a nation where they may freely follow their consciences while also respecting the consciences of their neighbors. I do not want them to live in a country where religious institutions compete for government favor, public funding, or political influence.

I respectfully ask the Commission to affirm the separation of church and state, remove the concept of a government-supported “bridge” between church and state, reject government favoritism or direct financial support for religious institutions, preserve the nonpartisan character of churches and tax-exempt religious organizations, protect every faith and every conscience equally, and ensure that public educational materials explain both religious free exercise and protection from government-sponsored religion.

Religious liberty is too precious to be placed in the hands of politicians or made dependent upon government funding. It must remain a right that belongs equally to every person.

For the sake of my children and future generations, please do not adopt the draft report in its present form.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Quade
Mother of four
AmericaInProphecy.com

From: Anita Ross <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to the Commission Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:01:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I am writing to say that we want to maintain separation of church and state. And I believe that it is in the constitution in which we have a copy of. (we as in 20 people. Thanks for accepting my responses. God bless You for doing the right thing. [REDACTED] PII . Anita and David Jablonski.

From: surich <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:02:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was very concerned to learn that the RLC wants to join church and state again. Do not remove that wall.

The Commission on Religious Liberty is a farce. It's a sham, like a lot of what is going on in our government. This is proven by what they did to Carrie Prejean Boller. Where were they? Because she didn't comply with their beliefs, she was ousted from the commission. How is that religious or fair? How can they honestly call this organization "Religious Liberty"?

The definition of liberty: *"Liberty is the state of being free — freedom from arbitrary restrictions, coercion, or oppression, and the ability to act, think, and speak according to one's own will and judgment."*

Was Carrie treated in such a way by getting kicked off the committee due to her religious convictions and what she posted on social media, even if it was against the Zionist views of what the commission stood for?

It's proven in history: anytime the church gets control of the government, the people will suffer. I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Sincerely,
Susan Betz West Plains, MO

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

From: Lynnette Cain <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:04:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious Liberty commission,

Date: Mon, Jul 13, 2026 at 7:27 AM

Subject: Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Charlotte Powers

To: <[REDACTED] PII (mailto:[REDACTED] PII)>

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was concerned to read that the Commission wants to change the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. Respectfully, that is backwards - and as a person of faith, I find the idea troubling.

That wall wasn't build by secularists to keep religion down. It was put in place by believers for reasons of freedom. A bridge doesn't make the church strong; it allows the government money and political support to come right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering politicians instead of God. History shows what happens when church and state join together, and it isn't good for either one.

Please don't make that bridge. Keep the wall. It will protect much more than constrain it.

Sincerely,

Lynnette Cain

Cicero, In

From: Lora Friesen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:06:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern. While I am a Bible believing Christian, I fully support the separation of church and state. Belief should not be pushed or required. Citizens should be allowed to follow their own belief system. It is not the Government's job to save the soul. Freedom to choose is paramount. No one belief system should interfere with another. There are obvious laws that need to be held, such as human sacrifice. But what a person believes and the way they worship should be their right. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lora Friesen

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

From: Julie Novielli <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:06:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Liberty_of_Conscience.pages

Please add to the public comment area - Thank you!

ATTENTION: U.S. DOJ

My conviction regarding the separation of church and state is rooted in both history and conscience.

History has repeatedly shown that when civil government exercises authority over matters of faith, religious liberty is diminished. From the persecution of religious minorities in Europe to the experiences of early American settlers seeking freedom of conscience, the lesson has remained the same: genuine faith cannot be compelled by law.

The founders of the United States recognized this principle by protecting both the free exercise of religion and by preventing the establishment of religion by the government. These safeguards preserve the liberty of every individual to worship according to conscience - or not at all - without coercion.

As a matter of deeply held religious conviction, I believe that allegiance to God and matters of faith must remain separate from the authority of the state. I therefore support the historic principle that church and state have distinct roles and that religious liberty is best protected when neither controls the other.

This conviction is sincere, longstanding, and based on both historical evidence and my personal understanding of religious freedom. We also need to learn and lean into the experience of Covid 19 and the coercion against the conscience of many.

Biblical text: Galatians 5:1 & 13; Acts 5:29; Genesis 1:1

Thank you for your attention to this matter

From: Robert Thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State- Robert Thomas

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:07:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

I am writing to formally express my agreement with the Pillar of Freedoms. Please let me know if there are any next steps or additional documentation required from my end to formalize this support.

Best regards,

Robert Thomas, Carbondale Illinois

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

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:07:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a citizen of the United States of America, I am sincerely and passionately against the government getting anywhere near our freedoms to individually live out our unique religious beliefs. This is a pillar of our great American experiment.

Pillars of Freedom comments are right on!!

With all respect,

Debbie Nakashima

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

From: Viola Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:08:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please, People! We have Sooo many Religions in America...

We can't even Unite, nor should we even Try!! To Make them Part of The United states's Laws!

Church and States Cannot! And SHOULD NOT! ATTEMPT! TO BE UNITED!

65% OF AMERICAN ARE Catholic!

UNITING CHURCH AND STATE, WILL PUT THE POPE IN CHARGE! 🤖

ALL BUT 2 OF THE Supreme Court's JUSTICES ARE CATHOLICS!!! 🤖 🤖

That is not My Choice of Religion. 🤖

From: Richard Wolf <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:09:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

I reject any proposal that removes religious freedom.
Sent from my iPhone

From: Roberto and Socorro Valencia <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

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

Sincerely,

Socorro Valencia
Keene, Texas

From: Wilbur Atwood <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Discussion of the Constitutional meaning of "Separation of Church & State"

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

As a citizen of this country for 84 years, and a pastor for over 40 years, I want to urge against the more modern interpretation of the Constitution. by the Commission appointed to study this and make recommendations. I don't think the founding Fathers are being understood. The founder of Christianity, Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Matthew 22:21. Here Jesus is explaining heaven's view which is, a separation of church and state.

Since many of our founders came from countries where the governments controlled religious matters they wisely put protections into the Constitution, clauses which have served us well for 250 and made our country the best place in the world to live.

Roger Williams led the way to the following understanding in this country. He declared it to be the duty of the magistrate to restrain crime, but never to control the conscience. "The public or the magistrates may decide," he said, "what is due from men to men, but when they attempt to prescribe a man's duty to God, they are out of place."

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

Therefore the Constitution says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Rightly understood, this prohibits the government from making any decisions that would control the conscience, including how people worship.

As a Christian I think that if we are a Christian Nation we would have God's blessings continue as we have had in the past but working through the government is not a wise plan. The pastors and church leaders need to seek God for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring about conversions. Living the christian life is the only way to true happiness but forced Christianity will not make America great. In the entire life of Jesus we see no force used to get followers.

In fact here is what will happen: The union of the church with the State, be the degree ever so slight, while it may appear to bring the world nearer to the church, does in reality bring the church nearer to the world. This path will lead to the destruction of our country because the Bible says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation." Proverbs 14:34.

Pastor Wilbur Atwood

From: Light of prophecy International <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:10:15 -0400

Importance: Normal



Seperation of Church and State Doc..pdf

Dear Members of Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. Please see the attached PDF, which includes my comment and explanation for my request.

Sincerely,
Pastor Michael Avaylon
Chewelah, Washington

From: tbkoolington <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] : PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Terrence Shields

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:10:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a private citizen who cares deeply that our government stay faithful to both halves of the First Amendment's promise on religion. My family has always understood liberty of conscience as something government protects, not something it grants or withdraws by policy. I ask you to keep that distinction at the center of your work.

Coercion cannot produce faith; it can only produce compliance, and compliance is not what any religion actually asks for. A law can march a body into a pew, but it cannot put belief in a heart, because belief is heart-work and statutes only reach hands and feet. History bears this out in the plainest way: centuries of state-established Christianity in Europe did not deepen piety, they produced pride and indolence in the clergy and ignorance and servility among the people, along with the superstition and persecution that always seem to follow when church and state trade places. Even a general and president understood this. Grant's counsel still holds: leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contribution, and keep the state and church forever separate. The churches this Commission might be tempted to favor would not be strengthened by favor; they would be hollowed out by it, trading the power of God for the power of the police.

The deepest argument here is not merely practical but Christian in its own terms. Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's draws a line between two jurisdictions: the civil, which governs conduct between neighbors, and the religious, which belongs to God alone and to no earthly power. Under that teaching, government may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil, whether it injures a neighbor's rights, never whether it is pious or impious, orthodox or heretical. Every recommendation that puts the government's weight behind a religious text, symbol, or lesson crosses that line into territory that was never Caesar's to begin with. That is not a demand for a hostile secularism; it is a demand that the state stay inside the boundary its own founding principles, and the principle Christ himself stated, assign to it.

Finally, I would ask the Commission to remember that religious liberty cannot rest on majority sentiment, however sincere. If a vote can grant a right, a vote can revoke it, and then it was never a right at all, only a permission held at others' pleasure. Our rights are described as inherent and Creator-endowed precisely so that they stand outside the reach of election returns; constitutions exist to protect the minority, since the majority never needed such protection to begin with. As one Congressional report on this very subject put it, the Constitution regards the conscience of the least popular believer as sacred as that of the majority, and gives no more authority to touch one conscience than a whole community's. Popular support may justify a highway bill. It cannot justify a religious one.

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

Respectfully,
Terrence Shields

From: Heidi Nordby <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment—separation of church and state—Heidi

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:10:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission;

I was concerned when I learned that the Commission wants to weaken the wall of separation between church and state, especially repealing the Johnson Amendment and using government money to fund religious activities. As a person of faith, this concerns me deeply. That wall was put there by believers who recognized that in order to freely exercise their religion, the government needed to be separate and independent of the church.

Our founding fathers recognized that many colonists came to our land to escape religious tyranny that resulted from State religion. And when writing our constitution, they were very careful to include language that would protect and prevent our government from interfering with free exercise of religion and conscience.

When churches receive and accept government funding, it opens the door for the government to influence the ministry of the church. And churches end up competing for funding, and possibly compromise their beliefs to gain government favor.

Please keep church and state separate. It not only protects people of faith, but also those who do not have religious beliefs and the clear separation between church and state is why religion has continued to be a strong part of our culture. This is how we keep both church and state free. Religious liberty is strongest when the government is neutral. Please revise the recommendations and strongly affirm free exercise of religion, preserve the establishment clause's separation principle, and the Johnson Amendment's guardrails.

Thank you for your service and taking time to read public comments.

Sincerely,
Heidi
Sent from my iPad

From: Colton Harbour <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:10:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I simply would like to say that I stand with the sentiment that the government should have little to no control over the religious liberties of the people of the United States. Furthermore, I believe that it would be wrong even for the government as a whole to support one religion over the other.

Sincerely,
Colton A Harbour

From: Carol Reynolds <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:10:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

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

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

My ancestors fled to the USA back in the 1700s because of religious persecution in Switzerland by the state church. I am deeply committed to keep that separation wall strong in our country.

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

Sincerely, Carol Reynolds

PillarofFreedom.org | [REDACTED] PII

From: Socorro Valencia <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:11:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled when I learned about the suggestion of making a bridge between church and state.

In the past when there was not separation between church and state dark ages persecution was a reality. In America the founding fathers had clear the idea of separation between church and state otherwise the rights of minorities will not be preserved.

In my own experience because in my country of origin there was not separation of church and state, I had waste four years after finishing high school to enter into university, requesting to have entrance test not on Saturday for my religious convictions, the test was offered half on Saturday and half on Sunday.

Now as a United States citizen I enjoy the freedom of worship. Therefore I am writing to you to reconsider your recommendations that would weaken the separation of Church and State, especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

Please keep separate church and state.

Sincerely,

Roberto Valencia
Keene, Texas

From: evanir garcia <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Separation of Church and State- Evanir Garcia

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:11:44 -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,
Evanir Garcia

From: katarina stanic <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reply to the recommendations

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:12:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am concerned! Very concerned! Even alarmed!

By explicitly asserting that there is no separation of church and state because that exact phrase isn't present, reveals the extent of purposeful closing of the eyes to the obvious. We cannot arrive to safe, and certainly not to great places, with our eyes closed. We cannot ignore the history without groping in to repeat it. There IS separation between church and state. There has been! And there has been the purpose for it! Here it is, in the words of the Father of the Constitution, president James Madison:

"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."

The present recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission, unless arrested, will be heading to ceaseless strife and complete undoing what made America great and free, in the first place. IfiMAGA will ever succeed, the flag of liberty of conscience needs to keep waving over American shores and the walls of separation between church and state must remain standing.

Sincerely,
Katarina Stanic

From: Anthony Drummond <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Anthony Drummond

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:13:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who takes both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses seriously, and I want to begin from the source that matters most to me: my own faith. 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. That line was not a suggestion to government; it was an exclusion. Civil government exists to protect one person's rights from another's injury, and it may ask only whether an action is civil or uncivil, never whether it is religious or irreligious. When a legislator or a commission proposes to put the state behind a religious text, a display, or a devotional lesson, the objection I raise is not that this is too religious for a secular government. It is that it is forbidden by the very faith it claims to serve.

I also ask you to consider what kind of thing a right is. If a right can be granted by majority vote, it can be revoked by majority vote, and then it was never a right at all — only a permission, held at the sufferance of whoever wins the next election. Our tradition holds instead that rights are inherent, owed to the Creator before they are owed to any government, and that constitutions exist precisely to put certain things beyond the reach of election returns. Popular government is instituted to protect the minority, since the majority can generally look after itself. Popularity may justify a highway bill. It cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never among the things submitted to the vote in the first place.

History shows why this matters even when the first step looks harmless. Constantine's first religious law grew, by a logical and not an accidental process, into imperial control of doctrine, persecution of dissenters, and eventually the Inquisition. The government that takes a side in religious controversy loses the very peace-keeping power it exists to provide, because it becomes a partisan rather than an arbiter. Nobody proposing a school prayer mandate or a religious display today is proposing an Inquisition, and I don't suggest otherwise. But the principle conceded in the first small measure is the same principle that produced the last one. Refuse the principle, and the later consequences have no foothold.

Finally, I'd point to what coercion actually does to faith. A law can compel a body into a pew; it cannot put belief into a heart, since love for God is essential to any act of real religious devotion, and force in that territory only manufactures hypocrisy. Worse, a state-favored religion tends to corrupt the very faith it favors — inviting converts of convenience and clerical complacency, and trading spiritual power for police power, which is itself a kind of confession of weakness. Fifteen centuries of established Christianity produced, in James Madison's accounting, pride and indolence in the clergy and servility in the laity. I don't think today's proposals would revive American religion. I think they would hollow it out, while handing its content to whichever majority holds office next.

I am recommending a book called Great Controversy. This book reviews Church history and what happens when a bridge is setup for both church and state. Also, it points back to Bible prophecy, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. It shows that a church and state system will be developed again within the United States. This along with deceptive miracles and impersonations of Christ will lead to persecution within the United States and beyond.

Source: EGW Writings <https://share.google/gv76MYt0PKt3zKCDH>

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

Respectfully,
Anthony Drummond

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

From: Thomas Stratman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Part 2: overall comments, issues, and solutions

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:13:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

The 224-page report appears to argue for a much closer relationship between religion and government than has traditionally been understood under the American principle of church-state separation. More specifically, it seems to advocate for integrating a particular evangelical Christian perspective into American government and society.

The report also argues that nonprofit organizations should not be required to comply with certain civil rights requirements and proposes repealing the Johnson Amendment, which currently prohibits tax-exempt nonprofits from endorsing or campaigning for political candidates. These recommendations would represent a significant shift in the longstanding relationship between charitable organizations, religion, and electoral politics.

The report's references and recommendations are overwhelmingly Christian in focus. For example, it supports displaying the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms and encourages Christian activities in public schools. As written, the report gives little indication of how these recommendations would apply equally to other faith traditions. If the underlying principle is truly religious liberty for all, then public institutions would inevitably have to balance the Free Exercise Clause, the Free Speech Clause, the Establishment Clause, the Equal Protection Clause, student safety, and age-appropriate educational supervision.

That raises practical questions. If Christian religious displays are permitted in classrooms, should teachers also be free to display symbols from other religions or belief systems? A teacher might display a Christian cross, while another displays a statue of Baphomet. One classroom could feature the Star of David, another the Islamic Crescent and Star, another the Om symbol, the Dharma Wheel, the Lotus Flower, the Daoist Yin-Yang, the Sikh Khanda, or the Egyptian Ankh. Each of these symbols represents sincerely held religious or spiritual beliefs for different communities.

Once public schools become venues for the expression of individual religious traditions by educators acting in their official capacity, administrators would face the difficult task of applying constitutional protections consistently across all faiths. The result could be recurring legal disputes, perceptions of favoritism, and increased religious tension rather than educational neutrality.

For that reason, I do not believe it is practical for teachers, while serving in their official role as public educators, to use their classrooms as places for religious expression. Doing so risks blurring the distinction between education and religious instruction. Religious formation has traditionally been understood as the responsibility of parents and faith communities, while the public education system exists to provide a universal education that prepares all children for responsible citizenship in a constitutional republic. That mission includes cultivating civic virtue, encouraging informed participation in democratic institutions, reducing inequality through educational opportunity, and promoting social cohesion among citizens of many different backgrounds and beliefs.

Taken as a whole, the report reads less like a defense of religious pluralism and more like an argument for granting a privileged place to one particular Christian tradition within American public life. It leaves unanswered how its recommendations would protect the equal religious liberty of those who hold different beliefs—or no religious beliefs at all.

I hope the Religious Liberty Commission is not advocating for a model in which government selectively protects the religious freedom of some groups while allowing exemptions that would permit discrimination against others. A commitment to religious liberty is strongest when it is applied consistently and equally, rather than favoring one faith tradition over another.

The founders' writings and official acts show the United States was established as a secular national government that would not have any religious tests to hold office, no national church codifying their beliefs into law, and broad religious liberty to protect pluralism. Our founding was informed by a mix of

The United States has never required religious uniformity as a condition of citizenship. While Christianity undeniably influenced many of the nation's founders and the broader culture of the time, the founders' writings and official acts established a secular national government: one with no religious test for public office, no national church, and constitutional protections for the free exercise of religion alongside prohibitions against governmental establishment of religion. The American experiment has always been strengthened by protecting the rights of people with differing religious convictions: Christian, Jewish, Deist, Indigenous spiritual traditions, Hindu, Buddhists, Atheists, Enlightenment influences, and others. to live together under equal protection of the law.

Christian nationalists only believe in freedom of religious expression for people like them. Cherry-picking out of context quotes, so they can parrot this myth that we were founded as a Christian nation. Which is simply not true.

From: Jaime Martin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Establishment Clause -Jaime

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:14:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen who cares deeply about both halves of the First Amendment's promise, and I want to thank you for your service before I say anything else.

The first argument I want to raise is one Christians themselves should recognize before any other. Christ divided 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. That line was pressed by Alonzo Jones before a U.S. Senate committee in 1888, arguing against a national Sunday law: civil government is civil, and has nothing to do, in the matter of legislation, with religious observances in any way. The test this leaves is simple and religion-neutral: the state may ask only whether an act injures a neighbor, never whether it is religious or heretical. Every proposal that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses that line into territory Christ himself reserved for God alone.

This is not only a theological claim; it is a matter of established American precedent. In 1829 and 1830, Congress itself, still populated by men who had lived through the founding, rejected petitions to halt Sunday mail and legislate religious observance. The Senate committee wrote 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. The House committee went further, warning that if a legislature defines one point of religious duty, it may with equal propriety proceed to define every part of divine revelation. Any commission recommendation that leans on government to affirm religious duties must reckon with the fact that it is asking us to overrule what Congress itself declared outside its province, in an official report, while Madison still lived.

History also teaches that coercion cannot produce faith, only its counterfeit. Forcing outward observance will not make Christians of anyone; it may make hypocrites of many. 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, and in both superstition, bigotry, and persecution. Grant said it plainly: leave religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school, and keep the state and church forever separate. Government sponsorship does not strengthen the churches it favors; it corrupts them, trading spiritual vitality for political convenience.

Finally, there is a structural reason government can never rightly hold religious power in the first place. Our 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 was never delegated was never received. As Jones put it, no government can ever account to God for any individual, and no government will ever stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer even for itself. The First Amendment did not invent this limit; it simply recorded a boundary that already existed.

Protect free exercise for all, and keep the state out of the business of religion. The two commitments stand or fall together. I trust that the decisions you make will shape the country future generations will inherit, and I ask you to weigh these arguments with that in mind.

Respectfully,
Jaime

From: Amie Hubbard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Amie Hubbard

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:14:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

A Plea to Preserve America's Sacred Safeguard of Religious Liberty

Upon reading through the Religious Liberty Commission Report, your dedication and effort to preserving the sacred gift of religious liberty was evident. Thank you for your hard work, for your diligence to the sacred trust.

However, on June 26, 2026, Dan Patrick, chairman of President Donald Trump's Religious Liberty Commission, stated from the Oval Office that "the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution." This is extremely alarming!

While the exact phrase "*separation of church and state*" does not appear in the Constitution, the principle unquestionably does. It is woven into the very framework of our nation's founding documents and has served as one of the greatest safeguards of both civil and religious freedom for nearly 250 years.

The Constitution intentionally places limits on the government's involvement with religion. **Article VI** declares that "*no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.*" This remarkable protection ensures that citizenship and public service are never conditioned upon religious belief or affiliation.

Even more significantly, the **First Amendment** of the Bill of Rights begins with these powerful words:

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

These sixteen words accomplish two equally vital purposes. They protect every citizen's right to worship God according to conscience—or not at all—and they prohibit the government from establishing, favoring, endorsing, or entangling itself with religion. Religious liberty cannot exist where government possesses the authority to determine which faith receives its favor.

The **Fourteenth Amendment** further extended these constitutional protections by prohibiting states from depriving any person of liberty without due process or denying equal protection under the law. Together, these constitutional provisions form the legal foundation that has protected religious minorities, majority faiths, and those with no religious affiliation alike.

History repeatedly demonstrates why these safeguards are indispensable.

Whenever civil power and religious authority become intertwined, both institutions suffer. Government gains influence over matters of conscience that belong only to God, while religion risks exchanging the transforming power of the Holy Spirit for the coercive power of the state. Faith that depends upon governmental privilege ultimately loses its moral authority because genuine worship can never be compelled by legislation.

America's founders understood this danger well. Many had witnessed or inherited the painful legacy of religious persecution in Europe, where governments established official churches, compelled religious conformity, and punished dissent. They intentionally created a constitutional system that would prevent those abuses from taking root in the United States.

While it is evident that is not the intent of the committee to diminish in any way religious freedom, it is vital to recognize that the separation between church and state is essential now and in the future.

The wall protecting church from state is not a barrier against religion; it is a shield for religion. It preserves the freedom of every church to proclaim truth without government interference and protects every citizen from governmental coercion in matters of faith.

In addition to these constitutional protections, Congress has long recognized the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries between religious institutions and political power. One significant example is the **Johnson Amendment**, enacted in 1954 as part of the Internal Revenue Code. The amendment provides that organizations receiving tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3), including churches, may not participate or intervene in political campaigns on behalf of—or in opposition to—candidates for public office.

The Johnson Amendment was never intended to silence the prophetic voice of the church. Churches remain free to preach biblical truth, address moral issues, educate their members on matters of conscience, and encourage civic responsibility. What it seeks to prevent is the transformation of houses of worship into extensions of political campaigns or partisan organizations.

This distinction is critically important. The church is called to proclaim the eternal truths of God's Word, not to become a political instrument. When political parties seek the endorsement of churches, or when churches become identified with particular candidates, both the gospel and our democratic institutions are diminished. Political loyalties can divide the body of Christ, while the church's unique mission—to point people to Jesus Christ—is overshadowed by temporal political agendas.

The Johnson Amendment helps preserve the independence of both church and state. It protects churches from becoming beholden to political interests and helps ensure that tax-exempt religious organizations serve the public good rather than partisan campaigns. Weakening or eliminating this safeguard would further blur the distinction between religious ministry and political activism, inviting greater government scrutiny of churches while increasing political influence within them.

The founders wisely sought to prevent government from controlling religion. The Johnson Amendment likewise helps prevent partisan politics from controlling the church. Together, these protections preserve an environment in which faith can flourish freely, consciences remain uncoerced, and churches can faithfully fulfill their God-given mission without becoming entangled in the pursuit of political power.

The Johnson Amendment **does not prohibit churches from speaking on moral or political issues**. It prohibits **endorsing or opposing political candidates** while maintaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

For people of faith, this principle is not merely constitutional—it is deeply biblical. Throughout Scripture, God invites rather than compels allegiance. Love, worship, and obedience have value only when they are freely chosen. Christ never advanced His kingdom through political power or civil force, declaring instead, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36). Religious conviction flourishes through persuasion, love, and the work of the Holy Spirit—not through governmental authority.

Therefore, we respectfully and earnestly appeal to the Religious Liberty Commission to recognize the profound responsibility entrusted to its care. True religious liberty is not strengthened by diminishing the constitutional boundaries between church and state. Rather, it is preserved by faithfully upholding them.

These constitutional protections are not obstacles to faith. They are among the greatest gifts ever given to faith. They ensure that every individual may seek God according to conscience, free from governmental pressure, religious favoritism, or civil penalties.

The erosion of these principles would not simply alter constitutional interpretation; it would place at risk one of America's most precious freedoms. Once the barrier protecting the independence of church and state is weakened, history warns that both religious liberty and civil liberty inevitably begin to erode.

Now, more than ever, America needs leaders with the courage to preserve these constitutional safeguards—not dismantle them. The freedom to believe, to worship, and to follow the dictates of conscience is too precious to be

surrendered. May we never forget that protecting the separation of church and state is, in reality, protecting the religious liberty of every American.

May God richly bless you,

Amie Hubbard

From: Michael Kay <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential religious liberty commission response

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:15:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a lifelong American citizen, I am writing to express my deep disappointment in the presidential religious liberty commission report, as well as the unacceptably short window for public comment. I believe this shows a complete disregard for the opinions of ordinary every day American citizens. Not nearly enough time has been given by the commission to allow people not only to be made aware of the report, but time to read, understand, and reply to it. This seems like just another example of politicians, imposing their own will upon the nation, without regard for the thoughts and opinions of those who will be most affected by their decisions. I think That the wall of separation between Church and state which your commission seems to completely despise, is a very necessary safeguard for the minority religious groups and against the development of State religions, which so many of those who settled this great land we're fleeing Europe to escape. My request would be that your commission would reconsider its position, or at the very least give more time for citizens to make their opinions known.

Sincerely,

Michael Kay

Hendersonville, North Carolina

From: Marion Inman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Religion

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:15:11e0400

Importance: Normal

Sirs,

I am certain you have heard way better discussion than I can articulate to you concerning separation of church and state.

So please count me against any move to insert religion in to government or government into religion.

I must always serve God according too His word no mater what the government legislates even if it is sold as for the general good.

Please decide carefully and prayerfully.

Thank You

Marion Inman

From: Frantz Philossaint <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Frantz Philossaint

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:16:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen who takes both halves of the First Amendment's religion language seriously, and I ask you to consider three arguments before you recommend any policy that draws government closer to the work of religion.

The first is structural. Any law touching religion, even one meant kindly, must define the religion it favors, and every definition includes some believers while excluding others. Even the included are no longer practicing freely; they are practicing on terms a future legislature can revise.

The second argument is Christian, not secular. Christ himself divided human duty into two jurisdictions when he said that which is Caesar's is to be rendered to Caesar, and that which is God's is to be rendered to God alone. Civil government answers only the question of whether an act is civil or uncivil; it has no authority to ask whether an act is religious, irreligious, or heretical. Every proposal that puts government behind a religious text, display, or lesson crosses the line Christ himself drew. That objection does not come from hostility to faith; it comes from taking Christ's own words seriously.

The third argument concerns what government could ever lawfully receive. Our system rests on the consent of the governed, meaning government holds only what the people delegate to it. But no person can delegate his relationship to God; he cannot authorize anyone else to believe, worship, or answer for his soul. What was never given could never be received. This answers the claim that avoiding a national church satisfies the Establishment Clause. Government's lack of religious jurisdiction was never a technicality of that clause; the amendment only recorded a limit that was already true of any government resting on consent.

I recognize these commissioners face real pressure to accommodate sincere religious concern. I ask only that the accommodation stop at the line where government begins legislating about religion itself, rather than protecting the person practicing it.

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

May God give us a few more years of grace to further its course.

Respectfully,
Frantz Philossaint

From: "Tammy M." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religion/state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:17:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Disolve "Separate of religion & state"??? Absurd!

If you do that we definately will have politicians telling schools & people what, who, when, where, how, & why they can practice, & even demand a certain religion cannot be practiced.

STAY OUT OF OUR PERSONAL FREEDOM CHOICES, & keep religion out of our schools so kids aren't torn between learning math, reading, writing, life skills & being forced to take up that time they can never get back because they're being forced to learn about religion which is very politically inserted not a choice!

Tammy mckean

From: Linet Oresi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state:

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:17:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Room 5706

Washington, DC

July 13, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to urge the Commission to uphold the separation of church and state as a fundamental principle of religious liberty in the United States.

The First Amendment protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits the establishment of religion by the government. This balance enables people of all faiths, as well as those with none, to live together in freedom and mutual respect.

When the government remains neutral in matters of faith, it protects religious liberty for everyone. It prevents governmental favoritism, preserves the independence of religious organizations, and protects citizens from official endorsement of any religion.

I respectfully ask the Commission to support policies that preserve these constitutional protections and ensure equal treatment for all Americans, regardless of religious belief.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Linet Oresi
Corpus Christi, Texas

From: Michael Huston <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: The separation of church and state. Michael Huston

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:17:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

I respectfully want My voice to be heard in support of what Alex Bowen and Pilar of freedoms messages have so urgently and clearly stated and essentially warne
I pray you take to heart this most serious issue according to the Bible first, history second, and what our founding fathers had wisely set up.

Michael Huston

Sent from my U.S.Cellular© Smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Lizzy Reyes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:17:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

God has given every person the priceless gift of freedom—the freedom to think, to choose, to learn, to follow one's conscience, and to worship Him according to personal conviction. These God-given liberties are the foundation of true human dignity and should never be taken away.

By safeguarding these freedoms for all its citizens, the United States has long stood as a beacon of liberty, teaching the world that every human life deserves respect and that freedom of conscience is essential to a just and peaceful society.

Yet history warns that whenever a nation joins the power of government with the authority of a particular church, freedom is placed in jeopardy. When a government begins to favor one faith or one form of worship as the standard for national greatness, those who follow a different path inevitably face discrimination and, eventually, persecution. It often begins with tolerance, then legal pressure, and finally coercion. The Middle Ages provide a sobering reminder of what can happen when civil power enforces religious conformity, leading to the persecution and suffering of those who refused to violate their conscience.

May God preserve this nation and its commitment to peace, liberty, and freedom of conscience. As long as these God-given principles are upheld, America will continue to be truly great. But if they are abandoned, the very freedoms that have made this nation a refuge of hope may one day be lost.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Torres

Añasco, Puerto Rico

From:

PII

To:

PII

PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Public Comment

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:18:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

There should be a barrier between church and state, that separation is key to things that are absolutely essential for American freedom. One major reason why there should be a separation is that without such separation it would be an endorsement, which under law you cannot endorse a religion. One other major reason is that even people of the same religion have varying beliefs which means that it is highly unlikely that each sect of true Christianity is included, and even more unlikely that each sect gets an equal voice. Jesus said his kingdom is not of this world, and Christian's can absolutely influence politics but you can't combine church and state because human interpretation would be making law and not God Himself. No one can trust that the correct sect will be in power because no one agrees on which one is fully correct.

With freedom in mind,

Micah

PII

From: ROGER PEDEN <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty--Separation of Church and State

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

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs: Do NOT move forward with building bridges between church and state. The government serves a good purpose for secular peace and organization, but SHOULD NOT

be the arbiter for sacred rites and privileges. Keep the door OPEN to individual rites and liberties!!! Let the individual be guided by God, not government. Government may have

good intentions, but the end result is confusion and restriction of personal freedom. Let separation of church and state remain in place. God will then "Bless America"!!!

Sincerely,

Roger Peden

From: Dina Madridi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:19:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good Morning,

On Friday, June 26, 2026 I listened with trepidation as the Commission on Religious Liberty released its report based on a year-long data gathering work. I believe that certain issues were raised and recommended that rather than protecting religious freedom in the United States will seek to restrict. Of utmost importance is the Commission's effort to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state that our Founding Fathers so carefully built into our founding documents. I believe that the two recommendations that the committee made and presented to President Donald Trump are counter to the separation of church and state that so many Americans currently rely on and enjoy.

My objections include:

1. funding religious non-profit activities - this leads to ties between religious organizations and government that may be difficult to undo.
2. funding religious education and clubs on public campuses - freedom of ideas may be severely reduced.
3. repeal of the Johnson Amendment - politics do not belong in the pulpit where only Jesus Christ should be uplifted. Politics belong to a different forum. Furthermore, I request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.
4. special treatment currently given to the state of Israel. All people should be treated equally by the government and strict neutrality should be the status quo.

As a lifelong Christian as well as a naturalized American citizen I feel privileged to have grown up in a country that values the human individual's right to practice their faith in the manner dictated by the church they have chosen. History clearly shows us what occurs when Church and State join to dictate social values and mores to the populace. There are many examples throughout thousands of years of the cruelties and killings that occur when people are not allowed to worship the God they believe in. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus are all guilty of heinous acts against their fellow human beings in the name of some philosophical god they worship. Giving the church power through the arm of the government makes religion deadly. Biblical prophecy tells us that the United States of America will abandon its founding principles and become a beast seeking whom it may devour. I believe in the one true God and practice my faith according to the Bible given to us by God. However, I do not have the right to force my faith on anyone else. When the government is forced to choose one faith to enforce, which will it be? Catholicism? Protestantism? Islam? Judaism? Hinduism? Or none at all? Let us keep the wall between Church and State as built by people of faith to protect all citizens of the United States. Let's keep freedom free.

Sincerely,
Dina Madrid
Bakersfield, California

From: Douglas Bourque <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:21:52 -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.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Douglas Bourque

Dunnellon Fl [REDACTED] PII

From: "Isaac Olatunji Jr." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:23:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

Though the words separation of church and state are not in the constitution, the first amendment clearly states the no law by Congress dealing with religious establishment shall be made which in turn will prohibit the free exercise of one's religious exercise of freedom. This wall of prohibits the church in using the authority of the state enforce their dogmas based on religion. This is what happened during the Dark Ages and any move to establish religion in any form will ultimately lead to prohibition which forms the basis of enforcement. Biblical and secular history has shown that his never amounts to good in the end, but persecution to those who exercise liberty of conscience. Uniting church and state will lead to what is term in the book of Revelation 13 and 17 the mark of the beast crisis and this response is the reason why this commission out to keep church and state separate---meaning the church cannot be allowed to use the power of the state to enforce religion in any form.

Sincerely,

Isaac Olatunji
Religious Liberty Advocate

From: Paul Griesheimer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] National Sunday Law

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:23:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

<https://www.diggingfortruth.org/religious-liberty/first-sunday-law---proposed-by-senator-blair-1888/at-jones---argues-in-senate-against-sunday-law-dec-13-1888>

From: Donovan Kurtz <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT--Concerning the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission--by Donovan Kurtz

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:24:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 13, 2026

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

Thank you for the time and effort you have put into creating this report. I certainly agree that without our vigilance, religious liberty will be attacked, weakened, and eventually lost. I agree with your finding that the ideology of secular atheism, while claiming to be neutral and unbiased, has threatened the public expression of religious faith and will continue to do so.

Religious liberty is very important to me and my family. My ancestors fled Russia and immigrated to the United States of America in order to secure the freedom to practice their religious faith. We thank God regularly for the ability we enjoy in this great country to live out our conscientious convictions.

One of those convictions is our strongly held belief that the separation of church and state is vital to the continued strength and prosperity of both our churches and, ultimately, the health of our nation as well. I am saddened by the conclusion of the Commission in its report that the wall of separation between church and state should be replaced by a bridge. History is replete with illustrations of the deleterious effects of combining church and state in one union.

The concept of the separation of church and state does not come from the attacks of secularism. Rather, it was formulated by people of faith who learned through hard experience that this separation, rather than harming, actually protected the free expression of religious faith. In our country, this understanding goes all the way back to Roger Williams and the establishment of the colony of Rhode Island in 1636.

Churches are only weakened when they compete with one another for government funding and learn to depend upon that instead of upon God. This will also inevitably lead to the state being forced to make decisions about the doctrine of various churches and which ones it supports and which it does not.

I cannot agree with your recommendation for the government to financially support religious non-profit activities and charities. It is a well-known fact that government money always brings with it government control. Churches will soon discover that they must compromise their convictions in order to receive state funds.

I must respectfully disagree with your recommendation to remove the Johnson amendment. It is a very dangerous idea to provide a tax-deductible way for large sums of money to enter the churches for the express purpose of affecting political outcomes. It is only a matter of time before political corruption seeps into churches along with the large money streams.

Rather than remove the Johnson amendment, it would be a great boon if the United States Department of Justice actually started to enforce it vigorously. Partisan political advocacy will not add one iota to the strength and spiritual vibrancy of our houses of faith.

I have no doubt that the Religious Liberty Commission has good intentions and positive motives in its recommendations. However, past events are not supportive of your conclusions. Repeatedly, throughout Christian history, religious minorities have been persecuted by the dominant church, when it was linked with the

strong arm of the state. Think of how many sincere Christians and church bodies were harassed by the Anglican Church united with the monarchy of England. This is just one of scores of examples that could be enumerated.

Multiplied thousands of Christians were forced to flee the Old World to find freedom of conscience and religion because they were persecuted by various unions of church and state in Europe. They came here seeking the liberty that was denied to them there. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past here in America.

Yes, people of faith should be encouraged to publicly express their convictions and bring their Biblical principles into the workplace and the marketplace of ideas. But this will only be hindered and hobbled by breaking down the time-tested and proven principle of keeping church and state separate.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft Report of this important Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

“May God bless America” is our heartfelt prayer.

Sincerely,

Pastor Donovan Kurtz, M.Div.

From: Daniel Sikich <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Im SDA I stand up in Protest of any Government making Religion

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:26:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Laws.... IT may not use the word church and state but it definitely implies it...Freedom of conscience is the principle of the first amendment freedom to choose the church and the religion or not is a God given right. When we force our own beliefs on others it always ends up bad.. lets keep America FREE.... Thank you for hearing me in this matter... Daniel Sikich Elder SDA Church.....

From: Danette Gallagher <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Library

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:26:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious Liberty committee members,

I am sending this email to voice my concern against moving forward in the separation of Church and state issue. I have seen the very concerning comments that the Constitution does not mention separation of church and state. It is plain in the first amendment that it was well intended.

We all know from the birth of our country that people came here to escape religious persecution that was happening in the Old world. Please realize that that will be exactly what will happen again if that wall that separated the two should fall. Anytime church and state comes together, persecution is next to ensue. It happened during Jesus time during the dark ages and it will happen again according to Revelation chapter 13.

Even our early pioneers tried to establish some church-state religious laws and persecuted their own people. But Roger Williams established that church and state needed to be separated. James, Madison and Thomas Jefferson also believed in the separation and penned letters to others supporting their views, in case there was any sort of confusion on what they believed.

This country was founded on religious principles but not to be run as a church- state political entity. We have always, for 250 years, stood firmly on separating church and state. Even JFK stood up against the pressure of combining the two as a Catholic president.

Please reconsider the joining of these two very separate, powerful pillars. Jesus said" Render unto Caesar that which is Caesars and unto God that which is God's". Keeping separate the two. Please know that nothing good will come from this.

I'm also going to request that you uphold the Johnson amendment. That is also one way of mixing church and state. It is no secret that people take what their pastors, priests and bishops say and vote according to the dictates of the pulpit. This will lead America to fall.

Thank you for considering this letter and prayerfully ask God to show you His direction. Read Revelation 13. It speaks of forced religion. You don't want to be party to this prophecy becoming fulfilled.

Sincerely,

Danette Gallagher

North Idaho resident

From: Steve Renei<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] To the Religious Liberty Commission;

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:27:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am sure the history of the Dark and Middle Ages is noted in the Library of Congress. The Roman Catholic church and the Kingship (State) were together persecuting Jewish and Christians if they did not worship according to the dictates of the church and state guidelines. Untold numbers were killed, burned at the stake, and tortured and how people tend to forget History is exactly the reason we founded United States of America is to have freedom of religion to worship and other freedoms as well . Remember our Reformers Like Martin Luther and Tindale and Huss who spoke up about church and state and how the Bible was being controlled by church and state. If Our GOD ALMIGHTY IN HEAVEN, gives us freedom of choice to choose to worship him or not, NO MAN ON EARTH SHOULD OVERRIDE GOD'S AUTHORITY. GOD does not force himself on anyone but respects man's choice. In my humble opinion, history will repeat itself in persecution if church & state combines and all our freedoms will be loste

I vote against church and state as God in heaven is my witness.

Sincerely, Steven Rene 07/13/2026

From: Brenda Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom versus Trump's Decline of Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:27:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

We understand that our faith as Seventh-day Adventists is that we have a right to choosing our own beliefs and standards without state or government interference. What Trump is trying to do is erase what our forefathers fought and died for. It is surprising to me that so many Adventists voted for a man that would do such a thing, however one thing we are always faced with is this. When you vote for a person whose personal belief(s) do not line up with the greatest commandment "Love your neighbor your neighbor as yourself." We are all in trouble.

From: Linda Potter <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State - Linda Potter

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:28:33 -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.

Thank you,

Linda Potter

Butte, North Dakota

From: Luis Gaeta <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religion

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:33:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen of Muscatine, Iowa, with no institutional interest to advance, only a plain concern that this Commission understand what the founding generation actually built and why. I ask you to consider three points before recommending any change to how government and religion relate in this country.

First, separation of church and state was not an accident of silence or a later invention read backward into the Constitution. It was demanded by the very churches who had lived under establishment and knew its costs — the Presbytery of Hanover, the Baptists, the Quakers. Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance, Jefferson's Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, the Article VI ban on religious tests, and the ratifying conventions all point the same direction. Madison himself 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." He and his contemporaries did not wait for a full establishment to take shape before objecting to it; as the Memorial and Remonstrance puts it, they saw the consequences in the principle and denied the principle itself. Any commission that wishes to claim the founders for state-sponsored religion must first explain away Madison's own words to Madison's own contemporaries.

Second, this is not only a matter of eighteenth-century intention. One generation after the founding, while men who had lived through it still sat in Congress, the Senate and House took up petitions demanding Sunday mail closures and religious legislation — and rejected them in official reports. Congress itself declared that it was not the legitimate business of the legislature to decide which religion is true or false, insisting that the government it served was a civil institution, not a religious one. The same reports warned that letting government define even one point of religious duty opens the door to defining all of them, down to "the forms and ceremonies of worship, the endowment of the church, and the support of the clergy." They also observed that religious coercion cannot achieve its aim, since "Human power may extort vain sacrifices, but the Deity alone can command the affections of the heart." This is the government's own precedent, not a modern court's gloss, and it deserves at least as much weight as anything decided in 1947.

Third, and most fundamentally, rights that depend on majority approval are not rights at all, only permissions that can be withdrawn. The American theory holds that conscience answers first to the Creator, and that government exists to protect that domain, not to police it — which is exactly why constitutions place certain things beyond the reach of election returns. As one Religious Liberty Library tract states plainly, 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 government exists to protect the minority, not to overrule it. However many Americans favor a religious observance or display, that popularity cannot substitute for right, because religion was never among the matters properly submitted to a vote.

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

Respectfully,
Luis Gaeta
Muscatine, IA

Luis E. Gaeta [REDACTED] PII A.T.C.E.; B.S.I.E.; M.B.A.; ACQ Level I & II; C.L.E.P. & B.O.M. Level 1

From: tahina rojas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Commission on Religious Liberty Tahina Rojas Gonzalez, Gilbert Rodriguez Gonzalez

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:35:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This principles are not merely constitutional- they are biblical. When questioned about civil authority, Jesus Christ, declared: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mathew 22:21) In those few words, Christ established a distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience. Government possesses legitimate authority over civil order and the protection of equal rights, but worship, doctrine and the relationship between an individual and God remain beyond its lawful reach.

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

Americans understood this lessons well. Many of the earliest settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled governments that enforced religious conformity.

The Founders sought to break from that centuries-old pattern by denying the federal government any authority over religion.

Article VI prohibits religious test for public office, and the First Amendment forbids law respecting an establishment of religion. These provisions were not accidental. They were deliberate safeguards designed to preserve liberty of conscience for every citizen.

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

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

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

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

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

We, the undersigned, adults residing on the territory of United States, twenty-one years of age or older, hereby respectfully but firmly request your honorable corporation, not to admit any Bill relating to the Sabbath or the Lord's day, as well as to any other religious or ecclesiastical institution or rite, or to favor in any way the adoption of any resolution for the Amendment of the national Constitution that could tend in some way, directly or indirectly, to give preference to the principles of any religion or religious body over others, or that in any way it approves the practice of legislating on religion, but to maintain forever as our Fathers established it, -the total separation between religion and the state as secure by the Constitution as its exist now.

Respectfully submitted

Tahina Rojas [REDACTED] PII

Gilberto Rodriguez Gonzalez [REDACTED] PII

From: Brian Mullen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:35:19 -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

I agree with the Pillar of Freedom recommendations and I would appeal to you to put them into practice.

Thank you for your time,

Brian Mullen

From: T H <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:35:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe I have a duty to voice my views on the Religious Liberty principle as spoken of in the US constitution. Yes, I do believe it is part of the US constitution, and I believe this principal of separation must be upheld.

No government should promote or mandate religion. The early settlers on this very land sought to flee religious persecution. Old world history shows that when state and religion has joined, persecution has followed every time.

Roger Williams was a puritan minister who himself advocated for religious freedom. He founded Rhode island on this idea of separation of church and state. This later influenced Madison and Jefferson when the first amendment to the US Constitution was written, and is how this principle of separation is woven into our founding documents.

I do not take religious freedom lightly. As a practicing Saturday-Sabbath keeping Christian myself, I do not believe it is any governments place to dictate how, Who, when, where, etc a person chooses to worship. Because once this begins to occur, fundamental rights begin to erode. Supposing a government takes the side of a Christian religion, how then can they "enforce" said Christian principles when the very God they claim to exalt is not a god of force? And said force goes against His very nature?

Therefore, the first amendment to the US Constitution must remain both in principle and in practice to protect all persons of all faiths and non faiths.

T. Herring

From: Alvina Cook <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendation 1

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:36:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I respectfully urge the Department of Justice not to adopt Recommendation 1 as I believe that would weaken the historic constitutional protections separating church and state. Instead, I encourage the Department to preserve the First Amendment's safeguards, continue protecting the religious liberty of every American.

Thomas Jefferson explained that the First Amendment built "a wall of separation between Church & State" because religion is "a matter which lies solely between Man & his God." James Madison, the principal architect of the Constitution, likewise warned that history demonstrates the dangers of religious and civil authority becoming intertwined. Their concern was not hostility toward religion but protection for religion.

As a Christian, I believe Christ's instruction to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" establishes an enduring principle. Civil government has an important role, but it is not entrusted with governing conscience. Faith cannot be compelled by law, nor should the government determine religious truth.

Alvina Cook (c) [REDACTED] PII

I'm not really an artist I just stamp that way

If any man (woman) be in Christ, he (she) is a NEW creature! 2 Corinthians 5:17

From: Wanda Grindstaff <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Liberty by Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:36:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 12, 2026

Subject: Public Comment - Separation of church and state, Wanda Grindstaff.

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Please reconsider the recommendations in your report that would erode over time the separation of church and state. The use of government funds for religious undertakings and cancelling the Johnson Amendment I'm asking you to reevaluate again based on new perspectives.

Churches taking government money or even venture into any political venture leads to corruption. This opens the door for competition for funding and answering to political structures instead of God. This puts a wedge between God and man and actually could create unnecessary fears of worshiping with freedom of conscience and to serve God out of love instead of fear.

Separation of church and state was established by people of faith to protect serving God out of Love and not by fear or coercion. Religion is strong in America. Please keep church and state separate. Let's keep both church and state free.

Wanda Grindstaff
Powell Butte, Oregon

From: Tarlene Barfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State--Tarlene Barfield

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:38:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of 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--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 both keep free.

Sincerely
Tarlene Barfield
Vancouver, Washington

From: W A <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:38:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Committee,

I am writing to share my perspective regarding the importance of freedom of religion and the historical wisdom upon which it was established in the United States. It is essential that we do not underestimate the significance of these principles for everyone in our country.

I believe that if a specific day for congregated worship were required, it would be found within God's Moral Law. In fact, Exodus 20:8-11 states that the seventh day, is the Sabbath of the Lord. (Saturday is the seventh day). Furthermore, Mark 2:27 suggests that the Sabbath was made for all of humanity, not just a specific group.

I urge you to consider these points before moving forward with any efforts to institute a specific day for congregated worship, as it is important that we all remain aligned with the Holy Word of God.

Thank you for your time and for considering my views on this matter.

Best regards,

W A

From: Monique Morales-Mason <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Draft - Concerns from a Christian

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:39:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty,

I would like to respectfully raise several concerns of the draft of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. As a Protestant Christian, I understand and resonate deeply with the growing concern over the rise of atheistic and secular humanistic worldviews in our society. However, in our efforts to respond to one extreme, we must be careful not to embrace another. **The answer to increasing secularism is not to expand the role of civil government in matters of religion, but to preserve the constitutional protections that safeguard the liberty of conscience for all Americans.**

At the same time, I would like point out some key principles articulated more than a century ago by a gentleman named Alonzo T. Jones during his testimony before the United States Senate in 1888 in opposition to Senator Henry Blair's National Sunday Bill. Although the historical context was different, the constitutional principles he defended remain highly relevant today. You can read his entire argument here: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Tracts/RLT/RLT1892-102.pdf>

Jones argued that civil government and religion occupy distinct spheres of authority. Government exists to protect life, liberty, property, and the equal civil rights of all citizens. Matters of conscience, worship, and religious obligation belong exclusively to God and must remain beyond the authority of civil government. He maintained that **the greatest protection for religion is not government promotion of religion, but government restraint from exercising authority over it. I offer these concerns not as an atheist, but as a Protestant Christian who deeply values both faith and religious liberty.**

One of Jones' central warnings was that religious liberty is often threatened not by openly hostile governments, **but by well-intentioned efforts to encourage or strengthen religion through civil authority. History demonstrates that governments rarely begin by intending to persecute religious minorities. Rather, they begin by promoting what is believed to be the common good, the common morality, or the common faith. Over time, however, those same principles have frequently resulted in pressure upon those whose convictions differ from those of the majority.**

For this reason, I am concerned by portions of the draft report that appear to advocate a closer institutional relationship between religion and government. **While protecting the free exercise of religion is entirely appropriate, encouraging government to promote religion or to move away from a clear separation of institutional authority raises important constitutional questions.**

The report's discussion of replacing the traditional understanding of separation between church and state with stronger institutional cooperation may unintentionally blur the very boundary that has historically protected both religious freedom and civil government. Jones argued that government best protects religion when it neither favors nor discourages any faith, but instead remains neutral while safeguarding every citizen's right to worship—or not worship—according to conscience.

Similarly, while America's religious heritage is undeniable and has profoundly shaped many of our nation's values, **government should exercise great caution when affirming or promoting particular religious traditions. The First Amendment protects not only the religious convictions of the majority but also the conscience of every minority faith and every individual citizen. True religious liberty is measured not by how well the majority is protected, but by how securely the rights of those who disagree are preserved.**

Jones also emphasized that civil government should never assume authority over matters that belong solely to individual conscience. **Once government establishes the principle that it may encourage, promote, or define religious practice, it creates a precedent that future governments—perhaps with very different priorities—could expand in ways never originally intended.** Constitutional safeguards exist precisely because governmental intentions change over time.

Importantly, these concerns should not be interpreted as opposition to religion in public life. **Religious individuals should remain free to speak, assemble, worship, serve their communities, and participate fully in civic affairs. Churches and faith-based organizations should enjoy equal protection under the law.** Government should never discriminate against religious belief. However, **protecting religious liberty differs fundamentally from promoting religion through governmental authority.**

The enduring lesson from A.T. Jones' testimony is that liberty of conscience is preserved when civil government faithfully remains within its constitutional jurisdiction. Government should vigorously defend every person's right to exercise religion freely while refraining from exercising authority in matters of faith itself. **This distinction has served the United States well for generations and continues to provide the strongest protection for believers and non-believers alike.**

I appreciate the opportunity to review the Commission's draft report and to submit my comments for consideration. **I commend the Commission's stated commitment to protecting religious liberty and ensuring that Americans are free to practice their faith without government discrimination or hostility. The protection of religious exercise is a foundational principle of our Constitution and one worthy of continued defense.**

I agree with the Commission regarding the following:

- The First Amendment rights of pastors, religious leaders, houses of worship, faith-based institutions, and religious speakers
- Conscience protections in the health care field and concerning vaccine mandates
- Parents' authority to direct the care, upbringing, and education of their children, including the right to choose a religious education
- The right of all Americans to freely exercise their faith without fear or Government censorship or retaliation

However, I do not agree with the following because it has the potential to unintentionally weaken the constitutional safeguards that have historically protected religious liberty for all Americans and their individual beliefs. For instance, depending on the type of religion that the prayer will be based it has the potential to result in exclusion of certain people.

- Permitting time for voluntary prayer and religious instruction at public schools; Government displays with religious imagery

I respectfully encourage the Commission to carefully consider whether any recommendation expands the institutional relationship between religion and government. **Our nation's commitment to freedom of conscience is strongest when government protects religion without directing it, encouraging it, or becoming entangled in its practice.**

In closing, preserving the constitutional separation between church and state is not an act of hostility toward religion but one of profound respect for it. It affirms that the church's authority is spiritual rather than political and that the truth of the Gospel needs neither the endorsement nor the enforcement of civil government to accomplish its mission.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,
Monique Morales-Mason

From: CKi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:39:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern:

I am deeply concerned by recent efforts that appear to weaken the longstanding principle of the separation of church and state. I respectfully urge our leaders to preserve and protect this foundational safeguard of religious liberty.

One of America's greatest strengths has been the freedom for every person to worship according to the dictates of conscience—or not to worship at all—without government coercion or favoritism. While the exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution, the principles embodied in the First Amendment have long protected both the church from government interference and the government from religious control.

Many of our nation's earliest settlers came seeking freedom from religious persecution and state-imposed religion. They understood from painful experience that when civil authority and religious authority become too closely intertwined, freedom of conscience is often the first casualty. History repeatedly demonstrates that governments empowered to promote one religious viewpoint can also suppress others.

As a Christian, I believe that genuine faith cannot be compelled by law. It must be the free response of an individual's conscience. Religious liberty is not merely a constitutional principle; it is a moral one. It protects people of every faith, as well as those of no faith, and allows religion to flourish through conviction rather than coercion.

I respectfully ask that our nation continue to uphold the principles of the First Amendment and safeguard the separation between church and state. By doing so, we preserve the precious freedom of conscience that has distinguished America for generations and protect the rights of all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Thank you for your service and for your commitment to defending the religious liberty of every American.

Calvin Kim DDS

From: andrew bairi<[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII, [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty released draft report,

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:39:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Money, Private Faith: Why Government Should Stay Out of Religion

I am requesting the commission for religious liberty rethink their position. There are many reasons for this including the following:

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations, arguing that separating physical aid from spiritual care may deny people the full help they need. That may be true in some cases, but it is a reason for churches to fund such work themselves, not for the state to fund it. When religion depends on public money, it risks becoming a stand-in for government aid while presenting the assistance as its own. Public funding can also support indoctrination or evangelism, undermining the government's neutrality. The Commission further suggests that church members must leave their beliefs at home when doing humanitarian work. That should not be true when they act independently, but it must be true to the extent they receive state support. This boundary protects religion, the state, and citizens alike. Government money invites government control, and religious groups may alter their teachings to meet public requirements for funding. It may also lead different religions to demand equal funding despite offering unequal services. The state would be wise to avoid that conflict.

The government support for religious education would inevitably draw the state into deciding religious questions. While religion may benefit society, the state should not attempt to make people religious or determine which doctrines deserve public support. Funding religious schools would require oversight of accreditation, curriculum, and institutional values, forcing the government to judge controversial teachings. The example of the Ten Commandments shows that even familiar religious texts involve competing traditions and interpretations. The section concludes that refusing to fund religious doctrine is not hostility toward religion, but a necessary restraint that protects religious freedom.

The late Emile Dirkhiem made the observation, "When mores are sufficient, laws are unnecessary; when mores are insufficient, laws are unenforceable." This has become common sense for thinking people. It is true our nation is in substantial moral decline. However, the binding of church and state has never been the remedy. While most religious organizations seek to uphold strong moral standards, those standards must arise from conscience rather than imposed through a church and state union.

Andrew Bair
Marlinton, WV.

From: Stephen Hoosier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:39:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am most concerned 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. I have found no example in history where Church/State combined led to more freedom. Liberty Of Conscience should be paramount in all we do as I believe it is God given and has propelled our nation to heights never before realized.

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.

Further, I believe if the Church acts with respect to its Divine Commission there would be no need to seek Government assistance and vice versa.

Thank you for seeking my input for the decision before the Committee.

Sincerely,
Stephen D Hoosier
Columbia SC

Sent from my Galaxy

From: DUANE MAYCOCK <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:42:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Disband the commission. It is only promoting strengthening the Republican party by claiming it supports Religious Freedom while it is actually trying to establish its own brand of religion.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:43:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a US Citizen, and a person who deeply values my freedom to worship according to the dictates of my conscience. I have recently learned of the Commission's proposal to replace the protection of a wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge."

The "wall" was built by our perceptive leaders (many of whom were Christians) to keep the church and all American citizens free of government interference in their religious choices, (not by secularists to restrict religion).

A "bridge" opens the door for government funding, political influence, and preferential treatment, forcing churches to compete for

grants and answer to politicians instead of to God. History here and across the world demonstrates that the blending of church and state is detrimental to both.

If you are to serve our varied US population (with its great variety of spiritual beliefs protected in our Constitution) I strongly urge you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken this separation—specifically, using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches engage in partisan politics or accept government funding, they become influenced by the government's political agenda. Separation protects faith from such an influence, which is precisely why religion has remained strong in our country.

Please maintain the separation of church and state, which will enable our country to best serve people of any faith, practicing according to their own conscience. That conscience is currently protected by our Constitution. Please keep it that way.

Sincerely,

Leslie Carrasco

Tehachapi, California, USA

From: Jenny ui she <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I agree with

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:44:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Pillar of freedoms comments please implement them
Jenni

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Donald Vollmer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:44:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Is there anytime in history when the kingdom of God has prospered through the support of the state? The power of the Gospel is to change hearts and minds; If the church is faithful to its mission its influence will be felt in society and its promise realized. In Christianity there is no compulsion. How was it that the One who came to deliver us from the bondage of sin was put to death by the very ones He came to save? Are religious leaders today any more trustworthy than they were in Jesus day? Let it be clear from the history of Church and State that when they are combined, the church becomes corrupt, and religious liberties are lost.

From: Ronald Motis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:45:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear RLC Conference,

I fell you are very audacious to desire to merge our religious choices with that of the state. Perhaps you don't recall the most basic law in Europe regarding one's freedom to physically choose how and what one follows when it comes to our own spiritual food. This law and restriction was the reason WHY our forefathers sailed here. To gain this freedom. This new decision of yours is also against God's law and our right to choose to accept Him as our Savior. He does not force us to choose Him as that is NOT love. Please change your stance here that violates our most basic human rights.

Sincerely,
Ronald Motis

[REDACTED] PII

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:49:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious liberty commission,

After reviewing the report published, I don't believe that this promotes religious liberty for everyone. Diminishing the line between separation of Church and state takes away the free will that God has given us to choose whether we worship Him or not. As a Christian myself, I know that God would have us to worship him, but not from force. We look back at history and see even during the dark ages when the reformation began that the core issue was worship. Ecclesiastes chapter 1 tells us "there's nothing new under the sun" we have history to reflect on and to understand how we can move forward and be better, but whenever we diminish that line and refuse to learn from our past, the same thing repeats itself. God has given us a conscience to choose how we serve him. Joshua 24:15 tells us "choose ye this day whom ye will serve" there is implication of choice there and God has given us the freedom to choose whom we will serve. This government and its principles were built on freedom of choice separating the line between Church and state takes away that choice from everyone. I love this country and the constitution, that offers us many freedoms. I would hate to see our principles that this country was built on changed. As Jesus Christ states in Matthew 22:21 "Render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesars and unto God the things that are God's". I pray that this is not something that's taken lightly, but that everyone is very prayerful about these next steps as this will not only affect a few people but everyone worldwide.

With many blessings, a devoted follower of God

From: "Homer & Debbie Curry" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:49:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

USA has been a strong supporter of religious liberty, because of the separation of church and state. Our country should not attempt to control the method of worship. My worship is directed by my understanding of God. I wish to allow others that same privilege.

Debra Curry

God loves You!

Keep God's Promises in your Heart

<http://fast.st/cc/currydaal>

From: "Steve St.Clair" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Comments to the Religious Liberty Commision

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:50:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jul 13, 2026, at 11:23 AM, Steve St.Clair <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

>

>

> Sent from my iPhone

> We am very concerned as we see our beloved country teetering toward joining the state with the church. That combination only dissolves into the very thing the commision is wanting to guard against: corruption and persecution. The government has no business in a person's religious life. We are in a mess alright but resorting to political power to solve the church's problem will not solve the issue.

> Look at history, which repeats itself- the Dark Ages, aptly named, for the church using the power of the state to ultimately kill millions in the name of saving souls, but was a lust for power. Look at France in their Revolution and the insane bid for riddance of religion, using the combination of state's power and atheistic "church" to set up a Goddess of Reason amid terror and massive bloodshed. No, keep that wall!&

> Robert Frost wrote a poem concerning good fences making good neighbors, which contains sound reasoning: defined borders and enforcement of laws on either side. Government: Keep the Johnson Amendment strong and enforce the 1st Amendment which is the wall- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof! The push is to prohibit the free exercise thereof! No bridges, enforce the directions of the first amendment.

> God instituted the 10 Commandments. Let the state deal with the last 6 and the individual citizens abide with their Creator as their consciences dictates as dictated in the first 4.

Sincerely, Steve and Vicki

From: Cynthia Wright <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:50:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a citizen of the United States, and I believe that there should continue to be a separation of church and state in America. This allows the protection of religious liberty for Americans.

Thank you for your time in this most important matter.

Regards,

Cynthia A. Wright

From: [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:50:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious liberty can not be maintained unless religion and the state stay separate.

It is only a matter of time before persecution is the result, it's history being repeated. The dark ages were a result of Constantine bringing religion into the Roman state.

True religion can not be imposed, the conscience has to be free to choose.

Sincerely,

A concerned Bible student.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Mona Nuckolls <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] keep the state out of my relationship with God!e

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:50:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

government has no right how to dictate how i worship!
Sent from my iPhone

From: Brittany Holder <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Land of the free thinkers

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:51:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

I hope im doing this right so here it goes. I do not think it is a good idea to combined religion and state those things need to be kept separate because people of different religions and ethnicity are being persecuted in the name of God and Trump because they don't fit in a certain box. I remember growing and being so proud to be an American cause to me it was always the land of the FREE and it doesn't seem all that free now and if you mix religion into that would be a catastrophic event I believe it would bring great harm to the people of this country, and the many different beautiful people and there religions. I Thank you for your time on this matter.

From: Suzan Lozano <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I am in favor of keeping Church and State separate.

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:53:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am in favor of keeping Church and State separate.

Suzan Lozano

From: GeorgeElla Fisher <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:53:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a faithful citizen and person of faith, I am deeply troubled by the Commission's proposal to establish a bridge regarding the constitutional wall of separation of church and state. Creating such a bridge will weaken this essential protection that we have long relied upon and valued.

I urge the Commission to uphold and protect this established boundary.

Sincerely,
Ella J. Fisher
Siloam Springs, AR

GeorgeElla Fisher

From: Thomas Nathaniel <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Church and State SEPARATE!

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:53:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep church and state separate. History has shown that this is never a good idea.

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

From: T W <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:54:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Commission.docx

Dear Religious Liberty Commission;

I sincerely appreciate the steps that you, as a Commission, are taking to protect religious liberty and I agree with and applaud the vast majority of the recommendations made in the draft report.

I would encourage the Commission to clearly delineate that these protections include all persons, whether religious, non-religious, atheistic, or of minority religions. All Americans deserve to be protected no matter if they have a religious affiliation or not. No one should ever be coerced in matters of conscience. This recognized and upheld separation of civil and Divine jurisdiction and authority (As Christ clearly stated, "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God, what is God's.") is what has made America great and a beacon of freedom to the world.

My ancestors came to this country as refugees on the Mayflower for this very reason, to escape religious persecution in a country where man had blurred the lines between Divine and civil jurisdictions to where there was no separation of church and state. **Keeping these jurisdictions completely separate is the ONLY way to keep America truly great, and to keep America truly free.**

There are **three points** that I ask the Commission to consider regarding recommendations under the Draft Report's section on Parental Rights.

Regarding Parental Rights, Page 218, Regulation 3. d.

. . . "parent's rights to:"

3. d. Receive notice when schools plan to teach their child material that would undermine the child's religious upbringing; "

I can see the merit behind this recommendation as an ideal, yet as a Christian teacher myself, this ideal is not humanly possible to accommodate. Out of a roomful of thirty plus students and their parents, again, it is not humanly possible for a teacher to know and understand the complexities of every religion represented and if something he/she may present could in some way contradict any one of these ninety plus (30 students plus their two parents) person's religious beliefs or viewpoints.

If choosing to send their child to a school outside one affiliated with their own personal religion, parents can expect that there will inevitably be influences and subjects taught and presented that may go against their personal religious beliefs. This applies to any educational platform and it seems highly irrational to expect that an educator could possibly present every subject in a way that does not in any way contradict a child's and/or their parent's religious beliefs.

This point/expectation needs to be reconsidered, rephrased, or redacted as it is currently irrational at the highest level.

Regarding Parental Rights, Page 219, Regulations 3. h. and i.

. . . “parent’s rights to:”

3. h. Be informed if their child’s school allows males to compete in athletic programs designed for females;

3. i. Be informed if their child’s school allows males to use restroom or locker rooms designated for females;

Both of the above recommendations are necessary and highly appropriate, yet, they should also include the same recommendations vice versa. As the mother of a young son, I would certainly want to be informed if his school were to allow females in the boy’s restroom or locker room. Boys need to be protected as well as girls.

Thus, I ask the Commission to modify the above recommendations to protect both males and females, boys and girls.

I believe it would be beneficial to recommend that all state-run schools be transparent regarding their curriculum. Parents do need to know what is being taught to their children, yet teachers cannot cater to every student and parent. Let’s be realistic here. Parents do have a choice where to send their children to school. This choice will determine what their children are exposed to and taught.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

T. Scott

From: Yolanda Sidney <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] "Preserve Separation of Church and State" – Yolanda Sidney

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:54:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that the civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent government from establishing or favoring religion. In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Yolanda Sidney

From: David Preisner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- Chapter 14i- David N. Preisner

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:54:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment regarding Chapter 14 of the Commission's draft report, specifically addressing the proposed Department of Justice guidance on the Establishment Clause.

I appreciate how the report recognizes the unfair and at times persecutive treatment people of faith have received at the hands of their fellow countrymen. I cannot but be cautious and respectfully raise concerns on some of the conclusions and recommendations in the report.

While the draft report suggests that the phrase "separation of church and state" has been misapplied, a comprehensive view of both human history and basic theological principles shows that a strict boundary between these two domains is essential. Freedom of religion is, in its essence, freedom of thought, opinion, and conscience. Only when the government fails its duty to protect the rights of its citizens is when we see the abuses go unchecked. For a government to intervene is not removing the wall, nor is it overstepping its bounds of entering the religious domain, but is protecting the citizen from harm or loss due to their convictions.

Most crucially, forced worship, whether through legislated observance or mandatory displays of religious texts, is not worship at all. It is coerced conformity, devoid of the voluntary devotion that defines true faith. It is merely coerced outward conformity. God does not need a human government to force people into religious action, as forced compliance is meaningless to Him. The ministry and actions of Jesus Christ demonstrate that He "calls all men to repent." This call requires a free, uncoerced action on the part of the individual, because it is God alone Who transforms the human heart. When a state attempts to mandate religious compliance, it oversteps its bounds and interferes with this sacred, voluntary relationship.

History proves that whenever a state gives any degree of control or preference to a specific church, it inevitably erodes these fundamental human freedoms. Centuries of European history prior to the founding of the United States (marked by state-sanctioned persecution) demonstrate that when the apparatus of government is used to enforce religious doctrine, human liberty is destroyed.

It was precisely to avoid these failures that many of America's founders advocated a constitutional separation between institutional religion and civil government. Roger Williams, founder of Providence, Rhode Island, was among the first to argue for a 'wall of separation' (not to restrict faith, but to protect it). He understood that state involvement corrupts the purity of faith and oppresses individual conscience. Furthermore, the Framers of our Constitution deliberately broke away from the failed historical models of state-sponsored religion. James Madison, in his *Memorial and Remonstrance*, warned that state-established religions lead to "superstition, bigotry, and persecution." The mind, he insisted, must remain free, and government has no right to interpose between an individual and their thoughts.

The proposed narrowing of the Establishment Clause in Chapter 14 risks repeating the very historical and philosophical mistakes our nation's founders worked so diligently to avoid. True religious liberty demands that government remain neutral among religions and between religion and nonreligion, while vigorously protecting the constitutional rights of every citizen. By staying out of the religious domain,

the state safeguards freedom of thought, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of belief, can coexist as equals.

I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state. Instead, let us uphold the historical and spiritual lessons that guarantee true freedom of conscience for all Americans.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

David N. Preisner
Alvarado, Texas

From: Patricia Vos <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:55:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am for the separation of church and state. please vote to keep them separated.

From: Cody Clifford <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- Separation of Church and State – [Cody Clifford]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:56:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider any recommendation that weakens the historic separation of church and state or invites greater political involvement through churches. As a committed Christian, I freely choose to follow Christ because genuine faith and love for God can never be compelled—they must be the result of personal conviction. Throughout Scripture, God invites rather than forces obedience, honoring the freedom He has given each person to choose. Civil government should therefore protect liberty of conscience rather than become entangled in matters of faith. The First Amendment wisely prohibits the establishment of religion, protecting both the church from government influence and the government from religious control. Repealing restrictions such as the Johnson Amendment risks drawing churches into partisan politics and, over time, increasing government involvement in religious institutions. America's enduring strength has been its commitment to protecting the God-given right of every individual to worship—or not worship—according to conscience. I respectfully ask the committee to preserve and defend that precious freedom.

Sincerely,
Cody Clifford
Maryville, TN

From: WATCH YE SAINTS MINISTRY <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:57:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

We do not agree with church and state to unite we need religious liberty church and state should separate

From: Suzan Lozano <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I am in favor of keeping Church and State separate.

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:57:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am in favor of keeping Church and State separate.

Suzan Lozano
Bakersfield, CA

From: "Renata E." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:59:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Commission's draft report.

I respectfully encourage the Commission to uphold the principle of separation of church and state. This constitutional safeguard has long protected both religious freedom and the independence of religious organizations by preventing government involvement in matters of faith.

I am concerned about recommendations that would increase government funding for religious activities or eliminate the Johnson Amendment. While these proposals may be well intentioned, they could lead to greater political influence in religious institutions and weaken the protections that have helped preserve religious liberty for generations.

Please reconsider these recommendations and continue to support policies that protect freedom of conscience and ensure equal treatment of all faiths.

Thank you for taking my comments into consideration.

Respectfully,
Thanks

Renata Estrada
Arp, Texas

From: mary fox <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State - Mary Fox

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:59:30 -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,

[Your Name]

[City, State]

*Mary Fox
Montague, Mi*

From: Ivan Hietti <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 12:59:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with the Pillar of Freedoms comments.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Sandra Blanchard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - separation of church and state - Sandra blanchard

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:01:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Sandra Blanchard

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,

Sandra Blanchard

Montague, Michigan

From: Bruce Chasin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - separation of church and state (Allan Chasin)

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:01:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious liberty commission:

I am concerned with your decision on building a bridge between church and state, because the state will influence the church; and which denomination. Each church is different in size and beliefs. In 1888 Congress was about to pass a Sunday law. Which would only bring persecution of sABBath keepers.

Freedom to worship God or not should be a right that the government protects not govern with restrictions and requirements.

I object to repealing the Johnson Amendment because it is a safeguard.

The Catholic church United with the State that persecute true Christians for 1260 years.

So please reconsider your position on this matter.

Also you are showing intolerance when you removed Carrie Prejean from the commission just because she asked a question about Zionism

Sincerely. Allan Chasin

Dunlap, TN

From: [REDACTED] PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:02:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: The Religious Liberty Commission

I believe it is wrong to go back on what the First Amendment clause has always supported - religious liberty and the separation of church and state. In this clause it states, "Congress shall make NO LAW respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

This was meant to protect every citizen's right to worship or not to worship according to their conscience, and by allowing this in the past, the United States of America has been one of the greatest examples for religious liberty in history!

President Madison expressed the concept this way, "Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence."

Therefore, as I see it, if the government removes the wall between church and state, there will be no regard for personal convictions and freedom to worship as each individual chooses. Ultimately this will lead to force and violence which goes against God's government and His character of love.

Panel members of the Religious Liberty Commission, make your decision with the utmost care!

Most Sincerely,

A CONCERNED CITIZEN

From: Raquel Fouts <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -Separation of Church and State-Raquel Fo

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:02:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a Sovereign Citizen of the New Republic of The United States of America, to ask you to please reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the Separation of Church and State- especially using Government money ,which I have contributed to in my lifetime through taxes to be used to fund religious activities and to also repeal 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 is bad for the church and the country alike.

Separation isn't a secular idea; People of Faith, built it to Protect Faith, and the Freedom of Choice to worship God, period. Our Founding Fathers made Religious Liberty in this country, giving us, it's Sovereign Citizens the freedoms to choose who we desired to worship and what denominations to worship in. This is the reason religion has stayed strong in this country, The New Republic of the United States of America, The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

Please keep Church and State Separate. That's how we keep Both of Them FREE....

Sincerely,
Raquel Fouts
Rex, Georgia

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Dennis Malik

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:02:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen from Davenport, Iowa, asking this Commission to protect religious liberty by protecting it for everyone, which means keeping government out of the business of religion. That request is not a modern grievance. It is the founders' own settlement, and I hope the Commission will treat it as such.

Some tell this Commission that strict separation of church and state is a twentieth-century invention grafted onto a Constitution that never intended it. The historical record says the opposite. The Virginia struggle of 1776 to 1786, Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance, Jefferson's Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, Article VI's ban on religious tests, and the ratifying conventions that demanded the First Amendment as additional security all point the same way. And notice who pushed hardest for that separation: not skeptics, but churches that had themselves felt establishment from underneath, the Presbytery of Hanover, the Baptists, the Quakers. Madison, who drafted the 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 with it would be a most flagrant usurpation. A commission that wants to claim the founders for state-sponsored religion has to explain away Madison in Madison's own words.

This is not only a matter of eighteenth-century intention. Congress itself ruled on this question one generation later, when Sabbatarian petitioners demanded a halt to Sunday mail. The 1829 and 1830 committee reports, adopted by Congress while men who had lived through the founding still sat there, declared plainly that it is not in the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true or what false, since our government is a civil and not a religious institution. Those reports also warned where the first religious definition leads: let a solemn act of legislation define even one point of divine revelation, and it may with equal propriety proceed to define every part of it, down to the forms of worship and the support of the clergy. Any proposal in 2026 that asks government to define or promote religious duty must reckon with the fact that it is not overturning a single court case. It is overturning an official act of Congress.

Underneath both of these arguments is a plainer truth about religion itself. Force cannot reach the heart. Forcing men to attend church or observe a holy day will not make Christians of them; it may make hypocrites, but Christians none. Madison surveyed nearly 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, bigotry, and persecution. State favor does not strengthen a faith; it hollows it out, trading the power of conviction for the power of the police. Grant said it best when he urged that the matter of religion be left to the family altar, the church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contribution, and that the state and church be kept forever separate. The churches most likely to be tempted by government favor today are the ones with the most to lose from accepting it.

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

Respectfully,
Dennis Malik
Davenport, Iowa

Sent from my iPhone

From: marta wells <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:03:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the current constitution of the USA. I don't believe there would be a benefit of combining church and state. We have fought many battles and can look at past history and see that this would be detrimental. I am a Christian. I believe everyone has the choice in life to accept Jesus, it shouldn't be forced by the government.

Marta Louise Wells

From: Robbin Hill-Bowersi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Continued Separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:04:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

The U.S. government is tearing down

This is to urge you to embrace the benefits to religion and to religious freedom from the separation of church and state.

The separation of church and state was the clear original intent of the founders whose ideas formed both the Declaration of Independence (Jefferson) and 1st Amendment to The Constitution (Madison), itself. Separation of church and state is both the true conservative position and what allows religion to flourish in a free society.

As you know, the term "separation of church and state" comes from Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists, advocating for a "wall of separation"— for the protection of the religious freedom of a (then) religious minority. Madison, "The Father of the Constitution," listed 15 reasons (in Madison's Remonstrances) why, in a free republic, church and state should remain separate. To state that church/state separation was not the intent of the founding fathers is dishonest, at best. The ideas of Jefferson and Madison were codified in our American creed, The Declaration of Independence, and in The Constitution. Further, the movement to integrate church and state is a dangerous return to the European model — which yielded centuries of bloody religious wars and a stifling of evangelism. There is no history where the integration of church and state worked well for free people. In fact, church and state integration is the catalyst to religious persecution. This is clear, currently, in theocratic countries like Iran.

I respectfully urge you to do what you know to be right. Political expedience in God's name, violates the 2nd Commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Resist the hypocrisy. God does not force compliance. Neither should the state. Do not politicize religion. It is ungodly.

Sincerely
R Hill-Bowers
Upper Marlboro, MD

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

From: Sean Davis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:04:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good afternoon. I wanted to write to express that I believe separation of church and state is important. The forefathers of the United States left the old world of Europe and came to this country for the purpose of having religious liberty. If church and state come together that will be a danger to our constitution. The history of what happened in the old world during the middle ages will be repeated. While there are liberal agendas that are also dangerous, this will be a greater threat. Please consider this step before making the decision. Thank you.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Sandra Dombrowski <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] response to President's Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:04:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the President's Religious Liberty Commission:

I am responding to the recently released President's Religious Liberty Commission Report. As a voting citizen of the United States, an active member of a Protestant denomination, and a proud lover of this country, I respectfully object to any recommendation that characterizes the separation of church and state as a constitutional mistake rather than one of the foundational principles that has preserved religious liberty in America. I give thanks to friends who helped me put words together to express what I wish to communicate to you:

The two religion clauses of the First Amendment - the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause - were designed to work together. One protects the freedom to practice one's faith, while the other prevents government from establishing, promoting, or favoring one religion over another. Together they form one of the strongest protections of religious liberty ever established by any nation.

Please do not weaken the Johnson Amendment. Houses of worship fulfill their highest calling when they proclaim truth, disciple believers, and minister to their communities without becoming extensions of political campaigns or partisan organizations. The mission of the church is most effective when its allegiance remains first and foremost to Christ with no influence or pressure by political parties or candidates or undo interaction with them in attempt to use political power to fulfill the mission of the church.

History repeatedly demonstrates the wisdom of these constitutional safeguards. Religious persecution in America has seldom arisen from secularism alone; more often it has occurred when one religious group gained the support of civil authority and used governmental power to suppress the convictions of others. Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Jews, Seventh-day Adventists, and many others have experienced discrimination when government aligned itself with particular religious interests. Our founders wisely sought to prevent such abuses by limiting the power of government in matters of religion, thereby protecting believers of every faith as well as those of no faith.

I am a citizen of this great nation because my maternal grandfather fled Nazi-controlled Germany seeking freedom and found it here in the United States. My father's side of the family immigrated here at the time the pilgrims came on the Mayflower, all seeking freedom to live as their conscience dictated. One of my ancestors, Josiah Bartlett, signed the Declaration of Independence (top right corner) because he believed these thirteen colonies should have freedom and a say in the matter of how they were governed.

Please do not do anything to jeopardize these freedoms that so many have gone to great lengths to secure.

Again, as a Christian, I do not view the separation of church and state as a threat to the gospel. I regard it as one of the essential protections that preserves the purity of the church, safeguards the sacred right of conscience, and secures the religious liberty guaranteed to every American, no matter what they believe. My prayer is that these constitutional principles will continue to be upheld, ensuring that faith remains a matter of conviction rather than compulsion, and that both church and state remain faithful to their distinct and God-given purposes.

Respectfully,

Sandra Dombrowski

Christian writer, editor, mother, pastor's wife, voter, helper of the poor and diseased

Manchester, Connecticut

From: Phil Blakei<[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII, PhilBlakei<[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATEi-PHIL BLAKE

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:04:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully urge you to uphold the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state, a cornerstone of our nation's commitment to religious liberty. America's founders, many of whom fled religious persecution and the coercive union of church and government in Europe, established a constitutional American system that protects the free exercise of religion while preventing governmental establishment or favoritism toward any faith. This framework has safeguarded both religious freedom and civil liberty for more than two centuries.

History consistently demonstrates that when government promotes, funds, or enforces religious activity, it creates conditions that foster favoritism, diminish freedom of conscience, and place religious minorities and non-adherents at risk of discrimination and persecution. A government that remains neutral in matters of religion best protects the rights of all citizens, regardless of their beliefs.

Accordingly, I respectfully oppose the use of public funds to support religious nonprofit activities, religious education, or religious clubs on public campuses. Taxpayer resources should be used for public purposes that serve all citizens equally, without advancing or endorsing particular religious beliefs.

I also urge you to preserve the Johnson Amendment, which prohibits tax-exempt churches and charitable organizations from participating in partisan political campaigns. Maintaining this longstanding provision helps preserve the independence and integrity of religious institutions while preventing the use of tax-exempt organizations as vehicles for partisan political activity.

Additionally, I encourage the federal government to maintain complete neutrality in its relationship with religion. No religious group should receive preferential treatment or special governmental favor based on its faith. This principle also extends to the government's relationship with foreign nations, including the State of Israel. American policy should be guided by constitutional principles, national interests, and equal treatment under the law rather than religious preference.

The First Amendment protects both the free exercise of religion and guards against governmental establishment of religion. These complementary protections have enabled people of every faith—and those of no faith—to live together in freedom. Preserving this constitutional balance is essential to protecting the liberties of all Americans.

I respectfully ask that you continue to defend these founding principles by opposing measures that erode the separation of church and state and by supporting policies that preserve religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and equal protection for every citizen.

Thank you for your service and for your thoughtful consideration of these concerns.

Respectfully,
Phil Blake

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] separation of church and state -

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:05:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear sirs,

The separation of church and state was a fundamental point of the constitution; this is what our father's established as being necessary to maintain a freedom of ALL religions.

I am totally opposed to the unity of church and state , please count my vote as NO to the proposal.

May you have wisdom to see what horrendous changes are going to happen if you allow it. The constitution of the United States must be upheld.

Respectfully,

Dagmar Goubaj

www.quovadisministry.org

...for the love of the Truth

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From: Vivianne Lewandowski <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:06:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 13, 2026

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

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

After becoming aware of the contents and recommendations for building a bridge between church and state in your religious liberty draft report, I am deeply concerned. Our founding fathers believed strongly in the separation of church and state because that is what they were fleeing from in Europe. They sought out this land to be free from religious persecution. The dark ages before the reformation were a horrible time of persecution for those that did not agree with the church/state system. Any time there has been and is a union of church and state persecution has resulted. Even today in such places as N. Korea, Iran, China as well as other countries around the world, where liberty of conscience is not upheld, people are suffering. The God of the Bible is a God of liberty, not of coercion of the conscience. He wants the heart not a forced worship. It is the duty of the state to legislate the last 6 commandments. The first 4 are between God and the individual. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Matthew 22: 21.

I respectfully disagree with your proposals that would weaken our separation of church/state. America's greatness is in that wall of separation. Please don't tear it down. It will not make things better. I don't want to see any laws, mandates or financial contributions that would infringe upon our 1st amendment or liberty of conscience.

Please reconsider the recommendations in your report.

Prayerfully,

Vivianne Lewandowski
Salem, NH

From: Pauline Nettifee <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:06:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION:

Please, keep church and state separate.

I believe the limits on the government in the U.S. Constitution were designed to preserve the religious freedom of individuals. The breaking down of the separation of church and state will only lead to oppression.

Thank you,
Pauline Nettifee

From: JW Peters <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:07:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly object to the conclusions of the commission's report. American politics and candidates or endorsements have no place in the pulpits and churches of the United States of America. The mixing of federal government policies and personalities with religion is anathema to the Constitution. Jesus said, "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's into God, that which is God's."

JW Peters

From: Marilyn Dittman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church/state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:07:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am concerned! Very concerned! Even alarmed!

By explicitly asserting that there is no separation of church and state because that exact phrase isn't present, reveals the extent of purposeful closing of the eyes to the obvious. We cannot arrive to safe, and certainly not to great places, with our eyes closed. We cannot ignore the history without groping in to repeat it. There IS separation between church and state. There has been! And there has been the purpose for it! Here it is, in the words of the Father of the Constitution, president James Madison:

"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."

The present recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission, unless arrested, will be heading to ceaseless strife and complete undoing what made America great and free, in the first place. If MAGA will ever succeed, the flag of liberty of conscience needs to keep waving over American shores and the walls of separation between church and state must remain standing.

Pls keep president Johnson's separation of church and state firmly in place.

Sincerely,

Swany Dittman

Sent from my iPhone

From: Cedric Johnson <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Objection To The Elimination Of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:09:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

At present there are some ten thousand religions in our world. Religion is a structured system of faith, and is based on acceptance of church doctrine mostly, which is also subjective and personal. Of the vast number of religions, most worship as Christian, Islam, Buddhism, Catholic, Hinduism, Jewish, etc. The choice of faith is a personal choice for which government should not intervene to make recommendation, or support a particular religion, as by doing so you take away a personal freedom.

Best Regards,

Cedric Johnson
Sent from my iPad

From: vchris1 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:09:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments.

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Lavleen Kaur Madahar <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT – SIKH AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:09:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: PUBLIC_COMMENT_-_RELIGIOUS_LIBERTY_COMMISSION_DRAFT_REPORT_-_SIKH_AMERICAN_LEGAL_DEFENSE_AND_EDUCATION_FUND_.pdf

Please find the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)'s public comment for the Religious Liberty Commission's draft report attached.

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Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

PII

PII

PII

July 13, 2026

Attn: Religious Liberty Commission
Office of the Associate Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Re: PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT – SIKH
AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

The Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. As the nation's oldest Sikh American civil rights and advocacy organization, SALDEF has spent more than two decades defending the religious freedom of Sikh Americans and advancing the promise of the First Amendment for people of all faiths and beliefs.

Religious liberty is one of our nation's most fundamental constitutional commitments. For religious minorities, including Sikhs, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and many others, that promise has never depended solely on the protection of free exercise. It has also depended on a government that does not elevate one religious tradition above others. The Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause work together to ensure that every American can practice their faith freely without fear of discrimination, coercion, or government favoritism.

For the last year, the Religious Liberty Commission has been meeting, hearing from witnesses, and conducting Commission work all in violation of the basic transparency requirements required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Commission's failure to comply with FACA has impeded SALDEF's ability to prepare for hearings and stay informed of the Commission's work. The comment period for the Commission's report, lasting just 15 days—three of which fell over a holiday weekend—has also made it more difficult for SALDEF to provide thorough and detailed comments on the 224-page draft report. Nonetheless, SALDEF submits the following comments on the substance of the draft.

The 12 core policy recommendations delivered by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission in the draft report represent a concerted effort to reshape federal policy around a specific interpretation of the First Amendment. While the Commission presents its recommendations as a universal defense of religious liberty, the report repeatedly advances a narrow vision rooted in predominantly Judeo-Christian terminology, conservative legal theories, and a notable lack of pluralistic representation. The absence of meaningful engagement with the lived experiences of many minority faith communities raises significant concerns about whether these recommendations would strengthen religious liberty for all Americans or primarily expand protections for a select set of religious viewpoints. A truly durable framework for religious freedom must reflect the constitutional principle of equal treatment and recognize the diversity of religious practice that defines the United States today.

The framing and substance of each of the 12 core policy recommendations reflects the bias of the Commission and its failure to account for the perspectives of diverse faith communities. Below are examples of the ways in which each policy recommendation falls short: :

1. Clarifying the Establishment Clause: The Commission instructs the Department of Justice to issue guidance that "clarifies" the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause.
 - a. The report characterizes the "wall of separation between church and state" as a mid-twentieth century myth and an "artificial separation". This recommendation seeks to institutionalize the "bridge" analogy, which views religion and government as mutually supportive rather than separate. This prioritizes majoritarian religious influence over the secular protections that benefit religious minorities who rely on that "wall" to prevent state-sponsored favoritism. For many minority faith communities, Establishment Clause protections are practical safeguards against government endorsement of majority religious practices.
2. "Know Your Rights" Posters and FAQ: Federal agencies are directed to issue "Know Your Rights" posters for students, parents, healthcare workers, and military members.
 - a. The "rights" articulated in the report's FAQ primarily focus on Christian-specific symbols (like "Jesus Loves Me" masks) and voluntary prayer. There is no corresponding emphasis on the rights of Sikh students to wear a Dastaar (turban) or the rights of Muslim employees regarding prayer breaks, which are critical pluralistic concerns missing from this standardized guidance. As the report itself states, 75 percent of Sikh students are bullied for their articles of faith.¹ Many educators remain unfamiliar with Sikh articles of faith, resulting in confusion over kirpans, turbans, and religious accommodations. Any "Know Your Rights" guidance should serve to protect the rights of *all* people, not just a select few.

¹ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline>

3. Written Explanations for Allegations: Public officials must provide a written explanation within 30 days if they allege a person under their supervision has "improperly engaged in religious expression".
 - a. This is designed to create a paper trail to deter administrators from enforcing secular policies or what the report calls "superficial 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' quotas". It focuses on protecting the "courageous" witnesses, mostly Christians, who testified about being disciplined for their faith. Yet the Commission did not consider that minority faith employees often face inconsistent enforcement of dress codes before accommodations are granted. Many accommodation disputes arise because supervisors lack training on Title VII religious accommodation obligations. The draft report fails to account for the experiences of minority faith communities in navigating religious expression and accommodation.
4. Religious Liberty Reporting Hotlines: The report calls for the creation of federal hotlines and online portals to report violations of religious liberty.
 - a. The narrative context suggests these portals are intended to combat secular liberalism in schools and healthcare. For example, the report emphasizes reporting bullying against Christian students for their views on gender ideology but provides no Sikh student witnesses to narrate their unique experiences with articles of faith.
5. Nominating "Courageous" Federal Judges: The Commission recommends nominating federal judges with the courage to decide religious liberty cases on the merits.
 - a. In the context of the report, "judicial courage" is code for appointing originalist, conservative judges who will overturn precedents the Commission dislikes, such as *Employment Division v. Smith*. This prioritizes an ideological shift in the judiciary rather than a pluralistic commitment to a broad range of faith traditions. Many landmark religious liberty victories for minority faiths, such as *Tagore v. United States*, *Singh v. McHugh*, and *Holt v. Hobbs*, came from an ideologically balanced set of federal judges.
6. DOJ Religious Liberty Task Force: A task force would be created within the DOJ to track and prioritize litigation protecting religious liberty.
 - a. The prioritized litigation mentioned in the report includes defending pregnancy resource centers and the rights of teachers to use birth-sex pronouns. By prioritizing these specific conservative causes, the task force risks neglecting the civil rights concerns of non-Western faiths—such as Sikh profiling, zoning discrimination against mosques, gurdwaras, and temples, prison religious accommodations, workplace accommodation litigation, as well as language access—which are not featured in the report's narrative.
7. Combatting Anti-Semitism: This is the only recommendation focused on a specific minority community.

- a. While a vital concern, the report dedicates an entire chapter to Jewish Americans while omitting equivalent chapters for Sikhs or Muslims. This creates a hierarchy of protection, where some minorities receive deep narrative attention and specific policy mandates, while others are relegated to brief mentions or footnotes. In 2024, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released their national report on hate crimes, indicating 143 anti-Sikh hate crimes.² Sikhs are one of the top three most targeted religious groups in the country, after Jewish and Muslim communities.
8. Protection from Government-Led Litigation: The report seeks to shield religious Americans from "government-led litigation targeting their free exercise".
 - a. This is aimed at ending "lawfare" against institutions like the Little Sisters of the Poor or healthcare workers objecting to procedures like abortion. It centers on the Catholic and Protestant framework of healthcare ethics while ignoring Sikh, Muslim, or Hindu perspectives in medicine. Healthcare providers may be unfamiliar with Sikhs and their beliefs and practices, which can affect patient experience. Examples include: (1) respect for unshorn hair (kes), (2) understanding the significance of articles of faith (Panj Kakkars), (3) language barriers for immigrants, (4) limited culturally appropriate health education. 7.3% of participants in the 2021 SALDEF Sikh American Health Survey had difficulty trusting healthcare providers.³
9. Repealing the Johnson Amendment: The Commission recommends repealing the provision that prevents 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing political candidates.
 - a. The report frames this almost exclusively around the "Pulpit" and the rights of "Pastors" to provide spiritual guidance. By using Christian-specific terminology, the recommendation fails to account for how this policy affects Granthis (Sikh religious leaders) or Imams, whose leadership structures and community guidance styles may differ significantly from the "pulpit" model. Additionally, some faith traditions intentionally avoid endorsing candidates. Changes could create pressure on religious organizations that prefer political neutrality.
10. Streamlining Military Religious Accommodations: The Department of War is ordered to improve the process for religious accommodations in the military.
 - a. While this chapter is the most diverse, featuring Captain Sukhbir Singh Toor (Sikh) and Rao Harish (Hindu), the broader policy focus remains on the chaplaincy, which is historically dominated by Christian clergy. Recommendations to "restore the use of military emblems on religious texts" (like Bibles and dog tags) show a persistent hyper-focus on Christian material culture. Sikhs only obtained broader military accommodation after years of litigation and policy advocacy. Individual waivers were historically required. Grooming

² <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2024-reported-crimes-in-the-nation-statistics>

³ <https://saldef.org/community-initiatives/>

standards disproportionately affected Sikhs, Muslims, Jews, and others with religious beard requirements.

SALDEF supports robust protections for religious liberty and has long advocated for accommodations that allow individuals to practice their faith freely in schools, workplaces, the military, and public life. Sikh Americans understand firsthand the importance of strong constitutional protections, having fought for the right to wear turbans in military service, maintain articles of faith in the workplace, and receive equal treatment under the law.

Yet this draft report excludes the perspectives and specific needs of Sikh Americans, instead advocating for policies that, at best, would protect only adherents of Christian beliefs, and, at worst, would actively harm members of minority faith communities.

SALDEF urges the Commission to retract this draft report, reconstitute the Commission with a more balanced and diverse composition, and begin the Commission's work anew with a focus on honoring this country's great history of religious pluralism. That means ensuring minority faith communities are meaningfully represented in policymaking, avoiding government actions that could be perceived as favoring one faith tradition over another, and preserving both the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses as complementary constitutional safeguards. America's commitment to religious liberty has endured because it protects the conscience of every individual, not only those whose beliefs align with the majority. That principle should remain the guiding standard for any effort to strengthen religious freedom in the United States.

Thank you for your time. We welcome further engagement on this matter.

Sincerely,

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

From: Barry Scott <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK – BARRY SCOTT

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:09:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty:

Re: Public Comment on the Philosophical, Linguistic, and Jurisdictional Framework of the Draft Report

Dear Members of the Commission,

I submit this comment to express my strong support for the Commission's overarching mission. The substance of your findings achieves a vital tactical victory: it successfully identifies specific instances of government overreach and proposes legal remedies to protect religious citizens from direct interference. The report's alignment with the intent of the Founders—establishing a proper boundary to prevent the state from interfering with, coercing, or managing the religious convictions of the American people—is commendable.

However, I write to urge the Commission to reconsider the linguistic, epistemological, and philosophical framework it employs. While securing tactical victories, the draft report risks a profound strategic defeat by inadvertently adopting the lexicon and assumptions of the very secular administrative state it seeks to correct.

Below, I outline the strategic vulnerabilities in the current draft and propose corrections to secure a lasting, philosophically sound victory for religious liberty.

1. The Historical Shift and the Semantic Trap of "Faith-Based"

The Founders drafted the First Amendment in a society where belief in a Creator was the largely unquestioned baseline of human experience. Their primary concern was preventing the government from interfering with, coercing, or establishing a specific sect.

Today, the cultural context has inverted. We now live in an era where belief in God is increasingly questioned, and secular rationality is the default baseline of the administrative state. The legal mechanism of the First Amendment (preventing government overreach) remains valid, but the philosophical justification for it has shifted. We are no longer merely protecting an unquestioned cultural norm from state interference; we are defending the rationality and legitimacy of theistic belief in a highly skeptical society.

By consistently utilizing the bureaucratic term "faith-based," the Commission inadvertently adopts the secular state's epistemological framing and in doing so, it implicitly concedes a profound epistemological defeat. In modern parlance, "faith" is frequently juxtaposed against "reason" or "evidence," and understood not as a rational commitment based on sufficient grounds, but as subjective, credulous irrationality. When the government uses "faith-based," it subtly categorizes religious organizations not as institutions driven by reasoned truth, moral reality, or philosophical conviction, but as groups catering to mere subjective preferences. This grants an unearned philosophical victory to secular skeptics before the legal debate even begins.

Because rationality is a phenomenological primitive in human experience, the way we frame religious belief dictates how the state interacts with it. If religious conviction is framed as mere "faith" (irrational credulity), then government protection of religious liberty is reduced to mere tolerance. The state will tolerate irrational quirks, but it does not respect them as legitimate perceptions of truth. When the administrative state's definition of the

"public good" or "human rights" inevitably conflicts with the presumptively "irrational" beliefs of a religious institution, the state will reliably coerce the institution into compliance. Society does not fiercely protect what it views as mere credulity.

By using the language of "faith-based" organizations, the Commission inadvertently validates the skeptic's premise that religion is a special, irrational case that the state must merely "accommodate" or "tolerate" out of politeness. This subtle framing is ultimately disruptive and divisive, because it leaves religious liberty vulnerable to the very state coercion and interference the Commission is ostensibly trying to prevent.

2. The Myth of Secular Neutrality and the Demand for "Accommodation"

The Commission correctly calls out the "Myth of Secular Neutrality," recognizing that the state actively promotes a secular worldview rather than maintaining a neutral public square. This is a crucial philosophical correction.

However, rather than establishing genuine philosophical grounds for a public conversation about possible world views (a much larger conversation beyond the scope of the Commission's mandate), the Commission passively re-establishes this myth through its own language. By framing religious liberty as a series of "accommodations" for "faith-based" groups, the Commission treats secularism as the "default" operating system of the public square, and religion as a subjective "plugin" that requires special carve-outs or exceptions to participate. If, however, religious conviction is a reasoned response to objective reality, it should not be treated as a special exception to secular norms; it should be recognized as a foundational, rational reality that legitimately participates in defining and enriching the public square. The state should not merely "tolerate" religion; it must respect it as a rational contributor to civil society.

3. The Elephant in the Room: Subsidies and the Loss of Jurisdictional Independence

The Commission rightly rejects Jefferson's "wall of separation," recognizing that the Constitution does not demand that church and state be completely isolated. Instead, the report properly advocates for a "rightly ordered relationship."

However, in its zeal to secure equal treatment and integration for religious organizations, the Commission must not ignore the most fundamental threat to this rightly ordered relationship: the loss of jurisdictional and institutional independence.

As a society, we consistently fail to acknowledge the elephant in the room regarding church and state: the danger of active government support is just as corrosive to religious liberty as active government interference. The longstanding practice of granting specialized tax preferences to clergy (such as the parsonage allowance) and institutional tax subsidies blurs, nay, virtually obliterates this vital jurisdictional boundary.

The Patron-Client Trap: When the government provides active financial subsidies or specialized tax preferences to religious entities, it establishes a patron-client relationship. It implicitly signals that religious institutions are state-sponsored projects rather than independent, self-sustaining manifestations of objective truth.

The Leverage of Subsidy: The Commission seeks to protect religious institutions from government interference (such as repealing the Johnson Amendment). But true institutional independence requires recognizing that you cannot claim total autonomy from the state while simultaneously relying on its financial patronage. The very tax code that grants these preferences gives the government the leverage to define what constitutes a "legitimate" religious function. If religious belief is a reasoned, objective reality, it is entirely capable of sustaining itself without the state's financial engineering. True liberty requires the religious sphere to be independent of state financial leverage. A classic and successful model of this posture can be seen in the history of Hillsdale College in Michigan, which has famously refused all federal funding to preserve its institutional and intellectual

autonomy. The degree of resistance to this proposal from religious groups will be indicative of the degree of influence already involved and may well be the ultimate litmus test of genuine religious faith.

4. The Grounds for Resolution: Rejecting State Coercion in Divine Matters

To properly manage the "rightly ordered relationship" between church and state, the Commission must address the underlying anxieties of our current cultural moment. We recognize that there are factions on all sides—both secular and religious—who believe that whoever controls the state may and should use its coercive power to enforce their respective orthodoxies. Secular critics rightly fear religious actors who might seek to impose theological ends through civil coercion (e.g., Christian Nationalism). However, these critics are often blind to the fact that the secular administrative state is aggressively doing the exact same thing, utilizing civil coercion to enforce secular orthodoxies (e.g., the prohibition of creation science in public schools).

The solution to this dual threat is not for the state to become the arbiter of which worldview wins. The solution is a strict, uncompromising adherence to jurisdictional limits.

The Founders understood, drawing on deep roots in historical Christian practice, that the human jurisdiction and God's jurisdiction are distinct. The state's legitimate tool is the sword (coercion); God's law operates on the conscience (voluntary submission). The state is fundamentally incompetent to enforce Divine Law because it cannot coerce the conscience without destroying it.

Therefore, when human law and Divine Law inevitably conflict as they must in this world, the historical and proper resolution is not for religious citizens to employ human coercion to overthrow human law, nor is it for human law to crush religious conscience, although we must recognize that, ultimately, the human state will indeed seek to do so. The classical posture—which secured religious liberty in the first place—is one of civil disobedience and submission to the penalty: "I fully acknowledge and comply with human law within its jurisdiction. When it conflicts with Divine Law, I do not take up the sword against human law; I simply do not comply, I accept the worldly consequences, and I leave the justification to God." If Divine Law is real, then religious people can afford to "lose" in the public jurisdiction; for religious people to adopt secular coercion as their method is to "lose" in the Divine jurisdiction.

The fundamental error the Founders were trying to avoid was the illusion that human beings possess the authority, or the competence, to enforce God's law with human coercion. By attempting to manage, subsidize, or coerce the religious sphere, the modern administrative state assumes an arbiter role it was never granted – by neither the Founders nor by God.

5. Strategic Recommendations for the Commission

To secure a strategic victory that honors the Founders' vision, respects jurisdictional boundaries, and elevates the public understanding of religious liberty, I urge the Commission to adopt the following corrections in the final report:

1. Abandon the Term "Faith-Based": Pivot to "religious," "conscience-driven," or "conviction-based" organizations. Explicitly reject the administrative state's reductive jargon that frames religious institutions as mere purveyors of subjective, irrational "faith."
2. Affirm the Rationality of Religious Conviction: Explicitly state that religious belief is a reasoned response to reality, not blind credulity. The state must respect religious contributions to the public square as rational and objective, not merely "accommodate" them as subjective quirks.
3. Affirm Jurisdictional Independence over Subsidies: The report should explicitly affirm that a "rightly ordered relationship" requires strict jurisdictional independence. The government must not interfere with religion, nor

should it create a financial patron-client relationship by providing specialized state subsidies or tax preferences in any form. The Commission should recommend to Congress the abolition of existing specialized religious tax preferences, and advise the Executive Branch against implementing new ones.

4. Reject the State as Arbiter of Divine Law: The Commission should explicitly state that the human state lacks the jurisdiction and competence to enforce or adjudicate Divine Law. The protection against both secular overreach and religious nationalism is the strict limitation of the state to its civil jurisdiction, leaving the conscience entirely free from state coercion, whether that coercion takes the form of legal penalty or financial manipulation.

Finally, the Commission must ensure its protections extend to all Americans — believers and non-believers alike. Secular citizens, the religiously unaffiliated, and members of minority faiths deserve the same ironclad guarantee that the state will never coerce conscience or adjudicate Divine Law. By anchoring religious liberty in the objective rationality of conviction, the necessity of institutional independence, and the strict jurisdictional limits of the state, the Commission can move beyond mere tactical protections and deliver a strategic framework that equips the nation to defend and celebrate religious freedom for generations to come. By rejecting both secular overreach and any religious push toward establishment or Christian nationalism, the report can deliver the truly neutral, pluralistic religious liberty the Founders intended: a framework in which every citizen's conscience is sacred, no matter what beliefs they hold. This is the enduring legacy the Founders envisioned—and the one the American people deserve.

Thank you for your service to the nation and for your dedication to this foundational American freedom.

Sincerely,

Barry Scott

From: Camille Lyn King <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

In discovering that the Religious Liberty Commission is looking to replace the wall of separation of church and state with a "bridge" between church and state is alarming. This is the exact opposite of why this country was founded. The pilgrims and other groups established this country to escape religious standards forced upon them by the government. The central idea was to establish a country in which people could worship as they so choose, thus becoming Protestants. I find that the idea of forming a bridge between church and state is taking very concerning steps backwards in time, to say the least. The wall of separation between church and government was established to protect the very nature of God in the church – which is freedom of conscience to choose one's own path. God does not force. A bridge does not strengthen Christianity, it weakens its foundation and opens the door for government money and political favors to come in and promote churches to compete for grants – this is not good.

Please consider these comments and keep the wall of separation between church and state for it protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Camille King

Athens, AL

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Camille Lyn King, MFA

From: Duane Leker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:11:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I would like to make it known that I agree with the words of Thomas Jefferson who stated:

“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.”

I believe that government has no authority to tell me what to believe, or how to worship, and that government lacks authority over religion. I value my religious freedom.

Duane Leker
Sent from my iPhone

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Donna Angela <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns about the wall of separation of Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:12:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

When I heard leaders recommend that the wall of separation of church and state should be eliminated, my mind goes to the persecution that happened in past ages when this was implemented.

America was founded upon the principles of religious freedom. We were a country without a Pope and without a King. Each individual was given the freedom to worship God according to his own conscience. This freedom will slowly but surely be dismissed if church and state unite.

This is a very serious issue and has far reaching effects that the committee may not have considered. Please take the concerns of the American people who stand against this very seriously.

Thank you,
Donna Griffith
Oregon

From: Sarah Madrid <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:12:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have been hearing a lot lately about church and state as well as about how the constitution does not specifically advocate for this wall of separation. Please do not mistake me. I am a christian and attend church weekly as is my custom with rare exceptions. I believe in the godly principles of kindness, compassion, and brotherly love. While I believe that true biblical Christianity and its focus on a healing and personal relationship with Jesus is absolutely the balm that the world needs, I do not believe in the use of compelling force to achieve this goal.

My concern with the language coming out of the RLC is that there is a stated goal to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge instead. On the surface this may not seem a terrible thing, but as a student of history, I see grave danger in this. Whenever the church has joined with the state in the past, evil has ultimately been the outcome. We can see this in the religious persecution of the dark ages when the Catholic Church used the arm of the state to persecute and murder untold numbers of people. We see it in the religious persecution in England when the Protestant church hunted down, imprisoned, and killed Catholics who did not agree with the official line of the church. We see it in Muslim countries such as Iran where the state is joined with the church and conversion to Christianity is prohibited on pain of death. We see it even in India where the Hindu majority persecute those of other religions with the government turning a blind eye. You see, ultimately it does not matter what religion is united with state. The outcome is the same. Things start off ok on the surface, but they end in suffering.

This is why our country has been such a land of freedom and has been blessed by God, because of the freedoms that have been built into the constitution as well as the prohibitions such as the first amendment which states that "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 ideas of Roger Williams from the 1600's were integral in the concept of religious liberty when he objected to the union of church and state even when this went against the current traditions and ideas of the time. He asserted that the government was not within its rights to attempt to enforce the first table of the law which pertains to our relationship with God. This is specifically important as we hear an increase in voices from the christian nationalist groups who are advocating the legislation of the first table of the law.

The first commandment states "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me." How can that be legislated? Can government go into the hearts and minds of people and prosecute though crimes? I ask because I see leftist governments in the

UK attempting to do just that with those who pray silently outside of abortion clinics. This is wrong by whichever side does it and should not come to our shores!

The second commandment states “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” Will the government that enforces this command shut down the Catholic Church and its institutions for its violations of this command? While I heartily disagree with this church’s use of images/idols, I do not believe the government has the right to restrict their freedom.

The third commandment state: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” Will the government fine those who curse? Those who publicly call themselves Christian’s yet act in a way unbecoming of Christ? The government has not right to do so.

The final commandment of the first table - the fourth states: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” How will the government enforce this one? Will it enforce worship on the 7th day of the week - Saturday/Sabbath? While I worship on this day as the day God has enjoined as a remembrance of Creation, rest, and the freedom and love God has given and bestowed on us, I absolutely reject the idea that the day should be legislated. In 1888 Senator Blair introduced a bill “to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship.” This bill if made into law would have restricted freedom and there actually was a restriction of religious freedom around that time period for those who dared to work on Sunday. History goes in cycles and I fear that we are headed back around to where we were in the 1880’s. This is prophesied to happen in Revelation 13, but I must still raise my voice to object as I see the great harm that will come from it.

Therefore, I would request the following:

- I request that any and all religious non-profit activities be avoided/terminated. We the church should be putting forth funds to care for the poor, help those in need, and teach others of Christ. We should not use government funds for this. Otherwise, we are using the government to obtain the tax money of people who never consented to the activities to be carried out.
- I request that religious education and religious clubs on public campuses not be given government funds. The government should not be paying public tax monies to propagate a certain religion, any religion, or even the lack of religion such as atheism which is a religion unto itself. The government should remain neutral and allow the freedom of choice.
- I request that the Johnson Amendment remain intact and fully enforced. Politics has no place in the pulpit. The message to be given there is on the healing and saving that comes from God alone through a personal walk/relationship with him.

To conclude, please maintain the separation of church and state. Keep the wall and don't build that bridge. This is the best way to protect the peoples of this great country.

Sincerely,

Sarah Madrid, MD

Bakersfield, CA

From: norma hunter <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:13:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is important to maintain the separation of church and state which our fore fathers sacrificed so much to establish. Separation of church and state is intrinsic to our great Constitution, and the secret of our success, as a nation. Unifying church and state will not bring about improved moral standards nor a genuine belief in our loving Creator and Redeemer. In fact, it does the opposite as it goes against the Gospel. God alone can change the heart so that changes in Society and in our lives are permanent. Jesus never forced the conscience but invited everyone to follow him. It is His kingdom, established by Him (when he comes the second time, which is very soon) that will be an everlasting kingdom where peace, goodwill, and righteousness will reign forever. Let us accept His kingdom of grace first in our hearts through His transforming power.
Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:13:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have concerns about the Committee's recommendations regarding the separation of church and state. I believe the Founding Fathers understood the dangers of mixing government and religion, and history has shown the problems that can happen when those two powers become too closely connected.

The separation of church and state was meant to protect religious freedom for everyone. The government should not have the authority to control, establish, or interfere with people's religious beliefs. Faith is a personal matter between individuals and the Father in Heaven, and people should be free to practice their beliefs without government influence or pressure.

Leaders like James Madison and Thomas Jefferson supported this principle because they had seen the harm caused when governments became involved in religion. I believe the Department of Justice should consider these lessons from history and continue protecting the freedom of both religion and government to remain separate.

If Yahuah lets us choose Him or not to choose Him then who are we as people to make choices on what to believe for others? We shouldn't be.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Linda J Zaccaro <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:14:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

As a Christian who deeply values both my faith and the constitutional principles of our nation, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the draft report issued by the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. My faith teaches me the importance of individual conscience, and I firmly believe that true freedom of speech and religion can only exist when there is a clear distinction between church and state.

The proposals outlined in this document threaten to blur those essential lines by integrating religious doctrine into public schools, allowing tax-exempt houses of worship to engage in partisan politics, and using federal agencies to promote specific religious viewpoints. History has proven time and again that when a nation combines church and state, it inevitably erodes democratic freedoms and ends up as a theocracy.

Protecting the separation of church and state does not weaken religion; it safeguards it from government interference and the church to coerce the government, ensuring our democracy remains free for people of all faiths and no faith. I urge the commission to reject this draft and uphold the traditional constitutional boundaries that have protected American liberty for centuries.

Sincerely,
Linda Zaccaro

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

From: Kaye Gurthet <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:15:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe with so many other people, that Government has no authority over the Church, and its beliefs!

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

From: jeff simpson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] religious liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:15:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

dear council members

dear members, as any Christian would, we would all love to see people come to a knowledge of our Creator, to turn to Him and follow Him. in our constitution our founders of this nation made it clear that there are rights, inalienable rights, that come from Him. life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

our Creator granted man a mind to reason. and by so doing gave man free will. a free will to choose. then the question to be asked is "does man go beyond what God has given?"

from research it was George Santayana who said, "those who forget the past are doomed repeat it" in his 1905 book "the life of reason." the Pilgrims came in search of land in which they found freedom to worship that Creator in freedom from mandates from another in how they should worship, what they must believe, how their lives were to be governed. the long history of persecution in Europe during the Dark Ages that sparked the Protestant Reformation, and then under the rule of Henry VIII when the king put himself over the church later continued with persecution of those who sought freedom of worship. the Pilgrims sought refuge first in Holland and areas surrounding, and yet the arm of force and coercion grew and expanded to where they were, causing them to look beyond the lands, across a vast ocean, in search of such a place, America. and it was so, for a time. yet as more and more came across establishing colonies, villages and towns the same spirit showed itself, the same spirit that they had fled from. all the "witch trials" that were done in Europe showed themselves here, the most notable being the Salem Witch Trials where later proven innocent, people were thrown into rivers bound with rope and stones to drown. and early laws established such as what we can find here; teachingamericanhistory.org/document/laws-rights-and-liberties-related-to-religion-in-early-america/ religious laws that contained death penalties, loss of properties and rights. this country that has thru the years been a bastion of the freedoms, all the freedoms of men, as long as that freedom doesn't infringe on the rights of others, is now sitting at the top of a long sliding board. one push it all it will take to start the long slide downward. it was the life of one Roger Williams that so impressed many of those founding statesmen when his story was recounted in meeting places, homes and churches that brought many to Rhode Island in search of being able to worship God in freedom. might we be in danger of returning to the way it was before this man of God took his stand for the freedom, that inalienable right of freedom?

much is said about no separation of religion and state mentioned in the constitution. does it need to be spelled out in exact wording and phrasing for the concept to be there? "congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion nor the free exercise thereof" lays out that concept. "it was just a stinking letter" were the words of many. yet when Jefferson wrote that letter, the same man who wrote the constitution and had part in the bill of rights, written to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802, lays out in more detail the concept of that clause. that many of these men made quotes about religion, God, the morals of scripture, the need of them for a nation to survive, thrive, and maintain a good and right government, they also made many about that religion being free. here are a few; www.presidentialcrossroads.com/us-president-quotes-religion-early-presidents/ **"The United States of America should have a foundation free from the influence of clergy. George Washington. John Adams"** **As I understand the Christian religion, it was, and is, a revelation. But how has it happened that millions of fables, tales, legends, have been blended with both Jewish and Christian revelation that have made them the most bloody religion that ever existed. John Adams"** **The government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion. "Thomas Jefferson"** **Religion is a subject on which I have ever been most scrupulously reserved. I have considered it as a matter between every man and his Maker, in which no other, and far less the public, had a right to intermeddle. "James Madison"** **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.** while these men extolled the many benefits of the religious experience, they also knew the dangers of the mix of religion and state, having experienced it or just a generation or 2 from it.

that there has been those who have sought to cast any sense of biblical morality into the waste dumps is of no question. should there be a pushback on this? of course men and women of biblical standing should stand up. with laws? laws that protect their freedom of speech, yes. with laws that prohibit others rights to speak? no. isn't that an infringement? laws that force to comply, coerce? doesn't that sound like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius in Daniel 2, 6 and the beast of Revelation 13?

then i urge to heed the history of the past, on both sides of the issue, to take time on the knee in prayer, and serious consideration of the issue, whether it's right for governments to step into matters of faith, or best to leave it between his Creator and the man.

with all respect and honor that is allowed to men and women who lead a nation,
Jeff Simpson, a Christian that prays our nation remains a free one.

Like mned to repeat it,"

From: Genehcpai<[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:15:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: RL_Comm_Comments.docx

Eugene C. Heinlein, CPA

July 13, 2026

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

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Commission Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft report. I am among those Americans whose descendants fled Europe during colonial times to avoid religious persecution. Two of my family members were executed by the British during our war of independence. As a conservative Christian, I believe your report is of profound importance.

The report is clearly well intentioned, but it opens doors to institutionalized persecution and poses a threat to the liberty it proposes to protect:

- 1 There should not be government funding of religious non-profits. Funding an activity automatically results in control of that activity. Persecution from governmental involvement in religious activity is what drove my ancestors from Europe. Governmental funding of religious non-profit activities will unavoidably create preferences between religions and denominations. Because funding will never be unlimited, that funding will never be without guidelines and oversight by government. As a CPA who has worked in the area of not-for-profits, I have had much personal experience with the level of interference government funding always creates. Oversight equals political control.

- 2 Government funding of religious education also poses a major problem. My wife and I paid to send our three children to church schools to avoid the interference of government in our children's upbringing. It is impossible for you to fund it without exercising oversight (control). Many other committed Americans also choose to privately pay for their children's educations. The government is not our children's parents, we are. You will only corrupt the system by publicly funding it.
3. The special mention given to anti-semitism in your draft report (item seven) already shows a potential governmental preference. Why mention just one group? I wish you could see the danger you are proposing.
4. The Johnson Amendment should continue to be fully enforced. We have not become less political since the days of Lyndon Johnson. The Johnson Amendment protections are needed now more than ever. The circle formed by the government funding church activities which in turn are used to promote politicians needs to be defended against.

Perhaps the best proposal would be: "Congress (*and the entire federal government by extension*) shall make no law (*or report, or regulation, or requirement*) respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;"

This letter includes only some of my reservations regarding the draft proposals. If your draft had been more widely known, you would be receiving many more comments.

Thank you for giving this your attention.

Yours truly,

Eugene C. Heinlein, CPA

From: Charlie Stanley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:18:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Charlie Stanley

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments on the draft report.

As a person of faith, I believe the separation of church and state is essential to protecting religious liberty for everyone. It allows churches to remain faithful to their mission without political influence and ensures that the government treats all religions fairly and impartially.

I respectfully ask the Commission to reconsider recommendations that would weaken this principle, including expanding government funding for religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. These changes could blur the line between church and state and ultimately undermine the religious freedom they are intended to protect.

Please preserve the longstanding principle of separation of church and state so that both religion and government can remain free and independent.

As a Christian this matter is very important to me.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Charlie Stanley
Arp Texas

Sent from Charlie's iPhone

From: Dave Walks <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:18:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please maintain separation of church and state. Otherwise history of the dark ages will repeat itself

From: Renee Wilson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Renee Wilson

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:18:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen of DeWitt, Iowa, someone who cares deeply that religious freedom survive intact for my children and grandchildren. I ask you to remember that this country was built by people fleeing the dictates of kings and popes who claimed authority over conscience itself. That history is not incidental to religious liberty; it is the foundation of it, and I hope your recommendations will honor rather than erode it.

The deepest argument for keeping government out of religion is not secular at all — it comes from Christ Himself. When He said to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's, He drew a line between two jurisdictions: one civil, one divine. Civil government exists to govern our duties to one another, and it may rightly ask only one question of any act: is it civil or uncivil, does it harm a neighbor? It has no business asking whether an act is religious, pious, or heretical, because that question belongs to God alone. A commission that puts government behind a particular religious text, practice, or lesson has crossed the very line Jesus drew — and it does so not in the name of secularism, but in violation of the Christianity it claims to protect.

I also urge the Commission to remember that rights do not come from majority vote. If a vote can grant religious liberty, a vote can just as easily take it away, and then it was never truly a right at all — only a permission from the crowd. Our tradition holds instead that rights are inherent, given by the Creator, and that government exists to protect them, especially for the minority who cannot protect themselves at the ballot box. Popular support may justify a highway bill. It cannot justify a religious one, because religion was never something the founders submitted to a vote. However many people favor a religious observance or display, they have no more right to decide what I owe to God than I have to decide what they owe Him.

Finally, I ask the Commission not to treat separation of church and state as some modern invention layered onto an indifferent Constitution. It was deliberate design, argued for and won by the churches of the founding era themselves, who had felt the weight of establishment and wanted no part of it again. James 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. If Madison's own words describe what the Amendment means, then any commission that reads it as permission for government-sponsored religion bears the burden of explaining him away.

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

Respectfully,
Renee Wilson
DeWitt, IA

Sent from my iPhone

From: Brian Hindman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Liberty of Conscience

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:19:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commissioners,

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to respond to your initial report and conclusions. Having taught American History in high school for 17 years and now serving as an ordained minister for 11 years I have more than a passing interest in this subject.

Just days ago we celebrated the 250 year anniversary of our founding. Although not part of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence asserts that

“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.” These words mean much to us as a people. We are founded on the principle of liberty which is a self-evident right granted by God to all men.

After winning our independence on the battlefield the Fathers of our Constitution wisely sought to protect liberty of conscience in the very First Amendment to our Constitution with both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. Civil government is not to be entangled with the religious beliefs of its citizens.

Why did Jesus say to Pilate at His trial, “My kingdom is not of this world?” When Jesus came to earth He came to establish a spiritual kingdom based on spiritual principles. Why did Jesus say to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and render unto God the things that are God’s?” The Ten Commandments answer this question. There were two tables of stone that God wrote on with His own finger. The first table contained the first 4 Commandments and relate to our worship of God. No man, no earthly government has a legitimate right to interfere with attempting to enforce these commandments. They belong to God and can only be given to Him from the heart and mind of a person. The second table contains six Commandments that relate to man’s relationship with each other. Here is where the civil government has a legitimate right to prevent theft, murder, lying, etc. But the realm of conscience and worship belong strictly to God. “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay.” God will take care of lawbreakers in His own time and in His own way without any interference by the civil government.

My earnest appeal is to allow the Constitution as it was originally drafted and amended with the Bill of Rights in the first ten amendments to continue to stand. These mighty principles reflect the true will of God for all people. An attempt to “build bridges” between the church and state will only result in coercion and persecution of the minority beliefs. Might does not make right and when men attempt to compel the conscience of another he violates an area that God Himself does not do. Let a different religious group take power of the civil government and they will speedily coerce and persecute all who disagree with them. God does not do this, nor should our beloved United States do this.

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.” (Romans 14:4)

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” (Romans 14:5)

In His Service,

-Pastor Brian Hindman
Greensboro SDA Church

PII

From: Sharon Hodges <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding the DRAFT REPORT of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:20:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a Christian, I understand the desire for Christian values to regain power here in the USA. We have seen the detrimental results of the loss of moral, Bible-based beliefs. But we cannot fight this war by tearing down the wall of separation of church and state.

Many of those who came to this country did so because of results of the union of church and state: severe and egregious persecution. Separation of church and state protects everyone's freedom. Mixing religion and government lets the state impose one faith on everyone, leading to discrimination and tyranny.

While having a governing body whose members are Christian is a great benefit to a nation, the government has no business intruding in or funding of the people's personal religious beliefs.

I list the following objections:

- funding religious non-profit activities
- funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses
- Repealing the Johnson Amendment

Please seriously consider revising your draft proposal in which you suggest our government should further disregard the traditional and longstanding principles of our first amendment: The government should not run the church, NOR should the church run the government.

Sincerely,

Sharon Hodges

Knoxville, TN

From: Ann Totaro <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Committee on Religious Liberty, Draft report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:20:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

This is a brief message in response to the draft report re; Religious Liberty.

Our nation has just celebrated 250 years of Freedom. What a tremendous celebration throughout the country! In light of such a celebration I pause with concern regarding comments written in the report re: separation of church and

state. I believe, as did Roger Williams, that America is a model of separation of church and state affording Liberty of Conscience to all. To do away with separation of church and state and "build a bridge" will bring consequences.

We learn from history that any time society attempts to legislate morality it leads to persecution. Ecclesiastes 1:9 "What has been will be again. What has been done will be again; there is nothing new under the sun." History repeats

itself.

Centuries ago, the Waldenses took refuge from religious persecution in Guardia Piemontese, Italy. They lived in peace for a very long time there but on July 5, 1561 a bloody massacre killed 2,000 villagers. The Waldenses held different Biblical views from that of Rome. Persecution followed. I bring this ancient example to mind as my husband's family immigrated to America from this same village. Visiting Guardia Piemontese I went to the museum that tells the history of the massacre where the blood flowed out the city gate.

When one group holds power over others with differing beliefs it can lead to persecution. In America we hold dear Liberty of Conscience. Let us protect the separation of church and state.

Regards,

Ann Totaro

From: "Ashmeade, John" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

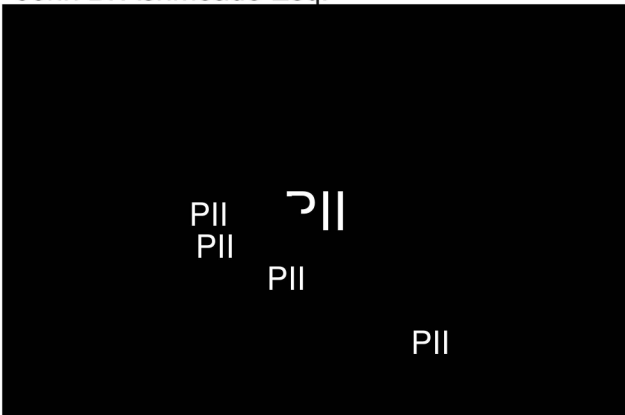
Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:20:31l -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

The publicly stated conclusions of the Religious Liberty commission raise two concerns. First, the conclusion that the constitution does not raise a a wall of separation of church and state runs counter to first amendment religion clauses. Second, the commission seems to privilege Christianity over all other religions. The establishment clause of the first amendment clearly and unequivocally prevents and precludes the government from establishing or endorsing any religion or religious practice. To do so would prohibit the free exercise of religion. In other words, the religion clauses work together to preserve religious freedom for all Americans, whether they practice or choose to be agnostic towards religion. Second, the report appears to highlight and focus on activities that reportedly impacts Christians. This suggests the report is incomplete in its assessments. The recent election cycles and enforcement activities on college campuses across the country have demonstrated significant antipathy towards Muslim Americans and their freedoms to live out their lives to the fullest. While the efforts to keep Jewish students safe on campuses is commendable and necessary, such efforts should not be made to the exclusion of protecting Muslim students. If the constitution means anything the government should equally protect religions without preference. I would request this commission revise the report to take into consideration these additional concerns.

John B. Ashmeade Esq.



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From: Cristy Allen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please do not unite church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:20:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 13, 2026

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my opposition to any recommendation that would weaken the separation of church and state or increase government involvement in religious institutions.

I value religious liberty deeply. One of the greatest strengths of our nation is that every person is free to follow their own conscience in matters of faith. This freedom protects people of all religious beliefs, as well as those who choose not to practice a religion. It is a freedom that deserves careful protection.

History demonstrates that when religious authority and civil authority become intertwined, individual liberty often suffers. Government should not determine religious beliefs, and religious organizations should not depend upon government power to advance their mission. Both institutions are strongest when they remain independent of one another.

I believe government has an important role in protecting public safety, defending individual rights, and enforcing laws that promote justice and order. However, it should not use public funds to support, promote, or favor religious organizations or activities. Religious ministries, churches, and faith-based programs should be supported voluntarily by those who believe in their work, not through compulsory taxation.

Faith is a matter of personal conviction and conscience. Genuine belief cannot be created by legislation, government endorsement, or financial support. Religious freedom flourishes when government remains neutral and allows individuals to practice their faith according to conscience without interference, favoritism, or coercion.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to oppose recommendations that would erode the historic separation of church and state, including efforts to expand government support of religious institutions or weaken longstanding protections that preserve religious liberty for all Americans.

Our nation's commitment to religious freedom has served people of many faiths and backgrounds for generations. I hope that legacy will be preserved by maintaining a clear distinction between the responsibilities of government and the mission of religion.

Respectfully,

Cristy Long

From: Mary Ellingsen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Galen and Mary Nell Ellingsen

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:21:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

My husband and I are deeply concerned about what appears to be the dismantling of the separation of church and state as is being recommended by the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. We are Protestant Christian and as such we understand that our liberty as a Christian is based on the ability granted to us by Jesus, the King of the Universe, to make a choice about our faith regardless of the dictates of the government. Jesus died for this opportunity as much as He died to save us from our sins. Please understand that we believe your intent is to encourage that our nation and the world turn back to God. This is the plea of our hearts as born again Christians as well. However the way that this process happens is a deep felt conviction born from our love of the Savior and what He has done for each of us on the cross of Calvary. This free will choice must not be undermined by the government because once this choice becomes aligned with coercion in any way it loses the tenants our nation was based on. The pilgrims came to America in order to exercise their free will of choice and this is what we want to protect with our very life. The free will choice of religious liberty is the most important belief we have and if must be exercised first and above all other rights we have as American citizens.

Please do not appeal the Johnson Amendment which in effect will release our churches to be politicized. Once this happens, worshippers will not have the freedom to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience without the interference of the government. It is just as important that those who are not believers have the right to that choice as well. Freedom of conscience must be preserved above all else. We also disagree with using public money to fund religious activities. This is an over reach of governmental authority and persecution follows such activities as this. Using the pulpit in our churches for political activity detracts from the God we are there to serve by becoming double minded. Churches end up competing for resources and the end of that. Is service to man and not God. Please hear this plea to strengthen the service to God in our communities. Free will choice in the service to the Lord is the only way, not by the money or dictates of the government.

Thank you so very much for giving us an opportunity to make a comment on this most serious matter. We very much appreciate the opportunity to have input and a voice. We pray that the decisions that will honor our Lord will be made.

From: Heidi Liv Tompkins <[REDACTED] PII>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment/Response to the June 26, 2026 Draft Report to the President, by The Religious Liberty Commission Members

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:21:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 13, 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 (Hereinafter "RLC") Draft Report, Issued June 2026

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

As an American Citizen who has long enjoyed the unalienable rights given to All by our Creator, The God of Heaven, which have been upheld by this great Country for the last 250 Years,
I wish to comment on the statements made that "There is NO Separation of Church and State" in our Constitution.
While those words do not exist, the principle does, however I feel that it has been misunderstood or misinterpreted.

I am for "Faith IN State", rather than "Church AND State".

What does that mean?

I would rather have lawmakers with sound moral judgement that is based on Biblical Values and upholding our God Given rights, than those who do not respect life or the Creator, yet: I don't feel that the "CHURCH" Or Churches need to unite with the government, uniting "Church and State" for moral, sound lawmakers to uphold our God-Given unalienable rights.

I believe that such a union would give way to the possibility of future administration's to abuse such power. Look what happened during the pandemic with a liberal administration? Citizens lost jobs, homes, livelihoods because they desired to protect their medical freedom and bodily autonomy in regards to what they inject/inject.

My best friend is a hospital Nurse.

During the beginning of the pandemic, even if she was sick she had to work, and she and others of her profession were hailed as "Heroes", UNTIL they exercised their Medical Freedom, their Religious Freedoms, Liberty of Conscience, and "Freedom to Choose" against the jab, and then, they were seen as enemies of the state? This happened in many of our patriotic professions: Nurses, Doctors, Fire Fighters, Police, Military and more. I understand that you are addressing that, which is greatly appreciated, but what about when the Vatican and the Left continue to push a "Green Sunday", or move the needle towards Worship, *because they can?*

What if another lawmaker like [Arizona State Senator Sylvia Allen](#) gains support for a bill, similar to what she proposed on March 26, 2015, stating:

["Probably, we should be debating a bill requiring every American to attend a church of their choice on Sunday to see if we could get back to having a moral rebirth."?](#)

According to her own statements, she thought nothing was wrong with such a bill. She did not prioritize or care about the Religious Freedoms that are afforded by the free exercise of religion - That is a violation of the First Amendment.

That would violate the religious freedoms and the free exercise of Sabbath-Keepers of many denominations, and Jews.

What mechanism could be put in place to ensure that all of your good intentions are not turned against us as Americans if a different, or liberal administration were in power and wanted to punish, or make examples of conservative Americans, even such as those who were wrongly accused on January 6th, 2021?

We ALREADY have that Mechanism - It is the First Amendment:

"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."

With statements and beliefs such as given by Lauren Boebert on January 27, 2022, any dominant belief system would have power to dictate over others, whether it was Biblical, or not.

She stated:

"The church is supposed to direct the government. The government is not supposed to direct the church," and "I'm tired of this separation of church and state junk." While I believe the government is NOT supposed to direct the Church, as Lauren Boebert also stated, I don't think the Church should direct the government - God, through Liberty of Conscience should. This is what led our founding fathers.

If the Church were allowed to direct the government, Where does that leave the SabbathKeeper? Where does that leave President Trump's own daughter and son-in-law?

If such a "wall of separation" were removed, what would prohibit Congress from making laws based on the above beliefs and statements?

If that principle is discarded, or thrown down, or the destruction is seen as the popular vote or persuasion, You would never be able to assure Americans of the protections that they are ALREADY afforded by The First Amendment...

In fact, those protections would lose ALL of their value, especially if the Johnson Amendment is repealed in addition.

Rather than discussing a removal of the idea of "Separation of Church and State", rather than calling that a lie, I would much rather see how this commission can Prayerfully PROTECT our First Amendment for Americans no matter what party is in office, and strengthen the Supreme Court's requirement to uphold it, in addition to the other freedom protecting measures you have suggested.

Many of us voted for President Trump because since his first term he stood and spoke very strongly about protecting Religious Liberty.

I urge you to do the same - consider those who honor God's Seventh-day Sabbath given at Creation, whether you adhere to it or not?

PLEASE Protect the Liberty of Conscience and freedom of religion of myself and my fellow Americans - Your fellow Americans.

PLEASE Do NOT destroy the First Amendment by removing the natural separation that it creates between ANY possible Lawmaking that prohibits or restricts the Freedoms set forth regarding Religion, which should be directed by liberty of conscience and the individual hearing of The Holy Spirit, NOT THE STATE.

I am Praying for each of you in this matter,

Sincerely,

Heidi T

From: Felicia Phillips <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep the wall

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:22:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Governor Dan Patrick, Chairman,
Dr. Ben Carson, Vice-Chairman,
and the Religious Liberty Commission members,

Thank you for giving us the privilege to respond to the commission's findings. How wonderful to know that our country continues to support religious liberty, a fundamental right given to us by God Himself. Much of what the commission supports is laudable, but certain aspects raise concerns. Examples of such concern include using government funds to support religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. (i.e., Churches contributing to campaigning).

Over two hundred fifty years ago, our ancestors came to these shores seeking religious liberty. They were tired of the religious and civil oppression of Europe that had prevailed for over a thousand years. Divinely led, our God-fearing forefathers began in the New World a bold experiment separating church and state. They had seen that every time a church got involved in government, oppression, persecution, and even martyrdom quickly followed. Our government has ensured that every person is free to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience or ignore God altogether.

For 250 years, this has prevailed in our country. No one can deny that many in our land, including some lawmakers, have forgotten God, and this is lamentable. Religion should always be a very personal affair. The government should never be involved in this private area. History has proven that the wall between is infinitely safer than a bridge.

Whether the Constitution of this great country specifically mentions the separation of church and state or not, everyone who has studied the issue knows that this was the intent of the framers of that sacred document. God has blessed this country precisely for this sterling virtue that has prevailed.

We respectfully appeal to the Commission and to our government to keep religion completely out of government and government out of the churches. May the First Amendment continue to be the hallmark of the free world. The majority or the government should never dictate in areas of conscience. This is God's domain. The greatest gift God has given to His reasoning creatures is freedom. Not even He will violate this precious gift. Jesus came that we might be free, free to worship or not to worship.

May the total separation of church and state ever prevail in free America!

Grateful to be an American!

Pastors Lamar and Felica Phillips

]

From: Kathryn Halbritter <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:24:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

Thank you.

Blessings,

Kathryn Cloete, MD

From: Dale Buckley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Separation of Church and State-Dale Buckley

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:24:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and a decendent of 2 of the pilgrims that came over on the Mayflower, I must state that I don't agree with the idea that there is no separation of Church and State in the Constitution. The idea was part of the founding of this country, the principle is in the Constitution and should be there for a truly free people to enjoy Religious Liberty in their country. The Pilgrims came to this country to find this freedom only to then proceed to persecute others who did not believe as they did. Roger Williams and the founding of Providence Colony was the model that eventually proved to be the one that brought true Religious Freedom to this land and the one on which our Constitution principles are based.

We find in the Bible these words of Jesus, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Here Jesus is giving us the example of separation of Church and State. Roger Williams understood this. He recognized that the State could and should govern the things that are covered by the last 6 of the 10 Commandments. It could and should govern the issues that pertain to the relationship between men and their fellow men. But the first 4 Commandments, those that deal with the relationship between man and God, the state should not touch.

I believe that the separation of Church and State in our History has made this country the best of any country on earth. World History tells us what happens when Church and State are combined. Persecution always follows that combination. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Thank you for your work and I pray that we will all be very careful as we move forward in this matter.

Your Fellow Citizen ,

Dale Buckley

From: Ackson Mbao <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] See the document on the separation of church and state

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:24:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: The-Separation-of-Religion-and-the-State.pdf

See the document on the separation of church and state

THE SEPARATION OF
RELIGION
AND
THE STATE

A. T. JONES

Source:

Signs of the Times, 1899

Cover:

The Great Wall of China at Jinshanling
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May 2021

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THESE articles were first printed in 1899. In 1900, they were printed in book form, with the addition of some extra articles that were attached as extra chapters at the end, entitled: *Christian Patriotism*. I have published these originals because the shorter length makes the topic more accessible.

The subject, that separation of Religion and State has always been God's purpose, even in the Old Testament, seems, on the surface, to be an incredible conjecture. We tend to associate the Old Testament with a theocracy that ruled by force and bloodshed. But A. T. Jones makes it clear in these few chapters, that this was never God's purpose or ideal.

Asides from the obvious association with the topic of Religious Liberty, the premise of this work is a big step towards a better view of God's character. Therefore these articles deserve to be brought to light again.

F. Zimmerman

www.practicaprophetica.com

1. The First Great Commandment

THE separation of religion and the State is one of the most important questions that any people can ever be called upon to consider, as the union of religion and the State has caused more misery than any other thing in history.

The separation of religion and the State is one of the two greatest and most important questions that stand before the people of "the United States of America and Asia" today. It is true that not everybody thinks so; nevertheless it is so, not only upon general principles, but also because of the daily aspiration and positive practice of the great mass of professed Christians of all sorts throughout the whole country. Yet the complete separation of religion and the State is Christian. It is not a mere sentiment or side issue of Christianity; it is one of the fundamental principles and chief characteristics of Christianity.

The Bible, not merely the New Testament, but the whole book, is the Book of Christianity. The New Testament is not a revelation new and distinct from the Old; it is the culmination of the revelation begun in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament and the New are one book: one consistent, harmonious revelation of God through Jesus Christ; because Jesus Christ is the revelation of God before the world was made, when the world was made, and through all the history of the world from beginning to end.

The first chapter of *Genesis* is Christian as certainly as is the first chapter of *John*. The book of *Genesis* is Christian as really as is the book of *Revelation* or any other book in the Bible. We repeat, therefore, that the whole Bible is the Book of Christianity, the Book of the Christian religion, the revelation of God through Jesus Christ.

And the separation of religion and the State is one of the

great thoughts of this great Book. It is one of the leading principles of that Book which for man is the source of all sound principle.

Many people think that the two or three expressions of Christ as recorded in the New Testament are all that the Bible contains on the subject of the separation of Church and State; and many others are disposed even to argue against these passages, and to modify them by other passages from the Old Testament. But separation of religion and the State is one of the original thoughts of the Bible, and reaches from the beginning to the end of the Book; and neither the Book nor this subject can be fairly understood in reference to this matter till this is clearly defined in the mind. We purpose to give a series of studies of the Bible on this subject from beginning to end.

Being one of the great thoughts of the Bible, one of the great thoughts of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, this subject is of vital importance to men everywhere in their relations to God, and not merely in their relations to the State. It is a principle that is involved in the daily experience of the Christian in his relation to God, and not merely an abstract question that man can stand, as it were, apart from and view simply as a speculative question of the relations between religion and the State.

The ways of God are right. His Word is the only certain light, the only sure truth. The principles which He has announced are the only safe principles for the guidance of men. We hope, and shall seriously endeavor, to make each study so plain that every reader can easily see and readily grasp the truth of it. We shall begin at the beginning.

Mark 12

²⁹ The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first com-

mandment.

³⁰ And the second is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Matthew 22

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

These two commandments exist in the very nature, and circumstances of existence, of any two intelligent creatures in the universe. They existed thus in the existence of the first two intelligent creatures that ever has a place in the universe.

When the first intelligence was created and there was no creature but himself, as he owed to his Creator his existence, as he owed to God all that he was or could be, heart, soul, might, mind and strength. It devolved upon him to render to God the tribute of all this, and to love God with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his mind, and all his strength. And this is the first of all the commandments. It is first in the very nature and existence of the first, and of every other intelligent creature.

But the second of these would have no place if there were but one intelligent creature in the universe; for then he would have no neighbor. But when the second one was created, the first of all the commandments was first with him equally with the other one; and now the second great commandment exists in the very nature and existence of these two intelligent creatures, as certainly as the first great commandment existed in the nature and existence of the first one.

Each of the two created intelligences owes to the Lord all that he is or has, and all that he could ever rightly have. Neither of them has anything that is self-derived. Each owes all to God. There is between them no ground of preference. And this because of the honor which each owes to God; because to each, God is all in all. Therefore the second great command-

ment exists as certainly as the first; and it exists in the nature and circumstance of the very existence of intelligent creatures. Consequently,

Mark 12

³⁰ There is none other commandment greater than these.

These two commandments, then, exist in the nature of cherubim, seraphim, angels and men. As soon as the man was created, the first of all the commandments was there, even though there had been no other creature in the universe. And as soon as the woman was created, these two great commandments were there. And there was none other commandment greater than these.

Now, if these two great commandments had been observed by man on the earth, and had man never sinned, there always would have been perfect and supreme religion; and there never could have been a State. God would always have been by every one recognized as the only Ruler, His law as the only law, His authority as the only authority. There would have been government, but only the government of God. There would have been society, but only the society of saints. But there would have been, and could have been, no State.

Therefore it is certain that the observance of these two first of all the commandments, at any time and everywhere, means the absolute separation of religion and the State, in all who observe them. And thus the principle of separation of religion and the State inheres in the very existence of intelligent creatures.

But man did sin. And having sinned, having departed from God, mankind did not love God with all the heart nor their neighbor as themselves. Christianity was introduced to bring man back to the position, and the original relations, which he lost.

Ephesians 2

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

1 Peter

¹⁸ For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,

It being, then, the one great purpose of Christianity to restore man to his original condition and relation to God, its purpose is to restore him to the condition in which he can love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength; and his neighbor as himself. It is to restore him to obedience to these two first of all the commandments. It is to restore him to perfect and supreme religion.

We have seen that such a condition maintained from the beginning would have been the absolute separation of religion and State; because, then, there never could have been any State. And now as the one great purpose of Christianity is to restore man completely to that condition, it follows with perfect conclusiveness that Christianity in its very essence, from the beginning to the end, and everywhere, demands the absolute separation of religion and the State in all who profess it.

And it must not be forgotten that the complete separation of religion and the State in those who profess religion, can be maintained only by these persons themselves being separated from the State. For it is so plain as to be indisputable that if the professor of religion is himself a part of the State, then in him there is at once a union of religion and the State.

2. Apostasy: Babylon and Assyria

Mark 12

²⁹ The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment.

³⁰ And the second is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Matthew 22

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

IT IS certain that if these two commandments had always been observed by all men, there never could have been a State on the earth. There would have been government, but no State. The government would have been altogether the government of God: He, the only King, the only Governor, on earth even as in heaven.

There would have been society, but no State. Because, men loving God with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind, and all the strength, and their neighbors as themselves, the will of God would have been done on earth even as in heaven. All would have been one united, harmonious, happy, holy family.

State and Society are Different

There is an essential distinction between society and the State.

Society is the union which exists between men, without distinction of frontiers—without exterior restraint—and for the sole reason that they are men.

The civil society or State is an assemblage of men subject to a common authority, to common laws,—that is to say, a soci-

ety whose members may be constrained by public force to respect their reciprocal rights. There results from that, that two necessary elements enter into the idea of the State: laws and force.¹

This distinction, however, though clear and easily evident, is seldom recognized. Indeed, it is not recognized at all by those who are anxious to secure the union of religion and the State in the United States.

But men did not observe these two “first of all the commandments.” They would not love God with all their heart; they would not love their neighbors as themselves. They rejected God as their only ruler, their only sovereign, and became ambitious to rule over one another. And thus originated politics and the State. The Scripture outlines the story of this:

Romans 1

²¹ When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.

Note, that at the first, men did know God. But they chose not to glorify Him, not to honor Him, not to give Him the first place in all their thoughts and actions. Knowing God, they did not like to retain Him in their knowledge.

The next step was that they became vain in their own imaginations. They professed themselves to be wise, of themselves. The consequence was that they became fools; and their foolish heart was darkened.

In their vain imaginations they made gods of their own.

¹ Paul Janet, *Elements of Morals*, p. 143.

And then to assist themselves in their worship, they made images of the gods which they had imagined.

The image was always the outward, tangible, form of the god which they had already conceived in the imagination. Imagining is simply mental imaging. The outward form of the god, whether it be the shining sun in the heavens or a hideously-shaped block of wood or stone, is only the outward form of the imaging that has already been performed in the imagination.

Thus, from the knowledge of the true God, they went to the worship of false gods. From the light, they went into darkness. From righteousness, they went to wickedness.

This is the truth. And the records of the earliest nations witnessed to it. The earliest records—those of the plain of Shinar—witness that the people at first had a knowledge of the true God. The records of the next two of the earliest nations, Egypt and Assyria, bear witness to this same thing.

In all these places the earliest records testify that the gods were their first rulers and the real kings; while men, in the places of authority, were but the servants, the viceroys, of the gods who were held to be the real kings. For instance, one of the earliest records from Shinar runs thus:

To [the god] Ninridu, his King, for the preservation of
Idadu, viceroy of Ridu, the servant, the delight of Ninridu.

Another:

To [the god] Ninip the King, his King, Gudea, viceroy of
[the god] Zirgulla, his house built.

Another:

To Nana, the lady, lady splendid, his lady, Gudea, viceroy of
Virgulla....raised.²

² *Empires of the Bible*, p. 50.

These are not only the earliest of the records that have been found in that land, but they themselves show that they are of the earliest records that were made in that land. And they clearly testify of a time when there were no kings among men. The gods were the kings; and the men in authority claimed only to be the viceroys of the gods who were held to be the real kings.

And all this testifies of a time further back, when the people knew and recognized God as the only king and rightful ruler of men. They show also that this knowledge of God was so recent, and still so strong upon the minds of the people, that men who stood in places of authority had not the boldness to assume the title of king, even though they held the power.

The records of Egypt and Assyria testify precisely to these same things. And at that time also, there was no State. There was society.

There came a time, however, when even this lingering knowledge of God as king and the only rightful ruler, was cast off; and the man assumed the full title and prerogatives of king, himself.

The first man to do this was Nimrod. Nimrod was the first man in the world who had the boldness to take to himself the title and prerogative of king, in the face of the yet lingering idea of God as king. And the name which he bears, itself testifies to the fact that his action in this, was considered by men and also by the Lord, as precisely the bold thing which is here indicated.

“Nimrod” signifies rebellion, supercilious contempt, and...is equivalent to “the extremely impious rebel.”³

The Bible record of Nimrod is that:

³ James Silk Buckingham, Thomas Walker, *The Buried City of the East*, Nineveh, p. 25.

Genesis 10

⁸ ...he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

Another translation reads:

Genesis 10

⁸ Cush begat Nimrod, who was the first to be a despot on the earth.

⁹ He was an overbearing tyrant in Jehovah's sight; wherefore the saying, Even as Nimrod, the overbearing tyrant in Jehovah's sight.

That is, Nimrod was the first one to establish the might, the power, the authority, of human government, in the form of an organized State. He was the first man to assert the power and prerogatives, and assume the title, of king over men.

¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Consequently:

With the setting up of Nimrod's kingdom, the entire ancient world entered a new historical phase. The oriental tradition which makes that warrior the first man who wore a kingly crown, points to a fact more significant than the assumption of a new ornament of dress, or even the conquest of a province.

His reign introduced to the world a new system of relations between the governor and the governed. The authority of former rulers rested upon the feeling of kindred; and the ascendancy of the chief was an image of parental control. Nimrod, on the contrary, was a sovereign of territory, and of men just so far as they were its inhabitants, and irrespective of personal ties.

Hitherto there had been tribes—enlarged families—society; now there was a nation, a political community—THE STATE. The political and social history of the world henceforth are distinct, if not divergent.⁴

⁴ *Empires of the Bible*, p. 51.

Such was the true origin of the State. The State was, and is, the result of the apostasy of men from God. Such only could possibly be its origin; for if all men had always observed the two “first of all the commandments,” it would have been impossible for there ever to be any State. There could have been no human authority exercised. All would have been equally subject to God; He would have been the only Sovereign.

Before Nimrod there was society. Respect of the rights of persons and of their property was maintained. It was only when the apostasy grew, and men got farther and farther from God, that the monarchical idea was established and personified in Nimrod.

Let no one misunderstand. This is not to say, nor even to imply, that there should now be no human government, that there should be no State, nor even that there should be no monarchy. It is simply to say that which is the truth, that if there never had been any apostasy from God, there never could have been on earth a State, nor any human government.

It is true that these things are the consequences of the apostasy from God. But men having apostatized from God, these things all, even to such monarchy as that of Nimrod or of Nero, became necessary, just in proportion to the degree of apostasy.

It is better that there should be a government, bad as it may be, than that there should be no government at all. Even such a government as Nimrod’s or Nero’s is better than none at all; and without the apostasy having gone to a fearful length, there never could have been any such government as Nimrod’s or Nero’s.

Nimrod’s example was eagerly followed by all the nations around, until they were all absorbed in it. Society had passed away, and only States remained; and these universally idolatrous. In all that region, only Abraham believed God; even his

own parents being idolaters:

Joshua 24

² They served other gods.

God chose Abraham then to be the father of all them that believe God; the father of all who will have God alone to be their God. Abraham represented then the religion of God, the beginning of the church of God. And from that State, God separated Abraham. He said to Abraham,

Genesis 12

¹ Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, into a land that I will show you.

And in thus separating Abraham from that State, from his country, God taught the people then, and through all time, the separation of religion and the State, the separation of Church and State.

And it must not be forgotten that in the case of Abraham, this universal example, the separation of religion and the State, was the separation of the individual believer from the State. And as Abraham was at that time the church, and he was separated from the State, in this it is plainly taught that the true separation of Church and State is in the separation of the individual church-member from the State.

Besides, it is perfectly plain in itself that where the same individual is a member of the Church and of the State at the same time, there is at once in him a union of Church and State.

3. The Father of the Faithful

Genesis 12

¹ Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, into a land that I will show you.

WHEN God said this to Abraham, He had not yet showed to him the land or country into which he was to go, and which was to be his. So far, the Lord had only promised to show it to him.

There were three things, however, which Abraham must do before he could fairly expect God to show him the country which He had promised, and which was to be his:

1. He was to get out of his country;
2. From his kindred;
3. From his father's house.

He left his country; but when he did so, his father and his kindred went with him to Haran, and dwelt there. There his father died; and now, separated from his father's house, he went on to the land of Canaan.

But there accompanied him yet one of his kindred—Lot, his brother's son. While Lot was with him, and he was thus not separated from his kindred, though separated from his country and his father's house, the time could not come for God to show to him the land, nor the country which He would give him. But there came a day when Lot should be separated from him. Lot chose all the plain of the Jordan, and journeyed east, and...

Genesis 13

¹¹ ...they separated thus, one from the other.

And just then it was that God showed to Abraham the land which He had promised to show him, the country which should be his.

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward;

¹⁵ For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever.

And the country which the Lord then showed to Abraham, and which He there promised him should be his for an everlasting possession—that country embraced the world; for...

Romans 4

¹³ ...the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Therefore, when at the word of the Lord Abraham lifted up his eyes to see what the Lord would show him, he saw “the world to come,” which is to be the everlasting possession of all them which be of faith. For

Galatians 3

²⁹ ...if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

And from that day forward Abraham...

Hebrews 11

⁹ ...sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country...

...looking for...

¹⁶ ...a better country, that is, a heavenly...

...and looking...

⁸ ...for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

For though God promised that He would give to Abraham that land, and to his seed after him, yet as long as he was in

this world God really...

Acts 7

⁵ ...gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on.

Now note: God had called Abraham out of his original country, and thus had separated him from that. Then He gave him not even so much as to set his foot on in any other country in this world.

Abraham at that time represented the religion of God. The Lord in His dealing thus with Abraham and in recording it, has shown, for all time and to all people, that it is His will that there should be an absolute separation of His religion from any State. And in thus showing the complete separation of His religion from any State, He shows that this separation consists in the separation of the individual believer of His religion, from any State. Are you walking...

Romans 4

¹² ...in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham...

...the friend of God? Abraham, representing at that time the church of Christ, being thus totally separated by the Lord from every State and country on the earth, there is thus shown to all people, as an original truth of the Gospel of Christ, that there should be total separation of Church and State, and that the church of Christ can never have any country in the world.

And in thus showing that the church of Christ can never have any country in this world, He shows that the individual members of the church of Christ can never have any country in this world; for that which composes the church of Christ is the individual membership.

So also dwelt Isaac and Jacob, heirs with Abraham of the same promise, accepting with Abraham separation from every earthly State and country, confessing...

Hebrews 11

¹³ ...that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,

looking for the country which God had prepared for them, and the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And that they accepted this freely of their own choice, by faith in God, is shown by the fact, as recorded:

¹⁵ Truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

¹⁶ But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.

This dealing of God with Abraham, and the record of it, were for the instruction of all the people who would believe God, from that time to the world's end. For Abraham was the called, the chosen, the friend, of God, the father of all them that believe. And all they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

And not the least element of instruction in this account of God's dealings with Abraham, is the great lesson it teaches that the religion of God means separation of religion and the State. Are you walking in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham? Have you gotten out of your country? Or have you still a country in this world? Is there in you a union of religion and the State? Further:

Galatians 3

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your Seed, which is Christ.

Therefore the promises recorded and referred to in the scripture, "To Abraham and his seed," are always to Abraham and Christ, and to Abraham in Christ. And, therefore,

Galatians 3

²⁹ ...if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

And when Christ, that promised Seed, came into the world a man among men, then in Him, as formerly in Abraham, there was represented the religion of God and the church of Christ. And as such He ever maintained the same principle of separation of religion and the State which He himself had set before the world in the life and record of Abraham. He refused to recognize, even by a sign, the wish of the people to make Him king:

John 6

¹⁵ When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain himself alone.

He refused, when requested, to act the part of a judge or a divider over men as to the rights of property:

Luke 12

¹³ And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

¹⁴ And He said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

¹⁵ And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

He refused to recognize the national lines of distinction, the wall of partition, which Israel in their exclusiveness had built up between themselves and other nations. He refused to judge, or to allow any others to judge, anyone for not believing on Him:

John 12

⁴⁷ And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

⁴⁸ He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

He distinctly declared that, though He is a king, yet His kingdom is not of this world, and that it is not in any way connected with this world:

John 18

³⁶ 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.

He distinctly declared the separation of His religion from the State:

Mark 12

¹⁷ Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

And when He sent forth His disciples with His heavenly commission to preach the Gospel of His kingdom, He sent them not to one particular nation, but to...

Matthew 28

¹⁹ ...teach *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

He sent them to preach the Gospel; not to one particular, favored, exclusive people, but...

Mark 16

¹⁵ Go into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every* creature.

Thus it is seen again that in every phase of the fundamental principle of the religion of God and the church of Christ, from the beginning to the end of the world, there is required the absolute separation of religion and the State—the total disconnection of His church from every State and country in the world, and from the world itself.

And this total disconnection of His church from every State and country in this world, and from the world itself, is, and can be, accomplished only by the total disconnection of the individual members of His church from every State and country in the world, and from the world itself.

John 15

¹⁹ You are not of the world; for I have chosen you out of the world.

John 17

¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Are you?

4. The Lesson of Egypt

IN THE beginnings of Egypt the same course was followed as in the beginnings of Babylon and Assyria. At first they knew the one true God; and He was their only King, their only Ruler. But they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; and therefore they went into idolatry, and from idolatry into monarchy.

The Egyptian records state that the first rulers of Egypt were the gods; after them the demigods; and after these the kings. In Egypt, however, the king was not content, as in Assyria, to call himself the viceroy of his god; he claimed to be the very embodiment of the god itself—the god was personified in the king; from him, it was declared, the people “received the breath of their nostrils;” he was “the giver of life.”⁵

And thus, though Nimrod was the first man to establish monarchical authority and assume the kingly title and crown, yet in Egypt his example was followed to the greatest lengths, as Egypt was undoubtedly the most idolatrous nation that ever was on the earth. There apostasy of every kind culminated, so that throughout the Bible the one word “Egypt” symbolizes everything that is contrary to God.

When the power of monarchy had filled the Mesopotamian plain, God called Abraham out of that country into the land of Canaan, where he could be free, and thus made a separation of Church and State, and preached the same to all people.

But in process of time, and by Egypt, the power of monarchy was spread over all countries, from Ethiopia to Aarat and central Asia. Then, as His people were obliged to live under the power of monarchy anyhow, the Lord put them where they could do the most possible good—He placed them at the very seat of the world’s empire, in Egypt itself.

⁵ *Empires of the Bible*, chap. VII, p. 207.

And there, through all the time of the supremacy of the Egyptian Empire, with Joseph and Moses beside the throne, and Israel among the people of Egypt, God held before all nations the knowledge of himself. And as soon as the time came when the Egyptian Empire must fall, God would place His people once more in Canaan, the pivot of the highways of the nations.

To this end there must be again taught to the world the separation of religion and the State, the separation of Church and State. God's people must be called out of Egypt, in order that they and all the nations might be instructed in the great principles of the Gospel, of supreme allegiance to God, of the separation of religion and the State, of church and country. Moses understood this, and therefore he...

Hebrews 11

²⁴ ...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. Pharaoh's daughter was Pharaoh's chief wife, and queen. Moses, therefore, by the most complete claim, was heir apparent to the throne of Egypt. And as the king was then more than eighty years old, it could be but a little while until Moses would possess the throne of Egypt. The throne of Egypt was at that time the throne of the world; for the power of Egypt then ruled the world. It was the supreme State, the governing empire over all.⁶

For Moses to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter was therefore to renounce the throne of Egypt. To renounce the throne of Egypt was to renounce the power of empire. It was definitely to disconnect from the State.

At that time Moses was called to have charge over the church of God:

⁶ See *Empires of the Bible*, chap. VII.

Hebrews 3

² ...Moses was faithful in all his house.

⁵ ...Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant...

1 Timothy 3

¹⁵ ...the house of God, which is the church of the living God.

It was in obedience to this call that he renounced the throne of Egypt and the power of empire. It was because of this that he definitely disconnected himself from the State. And in recording it, God designed to teach all people that conformity to His will means the separation of Church and State; that it means the renunciation of the throne and the power of earthly empire—the total separation of religion and the State. In recording it God designs to teach, and does teach, that union with His church means separation from the State.

And it was through the faith of Christ that Moses did all this:

Hebrews 11

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Therefore, from that day to this, it has been made plain to all people that faith in God, the faith of Jesus Christ, the original principle of the Gospel and of the church, means the absolute separation of Church and State; the renunciation of the throne and power of earthly dominion; the total separation of religion and the State; and that uniting with the church of Christ means separation from the State and countries of this world.

And this is what faith in God, the faith of Jesus Christ, the fundamental principle of the Gospel and of the church, means

to all people in the world today.

5. After Egypt

FORTY years the Lord led and fed His people in the wilderness. All this time He was teaching them the way of allegiance to himself—the way of faith. This He did in order that His purpose might be fulfilled through them in the land whither they were going to possess it.

At the end of the forty years they were encamped in the plain of Moab, opposite Jericho, preparatory to entering the land of their possession. While there encamped, the will of God concerning them was declared by an irresistible inspiration upon the prophet Balaam, and in words of instruction to His people for all time. And the words are these:

Numbers 23

⁹ Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

At that time the Lord's people composed...

Acts 7

³⁸ ...the church in the wilderness.

And in thus declaring that they should dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations, He plainly declared His will that His church should be forever separated from every State and nation on the earth.

God never intended that His people should be formed into a kingdom, or State, or government, like the people of this world; nor that they should in any way be connected with any kingdom, or State, or government, of this world. They were not to be like the nations or the people around them. They were to be separated unto God,

Exodus 33

¹⁶ ...from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

The people were to dwell alone, and were not to be reck-

oned among the nations. Their government was to be a theocracy pure and simple—God their only King, their only Ruler, their only Lawgiver. It was indeed to be a church organization, beginning with the organization of “the church in the wilderness,” and was to be separated from every idea of a State. The system formed in the wilderness through Moses, was to continue in Canaan; and was intended to be perpetual.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 603:

The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God. The work of Moses, of the seventy elders, of the rulers and judges, was simply to enforce the laws that God had given; they had no authority to legislate for the nation.

For God had declared plainly,

Deuteronomy 4

² You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish anything from it.

Thus the principles of their government were solely those of a pure theocracy. And such...

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 603:

...was and continued to be the condition of Israel’s existence as a nation.

In any government it is only loyalty to the principles of the government, on the part of its citizens, that can make it a success. Consequently, on the part of Israel, it was only loyalty to the principles of a pure theocracy—God their only King, their only Ruler, their only Lawgiver—that could possibly make that government a success.

But loyalty to these principles demanded that each one of the people should constantly recognize, and court, the abiding presence of God with him as the sole King, Ruler, and Lawgiver, in all the conduct of his daily life. Yet it is “by faith” that God dwells in the heart and rules in the life. And

Hebrews 11

⁶ ...without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Therefore the existence of the original government of Israel, and the existence of Israel as a nation, depended upon a living, abiding faith in God, on the part of each individual of the people of Israel. And just here, the only point where Israel could fail, Israel failed. The people did not abide in faith. They did not remain loyal to God as their King. And,

Judges 2

⁸ Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

¹⁰ And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel.

¹¹ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim;

¹² And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

¹³ And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

Then all the evils that came upon them only as the result of their apostasy and idolatry, they charged back upon the government of God. In their unbelief and apostasy, they could see in the continued raids of the heathen, by which their country was sacked, and themselves were oppressed, only evidence that for all practical purposes the government of God had failed. They therefore reached the conclusion...

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 603:

...that in order to maintain their standing among the nations, the tribes must be united under a strong central government. As they departed from obedience to God's law, they desired to be freed from the rule of their divine Sovereign; and thus the demand for a monarchy became wide-

spread throughout Israel.

Accordingly, they said to Samuel,

1 Samuel 8

⁵ Make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

As their hearts were fully set on having a king like all the nations, and as practically they were much like all the nations anyhow, the best thing the Lord could do for them was to let them have their king. Nevertheless, He said to Samuel,

1 Samuel 8

⁹ Protest solemnly unto them.

Samuel did so, but still they insisted:

1 Samuel 8

¹⁹ No; but we will have a king over us;

²⁰ That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

And of it all the Lord said to Samuel,

1 Samuel 8

⁷ They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

And Samuel said unto them,

1 Samuel 8

⁷ You have this day rejected your God,

1 Samuel 10

¹⁹ [And] have said unto Him, No; but set a king over us.

It was the same story of Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt, over again. When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, the arch-deceiver seduced them into idolatry, and from idolatry into monarchy, in order that he might gain supremacy over them, and by worldly influence entice them, or by force prohibit them, from the service of God.

It was to save them from all this that the Lord had said of them,

Numbers 23

⁹ The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

If they had remained faithful to this principle, there never would have been among Israel a State or a kingdom. Therefore, in announcing this principle, God intended forever that they should be completely separated from any such thing as a State or kingdom on the earth.

And as when that word was spoken they were “the church,” it is absolutely certain that in announcing that principle, God intended to teach them and all people forever that His plainly-declared will is that there shall be a complete separation between His church and every State or kingdom on the earth; that there shall never be any connection between His religion and any State or kingdom in the world.

And, further: As that people were then the church, and as the Lord said they rejected Him when they formed that State and kingdom, it is perfectly plain by the Word of the Lord that whenever the church forms any connection with any State or kingdom on the earth, in the very doing of it she rejects God.

But it is impossible for the church ever to form any connection with any State except by the individual members of the church forming a connection with the State. Therefore, as the church in forming such connection rejects God, and as it is impossible to do this except by the individual members of the church, it is perfectly plain that the teaching of the Word of God is that for members of the church to form connection with the State is to reject God.

And from ancient time all this was written for the admonition of those upon whom the ends of the world are come. Will the people today be admonished by it?

6. Like All the Nations

Numbers 23

⁹ Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

GOD had said this of Israel, but, contrary to His expressed will, and against His solemn protest, Israel set up a kingdom and established a State. When they did this, they plainly said that they wanted to be “like all the nations.” Contrary to all the Lord’s wishes, the people would “be reckoned among the nations.”

But Israel was the church, while all the nations were States. Israel, therefore, could not be like the nations without forming themselves into a State. But Israel, being the church, could not possibly form themselves into a State without at the same time, and in the very doing of it, forming a union of Church and State.

They did form themselves into a State, and did thus unite Church and State. But as this was contrary to the Lord’s plain Word, and against His solemn protest, it certainly stands as the truth that any union of Church and State is against the plain Word and the solemn protest of God.

Israel a “the church,” which is...

1 Timothy 3

¹⁵ ...the pillar and ground of the truth,

—was the depository and the representative of the true religion in the world. Then when Israel formed themselves into a State, this was nothing else than a union of religion and the State. And as their forming of a State was contrary to the expressed will and the solemn protest of the Lord, it is clearly the truth that any connection between religion—and above all the true religion—and the State is positively against the expressed will and the solemn protest of God.

And as Israel, the depository and representative of the true religion, in order to form a union of religion and the State, had to reject God, it is certainly true that every other people, in forming a union of religion and the State, do, in the very doing of it, reject God. Nothing can be plainer, therefore, than that the God of heaven and earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is eternally opposed to a union of religion and the State. He will never be a party to any such transaction. This is why He desired that:

Numbers 23

⁹ ...the people should dwell alone,

This is why He would have it that they should...

⁹ ...not be reckoned among the nations.

He desired that they should abide with Him, and have Him their only God, their only King, their only Ruler, their only Lawgiver—their “all in all.”

God wanted not only that Israel, but that all people on the earth, should know that He is better than all other gods, that He is a better King than all other kings, that He is a better Ruler than all other rulers, that He is a better Lawgiver than all other lawgivers, that His law is better than all other laws, and that His government is better than all other governments.

For this reason He would station Israel in Palestine, at the pivot of the highways of the nations; with the God of heaven as their only King, Ruler, and Lawgiver; with His law their only law, and His government their only government; the people dwelling alone and not reckoned among the nations—a holy, happy people; a glorious church.

Dwelling thus in the sight of all the nations that had forgotten God, those nations would be constantly taught the goodness of God and would be once more drawn to Him. Accordingly He told them:

Deuteronomy 4

⁵ Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments....that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it.

⁶ Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

But Israel would not have it so. Israel would “be reckoned among the nations.” Israel would be “like all the nations.” And so it has been, from that day to this. God has never been allowed by His professed people to reveal himself to the world as He really is. His church has always been too willing to “be reckoned among the nations,” too willing to be “like all the nations.” She has always been too willing to be joined to the State, to be a part of the State, to have religion a matter of State and government, “like all the nations.” And so it is with the church in all the world today.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 607:

“Like all the nations.” The Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated the Israelites from every other people, to make them His own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen!

And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God. As they depart from the Lord they become ambitious for the gains and honors of the world. Christians are constantly seeking to imitate the practices of those who worship the god of this world. Many urge that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs they might exert a stronger influence over the ungodly.

But all who pursue this course thereby separate from the Source of their strength. Becoming the friends of the world, they are the enemies of God. For the sake of earthly distinction they sacrifice the unspeakable honor to which God has called them, of showing forth the praises of Him who hath

called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 605:

The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their King—when the laws and the government which He had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations.

And such will be the days of any people's greatest prosperity. God's laws, just as they stand, without any re-enactment, without any adding to, or diminishing from, are superior to all other laws. His government, administered by himself through the operation of His own eternal Spirit in each individual heart, is superior to every other government.

But how shall the people know this, who know not God, so long as His own people will not have it so? How shall the nations know this, when His own professed church will not recognize it nor have it so?

Instead of holding fast God's laws and government as superior to those of all States and nations, the professed people of God consider that they must enter the politics and shape the policies, that they must tinker the laws and manipulate the governments, of the States and nations of the world.

Instead of magnifying God's laws and government before all the world, as superior to the laws and governments of all the nations, and showing unswerving allegiance to them as such, the people of the professed churches of God seek to mingle heavenly citizenship with earthly citizenship; and to bring down from their superior place the laws and government of God, and mix them up with the laws and government of all the nations in an unseemly and ungodly union of religion and the State.

And thus the people of the professed churches of God, of the young people's societies and leagues professing Christian-

ity—of all the combined church elements of the land—are following directly in the track of the church of ancient Israel; they will not dwell alone; they will be reckoned among the nations; they will be like all the nations; they will join themselves to the State; they will form a union of religion and the State; they will reject God, that He should not reign over them.

7. Result of Being “Like the Nations”

ISRAEL would form a State, and have a king, that they might be “like all the nations.” All the nations were heathen. To be “like all the nations,” then, was only to be like the heathen. All the nations became heathen by rejecting God. Then when Israel would be “like all the nations”—like all the heathen,—they could do so only by rejecting God. It was therefore but the simple statement of a fact when the Lord said,

1 Samuel 8

⁷ They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

When Israel formed a State, they thereby created a union of religion and the State. But they had to reject God in order to form a State. Therefore they had to reject God in order to form a union of religion and the State. It follows, therefore, plainly, that no people can ever form a union of religion and the State without rejecting God.

But though Israel had rejected God, yet He did not reject them. He still cared for them; and, through His prophets, still sought to teach and guide them, ever doing His best to save them from the evil consequences which were inevitable in the course which they had taken.

Long before the days of Samuel and Saul, Israel had been taught what would be the outcome of forming themselves into a State and choosing a king; for the formation of a kingdom in the days of Saul was but the culmination of a long-cherished desire in that direction. After the great victories of Gideon, a hundred years before the day of Saul,

Judges 8

²² ...the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule over us, both you, and your son, and your son's son also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.

This was nothing else than a proposition to establish at that time a kingdom, with Gideon as the first king, and the kingship to be hereditary in his family. But Gideon refused the offer:

Judges 8

²³ And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

Gideon knew that such a proposition meant the rejection of God; and he would have no part in any such thing. But the desire still lurked among the people; and forty years afterward, upon the death of Gideon, it was manifested openly in the men of Shechem making Abimelech, a son of Gideon, king in Shechem.

But in a parable, Jotham, the only son of Gideon who had survived the slaughter wrought by Abimelech, mapped out plainly to the people what would be the sure result of their venture. Jotham stood on the top of Gerizim and called to the people of Shechem, and said:

Judges 9

⁸ The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign over us.

⁹ But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

¹⁰ And the trees said to the fig tree, Come, and reign over us.

¹¹ But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

¹² Then said the trees unto the vine, Come, and reign over us.

¹³ And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheers God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

¹⁴ Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come, and reign over us.

¹⁵ And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my

shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

¹⁶ Now therefore, if you have done truly and sincerely, in that you have made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands;

¹⁷ (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:

¹⁸ And you are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother;)

¹⁹ If you then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:

²⁰ But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.

And so it came to pass; for in three years the distrust and dissension had so grown between the parties to the transaction respecting the kingship, that open war broke out, which ended only with the death of Abimelech; and, with that, the end of their experiment at setting up a kingdom.

Now all this was held up before all Israel who should come after, as a solemn warning and a forcible admonition of what would inevitably be the result of any attempt at setting up a kingdom. And when, in disregard of all this, and against the Lord's open protest, they did at last again set up a kingdom, this very result, though longer delayed, did inevitably come.

Almost all the reign of Saul, their first king, was spent by him in envy and jealousy of David and a steady seeking to kill him. The reign of David was marred by his own great sin, which he never could have carried out if he had not been king; and was also disturbed by the treason of his chief coun-

selor, and the insurrection of his son Absalom.

The latter half of the reign of Solomon was marked by his great apostasy, and was cursed by the abominable idolatries that came in with his heathen wives—all “princesses,” the daughters of kings—and which in turn brought heavy burdens and oppression upon the people.

At the end of the reign of these three kings, the nation had been brought to a condition in which it was not well that they should continue as one; and they were therefore divided into two—the Ten Tribes forming the kingdom of Israel, and the two other tribes forming the kingdom of Judah. And from that day, with the Ten Tribes there was continuous course of apostasy, of contention, and of regicide, till at last, from the terrors of anarchy, they were compelled to cry out,

Hosea 10

³ We have no king.

Then the Lord offered himself to them again, saying:

Hosea 7

¹³ You have fled from me.

Hosea 13

⁹ O Israel, you have destroyed yourself. Return unto me.

¹⁰ I will be your King.

But they would not return, and consequently were carried captive to Assyria, and were scattered and lost forever. When this happened to the kingdom of Israel, it could yet be said of Judah:

Hosea 11

¹² Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints.

But this was only for a little while. Judah, too, went steadily step by step downward in the course of apostasy, until of her too the word had to be given:

Ezekiel 21

²⁶ Remove the diadem, take off the crown;...exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high.

²⁷ I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him.

Thus Judah too was obliged to say, "We have no king." And Judah had to go captive to Babylon, with her city and temple destroyed, and the land left desolate. Thereafter the Lord was obliged to govern His people by the heathen powers, until He himself should come.

And even when He came, because He would not at once set himself up as a worldly king and sanction their political aspirations, they refused to recognize Him at all. And when at last even Pilate appealed to them,

John 19

¹⁵ Shall I crucify your King?...

...they still, as in the days of Samuel, insisted on rejecting God, and cried out,

¹⁵ ...We have no king but Caesar.

And this was but the direct outcome, and the inevitable logic, of the step that they took in the days of Samuel. When they rejected God and chose Saul, in that was wrapped up the rejection of the Lord and their choosing of Caesar. In rejecting God that they might be like all the nations, they became like all the nations that rejected God.

And such was the clear result of the union of Church and State among the people of Israel. And it is all written precisely as it was worked out in detail, for the instruction and warning of all people who should come after, and for the admonition of those upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Will the professed people of God today in the churches, societies, leagues, unions, and associations of all sorts, everywhere, learn the lesson taught thus in the Word of God of the

experience of the people of God of old who would have a State, and so rejected God?

8. Taught to Babylon

GOD had delivered His people from Egypt, and had united them to himself in order that they might be separated from all the nations. And having brought them out of Egypt, and joined them to himself, He said of them,

Numbers 23

⁹ The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

It was only by remaining faithful to their union with God that they could be separated from all the nations.

Exodus 33

¹⁶ For wherein shall it be known here that I and your people have found grace in your sight? Is it not in that you go with us? So shall we be separated, I and your people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

Israel was then the church,

Acts 7

³⁸ ...the church in the wilderness.

That church was united to God in solemn covenant, upon which He bled, and,

Jeremiah 3

¹⁴ ...I am married unto you...

...and,

Jeremiah 31

³² I was a husband unto them.

Thus was that church united to God. And in this there was the complete separation of Church and State. But Israel was unfaithful to God. She rejected Him and set up a State, and thus formed a union of Church and State. The result was the complete ruin of the State which they had formed; the scattering of the people in captivity among the nations; and the des-

olation of their land.

In their captivity and their trouble they sought the Lord in contrition; and joined themselves again in faithfulness to Him. And this brought them back to their original position of being the church only, and so to their original condition of total separation of Church and State.

God had planted Israel—His church—in Canaan to be the light of the world, to give the knowledge of the true God; as at that time and for ages afterward Palestine was the pivot of the known world. By their being faithful to Him and having Him abide with them, He intended that they should influence all the nations for good. But they revolted and became not only...

1 Samuel 8

⁵ ...like all the nations,

—but even...

2 Chronicles 33

⁹ ...worse than the heathen...

Therefore the land became sick of them, and spewed them out, as it had spewed out the heathen before them.

As by their apostasy and union of Church and State, Israel had frustrated God's purpose to enlighten all nations by them in the land where He had planted them, He would fulfill His purpose, nevertheless; and, separating them again entirely from the State, would enlighten all the nations by them in the lands where He had scattered them.

Israel, by becoming like all the nations, had lost the power to arrest and command the attention of all the nations, that the nations might know God, and be taught of Him. Nevertheless, God would now use them to enlighten those who, under Him, had acquired the power to arrest and command the attention of all the nations. Thus by them still He would bring to all the nations the knowledge of the true God, and teach

them that...

Daniel 4

¹⁷ ...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.

This is the whole philosophy of the captivity and subjection of Israel and Judah to Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome. God conveyed to the kings and people of these mighty empires, the knowledge of himself and of His truth for people and kings.

And, as we have found over and over in these studies that the separation of religion and the State is one of the fundamental principles of the truth of God for kings and nations, this is one of the great truths taught to the kings and people of these great empires. And this instruction was written out in the Word of God for the instruction of all kings and people until the world's end.

In the second year of his reign alone, to King Nebuchadnezzar there was shown in a dream a great image, whose head was of gold, his breast and arms of silver, his sides of brass, his legs of iron, and his feet and toes part of iron and part of clay. By the word of the Lord through Daniel this was explained to Nebuchadnezzar as signifying the course of empire from that time until the end of the world.

This dream was given to Nebuchadnezzar because that, while upon his bed, thoughts had come into his mind as to...

Daniel 2

²⁹ ...what should come to pass hereafter.

From what came to pass afterward with him, it is evident that his thoughts upon that question were to the effect that the mighty kingdom of Babylon, which he ruled—the head of gold—would in its greatness and glory continue on and on indefinitely. To correct this view, and to show him the truth, was the purpose of the dream.

The instruction in the dream, through the divine interpretation, was that the golden glory of his kingdom would continue but a little while, and then another would arise, inferior to his, and another, and another, and then there would be division, with all these descending in a regular scale of inferiority; and then, at last,

Daniel 2

⁴⁴ The God of heaven [would] set up a kingdom,

—and this alone would be the kingdom that should stand forever, and not be given to other people.

But Nebuchadnezzar would not accept this view of the subject. Accordingly, he formulated his own idea in a great image, about a hundred feet tall, all of gold from head to feet. This image he set up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon, to be worshiped, and called all his princes, governors, sheriffs, captains, rulers of the provinces, and people generally, to worship it.

This was a positive setting up of his own idea against that of God. This was to declare to all people that his golden kingdom was to endure forever; that there was to be no such thing as another kingdom arising separate from his and inferior to it, and after that others, descending so low as iron mixed with miry clay. No! There should be only his golden kingdom of Babylon, and it should never be broken nor interrupted; but should stand forever.

In a number of points this was an open challenge to the Lord. It was the assertion that Nebuchadnezzar's idea of the kingdoms of men should be accepted as the true and divine idea, as against that of God's, which had been given. It was the assertion that the embodiment of this opposing idea should be worshiped as God. As the idea and the embodiment of it was altogether Nebuchadnezzar's, this was simply the putting of Nebuchadnezzar himself in the place of God, as the

ruler in the kingdom of men, the head of all religion, and the director of all worship.

A great day was set for the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's idea, and the inauguration of the universal worship of it. A great multitude was assembled of many peoples, nations, and languages of his wide realm. When all were assembled, a herald proclaimed:

Daniel 3

⁴ To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

⁵ That at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up;

⁶ And whoso falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

In the great assembly were three young Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And when all the others fell down and worshiped, these stood bolt upright, paying no attention to the law that had just then been proclaimed, nor to the image. They were at once reported and accused to the king. Then the king,

Daniel 3

¹³ ...in his rage and fury,

—commanded them to be brought before him. It was done. He asked them if it was true and of purpose that they had not worshiped. He then repeated his decree and the dreadful penalty. But they answered:

¹⁶ O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hands, O king.

¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you

have set up.

The furnace was heated seven times hotter than usual, and they were bound and cast into it. But suddenly the king rose up in astonishment from his throne and cried to his counselors,

Daniel 3

²⁴ Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

But he exclaimed,

²⁵ Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Then the king called them forth, and said in the presence of all:

²⁸ Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

God had commanded all nations to serve King Nebuchadnezzar, and that whatsoever nation would not serve him, that nation the Lord would punish. Yet here He wrought a wondrous miracle to deliver the men who had openly and directly refused to obey a plain and direct command of the king. How could this consistently be? Easily enough. This command, this law, of the king was wrong. He was demanding a service which he had no right to require. In making him king of the nations, the Lord had not made him king in the religion of the nations. In making him the head of all the nations. God had not made him the head of religion.

But being an idolater, and having grown up amid idolatrous systems, Nebuchadnezzar did not know this. With idolaters, religion always has been, and still is, a part of the govern-

ment. In heathen systems, religion and the governments are always united; while in the true system, the genuine Christian system, they are always separate.

And this was the lesson which God there taught to Nebuchadnezzar. In a way in which it was impossible not to understand, the Lord showed to that king that he had nothing whatever to do with the religion, nor with the directing of the worship, of the people. The Lord had brought all nations into subjection to King Nebuchadnezzar as to their bodily service; but now, by an unmistakable evidence, this same Lord showed to King Nebuchadnezzar that He had given him no power nor jurisdiction whatever in their souls' service.

The Lord thus showed to King Nebuchadnezzar that, while in all things between nation and nation, or man and man, all people, nations, and languages had been given to him to serve him, and he had been made ruler over them all; yet in things between men and God, the king was plainly and forcibly given to understand that he had nothing whatever to do.

The God of heaven there taught to that king, and through him to all kings, rulers, and people forever, that in all matters of religion and worship, in the presence of the rights of conscience of the individual, the word of the king must change, the decree of the ruler is naught.

And this was written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. This is important instruction and present truth today. For throughout the whole English-speaking world today King Nebuchadnezzar's example of arrogance is being followed—and that even by those who profess to know God and to be guided by the Bible.

Nebuchadnezzar's offense was in setting up his own idea and forming it into a decree and then enforcing it as the law. And throughout these nations today, there are people who profess to know God and to be guided by the Bible, who have

set up their own or some other one's altogether human idea of the Sabbath against God's idea of the Sabbath—Sunday against the Sabbath of the Lord—and have secured the framing of it into a decree, and are having it enforced as the law. But it is all wrong, just as Nebuchadnezzar's assumption was wrong. And every one who will be faithful to God must say,

“We will not serve your gods nor worship the image of the Sabbath which you have set up.”

And in the presence of the rights of conscience of the individual today, the word of the ruler must change; such laws are simply naught.

Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson. And this truth was spread to all the nations and languages in that day; and it must be spread to all in this day. Will all who today are following his wrong course, learn this lesson and correct their ways, as did he?

9. Taught to Medo-Persia

THE night in which Babylon fell Daniel had been appointed by King Belshazzar,

Daniel 5

²⁹ ...the third ruler in the kingdom,

—because of his interpretation of the terrible handwriting on the wall. The reason that the highest honor that could be bestowed on him was that of third ruler, was because Belshazzar was only associate king with his father. This gave two kings, and so a first and second ruler; and another could not be higher than third ruler.

Thus it was with Daniel; and when that same night Babylon fell, Belshazzar was slain, and his father was a prisoner, and no longer king; this left Daniel the chief official, with whom the conquerors could communicate in rearranging the affairs of the Babylonian State. Because of this, and more particularly...

Daniel 6

³ ...because an excellent spirit was in him,

—the king of conquering Media and Persia...

³ ...thought to set him over the whole realm.

Thus,

³ This Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes.

When all the other presidents, princes, governors, and captains saw that Daniel, a captive Jew, was preferred before themselves, who were high and mighty Medes and Persians, they were much dissatisfied. And when they discovered that he was likely to be yet further promoted, they determined to break him down utterly. Therefore they formed a conspiracy, and diligently...

⁴ ...sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom.

But with all their diligence, and with all their suspicions and prejudiced care,

⁴ ...they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

There was, however, one last resource, which, by a trick, they might employ. They knew that he feared God. They knew that his service to the Lord was actuated by such firm principle that, in rendering that service, he would not dodge, nor compromise, nor swerve a hair's breadth, upon any issue that might be raised.

⁵ Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

But even in this there was nothing upon which they might "find" an "occasion." In order to find it they must create it; and create it they did. Pretending to be great lovers of their king and country, and to have much and sincere concern for the honor of the king and the preservation of the State:

Daniel 6

⁶ Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of you, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

⁸ Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not.

⁹ Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

They presented the case in such a plausible way, and with such evident care for the public good, that Darius was completely hoodwinked, and “signed the writing and the decree.” Thus the invention of the conspirators became “the law of the land.”

Daniel knew that the writing was signed. He knew that it was now the law—the law of the Medes and Persians too, which could not be altered.

Daniel 6

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

He knew perfectly that no law of the Medes and Persians, nor of any other earthly power, could ever, of right, have anything to say or do with any man’s service to God. He went on just as aforetime, because, practically, and in principle, all things were just as aforetime; so far as concerned the conduct of the man who feared God, any law on that subject was no more than no law at all on that subject.

In the Medes and Persians a new set of men had come upon the world’s stage; the power of empire had passed into new hands. And these new rulers, as well as Nebuchadnezzar, must be taught the truth of the separation of religion and the State. And in order that they should have opportunity to learn this, Daniel, who was the possessor and representative of this great truth, must stand, unswervingly, to the principle. And so he did.

¹¹ Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

They expected to find him praying that was exactly what they “assembled” for. And Daniel was not afraid that they

would find him doing so. They immediately hurried away to the king, and asked him,

Daniel 6

¹² Haven't you signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said. The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not.

¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, does not regard you, O king, nor the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.

Then the king suddenly awoke to the fact that he had been duped. And,

¹⁴ ...he was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

But it was all of no avail; the conspirators were persistent to frustrate every effort which the king could make. And they had a ready and conclusive argument against everything that might be proposed. That argument was the law:

¹⁵ Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establishes may be changed.

There was no remedy; the law must be enforced. Accordingly, though most reluctantly,

¹⁶ ...the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.

The king passed the night in fasting and sleeplessness, and very early in the morning went in haste to the den of lions, and...

²⁰ ...cried with a lamentable voice,...O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to

deliver you from the lions?

To the infinite delight of the king, Daniel answered:

²¹ ...O king, live forever.

²² My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before Him INNOCENCY was found in me; and also before you, O king, have I done no hurt.

That is divine testimony, published to all the world, that innocence before God is found in the man who disregards any human law that interferes with his service to God. It is also divine testimony that the man who disregards such laws, in so doing does "no hurt" to the king, to the State, nor to society.

Thus God taught to the rulers of the Medo-Persian Empire the separation of religion and the State; that with man's relationship to God, rulers and States can have nothing whatever to do. And it was written for the instruction of all rulers and States unto the world's end.

In these two experiences recorded in the book of Daniel—the one of Nebuchadnezzar and the worship of his great golden image, the other of the conspirators against Daniel's service to God—all people are taught in the most impressive way, that the God of heaven forbids any ruler to require His subjects to conform to His ideas in religion, and forbids all people to frame any law on any subject touching man's relation to God.

In these two experiences the God of heaven, in the strongest possible way, teaches all people, and particularly His own people, that in the presence of the rights of conscience, in the presence of man's relationship to God, and in all matters of religion, the word and authority of every king or ruler must give way; that all laws framed, which touch in any manner man's relationship to God, which touch any matter of religious observance, are simply naught—are no more than no

law at all on such subject.

In it all, the God of heaven also teaches to all that He vindicates and declares innocent all who refuse obedience to such decrees of kings and rulers, all who utterly disregard all such laws; and also certifies to all kings, rulers, and people that those who do disregard all such laws do “no hurt” to either king, ruler, or people.

And these lessons need to be perseveringly taught everywhere today. In almost every country in the world, and especially in the English-speaking countries, the schemes and inventions of men in matters religious, and particularly as to the observance of Sunday, are crowded into the law and so forced upon all the people. These men profess to be jealous guardians of religious liberty and the rights of conscience. They “do not believe in enforcing religion upon anybody.”

Yet all the time they are steadily working to get religious dogmas and institutions recognized and fixed in the law, and then demand obedience to the law, and throw upon the dissenter the odium of “lawlessness, and disrespect for constituted authority,” while they pose as the champions of “law and order,” the “conservators of the State, and the stay of society,” exactly as did the conspirators against Daniel.

Sunday, not only according to their own showing, but by every other fair showing that can be made, is a religious institution, a church affair, only. This they all know. And yet, in almost every land, those people are working constantly to get this church institution fixed, and more firmly fixed, in the law, with penalties attached that are more worthy of barbarism than of civilization; and then, when anybody objects to the enforcement of such laws, they all cry out:

“It is not a question of religion at all; religion hasn’t anything to do with it; it is simply a question of regard for law. The law! The law! It is the law of the land! We are not asking any religious observance by anybody; all that we ask is re-

spect for the law!”

But the lessons in the book of Daniel teach to all people that no religious or ecclesiastical institution has any right to any place in the law. And that when against right it is put into the law, it gains no force whatever from that, and is to receive no respect nor recognition whatever.

And thus by the word and work of God in the book of Daniel, there is taught to all kings and all people unto the end of the world, the total separation of religion and the State.

10. Christ the Example

JESUS CHRIST came into the world to bring to men the true knowledge of God; for...

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ ...God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

He came to reveal to men the kingdom of God,—to enunciate its principles, to manifest its spirit, to reveal its character. Of it He said:

John 18

³⁶ My kingdom is not of this world.

John 3

³ Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

And His apostles declared:

Romans 14

¹⁷ The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

“My kingdom is not of this world.” Every kingdom, every State, every government of men, is altogether of this world and of this world alone. How then can anybody be of any earthly kingdom or State and of the kingdom of God at the same time?

Those who are of the church are of the kingdom of God, because the church is the church of God, and not of this world,—it is composed of those who are...

John 15

¹⁹ ...chosen out of the world.

Those who are of the State are of this world, because the State is altogether and only of this world.

Thus in the Word of Christ, in the very principles of the cause of Christ, there is taught the separation of Church and State as complete and as wide as is the separation between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world, and that is as complete and as wide as is the separation between God and this world. Accordingly, Christ says in another place,

Matthew 22

²¹ Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.

In that time the head of the Roman Empire, the personification of the world's power, was Caesar. And in that Roman world-system it was claimed that whatsoever was Caesar's was God's; because to all the people of that world-system Caesar was God. He was set before the people as God; the people were required to worship him as God; incense was offered to his image as to God. In that system the State was divine, and Caesar was the State. Therefore that system was essentially a union of religion and the State. In view of this, when Jesus said,

Matthew 22

²¹ Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's,

—He denied to Caesar, and so to the State, every attribute, or even claim, of divinity. He showed that another than Caesar is God. Thus He entirely separated Caesar and God. He entirely separated between the things which are due to Caesar and those which are due to God.

1. The things that are due to Caesar are not to be rendered to God.
2. The things due to God are not to be rendered to Caesar.

These are two distinct realms, two distinct personages, and two distinct fields of duty. Therefore, in these words Jesus taught as plainly as it is possible to do, the complete separa-

tion of religion and the State; that no State can ever rightly require anything that is due to God; and that when it is required by the State, it is not to be rendered.

Jesus is the Example whom God has set to be the Guide to every person in this world in every step that can be taken in the right way. Any step taken by anybody in a way in which the Lord Jesus did not go, is taken in the wrong way. He has left us...

1 Peter 2

²¹ ...an example, that you should follow His steps.

Whosoever says that he...

1 John 2

⁶ ...abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

And Jesus never, in any manner nor to any degree, took any part in political matters nor in any affairs of the State. Jesus was then, and is forever, the embodiment of true religion. Therefore, in His whole life's conduct of absolute separation from everything political, from all affairs of the State, there is taught to all the world, and especially to all believers in Him, the complete separation of the religion of Christ, and of all who hold it, from everything political and from all affairs of the State. So faithfully did He hold to that principle that when a man asked Him only,

Luke 12

¹³ Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me,

He refused, with the words,

¹⁴ Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

And then said to them all,

¹⁵ Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he pos-

sesses.

Oh, if only all who have professed to be His followers had held aloof from all affairs of politics and the State, how vastly different would have been the history of the Christian era! What a blessing it would have been to the world! What floods of misery and woe mankind would have been spared!

And why was it that Jesus thus persistently kept aloof from all affairs of politics and the State? Was it because all things political, judicial, and governmental were conducted with such perfect propriety, and with such evident justice, that there was no place for anything better, no room for improvement such as even He might suggest? Not by any means. Never was there more political corruption,—greater perversion of justice,—and essential all-pervasive evil of administration, than at that time.

Why, then, did Jesus not call for “municipal reform”? Why did He not organize a “Law and Order League”? Why did He not disguise himself and make tours of the dives and the gambling-dens, and entrap victims into violation of the law? And why did He not employ other spies to do the same, in order to get against the representatives of the law evidence of maladministration by which to arraign them and to compel them to enforce the law, and thus reform the city, regenerate society, and save the State, and so establish the kingdom of God? Why?

The people were ready to do anything of that kind that might be suggested. They were ready to cooperate with Him in any such work of reform. Indeed, the people were so forward and so earnest in the matter that they would have actually taken Him by force and made Him King, had He not withdrawn himself from them. Why, then, did He refuse? The answer to all this is,

Because He was Christ, the Saviour of the world, and had come to help men, not to oppress them; had come to save men, not to destroy them.

The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power.

He who was our Example kept aloof from earthly governments—not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually and must regenerate the heart.

The Desire of Ages, p. 509-510:

Not by the decisions of courts, or councils, or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established; but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit.

John 1

¹² As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:

¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the Word of God.

Now Christ is the true Example set by God for every soul in this world to follow. The conduct of Christ is Christianity. Conformity to that Example in the conduct of the individual believer—this and this alone is Christianity in the world. The conduct of Christ, the Example, was totally separate in all things from politics and the affairs of the State. Christianity,

therefore, is the total separation of the believer in Christ from politics and all the affairs of the State, the total separation of religion and the State in the individual believer. Accordingly, Jesus said to His disciples forever:

John 15

¹⁹ You are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.

And to His Father He said of His disciples forever,

John 17

¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Every Christian in this world, then, must be in the world as Christ was in the world.

1 John 4

¹⁷ As He is, so are we in this world.

Matthew 10

²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.

The Master was always, and in all things, and by fixed design, completely separated from all affairs of politics and the State. And it is forever enough “that the disciple be as his Master.”

This is the Christianity of Jesus Christ, as respects the great question of religion and the State. And, as in all the instruction from God from the beginning of creation down, it calls always for the complete separation of religion and the State in all things and in all people.

11. The Powers That Be

The Limitation

IN the 13th and 14th chapters of *Romans* is one of the strongest of the many strong treatises that there are in the Bible upon the total separation of religion and the State—the separation between that which is due to God and that which is due to Caesar.

First is a recognition of the right of the State to be, and to require subjection and tribute:

Romans 13

¹ Let every soul be subject to the higher powers...The powers that be are ordained of God.

⁶ For this cause pay tribute also.

⁷ Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Next is marked the sphere of man's relation to the State:

⁸ Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loves another has fulfilled the law.

⁹ For this, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Now everybody knows, and Paul knew as well as anybody ever knew, that there are other commandments—other commandments of the very law from which he quoted these. There is the commandment:

Exodus 20

³ You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ you shall not make unto thee any graven image....

⁵ You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity

uity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

⁶ And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

⁷ You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work;

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work;...

¹¹ 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.

With these commandments standing as a part, and, indeed, the first part, of the very law which he was citing, why did he leave these entirely out and say,

“If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself”?

Why?—For the simple reason that he was writing of man’s relationship and responsibility to the powers that be, to the State; and he was laying down the principle that when men have recognized the right of the State to be, have paid the required tribute, and have fulfilled all obligations to their neighbors, there is nothing more for them to render to the State; there is no other commandment in that sphere, and therefore no other duty to be performed toward the powers that be. This is made certain by the next verse:

Romans 13

¹⁰ Love works no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Which shows conclusively that it is only the relation of man with man—of man to his neighbor—that is considered in the passage under consideration. The passage is simply an enlargement, an exposition, indeed, of the principle announced by Jesus,

Mark 12

¹⁷ Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

When men have recognized the authority of the State, have paid their tribute, and work no ill to their fellow-men, the only relationship or obligation after that is to God. The only commandments outside of that sphere are those which mark man's duty towards God.

Thus the Scripture distinctly sets the limit of the jurisdiction or the requirements of the State, at recognition of right to be, tribute, and the relationship of man to man in working no ill to his neighbor. Beyond this the State has no right to go. Outside of this there is nothing for any man to render to the powers that be.

But the Word of the Lord does not stop here; it positively prohibits the powers that be from touching the relationship or obligation of men to God.

Romans 14

¹² Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

And that the emphasis is upon the word "himself" and not upon the word "account," is certain from the context in the whole chapter. It is not that "every one of us shall give *account* of himself to God," nor is it "every one of us shall give account of himself *to God*." That is all true enough; but that is not the thought expressed in the text.

The one thought particularly expressed is that "every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God." And thus, by the Word of God, all powers that be, all men, and all combinations of men, are positively prohibited from touching, in any way, any man's relationship to God. That rests with man alone; and for his responsibility there, he is to give account himself to God.

Duty to God, Not Men

Again:

Romans 14

⁵ One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

⁶ He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it.

The matter of the observance of a day, the duty to esteem one day above another, is not comprehended in that part of the law which relates to neighbors; nor is it comprised in the duties designated as marking the sphere of the powers that be. The observance of a day, the duty to esteem one day above another, is due solely to God. For

Romans 14

⁶ ...he that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord,

He does not regard it unto men. It is comprehended in that part of the law which details man's relationship to God alone, and concerning which to God alone every one is to give account himself.

Therefore, the powers that be, all men, and all combinations of men, are definitely commanded by the Lord to let every man alone in the matter of the observance of a day. On that subject all are commanded to...

Romans 14

⁵ Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

And this because that is an obligation due solely to God, and...

¹² Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

How different are the ways of professed Christians today from the Christianity of the New Testament! The vast mass of professed Christians today, in hunting for another command-

ment in the sphere of the powers that be, would inevitably write it thus:

If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall do no work on the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday.

But the Christianity of the New Testament, in defining the sphere of the powers that be, says,

If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And then, as to the observance of a day, commands the powers that be, and all men, and all combinations of men:

Romans 14

⁵ ...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

⁶ He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day to the Lord he does not regard it.

And

¹² ...every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

⁴ Who are you that judges another man's servant?

The day to be esteemed above others is the Sabbath of the Lord.

Matthew 22

²¹ Render therefore... to God the things that are God's.

And any man who does not esteem that day above others, who does not regard it unto the Lord, but esteems every day alike, is responsible to God alone and must render account of it himself to God, and not to man. While the thing that he does is wrong, it is a kind of wrong for which he is responsible to God, and not to the powers that be.

All this also conclusively shows that any movement on the part of the powers that be, or of men or combinations of men

through the powers that be, to require the observance of a day or to cause men to esteem one day above another, is a plain joining together of what is God's and what is Caesar's, is a positive union of religion and the State. It is written,

Mark 10

⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

And by the same token it can be authoritatively written,

“What God has put asunder, let no man, nor any combination of men, join together.”

Not of Faith is Sin

Again: This treatise in *Romans* 13 and 14, on the separation of religion and the State, the separation of what is due to God from what is due to the powers that be, closes with the mighty sentence,

Romans 14

²³ Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Whatsoever is of the Word of God is of faith; for faith comes by the Word of God; and...

Hebrews 11

⁶ ...without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Religion is due solely to God; it is “the duty we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it.” Therefore, for the powers that be, or any men by the powers that be, to require anything that is due to God, is only to subvert faith and require men to sin. For the powers that be, or any men through the powers that be, to require of any man anything that is due to God, is, in the very act, to unite religion and the State.

And as thus to require of men anything that is due to God, is to subvert faith and to require men to sin, it is certain that any connection whatever between religion and the State is

sin. And, therefore, the greatest example of it that has ever been in the world is aptly and justly designated,

2 Thessalonians 2

³ ...the man of sin.

Luke 10

²⁷ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

The keeping of these first two of all the commandments is complete separation from sin. Therefore our subject ends just where it began,—with the truth that the first two of all the commandments, and the keeping of them, are the basis and the surety of the universal and eternal truth of the separation of religion and the State.



From: Coco Martinez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Re: Religious Freedom

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:24:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 13, 2026

To whom it may concern:

I'm absolutely in favor of keeping church and state separate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sondra Wyman
Torrance, Ca

Sent from my iPhone

From [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation between church and state chap 2

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:26:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Commission Members,

I would like to say the "wall of separation" is a vital constitutional principle that protects all religions equally. The 1st Amendment Clause relies on keeping boundaries between civil authority and matters of conscience. It's has worked for 250 years. You will note in history when civil and religious boundaries are dissolved there is persecution.

Read "The Great Controversy " by EG White, last chapters, to see the future of this great nation, in light of the commissions recommendations.

Please keep the separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

Barbara Fischer

Through my friend's email.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Carol Simms <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Preserve Separation of Church and State--Carol Simms

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:26:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent the government from establishing or favoring religion.

In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Carol Simms

From: John Martin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:27:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly believe that we should continue the separation of church and state here in the United States like it has been for the past many years. I strongly urge that all religions should be free to express their beliefs publically. I believe they should be able to promote their beliefs in the public square without any government interference. All people should be protected as they practice their personal religious convictions.

John Martin

From: Bill Pyke<[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:28:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Our Public Officials Involved in Religious Liberty Issues,

I'm just taking some time out to address some concerns about the issue of Religious Liberty Commission that is about to be signed by our President.

First of all, I consider myself to be a conservative Christian, but knowing history and the record of many incidents where the government got involved with religious or church issues seldom turn out good in the long run. My concern is about the federal government getting involved at all with religious issues. Some of these issues are "funding religious non-profit activities," "funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses," and "repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts churches political activities," and a request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced. All down through history we have examples of where this ultimately leads to religious persecution particularly toward religious minorities. Obviously some religious organizations or institutions may benefit from these church/state laws but others can be affected in very negative ways. The good of all should be taken into consideration!

Keep in mind the Biblical account of Jesus Christ Himself where He was condemned and ultimately put to death by the Religious authorities linking up with the Roman Government authorities such as Pilate. This is a plain record of Scripture and a careful research of many such incidents of persecution of Christians down through time can be traced to religion having influence and control of the state. It seldom ends well! Thank you for taking time to consider some of the objections being sent in by sincere American citizens like myself.

Sincerely Yours,
Bill Pyke

From: Kye Sangha <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comments — by Faith Kneller

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:28:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 13, 2026

To The Religious Liberty Commission,

I am not a politician or a lawyer, but a retired school teacher. I am a history student and what I have studied makes me against breaking down the wall between church and state.

The pilgrims fled England because of religious persecution and then ran Roger Williams out of Plymouth for his different religious views from the colonists. He had to flee in the middle of winter to find religious freedom in Rhode Island.

The Dark Ages were another blot on history with joining of politics and religion.

I want the Johnson Act fully enforced and not repealed.

I urge you to consider these issues and not take down the wall between church and state which our Founding Fathers wisely erected.

Respectfully submitted,

Faith Kneller

From: Amanda Miller <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:28:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully urge the Religious Liberty Commission to uphold the constitutional protections of religious liberty and freedom of conscience for every person. As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that genuine faith must be freely chosen and cannot be compelled by government authority or social pressure.

History has shown that when religious and civil powers become intertwined, individual conscience can be threatened. The right to worship according to one's convictions—or to refrain from religious practice—must remain protected for all people.

I encourage the Commission to preserve the principles of religious freedom that allow faith to flourish through love, conviction, and personal choice rather than through legislation or coercion. Protecting liberty of conscience is not only a constitutional responsibility but a safeguard that benefits people of every faith tradition and belief system.

Respectfully,

Amanda Miller

From: Eilee Tejada <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] First Amendment reinterpreted

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:28:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This principles are not merely constitutional- they are biblical. When questioned about civil authority, Jesus Christ, declared: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mathew 22:21) In those few words, Christ established a distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience. Government possesses legitimate authority over civil order and the protection of equal rights, but worship, doctrine and the relationship between an individual and God remain beyond its lawful reach.

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

Americans understood this lessons well. Many of the earliest settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled governments that enforced religious conformity.

The Founders sought to break from that centuries-old pattern by denying the federal government any authority over religion.

Article VI prohibits religious test for public office, and the First Amendment forbids law respecting an establishment of religion. These provisions were not accidental. They were deliberate safeguards designed to preserve liberty of conscience for every citizen.

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

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

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

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

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

We, the undersigned, adults residing on the territory of United States, twenty-one years of age or older, hereby respectfully but firmly request your honorable corporation, not to admit any Bill relating to the Sabbath or the Lord's day, as well as to any other religious or ecclesiastical institution or rite, or to favor in any way the adoption of any resolution for the Amendment of the national Constitution that could tend in some way, directly or indirectly, to give preference to the principles of any religion or religious body over others, or that in any way it approves the practice of legislating on religion, but to maintain forever as our Fathers established it, -the total separation between religion and the state as secure by the Constitution as its exist now.

Respectfully submitted
Eilee Tejada

From: Paulette Hatley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment, separation of church and state, Paulette Hatley

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:28:41e0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone I am asking you to reconsider removing the wall separating Church and State. The separation has preserved our liberty of conscience. If you join Church and State, our freedoms will be gone and the state will eventually legislate conscience with terrible results. I urge you to reconsider your proposal to build a bridge between the two. Thank you

From: Lois Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment--Lois Starr

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:29:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the commission:

The most critical issue for the commission is to keep the wall of separation between the church and state. Any attempt to weaken or dismantle the separation of church and state is based on fault history. Roger Williams in founding Rhode Island, and later William Penn in Philadelphia both assured a separation of church and state.

I object to funding religious non-profit activities.

I object to funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.

I object to repealing the Johnson Amendment

I appeal to you to continue to maintain the wall of separation between church and state, and do not attempt to "build a bridge" between church and state. In my own work as a Registered Nurse at a Health and welfare agency, I faced potential religious discrimination "in case of emergency." Happily, there were no emergencies.

I further request that the Johnson Amendment be restored.

Thank you.

Lois Starr
Madison, Indiana

From: Dorothy Carscallen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please Keep Church and State Separate

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:29:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. We must refrain from using government money to fund religious activities and we must not repeal the Johnson Amendment. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the overbearing interest of politics comes with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God, which is 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 in the United States. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both free.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Carscallen
Berrien Springs, Michigan

From: Stanislaus Kotlow <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:30:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." These words are the very foundation of the Separation of Church and State. Any attempt to negate or neutralize this principle would be to violate the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Jesus Himself said: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." - Matthew 22:21 Therefore, no man, no government has the right to legislate anything that pertains to morality. That is the prerogative of God and God alone. The only jurisdiction of government pertains to civility, that is, how we respect each other's right to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." America is the greatest country that ever was because it has, more than any other country, recognized and maintained, to a certain extent, the Separation of Church and State. History has shown what happens when Church and State confederate to enhance or enforce moral principle. Religious persecution has always resulted without exception. Therefore, I urge you, in the name of religious liberty of conscience, to cease and desist from any proposal to dissolve the Separation of Church and State.

Sincerely,

Stan

P.S. Due to the uniqueness of my full name, I cannot do so without risk to myself and my family.

From: niyoyitcheri<[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:30:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to submit this public comment in support of maintaining a clear separation between church and state, a principle that has long protected both religious liberty and democratic government in the United States.

Many of America's Founding Fathers and early settlers experienced or were influenced by the history of religious persecution in Europe, where governments often favored particular churches and suppressed dissenting beliefs. One of the enduring strengths of our constitutional system is that it protects every person's freedom of conscience by preventing government from establishing, promoting, or disadvantaging any religion. I believe preserving this principle is essential to safeguarding liberty for people of every faith and for those with no religious affiliation.

I urge the federal government to maintain complete neutrality in its relationship with all religions and with every religious community. This principle should also apply to the government's treatment of Jewish people, the State of Israel, and all other religious or ethnic groups. Government policy should be based on constitutional principles, the rule of law, and the equal protection of all people, without granting special religious preference or disadvantage to any faith or nation because of its religious identity.

The First Amendment's guarantees of religious liberty are best protected when government neither establishes religion nor interferes with the free exercise of religion. A neutral government protects the rights of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, atheists, and every other American equally.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Department of Justice to continue defending the constitutional principle of separation between church and state and to ensure that government remains impartial in matters of religion. This approach best preserves religious freedom, prevents the abuses that history has repeatedly demonstrated can arise when government and religion become intertwined, and protects the liberties of future generations.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Mr. Chergai Niyoyitura

***We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way
the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. EGW***

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

From: Kathy Chambers <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:31:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good afternoon, I understand that the Religious Liberty Commission issued its final report, in part, attacking the separation of church and state. I respectfully believe in maintaining separation of church and state in order to keep religious freedom. Thank you for considering this feedback.

Kathy Chambers

From: "Conner, [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII" >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:31:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission leadership, thank you for this comprehensive report to protect our religious freedom. Although it may not be finalized, at least the report gives an overall view of what the concerns have been in the past and in the future. And has been made clear that the protection of religious rights for all will be addressed at some point in the process. My question at this time is, what action will be taken if there is a person whose religious rights have been violated? Will there be laws legislating these recommendations that are in the report? And how far will legislation go when putting this in effect? Especially when it comes to the separation of church and state which I totally believe as our forefathers believed. I am concerned because I enjoy worshiping on my day of worship freely without any restrictions. I believe that in the context of the Constitution that our forefathers' point is that there should be a separation of church and state. I feel it may be a very difficult task to do because there are many who worship differently. Our forefather's standards came from the Bible because God is love. God wants Christians to love him freely and it's not by force. So, the theme of the book of 1 John is love, 'God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on judgement, because in this world we are like him.' 1 John 4:16-17 KJV. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John 5:3 KJV

I thought including real live stories was an eye opener for those who have suffered ridicule because of their religious beliefs. And no one should have to experience this kind of treatment, especially in this country. I have heard many horror stories in other countries which break my heart.

I can relate to some of this kind of behavior because of a dear friend that lost his job because he was a Sabbath keeper (Saturday). After the months of trying to reason with his employer and help from his church, the efforts were all in vain. This kind of treatment is not right. So, in conclusion, I hope the recommendations will come to fruition for particular case as I mentioned. Thank you for this opportunity and for your time.

A Conner

From: Michael Hansen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:31:53 -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. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Michael Hansen

~~~~~  
Mike Hansen  
Parker, CO

"Failure is an event, not a person." Zig Ziglar

**From:** Erin Follis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Recommendation 1 and 9 - Foll

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:32:54 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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The Establishment Clause of our Constitution as well as the basis for the separation of church and state was well cared for by our founding fathers due to their religious persecution. Who's to say that wouldn't happen again? It is important to keep churches out of the government and the government out of churches (and all religious institutions). There has been a clear line for 250 years; the line needs to remain strong. This includes how tax money is being used, and how politics/government needs to stay out of religious institutions. There has been a separation for a reason and it needs to remain the reason our nation has been a strong one. Once we start blurring the lines, persecution will ensue. Let's look back at history and learn those lessons before we start changing current reality.

America the beautiful,

Erin Foll



**From:** Laura Cross <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:32:55 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Regarding the Seperation of church and state

To the honest men and women of this committee that are reviewing the legitimacy of why we as a country need a separation of church power, and state power.....or not.....

Please refer to all the historical accounts of what happened when the separation did not exist.

PERSECUTION.....

Every single time..

That is how this country started...Our forefathers Ran from Europe because of the Horror of tyranny, and controlling of people's right to make their own decisions....

Please stand for the TRUTH...

May God bless America, the Land of the FREE!

Sincerely,

Laura Cross

**From:** Anita Dumar <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:33:02 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

I am writing because I care deeply about the future of the United States. It is precisely because I value our Constitution and our democracy that I feel compelled to voice my strong opposition to the draft put forth by the Religious Liberty Commission.

In my view, this publication is not an objective assessment of religious liberty in America. I am deeply concerned about the attempt to normalize the increasing entanglement of religion and government. The First Amendment protects every American's right to practice any religion—or no religion at all. That protection depends on maintaining a clear separation between church and state.

I object to the publication's apparent elevation of certain religious viewpoints or religious belonging as deserving of special attention. The federal government should not communicate—explicitly or implicitly—that some religions are more worthy of recognition in America. Every citizen should be able to rely on a government that remains neutral in matters of faith, because that neutrality is the foundation of true religious liberty.

This publication asks Americans to be persuaded of a religious liberty problem that, in my view, has been largely manufactured. Meanwhile, many of the most vulnerable people in our country face real and urgent challenges that deserve our government's full attention. The real threat for many Americans are problems like poverty, inadequate access to healthcare, racial discrimination, challenges facing our veterans, and threats to the well-being of children and other vulnerable communities. I believe our government should focus its attention on addressing those pressing issues.

I also reject the use of taxpayer funds to support, promote, or subsidize religious activities or institutions. Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—should not be compelled to finance religious expression through their government. Public resources should serve the common good in a manner that respects the constitutional separation of church and state and treats all citizens equally, without advancing or endorsing any particular religion.

Ironically, I believe the recommendations put forth by the commission would pose a greater threat to religious liberty than the problems they claim to address. By encouraging the government to become more closely aligned with and supportive of religious viewpoints, they risk undermining the constitutional principle that has protected genuine religious freedom in the United States for generations. We have present-day and historical examples, both in our own nation and around the world, that demonstrate the dangers that can arise when any religious doctrine and government authority become intertwined.

I urge the Commission to reject fear-based narratives and political propaganda and instead uphold the Constitution's commitment to religious freedom for all Americans by respecting the wall of separation of church and state and ensuring that government serves every citizen equally, regardless of religious belief or non-belief.

I love my country, and because I do, I ask you to protect the constitutional principles that have safeguarded both religious liberty and American democracy for generations. Protect the Johnson Amendment. Do not erode the wall of separation of church and state. It remains one of the strongest protections of freedom that our nation has.

- Anita Dumar

**From:** Sylvia Mayeri <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of CHURCH and STATE - Sylvia Mayer

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:33:18 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a Sabbath-keeping Christian to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — even the Pilgrims came here to escape government controlled religion. Freedom of religion (a basic tenet of USA freedom) will inch by inch degrade and disappear. This starts with 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,  
Sylvia Mayer  
Ooltewah, TN

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**From:** Kathilee Matamoros <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fw: Public comment - Oppose recommended changes to separation of church and state

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:34:06 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I oppose the first and ninth recommended changes proposed by the Religious Liberty Commission. Here is the letter below, which I sent yesterday. (I am resending with the subject line stating my position.)

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**From:** Kathilee Matamoros <[REDACTED] PII >

**Sent:** Sunday, July 12, 2026 4:02 PM

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

**Subject:** Public comment

July 12, 2026

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to you in regard to the idea of building bridges between church and state. Please allow me to say that I am a born again Christian with conservative values. I love learning about God and His love for us, and I love sharing Him with those around me. I would wish that all humans on earth would come to know and love Him as I do. However, I do not believe it is the job of the government to help promote, or discourage any religion above another. I truly believe that the separation of church and state is one of the most important and unique values of the United States of America. I believe it was truly one of the most important values to the founders of our nation as well, that is why it appears in the very first Amendment.

Our forefathers knew from the recent history of the colonies, and likely from their personal history or experiences, that when church and state are united, it becomes all too easy for religious persecution to follow. The very pilgrims who famously came here were escaping persecution. Various of the colonies were formed specifically as places where people could find protection from one form of religious persecution or another, for example, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, among others.

When one religion is promoted above others by a government, it leads to restrictions for other religions. Though I would wish that all the world were true followers of Christ, imposing the teachings of Christ on others goes against the very principles taught in the Bible. When I read Christ's teachings I find Him inviting, pleading, drawing in love, but never forcing His teachings on anyone. God's government gives everyone free choice to believe and to act as they choose, and the consequences of their choices are between the individual and God only. The government can legislate civility – the ways in which individuals interact with those around them. But moral issues, those between man and God, should not be legislated in any way by a government. When governments step into the realm of religion, they WILL get it wrong. The freedom of, and/or freedom from religion I believe is one of the reasons our country has become so prosperous.

Historically our nation has been a place where others being persecuted by religious powers, including persecution by Christian governments, could come to find refuge and protection. Let us not become like the governments so many are fleeing from.

Truly, when one is free to practice their religion as they choose, or not practice religion at all, religion actually flourishes more than when it is legislated or controlled by the government, as one does not have to fear that they will somehow break a rule by living their faith to the fullest. If we feel we need greater morality in our country, then the churches, synagogues, and other religious entities need to seek revival and reformation among their people and work on improving their influence within their communities. But this should not involve the government, other than the government protecting the rights of all to practice their religion freely. If we want Christianity to be practiced freely, other faiths should be allowed the same privilege, so long as it does not involve harm of others. Freedom of religion also affects freedom of speech, another crucial principle to the government of our nation.

When church and state unite, conflicts of interest develop. Religious powers and the power of the state are, in my opinion, the two strongest powers in society. But they both function best when left in their individual spheres of influence. When united, they become hungry for the power of the other and both become corrupted. When religious powers look to the government for power, it becomes very easy for compromise of principle to occur in order to gain power. When the government begins to look to religious powers for authority, the powers of the state easily become corrupted as well.

In the realm of public education, teaching of religion, in any form, belongs to the religious powers and to parents and families, and not to the state. I fully desire for my children to learn about God. But if I leave that to a teacher in the public school system, they may not teach my child about God in the way I know and understand Him. Said teacher may have a different understanding of God than I do. Maybe that teacher belongs to another religion altogether and their teaching of religion to my child would be skewed by their own personal beliefs, even if they have been given specific material and concepts to teach. And this concept can be applied to so many other areas of government, if church and state are not separate.

In summary, I believe that the separation of Church and State is vital to our country's freedom and prosperity, that church and state are two very strong influences in society, but need to be kept separate, with religious bodies working in the moral realm, and the state working in the civil realm. I believe that is what our founding fathers believed and intended, and it is still just as relevant, if not more so today. When church and state are not separate, they begin to compete for power and corruption of both occurs, religious suppression and or persecution ensues. We owe our prosperity as a nation to the freedoms we have. Let us keep those freedoms unadulterated.

I therefore urge the members of the Religious Liberty Commission to seek to promote and maintain the vital and complete separation of church and state so that we can truly be a place where there is "liberty and justice for ALL."

Sincerely,

Kathilee Matamoros

**From:** Lori Colei<[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:34:38 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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July 13, 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 the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

*It was brought to my attention that our government is questioning the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state. This is extremely alarming to me as history clearly shows what happens when church and state are united and not kept separate. The government would make laws that affect religious freedom and all that don't agree are targeted and persecuted. This should not be for our wonderful country-the land of the free...*

*I respectfully request that the Department of Justice to not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it also convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to study more comprehensively the question of the separation of church and state in history. This is a very important topic that deserves more public input. Thank you for your consideration in this extremely important matter.*

*Sincerely,  
Lori Cole*

[REDACTED] PII

**From:** Sammie Hernandez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:34:45 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** The\_Religious\_Liberty\_Commission.docx

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To the commission,

Attached word document is being sent, as invited, for what the commission is trying to push regarding dispatching the separation of church/state.



*\*This information is to provide and give each reader Informed Consent*

The Religious Liberty Commission – Separation of church/state

I do **not** agree with changing/altering/modifying in any way, shape, or form – The Constitution – or its wording to try and make it say/mean/imply something else – including the use of an Executive Order.

*The title of the commission is antithetical to its agenda.*

**Liberty - noun**

1. The condition of being free from confinement, servitude, or forced labor.
2. The condition of being free from oppressive restriction or control by a government or other power.
3. The right or power to act as one chooses.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition

This commission desires to take away Religious Liberty by influencing the POTUS into plowing through an “Executive Order” to take away the wall of Separation of Church and state and tweak it to say “make a bridge” between Church and state.

There are a people who know what this means and the words used are a front to that agenda.

The masses do not know or understand, yet.

What, can those who are advocating for an executive order to make a bridge to clasp hands between church and state, be thinking by trying to do such an *Anti-American* move that will erase the very reason The Pilgrims risked all and gave up all to reach these shores –

*To escape the tyranny and brutality of a church and state-run country.*

History attests as to why The Pilgrims came to these shores. Again, to escape the countries who embraced church and state. Those countries, as history attests, did unspeakable horrors to anyone who spoke against the religious authorities. The citizens were not allowed freedom of religious liberty or the freedom to choose – by their own conscious.

Does this commission not understand what The Constitution *does say*?

## 1. The First Amendment

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.

<https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-1/>

What part of the highlighted portion, above, does the commission not understand – regarding separation of church and state not being in the constitution? It's right there. Taken from Congress.gov.

The commission can slice it and dice it any way they want to BUT it still says separation by the very words The Founders used to make the meaning clear, in the way they thought and spoke 250 years ago. Just because there are some people who don't like it and want to change it for their own agenda – does not, in any sense of all that is clear to anyone who loves Freedom, make what the commission/others think – as fact.

The Founders knew what they were doing by placing “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” in the constitution. – To ensure this land did not fall into the pits of hell like the countries in Europe who embraced church/state and then do to the citizens of this land which was done in the countries they fled from in Europe.

To take away any liberty or freedom of choice regarding Religion – is to **force** one on everyone without consent or informed consent. And then, violence, privation, force, coercion, persecution, and more evils begin. History attests.

Christ, is all about freedom of choice, period.  
satan is all about force or else.

It is touted for this country to get back to God. Well, God is a free will God. He does not force His laws on man. Man has free will to accept, abide by, and follow or to reject.

To bridge church/state is to take away all freedom of choice, all freedom of will, and all freedom of thought/conscious. ————— Power and Control over the peasants —————

## 2. Repeal The Johnson Amendment = Corruption of the churches

Funding Religious education, humanitarian aid, funding for women/maternal care w/religious influence. *Which religious influence?* Will the women be given a choice or will the influence be the one the commission chooses for them? Church/state can only maintain one religion – not multiples. It is not difficult to guess which one will be selected for the alleged common good.

The architecture says so much. The White house is not called that name from paint color.

Funding for religious schools?

Where will the vast amounts of money come from to fund these pet projects?

Tax payer dollars? - NO. NO and NO. That should never come to the light of day.

It is shouted there isn't enough \$\$\$\$ to do this – that – and the other BUT there is \$\$\$\$ for these items?

What, many needed already funded and stable programs helping the elderly, poor, and needy will be siphoned or defunded and then the pillaged \$\$\$\$ from those who really need it will be poured/funneled into these pet programs?

Do the people on the commission not know History – Religious History?

*Do they know what happened to the people who did not agree with the church/state?*

Please refer to the sourced information below regarding the history of Church/State responses to anyone who chose to live according to their own conscious and not follow the church/state .

history of religious massacres in europe (Typed into the search bar)

Search Assist

Religious massacres in Europe have a long history, particularly during the European Wars of Religion from the 16th to 17th centuries, which included events like the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, where thousands of Huguenots were **killed in France**. These conflicts were fueled by the Protestant Reformation and involved

significant violence between Catholics and Protestants, leading to widespread suffering and loss of life.

Wikipedia    ebsco.com

## Overview of Religious Massacres in Europe

Religious massacres in Europe have been a tragic part of history, particularly during the European Wars of Religion from the 16th to 17th centuries. These conflicts were primarily driven by the divisions created by the Protestant Reformation, leading to intense violence between Catholics and Protestants.

## Key Events and Their Impact

### Major Massacres

| Event                                  | Date      | Description                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre         | 1572      | Thousands of Huguenots were killed in France, marking a significant turning point in the French Wars of Religion.             |
| Massacre of Vassy                      | 1562      | The Duke of Guise ordered the massacre of Protestants attending a service, igniting the first of the French Wars of Religion. |
| Massacres during the Thirty Years' War | 1618-1648 | Widespread violence across Europe, resulting in millions of deaths from battles, famine, and disease.                         |

### Causes of Violence

- **Protestant Reformation:** Initiated in 1517, it led to the fragmentation of Christianity and the rise of various Protestant sects, which challenged the Catholic Church's authority.
- **Political Power Struggles:** Many conflicts were not solely religious but also involved territorial ambitions and the quest for political dominance among European powers.
- **Counter-Reformation:** The Catholic Church's response to the Reformation intensified hostilities, as it sought to reclaim lost territories and suppress Protestant movements.

### Consequences of Religious Massacres

The religious conflicts resulted in significant loss of life and suffering. The Thirty Years' War alone devastated Germany, leading to the deaths of approximately one-third of its population. The aftermath of these wars also laid the groundwork for modern statehood and international relations in Europe.

### Long-term Effects

- **Peace of Westphalia (1648):** This treaty ended many of the conflicts and established a new political order, recognizing multiple Christian denominations within the Holy Roman Empire.
- **Continued Religious Tensions:** Although major conflicts subsided, smaller religious wars persisted in Europe until the early 18th century, reflecting ongoing sectarian strife.

The history of religious massacres in Europe highlights the complex interplay between faith, politics, and societal change, leaving a lasting impact on the continent's cultural and religious landscape.

Wikipedia   dcc.newberry.org

st. bartholomew's day massacre (typed into the search bar)

Search Assist

The **St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre** occurred on August 24, 1572, in Paris, where thousands of Huguenots (French Protestants) were killed by Catholic mobs, marking a significant event in the French Wars of Religion. It was instigated by political and religious tensions, particularly following the marriage of a Catholic princess to a Protestant prince, which led to fears among Catholics about the growing influence of Protestants.

Wikipedia   Encyclopedia Britannica

### Overview of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre

The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre took place on **August 24, 1572**, in Paris, France. This tragic event was a significant episode during the **French Wars of Religion**, characterized by the violent killing of thousands of Huguenots, who were French Protestants.

### Causes of the Massacre

#### Political and Religious Tensions

- The massacre was fueled by deep-seated **political and religious rivalries** between Catholics and Protestants.

- It followed the **marriage of Margaret of Valois**, a Catholic princess, to **Henry of Navarre**, a Protestant prince, which heightened fears among Catholics regarding the influence of Protestants in France.

### Key Events Leading Up to the Massacre

1. **Peace of Saint-Germain-en-Laye** (August 8, 1570): Ended the third war of religion but left tensions unresolved.
2. **Marriage Ceremony** (August 18, 1572): The royal wedding brought many Huguenots to Paris.
3. **Assassination Attempt** (August 22, 1572): A failed attempt on the life of **Admiral Gaspard de Coligny**, a prominent Huguenot leader, escalated the situation.

## The Massacre

### Execution of the Attack

- The massacre began in the early hours of **August 24**, with the killing of Coligny and quickly spread throughout Paris.
- Catholic mobs, incited by the **House of Guise**, targeted Huguenots, leading to widespread violence.

### Casualties

| Location  | Estimated Deaths |
|-----------|------------------|
| Paris     | 3,000            |
| Provinces | 10,000+          |

The violence continued for several days, resulting in a total death toll that could range from **5,000 to 30,000** across France.

### Aftermath

The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre marked a turning point in the French Wars of Religion, leading to increased radicalization among Huguenots and further conflict between Catholics and Protestants in France. The event left a lasting impact on the perception of Catholicism among Protestants across Europe.

Wikipedia   [huguenotsociety.org.uk](http://huguenotsociety.org.uk)

Lest we neglect to mention -

**Martin Luther** and the nailing of his 95 theses to the castle church doors at Wittenburg

**The Reformers** - What was done to them for preaching truth - Knox, Melancthon, Cranmer, Calvin, Zwingli, Luther and more - Many burned at the stake as "heretics" according to the church/state - not by a jury of their peers.

**The Spanish Inquisition** -

the spanish inquisition (typed in the search bar)

Search Assist

The Spanish Inquisition was a **judicial institution** established in 1478 to identify and punish heretics, primarily targeting converted Jews and Muslims. It lasted until 1834 and was known for its brutal methods, including torture and executions.

ebsco.com    Wikipedia

## **Overview of the Spanish Inquisition**

The Spanish Inquisition was a judicial institution established on **November 1, 1478**, by the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. Its primary purpose was to identify and punish heretics, particularly targeting **converted Jews** (conversos) and **Muslims** (moriscos). The Inquisition operated until **July 15, 1834**.

## **Key Features**

### **Objectives and Methods**

#### **•Main Goals:**

- Enforce Catholic orthodoxy.
- Identify and punish heretics.

#### **•Methods Used:**

- Torture to extract confessions.
- Secretive trials without legal representation.
- Public executions, often by burning at the stake.

## **Historical Context**

- The Inquisition arose during a time of religious consolidation in Spain, following the **Reconquista**, which aimed to unify the country under Catholicism.

- The **Alhambra Decree** of 1492 forced Jews to convert to Christianity or leave Spain, leading to widespread suspicion and persecution of conversos.

## Impact and Legacy

### Outcomes

- An estimated **150,000 people** were prosecuted, with **3,000 to 5,000** executed, primarily in the early years.
- The Inquisition expanded its reach to Spanish territories in the Americas and Southern Italy.

### Cultural Significance

- The Spanish Inquisition has become synonymous with religious persecution and is often referenced in popular culture, notably in comedic contexts, such as Monty Python's sketches.

The legacy of the Spanish Inquisition remains a complex and controversial chapter in history, reflecting the intersection of religion, power, and societal control.

Wikipedia   Encyclopedia Britannica

The Waldensians (typed in the search bar)

Each searched and sourced topic is but a drop in the vast ocean as to the church/state run documented historical record of what happened when anyone/group stood for freedom of thought/conscious regarding religion. Yet, the commission wants to bulldoze the constitution to make it possible for another church/state country and open the door to, eventually, try to force/coerce people to embrace a state religion. This very topic is what caused multitudes to flee their homelands and come to this land – and NOW they want to turn this land into the



very tyrannical church/state that this land was and has been a haven for Religious Liberty and Freedom of. ...

Bridge to church/state = The Dark Ages, the power of that time, and everything else that came from it. Death, debauchery, darkness, suppression, domination, destruction, etc.

**Question;** Who do these few people, on the commission, think they are to make such a decision based on what they think/believe the constitution says and not based on the facts of what the constitution actually says?

The Founders wrote "We The People..." not only a select few to decide for all. That is textbook dictatorial, tyrannical, and papal.

So many on the hill speak of getting back to God. Which one?  
The Creator God in Heaven or the god of this earth?

Additionally, every ~ every living human being HAS a God given right to freedom of choice.  
This statement is a Biblical fact.

Joshua 24:15 KJV

<sup>15</sup> And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

"Liberty is the very essence of faith" The Great Controversy ~ E.G White

No man has the right to dictate anything onto another ~ regardless of topic ~ most especially religion.

No one can legislate and/or force what a person should or should not think/believe.

Acts 5:29 KJV

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men.

Our constitution (Separation of church/state) has worked for 250 years.

Yet, now, a few want to question it, end it, & throw the entire country into The Dark Ages?

\*Why?

\*For what purpose?

How, in the name of *in a full state of consciousness*, can this even be considered?

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If the commission moves forward, if the POTUS signs an executive order stating there is no wall of separation of church/state, as the constitution clearly states (with different words) – It will catapult this country into a modern-day version of The Dark Ages with a church/state run, one religion, and what history attests to will be nothing compared to what will wreak havoc on this land and its people.

The Bible is the filter for all things.

Every Bible prophecy, to date, has come to pass, to the letter – thus, so will the remaining ones. They are, in fact, unfolding before our very eyes.

What this commission is seeking to secure is, in fact, part of last day events, and if the time is in harmony with God's plan – it will occur and if it is not time – it will not happen.

The One and Only Great and Almighty God, in heaven, is in control – man is not.

The battle – is for the mind, body, and soul.

Ephesians 6:12 KJV

<sup>12</sup> 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.

**Last Question** – Is the commission ready to live in a church/state return to The Dark Ages landscape where no one is safe from a whisper in the ear of the power who can change everything with a nod of their head?

—— Research Church/State Religious History and buckle up. ——

Each living human is a juror in the case of who is right; God or satan.

There are only two choices.

Each person will have to decide *for themselves* and stand behind one or the other.

One offers life eternal and the other offers eternal death.

Choose wisely.

**From:** NadiaAjdari <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State (NadiaAjdari)

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:35:16 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

It saddens me to read that the Commission wants to take steps to weaken the separation between church and state in the United States. As the daughter of immigrant parents, both of whom came from countries without such separation, I have witnessed the recounting of many troubling life stories. My mom came from communist Russia, describing the control of the government on every aspect of her life, including what to believe in. My dad escaped the Islamic control of Iran. I know many Iranian relatives and friends who have been punished by the government and had relatives killed for not obeying the religious government. Therefore, it is troubling to me that the Commission is engaging in discussion to follow similar footsteps in the US. Bridging church and state will reduce the freedom of worship in this country, a key pillar on which the country was founded. History is full of examples of persecution by religious states, which is a result of combining government and its authority to control the first four commandments in the Bible. Let us not repeat history in this country.

Sincerely,

NadiaAjdari  
Bushkill, PA

**From:** Kathleen Greenfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty draft report comment

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:35:58 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Sent from my iPhone

Good morning,

We want to express concern that adopting a stance that there is no wall of separation between church and state can have unintended consequences down the road. We are Saturday sabbath keepers and would object to the government setting aside a designated day of rest or worship- either by law, executive action or through the labor laws. This would be a violation of liberty of conscience. I understand concern about atheistic influences on our society- but that needs to be dealt with through our positive influence and prayer.

Thank you

Glenn and Kathleen Greenfield

**From:** " [REDACTED] PII "i [REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Preserve the Separation of Church and State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:36:31 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as an American citizen and a person of Christian faith to express my deep concern regarding proposals that would weaken the historic separation of church and state by replacing what has long been described as a "wall of separation" with a "bridge."

The principle of separation was not established to diminish religion or to exclude faith from public life. Rather, it was championed by many believers who understood that the church is strongest when it remains free from government control and political entanglement. This separation has protected both religious liberty and civil liberty throughout our nation's history.

When government funds religious activity or churches become closely aligned with partisan politics, both institutions are placed at risk. Churches may find themselves dependent upon government resources, subject to political pressures, or divided by partisan loyalties. Likewise, government risks favoring some religious groups over others, undermining the religious freedom of all.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider recommendations that would erode this important safeguard, including proposals to expand government funding of religious activities and to repeal the Johnson Amendment. While well-intentioned, such measures would invite an unhealthy blending of church and state that history has repeatedly shown to be harmful to both.

One of America's greatest blessings has been its commitment to protecting the free exercise of religion without allowing government to direct, finance, or favor religion. This principle has enabled faith communities of every kind to flourish according to conscience rather than political influence.

Please preserve the separation of church and state. It is one of the surest ways to protect both religious freedom and the integrity of our faith.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these concerns.

Respectfully,  
David Qualls

**From:** Ezra St Juste <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ezra St Juste

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:36:59 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Commission's draft report.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve the longstanding constitutional principle that protects both religious liberty and civil government by maintaining a clear distinction between the authority of the state and the authority of religious institutions. This principle is not hostile to religion. Rather, it has been one of the greatest safeguards of religious freedom in American history, allowing faith to flourish without governmental control or coercion.

The First Amendment wisely protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits the establishment of religion by the government. It provides that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (U.S. Const. amend. I). These two protections are complementary. Together, they ensure that every American enjoys the freedom to worship according to conscience while preventing the government from exercising authority over matters that belong to God alone.

A distinction between church and state does not require government to be indifferent toward religion. On the contrary, government best supports religion by protecting every person's liberty of conscience equally. It fulfills its constitutional duty not by promoting one faith, one denomination, or one form of religious observance, but by ensuring that every citizen is free to worship or not worship, without governmental preference, coercion, or penalty. Such neutrality protects the rights of all Americans while preserving the integrity of religious institutions.

This principle is deeply consistent with the teachings of Scripture. Jesus Christ recognized separate spheres of responsibility when He declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21, KJV). Likewise, Christ stated, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36, KJV), making clear that the advancement of God's kingdom would not depend upon civil authority or political power.

Throughout Scripture, God consistently invites rather than compels worship. Joshua challenged Israel, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15, KJV). Christ Himself stands at the door and knocks rather than forcing entrance (Revelation 3:20, KJV). Genuine faith cannot be produced through legislation or governmental authority because worship is meaningful only when it is freely chosen. Civil government possesses authority to regulate public conduct necessary for peace and justice, but it cannot produce repentance, conversion, or sincere devotion.

This distinction also reflects the moral nature of the Ten Commandments. Civil law rightly protects society by prohibiting acts such as murder, theft, fraud, and violence. However, the duties owed directly to God, including worship, prayer, and the observance of sacred times or the Sabbath, are matters of conscience. Governments may regulate external conduct for the common good, but they cannot judge the sincerity of faith or compel love for God. Those responsibilities belong to the individual conscience under God alone.

History further demonstrates the wisdom of maintaining this distinction. Whenever governments have exercised authority over religious belief or practice, the result has too often been diminished liberty, religious division, and the corruption of both civil and religious institutions. Authentic faith thrives through conviction rather than

compulsion. Religion is strengthened by persuasion, example, and voluntary commitment, not by civil enforcement.

Indeed, history repeatedly shows that when religious communities seek governmental power to accomplish spiritual objectives, they often achieve the opposite. Civil authority may produce outward conformity, but it cannot transform the human heart. Laws may influence behavior, but they cannot create genuine faith. A church that relies upon the power of the state risks exchanging its moral influence for political influence, weakening both its spiritual witness and the public's confidence in its mission.

America's constitutional framework wisely recognized these realities. By protecting religious liberty while limiting governmental involvement in religion, our nation has fostered one of the most religiously diverse and vibrant societies in history. This constitutional arrangement has benefited believers of every faith tradition, as well as those who profess no religion, by ensuring equal protection under the law. We should be careful not to depart from these enduring constitutional safeguards, which have served our nation well for more than two centuries.

As a Christian, I would also offer a reflection from the nineteenth-century Christian author Ellen G. White. While not a constitutional authority, her observation captures an important historical principle:

"The union of the church with the state, be the degree ever so slight, while it may appear to bring the world nearer to the church, does in reality bring the church nearer to the world." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 297.)

Whether one approaches this statement from a religious or historical perspective, it reflects an enduring truth. The involvement of civil power in advancing religion ultimately does not strengthen the church. Instead, it can compromise the church's spiritual mission while eroding the religious liberty that protects every citizen's freedom of conscience.

James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," similarly warned in his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785) that religion "can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." Thomas Jefferson likewise wrote that legitimate civil government extends only to actions that affect others and not to the opinions or conscience of individuals (*Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*, 1786). These foundational principles helped shape America's constitutional commitment to religious liberty and remain as relevant today as when they were first written.

I respectfully encourage the Commission to reaffirm these foundational constitutional principles. Government best serves religion not by directing it, endorsing it, or enforcing it, but by faithfully protecting every person's God-given liberty of conscience. In doing so, it preserves both the constitutional freedoms upon which our Republic was founded and the voluntary nature of genuine religious faith.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

Ezra St Juste



**From:** William Wagner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Report – Hon. William Wagner (Ret.)

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:37:34 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Wagner\_Public\_Comment\_Religious\_Liberty\_Commission\_July\_2026.pdf

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Dear Commissioners,

Please find attached my public comment regarding the Draft Report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty.

I commend the Commission for producing a thoughtful and historically grounded report on one of our Nation's most fundamental constitutional freedoms. My comments are offered respectfully and constructively in the hope that they may assist the Commission as it prepares its final report.

Thank you for your service and for your careful consideration of these observations.

Respectfully,

**Hon. William Wagner (Ret)**

*WFFC Distinguished Chair for Faith & Freedom  
Spring Arbor University*

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*Distinguished Professor Emeritus  
WMU-cla / UF-Id (Constitutional Law & Ethics)*

[REDACTED] PII

**Public Comment on the Draft Report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty**

**Submitted by the Hon. William Wagner (Ret.)**

Distinguished Professor Emeritus Law

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the Draft Report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. My name is William Wagner and I hold the academic rank of Distinguished Professor Emeritus (Constitutional Law). I served on the faculty at the University of Florida and Western Michigan University Cooley Law School, where I taught Constitutional Law and Ethics. I currently hold the Faith and Freedom Center Distinguished Chair at Spring Arbor University. Before joining academia, I served as a federal judge in the United States Courts, as Senior Assistant United States Attorney in the Department of Justice, and as a Legal Counsel in the United States Senate.

Religious liberty occupies a unique place within the American constitutional order. It protects the freedom of conscience from which the meaningful exercise of every other liberty proceeds. Because civil government possesses no legitimate authority over the human soul, religious liberty has long stood as America's first freedom and one of the defining characteristics of the American experiment. The Religion Clauses of the First Amendment did not create this liberty; they constitutionally secured a freedom that the Founding generation understood to preexist civil government itself.<sup>1</sup>

Against that backdrop, the Draft Report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty represents one of the most important governmental examinations of religious liberty in recent decades. At a time when the constitutional meaning of the Religion Clauses has too often been obscured by historically untethered doctrines and shifting cultural assumptions, the Commission has produced a thoughtful and substantial work that returns the discussion to constitutional first principles.

I commend the Commission for grounding its analysis in the Constitution's text, our Nation's history and traditions, and the Supreme Court's recent jurisprudence. The Report properly recognizes that religious liberty is neither a governmental favor nor a

modern policy preference, but a foundational constitutional commitment rooted in the dignity of the human person and protected by our constitutional order.

I respectfully offer the following recommendations to strengthen the final Report and enhance its long-term value to courts, scholars, legislators, educators, and citizens.

## **I. Religious Liberty as a Pre-Political Right**

The final Report should more explicitly explain that religious liberty is a pre-political right rather than a governmental creation.

The Declaration of Independence teaches that all persons “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.”<sup>2</sup> Religious liberty is among those rights. Government does not bestow the freedom of conscience; it recognizes and secures a liberty that already belongs to every human person.

James Madison captured this principle with remarkable clarity in his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, observing that the duty each individual owes to the Creator is “precedent, both in order of time and degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society.”<sup>3</sup> William Blackstone likewise explained that human law derives its legitimacy from conformity to the higher law of nature and of God.<sup>4</sup>

The Religion Clauses therefore presuppose an objective moral order. They recognize that civil authority has legitimate jurisdiction over matters necessary to preserve justice and public order, but not over the human conscience itself. Government may regulate conduct within its constitutional authority; it may not compel belief or suppress sincere religious exercise merely because it disagrees with the convictions from which that exercise flows.

Making this philosophical foundation more explicit would strengthen the Report’s constitutional coherence while reminding future readers that religious liberty rests upon enduring principles rather than transient political preferences.

## **II. Original Public Meaning and Constitutional Fidelity**

The Report appropriately relies upon constitutional text, history, and tradition. I encourage the Commission to explain more fully why that methodology is constitutionally required.

The Constitution derives its democratic legitimacy from the consent of the governed expressed through ratification. Consequently, constitutional interpretation must begin with the objective public meaning of the text adopted by the people rather than later judicial innovations or evolving cultural preferences.

This original public meaning approach promotes the rule of law by preserving the Constitution as law rather than allowing its meaning to fluctuate according to the policy preferences of judges or political majorities. Fidelity to the Constitution requires judges to say what the law is, not what they believe it ought to become.

The Religion Clauses should therefore be interpreted according to their original public meaning informed by the historical practices and understandings that surrounded their adoption.<sup>5</sup>

### **III. The Supreme Court's Recent Religion Clause Jurisprudence Reflects a Coherent Constitutional Restoration**

One of the Report's greatest strengths is its discussion of recent Supreme Court decisions involving religious liberty. I encourage the Commission to emphasize more explicitly that these decisions collectively represent a coherent constitutional restoration rather than a series of unrelated outcomes.

In *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, the Court rejected the ahistorical framework established under *Lemon v. Kurtzman* and reaffirmed that Religion Clause disputes should be resolved by reference to constitutional text, history, and tradition.<sup>6</sup>

In *Carson v. Makin*, building upon *Trinity Lutheran* and *Espinoza*, the Court confirmed that government ordinarily may not exclude religious participants from generally available public benefits solely because of their religious character or exercise.<sup>7</sup>

In *Groff v. DeJoy*, the Court restored meaningful statutory protection for religious accommodation in the workplace by rejecting decades of interpretations that had substantially weakened Congress’s protections for religious employees.<sup>8</sup>

Most recently, *Mahmoud v. Taylor* reaffirmed that parents possess constitutionally protected authority to direct the religious upbringing of their children and that government may not substantially burden that authority without satisfying the Constitution’s demanding protections for religious exercise.<sup>9</sup>

Taken together, these decisions reflect a unified constitutional principle: government may neither suppress nor discriminate against religious exercise, and Religion Clause disputes should be resolved according to the Constitution’s original public meaning informed by our Nation’s historical practices and understandings.

#### **IV. Religious Liberty Within a Coherent Constitutional Jurisprudence**

Religious liberty cannot be understood in isolation from the Constitution’s broader structure.

The Constitution presupposes objective truth, recognizes the inherent dignity of every human person, establishes a government of limited and enumerated powers, divides authority among separate branches, preserves federalism, and protects the institutions of civil society that stand between the individual and the State.

These structural protections are not accidental. Together they safeguard liberty by preventing the concentration of governmental power.

Religious communities, families, schools, charities, and other mediating institutions perform indispensable civic functions. They cultivate virtue, transmit moral tradition, care for the vulnerable, and remind civil government that its authority is limited. The constitutional protection of religious liberty therefore preserves not only individual conscience but also the independent institutions essential to ordered liberty and republican self-government.

#### **V. Strengthen the Discussion of Parents’ Authority**

The Report thoughtfully discusses religious liberty in educational settings. I respectfully recommend expanding that discussion by recognizing parental authority as one of the defining constitutional questions of our time.

From *Meyer v. Nebraska* and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* through *Wisconsin v. Yoder* and, most recently, *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, the Supreme Court has consistently recognized that the family is not a creation of the State but a pre-political institution possessing its own sphere of constitutional protection.<sup>10</sup>

Religious liberty necessarily includes the authority of parents to direct the moral and religious education of their children, to choose educational alternatives consistent with their convictions, and to object when governmental policies substantially interfere with religious formation.

Because educational conflicts increasingly occupy the forefront of religious liberty litigation, a more robust treatment of parental rights would substantially enhance the Report's practical value.

## **VI. Additional Recommendations**

I respectfully offer two additional recommendations.

First, the Report should further emphasize the close relationship between religious liberty and freedom of speech. Many of today's most significant conscience disputes—including *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*—illustrate that compelled expression and compelled violations of conscience frequently arise together.<sup>11</sup>

Second, the Report should distinguish more explicitly among governmental acknowledgment of religion, governmental encouragement of religion, and governmental coercion regarding religion. The Founding generation accepted the first in many contexts and rejected the third. Preserving that distinction would improve the Report's historical precision while clarifying the original public meaning of the Establishment Clause.

## Conclusion

The Commission has produced a report of exceptional quality and lasting significance. Its careful reliance upon constitutional text, historical practice, and the Supreme Court's recent jurisprudence marks an important contribution to the continuing renewal of religious liberty in American constitutional law.

These recommendations are therefore offered not as criticism, but as respectful suggestions intended to deepen the Report's historical, philosophical, and jurisprudential foundations.

The Commission has an unusual opportunity. It can produce not merely an important report for one Administration, but a lasting constitutional resource that reminds Americans why religious liberty remains our first freedom. By grounding its final work even more deeply in the Constitution's original public meaning, the natural rights philosophy of the Founding, the structural safeguards of our constitutional order, and the Supreme Court's renewed commitment to history and tradition, the Commission can help preserve a constitutional inheritance that has safeguarded both faith and freedom since the birth of the Republic.

Respectfully submitted,

**Hon. William Wagner (Ret.)**

Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Law

Wagner Faith & Freedom Center

## Authorities

1. See James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785); *The Federalist* No. 51 (James Madison).
2. The Declaration of Independence para. 2 (U.S. 1776).
3. James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* ¶ 1 (1785).
4. 1 William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* 39–42 (1765).

5. *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, 572 U.S. 565 (2014); *Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist.*, 597 U.S. 507 (2022).
6. *Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist.*, 597 U.S. 507, 534–35 (2022).
7. *Carson v. Makin*, 596 U.S. 767 (2022); *Espinoza v. Montana Dep’t of Revenue*, 591 U.S. 464 (2020); *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 582 U.S. 449 (2017).
8. *Groff v. DeJoy*, 600 U.S. 447 (2023).
9. *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, 606 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2025).
10. *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390 (1923); *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925); *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972); *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, 606 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2025).
11. *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*, 600 U.S. 570 (2023).



**From:** Susan Manke <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – susan manke

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:37:44 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a citizen of Berrien Springs, Michigan, concerned that this Commission is moving toward recommendations that will take freedom away in the name of morality. I ask you to pay attention to the minority in this debate, because history shows that is exactly who popular religious legislation runs over. Morality cannot be legislated. Government can force people to act a certain way, but it cannot make them think a certain way, and every attempt to close that gap by law ends in coercion, not conviction.

The deepest argument against state involvement in religion is not secular but Christian. Christ himself divided all human duty into two jurisdictions, telling his hearers to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Civil government was given authority over civil matters, injuries between neighbors, not over religious observance, belief, or worship. As A. T. Jones told a U.S. Senate committee in 1888, there is a limit to lawmaking power, and that limit is the line Jesus Christ himself drew. The state may ask only whether an act is civil or uncivil; it has no business asking whether it is religious or pious. When government sponsors a religious text, display, or lesson, it crosses a line that Christianity itself forbids it to cross.

Rights, too, come from the Creator, not from majorities. If a vote can grant religious liberty, a vote can revoke it, which means it was never a right to begin with, only a permission. Our constitutional system exists precisely to place conscience beyond the reach of election returns, because popular government is instituted to protect the minority, not merely to enact the will of the many. As Jones put it to the Senate committee, the people, however numerous, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. A congressional committee said the same in 1829: the Constitution regards the conscience of the solitary dissenter as sacred as that of the whole community.

Even a law that favors religion destroys the free exercise it claims to honor. Any religious statute must define the religion it supports, and that definition necessarily excludes someone, while even those it includes now practice their faith by permission rather than by right. Jones warned that no man can safely consent to legislation favoring his own faith, because in doing so he surrenders his right to change his mind if conscience later leads him elsewhere. Believers who welcome government endorsement today are building machinery that a future, less friendly administration will not hesitate to operate.

Finally, this is not a new argument invented by modern secularists. Congress itself settled it in 1829 and 1830, when men who had lived through the founding still sat in its chambers. Those reports declared that it is not the legitimate province of the legislature to determine what religion is true, that a representative is chosen to guard rights of man rather than restrict rights of conscience, and that human power may extort vain sacrifices, but the Deity alone can command the affections of the heart. Those words remain the government's own considered judgment on this question.

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

Respectfully,  
Susan Manke  
Berrien Springs, MI

**From:** Tui Silafau <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:37:53 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

It is with great and vital concern that I am writing to you. As a citizen of the United States, it has been my privilege and honor to be able to express my faith and belief in God freely. However, one of the key things that I have learned as a Christian and also as a citizen of this country, is not to make the same mistakes of the past. It was alarming to me that the Commission would want to tear down the wall that lies between church and state. This wall was not meant to be built as a terror but it was built as a safekeeping for all American people. As Americans, we should remember that one of the key things of our history is the fact that many of the people that fled from Europe before the 13 colonies were even formed were due to religious persecution coming from a world where church and state ruled together as one. So many lives were taken due to church and state ruling together during the Dark Ages and we don't want to go back there again.

To bridge church and state together would invite tyranny and the ruling of one religious sect rather than giving freedom to all to worship according to their conscience. This freedom has kept us as a nation free from one religion ruling as the conscience of our country and I ask you to please keep that freedom intact through a few actions:

1. I request that the Johnson Amendment may continue to be fully enforced.
2. I object to funding religious non-profit activities through bridging church and state.
3. I object to funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses through bridging church and state.
4. I object to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities.

Please do not turn your backs on the American people and the freedoms that we all hold dearly. I urge that you stand firmly to keep church and state separated.

With gratitude,

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Tui Silafau

**From:** Ezra St Juste <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ezra St Juste

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:38:01 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Commission's draft report.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve the longstanding constitutional principle that protects both religious liberty and civil government by maintaining a clear distinction between the authority of the state and the authority of religious institutions. This principle is not hostile to religion. Rather, it has been one of the greatest safeguards of religious freedom in American history, allowing faith to flourish without governmental control or coercion.

The First Amendment wisely protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits the establishment of religion by the government. It provides that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (U.S. Const. amend. I). These two protections are complementary. Together, they ensure that every American enjoys the freedom to worship according to conscience while preventing the government from exercising authority over matters that belong to God alone.

A distinction between church and state does not require government to be indifferent toward religion. On the contrary, government best supports religion by protecting every person's liberty of conscience equally. It fulfills its constitutional duty not by promoting one faith, one denomination, or one form of religious observance, but by ensuring that every citizen is free to worship or not worship, without governmental preference, coercion, or penalty. Such neutrality protects the rights of all Americans while preserving the integrity of religious institutions.

This principle is deeply consistent with the teachings of Scripture. Jesus Christ recognized separate spheres of responsibility when He declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21, KJV). Likewise, Christ stated, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36, KJV), making clear that the advancement of God's kingdom would not depend upon civil authority or political power.

Throughout Scripture, God consistently invites rather than compels worship. Joshua challenged Israel, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15, KJV). Christ Himself stands at the door and knocks rather than forcing entrance (Revelation 3:20, KJV). Genuine faith cannot be produced through legislation or governmental authority because worship is meaningful only when it is freely chosen. Civil government possesses authority to regulate public conduct necessary for peace and justice, but it cannot produce repentance, conversion, or sincere devotion.

This distinction also reflects the moral nature of the Ten Commandments. Civil law rightly protects society by prohibiting acts such as murder, theft, fraud, and violence. However, the duties owed directly to God, including worship, prayer, and the observance of sacred times or the Sabbath, are matters of conscience. Governments may regulate external conduct for the common good, but they cannot judge the sincerity of faith or compel love for God. Those responsibilities belong to the individual conscience under God alone.

History further demonstrates the wisdom of maintaining this distinction. Whenever governments have exercised authority over religious belief or practice, the result has too often been diminished liberty, religious division, and the corruption of both civil and religious institutions. Authentic faith thrives through conviction rather than

compulsion. Religion is strengthened by persuasion, example, and voluntary commitment, not by civil enforcement.

Indeed, history repeatedly shows that when religious communities seek governmental power to accomplish spiritual objectives, they often achieve the opposite. Civil authority may produce outward conformity, but it cannot transform the human heart. Laws may influence behavior, but they cannot create genuine faith. A church that relies upon the power of the state risks exchanging its moral influence for political influence, weakening both its spiritual witness and the public's confidence in its mission.

America's constitutional framework wisely recognized these realities. By protecting religious liberty while limiting governmental involvement in religion, our nation has fostered one of the most religiously diverse and vibrant societies in history. This constitutional arrangement has benefited believers of every faith tradition, as well as those who profess no religion, by ensuring equal protection under the law. We should be careful not to depart from these enduring constitutional safeguards, which have served our nation well for more than two centuries.

As a Christian, I would also offer a reflection from the nineteenth-century Christian author Ellen G. White. While not a constitutional authority, her observation captures an important historical principle:

"The union of the church with the state, be the degree ever so slight, while it may appear to bring the world nearer to the church, does in reality bring the church nearer to the world." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 297.)

Whether one approaches this statement from a religious or historical perspective, it reflects an enduring truth. The involvement of civil power in advancing religion ultimately does not strengthen the church. Instead, it can compromise the church's spiritual mission while eroding the religious liberty that protects every citizen's freedom of conscience.

James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," similarly warned in his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785) that religion "can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." Thomas Jefferson likewise wrote that legitimate civil government extends only to actions that affect others and not to the opinions or conscience of individuals (*Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*, 1786). These foundational principles helped shape America's constitutional commitment to religious liberty and remain as relevant today as when they were first written.

I respectfully encourage the Commission to reaffirm these foundational constitutional principles. Government best serves religion not by directing it, endorsing it, or enforcing it, but by faithfully protecting every person's God-given liberty of conscience. In doing so, it preserves both the constitutional freedoms upon which our Republic was founded and the voluntary nature of genuine religious faith.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

Ezra St Juste

**From:** Richard Moss <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - religious liberties draft report

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:38:34 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Regarding the report on religious liberties, I would like to offer the following comments:

- religious liberty includes the freedom to not believe in a god, or gods. The summary of the draft report includes a quote from Donald Trump that says "we must always be one nation under God". Our constitution does not require that. Nor should it...
- religious convictions should be decided by the individual, not the government
- allowing the posting and preaching of religious beliefs in schools and other government institutions, without EQUAL representation from all other beliefs is inappropriate pressure. And the inclusion of all beliefs is impractical if not impossible. Leave religious teaching and advocacy to churches, and other venues that don't force exposure on others.
- including religious practice in public schools and government institutions implies that someone in government knows the Truth. Who do you think that is? Why would you trust that person, who is implicitly placing his faith IN Government?

**From:** Ostap Dzyndrai <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please Read

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:38:45 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I request that you please deeply consider your decision relating the combining church and state legislation.

The present recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission, unless arrested, will be heading to ceaseless strife and complete undoing what made America great and free, in the first place. If MAGA will ever succeed, the flag of liberty of conscience needs to keep waving over American shores and the walls of separation between church and state must remain standing.

Blessings,

Ostap Dzyndra, President

[REDACTED] PII cell

[www.buildandrestore.org](http://www.buildandrestore.org)

**Build and Restore International**

*And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places ... Isaiah 58:12*

**From:** "Thompson, Chris" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:39:19 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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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 accept government money, the corruption of politics flows into our churches. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of God. The supreme authority for any person is the God of the universe.

Everyone keeps saying that the constitution doesn't specifically talk about the separation of church and state. However, this country was founded upon the principles of freedom and free choice in all areas of life but specifically religion. The pilgrims were persecuted for their religion in Europe and made their way to America to avoid this persecution. They found this freedom here. The founding fathers were greatly aware of this in their contemplation of the government of this country. It is amply demonstrated by the history of Rome and the Roman Catholic church. When the Roman church and government were "one" entity, any person who exercised or expressed their own choice according to their conscience were ex-communicated from the church and potentially put to death in medieval Europe.

To remain free, the control of the church needs to remain free from the control of the government. God has allowed a person to choose whether to follow God and this God-given right should never be compelled or required by a government. Nor should a government dictate the conscience of any individual.

Please keep church and state separate as this is how we keep both of them free.

Thank you!

*Chris*  
**Christine Thompson**

[REDACTED]  
PII

[REDACTED]  
PII

**From:** " [REDACTED] PII "i [REDACTED] PII >

**To:** "Religious Liberty Commission at" [REDACTED] PII >

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religion and government institutions separate.

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:40:15 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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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, Linda Beaumonte

**From:** Robert <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:40:36 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Guide\_to\_Responding\_copy.pdf

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# 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](http://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 Boller—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]

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]

[City, State]

Robert Wewer & Mabeline Wewer  
TN Cookeville

**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Your Name]

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]

[City, State]

Robert Wewer & Mabeline Wewer  
TN Cookeville

***Share this with ~~ev~~everyone you know that might  
have an interest in our freedoms.***

***Please consider making a donation at:***

**[pillaroffreedom.org](http://pillaroffreedom.org)**

**From:** Nai Liveirai<[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:40:43 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

Sincerely,

Naiala Oliveira

Rancho Santa Margarita, California.



**From:** bernelda gonzales <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:40:47 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent government from establishing or favoring religion. In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Bernelda Gonzales

**From:** April Darcy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] A stand against a bridge

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:42:59 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

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

That wall wasn't built by on persons grand idea to keep religion down. It was built by people who experience persecution and hard ships from other religious groups who wanted to force their beliefs upon others to keep the church free and the people free they came together and made separation.

A bridge doesn't strengthen the church or the non church members; 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 or personal conviction. History is clear about what happens when church and state join together and it isn't good for either one.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church and the state and all the people in general. Because If we don't provide a place for God to work In the beautiful way He intended. Then he will work with other means. And that will mean trouble for all. Please reconsider this matter.

Sincerely,

April Jacobson

Lunenburg, MA

**From:** Richard Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ruling on Separation of Church and State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:44:05 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully ask you to first consider on your ruling of NO separation of church and state, and what the Supreme Court has ruled in the past on this subject, and how can that be if there is no such thing as separation of church and state? Here are the rulings 

**The U.S. Supreme Court has issued several landmark decisions addressing the separation of church and state. Notable cases include *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), which established the 'wall of separation' principle, and *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), which ruled against state-sponsored prayer in public schools. More recent cases like *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022) have further defined the boundaries between government and religious expression in public institutions.**

I know with the prayer in schools many Christian's are going to question but really what if you live in a Catholic area and someone leads a prayer to Mary? Or you are another religion. Let us not forget that there is always the freedom for students to pray and that must come from the home not the government.

Also I ask you to consider the words of Jesus in John 18:36, in which Jesus tells Pilate that His Kingdom is not of this world: "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 KJV

At the same time I believe we are told in Revelation 12, that God foretold about America being given as a place that the woman, which was the church, would escaped persecution from the very thing you are creating once again with the union of church and state because any time you unite the two, you no longer have freedom of religion. And so this very clause in the first amendment that does not use the very words but has the same meaning and that has separated the two is what has made America so GREAT with freedom of religion for ALL, not just one group and it holds persecution at bay.

And who knew this better than Roger Williams and the Puritans, in which the Puritans united church and state and they did the same thing, persecuting those who did not believe like they did, and this is what they ran from, and so who knows this better than Roger Williams.

I recommend you reading the book

"Rodger Williams and the Creation of American Soul." It should be required in all our schools. In which he makes this statement:

"Williams described the true church as a beautiful and magnificent garden, unsullied and pure, resonant of Eden. The world he described as 'the Wildernesse.' 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

And then we are reminded of what James says of this world you are wanting to be mixed with the church:

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” James 4:4 KJV

One thing we must remember about God, He to is all about free choice, other wise there can be no true love, of which we are told God is, He never uses force against any thing He has created, this is why He has allowed sin to exist, other wise everyone would serve Him out of fear and not love.

So my question to you, do you really want to go against this same principle and bring about fear in America because this ruling will bring about laws that will bring force to those who don't believe what the government will mandate, just like the past. This new phrase of the “common good”, common tells me from scripture that it's man made and not sacred, and good was part of the tree in the garden that man was not to eat of, after all the wisest man Solomon tells us twice once in Proverbs 16:25 and here:

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death.” Proverbs 14:12

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.

Also as an SDA, I also want to share counsel given years ago warning what we are seeing right now with this ruling because behind it are plans for Sunday laws stated in the plans of Project 2025.

Here is the counsel given years ago...

The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending.... They are working in blindness. They do not see that if a Protestant government sacrifices the principles that have made them a free, independent nation, and through legislation brings into the Constitution principles that will propagate papal falsehood and papal delusion, they are plunging into the Roman horrors of the Dark Ages.—The Review and Herald Extra, December 11, 1888. – {LDE 125.3}

There are many, even of those engaged in this movement for Sunday enforcement, who are blinded to the results which will follow this action. They do not see that they are striking directly against religious liberty. There are many who have never understood the claims of the Bible Sabbath and the false foundation upon which the Sunday institution rests.... – {LDE 126.1}

Case in point to the Sunday laws as stated above is the experience of Seventh-day Adventists 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.

And so please realize that 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.

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.

So please keep America GREAT and don't take us back to the dark ages.

And I say this knowing one day it's going to happen, but one must always stand for the true way of God, to hold back the evil that comes with any uniting of church and state. The real answer is for the church to come back to God and LOVE GOD so much that it will keep ALL 10 of His Commandments as Jesus stated in John 14:15 because as James tells us...

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10 KJV

So actually the moral fall in America is the fault of the church not the state and here is some history on what was foretold in prophecy and has happened at the end of the protestant reformation, of which we are seeing fulfilled now as well with this ruling on separation of church and state ... PS the three angels message referred to below  is found in Rev 14:6-12.

“The second angel’s message of Revelation 14 was first preached in the summer of 1844, and it then had a more direct application to the churches of the United States, where the warning of the judgment had been most widely proclaimed and most generally rejected, and where the declension in the churches had been most rapid. But the message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844. The churches then experienced a moral fall, in consequence of their refusal of the light of the advent message; but that fall was not complete. As they have continued to reject the special truths for this time they have fallen lower and lower. Not yet, however, can it be said that “Babylon is fallen,... because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” She has not yet made all nations do this. The spirit of world conforming and indifference to the testing truths for our time exists and has been gaining ground in churches of the Protestant faith in all the countries of Christendom; and these churches are included in the solemn and terrible denunciation of the second angel. But the work of apostasy has not yet reached its culmination. – {GC 389.2}

“The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, Satan will work “with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;” and they that “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,” will be left to receive “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11. Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a progressive one, and the perfect fulfillment of Revelation 14:8 is yet future. – {GC 389.

“Babylon is said to be “the mother of harlots.” By her daughters must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world. The message of Revelation 14, announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt. Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days; therefore it cannot refer to the Roman Church alone, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. Furthermore, in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this scripture, many of God’s people must still be in Babylon. And in what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the various churches professing the Protestant faith. At the time of their rise these churches took a noble stand for God and the truth, and His blessing was with them. Even the unbelieving world was constrained to acknowledge the beneficent results that followed an acceptance of the principles of the gospel. In the words of the prophet to Israel: “Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.” But they fell by the same desire which was the curse and ruin of Israel—the desire of imitating the practices and courting the friendship of the ungodly. “Thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown.” Ezekiel 16:14, 15. – {GC 382.3}

“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.”

James 2:10 ESV

By consenting to break one precept, men are brought under Satan's power. By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world.

Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the papacy. By a national act enforcing the false sabbath they will give life and vigor to the corrupt faith of Rome, reviving her tyranny and oppression of conscience.—Maranatha, 179 (1893). – {LDE 128.3}

So 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.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Johnson from  
Chattanooga TN.

Sent from my iPhone  
Richard Johnson

**From:** Annette Metz <[REDACTED] PII >

**To:** [REDACTED] PII

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state= important for all Christians

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:44:11 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a grateful citizen of the United States. My name is Annette Metz 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!

Annette Metz

These views are my own though the text was borrowed by a pastor-friend. It expresses my own views more eloquently than I could express it. May God continue to bless the separation of church and state in the United States of America where I reside as a Christian.

**From:** Dana Ortmann <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Church-State Separation - Dana Ortmann

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:44:49 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I come from a family of Veterans and they taught me that freedom is important... for everyone.

In light of this, I am writing to express my strong opposition to any efforts to redefine or diminish the historic separation of church and state in the United States.

The bedrock of our religious liberty is the First Amendment's guarantee that the government will not establish a state religion or favor one set of beliefs over another. The Establishment Clause exists to ensure that all Americans remain free to practice their faith, or to practice no faith at all, without state interference or coercion.

The principle of keeping distinct boundaries between civil authority and matters of conscience has protected religious diversity and freedom in our country for centuries. Moving away from this foundational concept threatens equal treatment and risks privileging particular religious views over others.

I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any recommendations that undermine the separation of church and state, and to uphold the constitutional neutrality that preserves liberty for all.

Sincerely,  
Dana Ortmann



**From:** Jack Ramos <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report Comment

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:44:58 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

After looking through the information discussed in your last meeting, I would like to respectfully disagree with the commission's recommendation to reinterpret the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state. The separation of church and state and religious liberty have been the cornerstones that have held our nation together for the last 250 years. History shows repeatedly when the state had power over the church, or the church had power of the state, persecution has always been the result. Was this not the reason why the pilgrims came to America, to escape that religious persecution? When federal laws such as the Johnson Amendment are repealed or weakened, there is concern that the distinction between church and state could erode, creating circumstances in which religious beliefs or practices may be enforced through government in ways that undermine the freedom of conscience of those who hold different beliefs.

I am a sophomore university student and happened to write a cause-and-effect essay for my English class on the unity of church and state. I thought that I'd like to share.

### Consequences of Unity of Church and State in America

The unity of church and state has been a large and controversial topic in today's age, especially in America. Many claim that the church must direct the state like it did in old times, while some argue that this unity should be avoided as it will result in much conflict as history has revealed. For the purpose of this paper, "unity of church and state" is defined as the establishment of a church in a government, eventually giving the church power to enforce its religious laws and practices on the people, with a penalty if disobeyed. This paper will attempt to explain the potential consequences that could arise, looking both at our laws today and what has occurred in the past, if this were to take place in America. The unity of church and state would negatively affect America by violating the First Amendment, undermining freedom of conscience, and ultimately resulting in persecution.

When looking at the constitution, it should be obvious that the immediate effect of a unity of church and state would be a violation of the First Amendment. Many prominent Christians and individuals in the government are seen to be promoting the union of church and state, saying there is nothing in the constitution that goes against it. Although there is no direct quote in the constitution that says, "No union of Church and State," it is clear when it says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" ("Freedom of Religion"). On top of this, the Constitutional Convention states, "The civil rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established, nor shall the full and equal rights of conscience be in any manner, or on any pretext, infringed." The establishment of a national religion, either officially or unofficially, is sure to lead to the church enforcing its practices and beliefs, resulting in the rights of the people to be "abridged," as the Constitutional Convention states, violating the First Amendment.

One will find that church-state union will threaten freedom of conscience, one of the foundational principles of the United States, as shown in the past. Freedom of conscience is the right of an individual to hold a personal moral or religious belief on what is right and wrong without the government interfering. The Middle

Ages, times when the Catholic Church and the state worked together, revealed that people were forced to adhere to certain religious practices, morals, and beliefs. If they did not, there would be severe punishments. An example of this at that time would be the observance of Sunday worship, “Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the Sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord’s Day” (Council of Laodicea, Canon 29). The Catholic Church at that time even got so severe as to say, “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” (White 564.5). Based on what history has revealed, these are the extremities that eventually would result if the church were to gain state power in America, they would legislate morality, going against everything our country stands for.

Ultimately, when freedom of conscience is disregarded, the next step is persecution. This is emphasized to a great extent in the book, *The Great Controversy*, that highlighted events during the Middle Ages. The author states, “when Rome at one time determined to exterminate the hated sect, a bull was issued by the pope, condemning them as heretics, and delivering them to slaughter” (White 77.1). These “heretics,” people who hold beliefs and practices that go contrary to that of the church, were condemned to die for not obeying the religious dictates of the church. In America today, there are many prominent Christians and Catholics (either in the government or very influential in the government) that are pushing for enforcing religious morality, such as a day of rest. Joel Webbon, a strong Christian Nationalist that advocates for church-state union states, “start punishing blasphemers (of Jesus) and also reinstall Sabbath laws,” while responding to people who “want to get back to their American heritage” (Right Wing Watch Reports). If this were to occur, what could be the result of those that disagree with, let us say, the particular day to rest on? As referred to above, history shows what the result would be.

The unity of church and state may sound beneficial in that it will better the morals of the nation. Yet, it could have serious negative effects: freedom of conscience trampled on, which leads to severe persecution and chaos. Even the First Amendment would be disregarded and could cause much confusion and unnecessary conflict. This should be a topic that Americans consider and care about. The principles of our country are important and are the key ingredients that have preserved us as a nation for 250 years. If these laws and principles were to be disregarded and worked around for “the greater good,” it could lead to consequences that undermine the long-term stability of our country.

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**From:** Connie Richards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Concerns for our Freedoms

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:45:25 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this public comment with the desire to keep our religious Liberty and not have a union of church and state.

We were born and have lived our lives with the precious freedom to worship God according to our conscience without government interference. We would like that freedom to continue.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Richards

From Idaho

**From:** hpihouzi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:45:55 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To whom it may concern,

I write to urge your steadfast support for the separation of church and state — not as a limitation upon religion, but as its most reliable safeguard.

This principle was not incidental to our founding; it was deliberate. Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to the Danbury Baptists, described a “wall of separation between church and state,” offered specifically to protect a religious minority from government encroachment. James Madison, principal author of the First Amendment, articulated the same conviction with even greater rigor in his Memorial and Remonstrance, where he catalogued the dangers of entangling civil authority with religious observance. Any claim that this was not the founders’ intent does not withstand scrutiny of the historical record.

History bears this out repeatedly. Wherever church and state have been fused, liberty has suffered the consequences. Europe’s history of religious coercion and bloodshed stands as sufficient warning. Contemporary examples, where governments claim religious authority, further illustrate how readily faith is reduced to an instrument of political control once that boundary is erased.

There is a theological dimension to this argument as well, one I believe merits serious consideration. Throughout Scripture, God does not compel worship. He invites, He reasons, He calls — but He does not coerce. This is because devotion obtained under compulsion ceases to be genuine devotion. If this is the pattern established by divine authority itself, civil government has no legitimate claim to a different standard. When political leaders invoke God’s name to secure or consolidate power, they misuse that name for ends it was never intended to serve.

I therefore ask you to give this matter your serious and deliberate attention. The freedom of conscience that separation of church and state secures is foundational both to this Republic and to the integrity of religious faith itself. History leaves little doubt: when that boundary is abandoned, liberty diminishes and faith is corrupted in the process. I ask you to defend it.

Respectfully,

Harvey Palmer

Meridianville, Alabama

**From:** Melisa Reinmuth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:46:04 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a concerned citizen about the report's recommendations to blur the line between church and state — particularly the proposals to direct public funds toward religious activities and to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

Government money and church life don't mix well. Once churches start relying on public funding or wading into partisan campaigns, they end up beholden to politicians rather than to their own conscience and God — competing for grants and currying favor instead of staying true to their mission. That's a loss for both religion and government. The wall between church and state wasn't erected by secularists to weaken faith; it was built largely by religious people themselves, precisely to keep faith safe from political interference — and it's a big reason religious life has flourished here. I'd urge you to preserve that separation. It's what keeps both church and state genuinely free.

Thank you in advance for reading my comments and carefully considering them.

Sincerely,  
MelisaiAree  
Redlands, CA

**From:** Tracie & Duane Gustrowsky <[REDACTED] PII>

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty report to the President

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:46:26 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

Please accept the following brief comments concerning the Commission's report to the President.

I appreciate the Commission's emphasis on restoring a reasonable understanding of everyone's inherent right to express their faith, or not to, in the public square. The experiences noted of different citizens who suffered to varying degrees for that expression, were a fresh reminder that a significant misunderstanding has emerged over the years of the First Amendment phrase "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

I appreciate also the Commission's recommendations that seek to eliminate the often adversarial relationship between organized religion, especially Christianity, and the federal government. The report used the phrase "building bridges between church and state." This is a welcome gesture when implemented in a passive sense.

However, some of the recommendations for implementing the bridge-building are troubling. These are more of an active nature.

One is the equal treatment rule proposal to ensure faith-based groups may compete for federal funds without facing the loss of religious identity. This rule is based on the supposition that tax revenue should be available to religious groups for charitable purposes and education. I have long disagreed with the proposal to use taxpayer funds to support ministries and groups that I differ with on fundamental teachings and lifestyle. Support should be left with those who believe in the religion or cause of their choice, not pooled from all taxpayers, many of whom choose no faith or religion.

To the same fundamental issue, tax revenue should not "follow the child" to religious schools. Another problem for schools is that with significant portions of their budgets funded by government, their budgets can easily become far too dependent on public funds, and threaten extinction of the school if there are insufficient private funds available when federal budget priorities may change, causing significant cuts to religious schools.

The government needs to reduce its size to the point of keeping religious institutions private and independently sustainable while those institutions focus on their mission. The church needs to be solely focused on its mission to carry the gospel to the people and the government needs to stay focused on its mission to enforce good law evenhandedly for all citizens while staying out of anything that favors, or promotes, religion using taxpayer funds.

It is true that the phrase "wall of separation" is not found in the Constitution. I hope that observation will not now, nor in the future, blind anyone to the greater truth of the intent of the First Amendment, which recognizes the separation heard long ago in the words of Jesus Christ, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Luke 20:25.

Thank you for your consideration.

Duane Gustrowsky

[REDACTED] PII

**From:** Daniel Blue <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pillar of freedoms response

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:46:45 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I Agree with the pillar of freedoms response on separation of church and states reponce. Pleese implement them!

Thank you!

Daniel Blue.



**From:** John Richards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Concerns for our freedoms To the White House liberty commission,I respectfully submit this comment. I would like to continue to have the right of Religious liberty and no union of Church and state. We were born to live our lives with freedom to worship God according to our conscience. I would like that freedom to continue. Thank you John Richards from Idaho

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:47:36 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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**From:** gary sidney <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Preserve Separation of Church and State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:48:21 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent government from establishing or favoring religion. In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Gary Sidney

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

**From:** Sandra Hrabowy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:48:28 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Please keep the separation of church and state, this is a free country and the government of a free country has no business compelling anyone to join a religion or Christian denomination. The GOD of The Bible does not force or compel, He wants people to freely choose to serve Him because they appreciate His character and love Him.

Sandy Hrabowy  
Hubbard, Ohio

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

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church/Religion and State

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:49:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

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Dear RLC and DOJ:

This is to urge you to embrace the benefits to religion and to religious freedom from the separation of church and state.

The separation of church and state was the clear original intent of the founders whose ideas formed both the Declaration of Independence (Jefferson) and 1st Amendment to The Constitution (Madison), itself. Separation of church and state is both the true conservative position and what allows religion to flourish in a free society.

As you know, the term "separation of church and state" comes from Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists, advocating for a "wall of separation"— for the protection of the religious freedom of a (then) religious minority. Madison, "The Father of the Constitution," listed 15 reasons (in Madison's Remonstrances) why, in a free republic, church and state should remain separate. To state that church/state separation was not the intent of the founding fathers is dishonest, at best. The ideas of Jefferson and Madison were codified in our American creed, The Declaration of Independence, and in The Constitution. Further, the movement to integrate church and state is a dangerous return to the European model — which yielded centuries of bloody religious wars and a stifling of evangelism. There is no history where the integration of church and state worked well for free people. In fact, church and state integration is the catalyst to religious persecution. This is clear, currently, in theocratic countries like Iran.

I respectfully urge you to do what you know to be right. Political expedience in God's name, violates the 2nd Commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Resist the hypocrisy. God does not force compliance. Neither should the state. Do not politicize religion. It is ungodly.

Sincerely,

Michelle Riley Jones  
Bowie, MD

"The thing to do, is to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud."--Dr. Maya Angelou

**From:** Jovy Martin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:49:49 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

**From:** Oliver BJ Archer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:50:10 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

I believe that the church and the state should operate in different spheres. I believe that Churches and their leaders should be free to speak on moral issues, but church or church leaders should not exercise governmental authority or function as partisan political organizations.. 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. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free. Below are my thoughts about the conclusions of your report.

1. I don't believe that the Johnson Amendment should be repealed. In fact, I believe that the Johnson Amendment should be fully enforced.
2. I object to all special treatment given Jewish people and the state of Israel, and desire that the government take a neutral stance towards all religious groups. That means that the government should never favor any religious sects nor target any religious sect for restrictions.
3. I believe that government money should not be used to support any religious institutions directly. This would include using public funds to support religious clubs or organizations on public campuses.

As a Christian, I support the separation of church and state because I believe Jesus distinguished His kingdom from earthly political power. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight... but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36). Keeping church and state separate protects both religious liberty and the integrity of the church.

Sincerely

Oliver B.J. Archer

**From:** Jamie Swingle <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:50:44 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of this blessed country 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.

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,

Jamie Swingle, CBAP  
Centerville, Tennessee

**From:** Violet Eads <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] I hope and pray the right decision is to not join Church and State I believe in  
RELIGIOUS Liberty vs and Pillow of Freedom

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:52:05 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Sent from my iPhone



**From:** Brenda Sullivan <[REDACTED] PII>

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] To preserve separation of church and state

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:52:48 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent government from establishing or favoring religion. In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Brenda Sullivan

**From:** Pat Arrabito <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments re The RL Commission Report

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:53:22 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Thank you for your work on defining and protecting Religious Liberty in the USA. I did already send a comment in regarding the separation of church and state. I would also like to comment on the Commission's goal of gutting the Johnson Amendment.

I believe this amendment protects churches from becoming tools of partisan politics, and should remain in place. Pastors can voice their opinions out of the pulpit, but they should not bring politics into the pulpit, and should not use the pulpit to promote political candidates.

Removing the Johnson Amendment will make churches vulnerable to corruption through donations for political candidates, and will destroy the message of the gospel. I wish we didn't need such an amendment; I wish pastors and churches would not even consider promoting candidates or political agendas, because that causes divisions and detracts from the gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings unity in the midst of the diversity of opinions.

But because there are corrupt church leaders, and because funding can be so attractive, churches are an easy target for exploiters, without the Johnson Amendment in place.

Church should be no place for the promotion of political candidates. So please, do not remove the Johnson Amendment. Let it remain as a protection for churches and the state.

Thank you for hearing my voice,

Patsy Arrabito

**From:** Harriet Evans <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:53:50 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Harriet Evans

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a Great Grandmother in my mid 80's and having been blessed to be born in this wonderful country way back in the old day, I have so much to be thankful for, but in recent years there have been many thing that I find very troubling for me as a life long Christian. There is one thing in particular has been brought to my attention, and that is why I'm 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. Those two items have so far kept the Government out of how I choose to worship God and my freedom to do so, and it troubles me greatly that there are now attempts to weaken that wall of separation.

I can understand how 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 in the good old US of A!

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,

Harriet Evans

Whitwell, Tennessee

**From:** Livvie Gates <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public comment

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:54:56 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I am writing because I am a Christian and I appreciate the freedom I have in this country to follow the dictates of my heart and worship as I choose. Please do not mix religion and politics or both will suffer. Keep religion and politics separate!!  
Thank you for listening to my comments. Ann  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Jeremy H. [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Letter of Respectful Concern

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:55:23 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report. I write as a concerned citizen who shares the Commission's conviction that religious liberty is our first freedom, and I want to begin by acknowledging what the report gets right.

The report's commitment to religious accommodation is commendable and concrete. Its recommendations that the EEOC enforce workplace accommodations for Sabbath observance and religious attire, that the military streamline accommodations for religious diet, dress, and days of worship, and that healthcare workers receive meaningful conscience protections would offer real relief to Americans whose practices differ from the majority's — the very people for whom religious liberty is most often a lived question rather than an abstraction. Equally welcome is the report's own governing principle, stated by one of its commissioners: religious liberty is either for everyone or for no one. That standard is exactly right, and I offer the following observations in its light.

First, the historical account in Chapter 2 attributes the separation of church and state to nineteenth- and twentieth-century European philosophy. The record suggests an older and more American lineage. Roger Williams articulated the principle in 1644. Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance followed in 1785, Virginia's Statute for Religious Freedom in 1786, and the First Amendment in 1791. When Jefferson wrote of a "wall of separation" in 1802, his audience was a Baptist congregation that had known religious disfavor firsthand and received the metaphor with gratitude. A principle fully expressed by 1802 is difficult to attribute to philosophers writing generations later, and the report's historical chapter would be strengthened — not weakened — by claiming this lineage of believers rather than conceding the principle to its critics.

Second, and measured against the report's own everyone-or-no-one standard, several recommendations give me pause: federal support for Ten Commandments displays in public school classrooms, government guidance facilitating devotional exercises and chaplaincy programs in K-12 schools, and repeal of the Johnson Amendment. Each asks government to lend its weight to religious expression, and government weight is never distributed evenly. In a classroom, the faith that appears on the wall is the faith the state has chosen; the children whose traditions differ — in their day of worship, their dress, their conscience — learn early that they are guests in their own public institutions. The same accommodations the report rightly champions exist because minority believers have always depended on a government that favors no faith. Recommendations that place the state's endorsement behind some expressions of faith sit uneasily beside the report's promise of liberty for all, and I would respectfully ask the Commission to weigh whether they can be reconciled with it.

History's lesson here is quiet but consistent: when government and religion draw too close, the cost falls first on the least numerous. The Commission has an opportunity to produce a report whose recommendations are as evenhanded as its stated principle. My hope is that the final version seizes it — and preserves, for every community of faith however small, the inheritance that has made American religious liberty the envy of the world.

With respect and appreciation for the Commission's work,

Jeremy H.

This communication is for the use of the intended recipient only. It may contain information that is privileged and confidential. If you are not the intended recipient of this communication, any disclosure, copying, further distribution or use thereof is prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify me by return e-mail and delete/destroy it.

**From:** Rebekah Hamilton <[REDACTED] PII >

**To:** [REDACTED] PII, Rebekah Hamilton <[REDACTED] PII >

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:55:23 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I'm writing as a citizen to share my deep concern in weakening the separation of church and state. I believe that the separation of church and state is the strength of the United States of America. It is our God given right to have freedom of speech and worship. And the Separation of Church and State is the only way to truly have that freedom.

I am praying that the Lord will guide you,

Sincerely,  
Rebekah Hamilton

**From:** Francisco Lozano <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Francisco Lozano

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:55:30 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a citizen who cares that both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses survive intact. My concern is not for one faith over another, but for the structure that protects all of them, including the beliefs of the person who reads this letter and disagrees with me.

The first thing I would ask any commissioner to hold onto is this: rights that exist only because a majority currently favors them are not rights at all, but permissions, revocable whenever the vote shifts. The older religious liberty literature put the definition plainly: a right is inherent in the one possessing it, independent of the will of all other persons. That is the whole reason we write rights into a Constitution rather than leaving them to referendum. Popular government exists to protect the minority, precisely because the majority can already take care of itself at the ballot box. When Senator Blair told a witness before Congress that most Americans favored a certain religious law, the answer given then still holds: the people, however numerous, have no right to invade another person's relationship to God. A commission asked to endorse religious displays or instruction on the grounds that a great many citizens would welcome them should recognize that argument for what it is — a majority claiming authority it was never given.

The deeper reason government lacks that authority is not merely that a clause forbids it, but that the power was never delegated in the first place. Our government rests on consent — on powers the people hand over. But no person can hand over his own conscience to a representative; a man can authorize an agent to manage his property, never to believe in his place. Since religious authority could never be delegated, it could never be received. Government cannot answer for anyone's soul at judgment, and authority without accountability is a claim no legitimate government can rightly make. The Establishment Clause did not invent this boundary; it simply recorded a limit that was already true of any government resting on delegated consent.

This is why I would urge the Commission to resist framing the two clauses as being in tension, as though free exercise sometimes requires establishment-style support. Any law favoring a religion must first define which religion qualifies, and that definition necessarily excludes someone — while even those included now practice their faith by legislative permission rather than by right. There is something worth sitting with in the old warning that no one can safely legislate in favor of his own creed, because doing so forfeits his liberty to change his mind if conscience later leads him elsewhere. Believers who welcome government favor today should ask who will hold that same machinery tomorrow, under a very different administration and a very different faith.

I offer these points not as abstractions but as convictions I hold personally, and I trust the Commission will weigh them with the seriousness they deserve.

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

Respectfully,  
Francisco Lozano

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Dilia E Rodriguez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Cc:** Dilia E Rodriguez <[REDACTED] PII >

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 14 (The Path Forward) - Dilia E. Rodriguez

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:55:44 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I thank President Donald Trump and the Religious Liberty Commission for this comprehensive report on the foundations of religious liberty in our nation and the assessment of the many ways in which it has been attacked and eroded. The many enemies of religious freedom, as well as other freedoms, are very good at obfuscating and redefining terms and principles. This report opens the way to begin to renew our religious freedom. It is a great gift to the nation on its 250th anniversary.



**From:**

PII

**To:**

PII

PII

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:56:04 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Religious Liberty Commission

I am a woman of faith and very concerned about the (Bridging) the gap between Church and State. This would be going backward in a violent history of the past of what the merging of Church and State would produce. Please reconsider this prayerfully because I see no positive outcome for our future if this happens.

Respectively,  
Faithful Citizen and God Fearing Child of God

**From:** Elisheba Weathets <[REDACTED] PII >

**To:** [REDACTED] PII

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Presidential commission report

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:57:18 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I believe that the constitution may not spell out church and state separation, but the principal is there. In the 10 Commandments, the first table is between God and man and government should have no say into what I believe because that's between me and God. The second table is where government has a say in what we do concerning ourselves and man other individuals our neighbors. Therefore, church and state should be separate.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Nick Will <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT– Church and State - Nicholas Will

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:58:29 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a citizen of the United States, I urge you to reconsider the recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state — replacing the “wall” with a “bridge,” directing public money to religious activities, and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

As a person of deep faith in God, I find this alarming. The wall of separation was built by believers to keep the church free, not by secularists to suppress the church. A bridge invites government funding and partisan politics into the church, until congregations answer to politicians instead of to God. History shows that entangling church and state harms both. Jesus himself established this separation saying “My kingdom is not of this world” and “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s and to God that which is God’s.”

Please keep the wall. It doesn’t constrain the church — it protects it, and it’s how we keep both church and state free.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Will, MD

[REDACTED]  
PII

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**From:** Tim Nirk <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please to not repeal the Johnson Amendment!

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 13:59:57 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Please accept this email from a concerned US citizen and a Bible believer as a request NOT to repeal the Johnson Amendment!

Best Regards,

Tim Nirk

**From:** Rachel Morgan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The Protection of our Religious Liberty at Stake

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:01:16 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

I know that as a free citizen, it is a treasure to have and to uphold religious liberty. The founding fathers understood this and were not trying to build a bridge but a wall to keep church and state separate. I know that you all are declaring that the separation of church and state is a lie, and recommending to tear down the wall of church and state and build a bridge. Dear friend, I believe it will not bring blessing but this will bring disaster to our society and this will bring us back to the time where a church ruled and influenced the state with an iron fist. Enforcing religion. Crossing the line between Christ-like to anti-christ I believe that this recommendation that you proposing will not save our nation but Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior only. He said "I Am The Way, The Truth and The Life..." John 14:6. He also said that we are to keep church and state separate "...render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God." Matthew 22:21. Jesus especially stated about Himself that "...if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32. This quote from Jesus is specifically referring to His crucifixion, but it can be used "lawfully" to point to the christian's duty in missionary work. I believe the founding fathers, myself a christian, other christian's alike, and a vast majority of others in this country alone believe and understand that uplifting Christ is a personal conviction and the state should not enforce or hinder the voice or advancements toward proclaiming Jesus and His message: The Everlasting Gospel. This is also supported by our Constitution regarding or freedom of religion, speen, and assembly.

I believe it is not your intention to do so. I believe that you are part of the longing, of men and women in high and low positions who would want to make this country a better place, and bring people to the Lord and may want to uphold Gods' Laws. However, God; Jesus does not want us to enforce them. He wants us, personally, to embrace, uphold, and share Him and His Laws. According to the scriptures, Jesus would be displeased if we try to enforce Him and His Messages on any one. God is a God of Love not force.

Jesus' disciples were once on a mission with Him, going about trying to convert the people and were angry at the villages for not accepting His Message: The gift of Salvation. They asked Jesus if they could ask The Father to destroy them. While the rage in their hearts towards those who did not follow Him stirred: Jesus our Lord and Savior rebuked them and Said "...ye know not what spirit ye are of. For The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." Luke 9:54-56. God gave Adam and Eve free will in the garden of Eden and has never taken it away form any man or women at any time. Christ was trying teach the disciples that the results of people accepting or rejecting Christ is a personal decision and not up to mankind to punish or destroy anyone who turned away from Christ.

Lastly, the scripture says The Holy Spirit Is our Teacher and will "...guide you into all truth..." John 16:13. It also states that He will convict the world of "...sin, and ofirighteousness, and judgement." John 16:8. If the state becomes involved with spiritual things, our liberty of conscience will be challenged so great, that the consequences would be unimaginable.

Please, please do not recommend that this wall of protection between church and state be broken down. God is Able: The Holy Spirit is Powerful enough to bring this nation and the whole at once to salvation and righteousness.

warmest regards,  
Rachel Morgan

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:02:20 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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(2nd email without personal address-please delete first one sent within the hour).

July 13, 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 the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

*It was brought to my attention that our government is questioning the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state. This is extremely alarming to me as history clearly shows what happens when church and state are united and not kept separate. The government would make laws that affect religious freedom and all that don't agree are targeted and persecuted. This should not be for our wonderful country-the land of the free...*

*I respectfully request that the Department of Justice to not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it also convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to study more comprehensively the question of the separation of church and state in history. This is a very important topic that deserves more public input. Thank you for your consideration in this extremely important matter.*

*Sincerely,*

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [REDACTED] PII

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:02:23 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Our\_letter\_to\_RLC.pdf

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July 13, 2026

From: Eiji and Carol Minami

[REDACTED] PII

To: 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 Commissioners,

We read the Religious Liberty Draft Report you have presented recently.

We are in strong disagreement with you on your interpretation of the American history and how the founding fathers came to the principle of the separation of church and state. Our suspicion is that you are being purposely ignorant about the course of the history and that you are using history in a distorted way to manipulate the truly ignorant people of America.

The world history and the early American history (before the establishment of the United States and its constitution) clearly show that the union of church and state ALWAYS, without exception, resulted in persecution of one group over another.

Whereas, we are in full agreement with you on freedom of religion and liberty of conscience, your proposed action will lead to the exact opposite effect of what you are intending to accomplish.

We request earnestly that you seriously revise your report in the fundamental points as mentioned above, which is really rather simple and obvious.

Sincerely yours,

Eiji and Carol Minami

Sent from [Outlook](#)



July 13, 2026

From: Eiji and Carol Minami

PII

To: 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 Commissioners,

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The world history and the early American history (before the establishment of the United States and its constitution) clearly show that the union of church and state **ALWAYS**, without exception, resulted in persecution of one group over another.

Whereas, we are in full agreement with you on freedom of religion and liberty of conscience, your proposed action will lead to the exact opposite effect of what you are intending to accomplish.

We request earnestly that you seriously revise your report in the fundamental points as mentioned above, which is really rather simple and obvious.

Sincerely yours,

Eiji and Carol Minami

**From:** cathy albert <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Liberty of conscious

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:02:35 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Hello, I stand on the word of God which based on freedom to choose who you want to worship, I highly recommend the freedom of liberty, the liberty of conscious.

Cathy

**From:** Shelly Nystrom <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] My response regarding the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:02:40 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

I am sending this letter to voice my opinion regarding the recent Religious Liberty Report and the recommendation to get rid of separation of church and state in the United States of America. The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. It is true that the actual words do not appear in the constitution. However, the first amendment in the Bill of Rights encompasses the principle of separation of church and state. See below:

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.

History is full of examples of persecution when the church and state work together. In fact, this is something the Pilgrims (etc.) were trying to get away from. They wanted to go to a land where they were free to worship as they believed without being persecuted. Have we so easily forgotten our history and what led to the growth of this new land? Persecution as a result of joining church with the state is not just a "slap on the hand" type of persecution, it eventually leads to persecution that results in the torture and death of the ones who do not agree.

We have a real-time example of what happens when church/state combine and the horrors that follow. Simply look at what is happening in Iraq today. It is pretty obvious the awful results of this type of government. We in the USA are horrified at how awful the people of Iraq are treated, and how their government has recently murdered 40,000 (but probably even more than this) of its own citizens who were protesting the leadership - how the citizens suffer so much under this radical regime. President Trump calls them crazy, evil leaders. However, what will happen to the USA if we adopt this same type of government (i.e. combine church/state)? It will most certainly lead to trampling on the freedoms of its citizens as well, and I want to state that I wholeheartedly protest.

We must maintain a separation between church and state if we are to remain a free country and uphold the first amendment in the Bill of Rights.

Thank you for your time,  
Shelly Nystrom

**From:** deena vasutin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:02:47 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a Christian believer and proud citizen of the great United States of America.

As such, I am troubled to read about the idea of a "bridge" that has been recommended by this Commission to replace the wall of separation of church and state. While the term "wall of separation of church and state" does not exist in our Constitution, the principles are clearly established and supported. Our founding fathers were very sensitive to the appalling absence of religious freedom that existed in the Old Country and so they gave us a Constitution that protected us in our country. History is very clear about the results of uniting church and state: it is very bad for both; the consequences are evil.

Please do not build this bridge.

Keep the wall.

Our beautiful country is founded on freedom for all; please do not take it away from us.

Sincerely,

Deena Vasutin

Campbell, California

**From:** Dina Raya <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:03:12 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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July 13, 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." 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. I urge you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken this separation— 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 - that's how we keep both free.

Respectfully,

Dina Raya

[REDACTED] PII

**From:** RW Ingelse <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re. Recommendations of Religious Liberty Commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:03:48 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the United States of America, I am deeply concerned by the Commission's proposal to bring an end to the existing constitutional principle that enables us to live in a country where church and state are separate.

This country, being founded upon principles that preserve independence for both civil government and religious institutions, has clearly survived and thrived where other countries that have blended church and state have failed in government and society.

History also has shown (e.g. Medieval Europe) that citizens are better served, and can only be truly free, when its government oversees the secular areas of its nation, and refrains from involvement and influence in the religious aspects of its people; and where the church is kept separate from politics.

Maintaining a separation of church and state protects both religious liberty and civil government.

We, the people, wish to remain free, living in the land which God founded for us to be free. I am praying that God Himself that will guide you.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Ingelse

**From:** Adoration Cowling <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:05:35 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I agree with Pillars of Freedom. No Sunday Laws please.

A. Cowling

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Dina Raya <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:05:50 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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July 13, 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." 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. I urge you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken this separation— 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 - that's how we keep both free.

Respectfully,

Ricardo Ramirez

[REDACTED] PII



**From:** Julie Fralick <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Response to the Religious Liberty Commission draft report

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:06:23 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To Whom It May Concern:

I have several concerns I wish to express about the report. I am a Christian and I teach junior high (history, religion, math and science) in a Christian school. I just found out about this report a couple of days ago from a friend at church. I wish I had been given more time to review the report and prepare a more detailed response. Nevertheless, considering there is a deadline today for responses, I did not want to miss the opportunity to express my concerns.

- 1) The view of American history represented in the report is not accurate.
- 2) Though I am a Christian, I do not like the idea of the government providing financial support for faith-based organizations, including schools.
- 3) I think it would be a grave error to repeal the Johnson Amendment. This would open the door for churches and pulpits to become weaponized politically.
- 4) I am uncomfortable with the government selecting one religion for special protection. I am not antisemitic and I teach my students about the horrors of the Holocaust and the current persecution of Jews as well as many religions. The government should promote the security of freedom of all religions. Why just one? By the way, it's important to remember that atheistic beliefs represent a religious worldview which deserves protections as well.

When I was 15 years old, I started studying the Bible on my own and I decided I wanted to attend a different church than the one in which my parents had raised me. They had sacrificed a lot to send me and my five brothers and sisters to private, parochial school (elementary and high school). Honestly, they were hurt by my decision, and up to that point in my life, it was the most difficult experience I had ever had--to tell them of my choice. However, they supported me and my freedom to choose my own beliefs and live by my convictions. They were wonderful people. I have tried to follow their example in many ways. Now, my adult children have chosen to be non-Christians. Of course I wish they believed as I did, but I support their right to choose for themselves.

Our founding fathers understood the importance of maintaining a separation of church and state. This foundation is woven into our Constitution in the same way that the Trinity is a foundation of the Bible. I know that the phrase "separation of church and state" is not found verbatim in The Constitution. Similarly, you will not find the word "trinity" in the Bible, but if you read the Bible, you cannot help but see evidence of the concept of a God with three Persons and one Being.

Freedom of religion is a pillar of our incredible nation. I pray we can protect this right for as long as possible.

Thank you,  
Julie E. Fralick

**From:** Carmen Kearns <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Carmen Kearns

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:06:51e0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write as a private citizen who holds both halves of the First Amendment's religion clauses to be one settled principle, not two rival claims to be traded off against each other. I ask you to consider three arguments, drawn from a strand of American religious-liberty writing that I believe still carries force today.

The first concerns the very source of government power. Our founding premise, stated in the Declaration, is 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. I can authorize another to manage my property or speak for my interests; I cannot authorize anyone to believe for me, worship for me, or answer for my soul before God. What was never mine to give cannot have been received by any government. This is not a technical reading of a clause; it is a structural fact about delegated authority. No government will ever stand before the judgment seat to answer for my faith, and where there is no accountability, there can be no rightful jurisdiction. The Establishment Clause did not invent this boundary — it simply recorded a limit that was already true of all government resting on consent.

The second concerns the danger of even well-meaning religious legislation. It is tempting to think that a law favoring one's own faith is harmless, even beneficial. But any law touching religion must define the religion it favors, and any definition draws a line — some included, some excluded, and even the included now practicing their faith by permission rather than by right. A believer who welcomes government sponsorship of his own creed has, without noticing, conceded that religion is a fit subject for legislative control — a concession that will outlive him and outlive his current majority. He has also mortgaged his own liberty to change his mind, since religious liberty includes the freedom to be persuaded and to follow one's conscience wherever the evidence leads. Lock today's belief into statute, and you have legislated against your own future conscience. I would ask the Commission to weigh this carefully the machinery built to favor one faith today does not come with any guarantee of who will hold the lever tomorrow.

The third concerns what coercion actually accomplishes. Religion is heart-work; law cannot reach the heart. Force can compel outward compliance, but it cannot produce belief — at best it produces conformity, at worst hypocrisy. And the deeper cost falls on the very faith the state tries to help. History's record, across centuries of established religion, shows not vigor but complacency: pride and indolence among clergy, servility and superstition among the laity. A faith that leans on state power for its survival has already confessed something troubling about its own vitality. I think often of Grant's counsel to leave religion to the family altar, the church, and private conscience, keeping church and state permanently apart — advice from a soldier and statesman, not a theologian, and no less sound for that.

I raise these points not to diminish faith but to protect it, and to protect the government's legitimacy as well. A commission convened in the name of religious liberty should resist any measure that lets today's favored religion write tomorrow's rules for everyone.

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

Respectfully,  
Carmen Kearns

From: GettingOut Customer Care <[REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED]

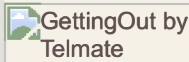
Subject: [EXTERNAL] A Request to Join GettingOut

Date: Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:07:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

[REDACTED]

[Online Help](#)



## You Have a New Inmate Contact Request.

Hello [REDACTED]

**Andrew Roberts**, a resident at **NB St John Regional Correctional Centre**, would like to be able to communicate with you. If you would like to be connected to this inmate, click the button below to accept the request:

**Yes, I want to "Create A New Account" so I can connect with this inmate »**

**Note:** You can block any contact at any time by logging in and clicking the "Block" button on that contact's profile page.

[GettingOut](#) by Telmate is the sole communication provider for residents at this facility. If you have any questions, visit [www.gettingout.com](http://www.gettingout.com) or call 24/7 bilingual toll free number at [REDACTED].

Thank you for using [GettingOut](#) by Telmate.

### What is GettingOut by Telmate?

GettingOut by Telmate is a communications system designed to make it simple for friends and family to connect with inmates by phone, video visitation, voicemail, written messages, photo sharing and more!

[Go to GettingOut.com](http://Go to GettingOut.com) »

### Deposit Funds

You may deposit funds to Inmate, Friends & Family and Trust accounts online at [GettingOut.com](http://GettingOut.com), at a **Telmate kiosk**, or over the phone 24/7 by calling [REDACTED].

**Login to Deposit Funds »**

### Schedule a Visit

Login to our system to schedule video visits at your facility or in some locations by computer or mobile phone.

### Need Help?

Visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) area on our website or call our customer service staff at [REDACTED].

**Visit Our FAQs»**

If you no longer want to receive notifications like this one, [please click here](#).

If this was done by mistake, please visit our website or call our Customer Service line:  
<https://www.gettingout.com/online-customer-service/> OR call [REDACTED PII].

[GettingOut.com](#)

Need Help? | [REDACTED PII] | [Online Help](#)

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**From:** Michael Schlemmer <[REDACTED] PII >

**To:** [REDACTED] PII

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:07:13 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Forced religion is false religion, and is not the religion of Jesus. The wall of separation between church and state was implied by our forefathers to protect us from what they experienced in Europe, where there was no wall of separation between church and state, and this resulted in the persecution of God-fearing Christians. If you remove this linchpin, you will have abandoned the way of Jesus Christ, which is entirely based on love, not compelling the conscience. Jesus gives us freedom of choice and love demands that it shouldn't be any other way according to the Bible, which is our only rule of faith. Please do not waver, look no further than Iran to see what happens when there is no wall of separation between church and state.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Michael Schlemmer

**From:** Maria Camarena <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-SEPARATION of Church and State- M.E. Camarena

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:07:18 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission.

I believe God opened the door for people in other countries to escape Religious persecution and Blessed this country. We celebrate Thanksgiving today because of that providential guidance and protection hundreds of years ago. I fear that if we remove God's guidance "Give unto Cesar what is Cesar's and to God what is God's" we will loose His protection and Blessings. I respectfully Disagree with the following:

1. Removal of any portion of the Johnson Ammendment.
2. Government funding of Religious Education and/or Religious organizations, institutions, or clubs on Public campuses or properties.
3. Government funding of Religious non-profit activities.

I pray we do not loose God's protections on this Nation because we do not respect and protect the rights of other people especially Freedom of Conscious to worship, When and How and allow the Holy Spirit to Guide each person and convict each heart in Sincerity Not Coerced by mortal men's laws. Force is against God's character, He died on the cross to show us His love for each one of us in this world. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only begotten Son, that Whosoever BELIEVES in Him should not Perish, but have everlasting life." The God who spoke and it was, at creation, and spoke and calmed the wind and storm that same God protected our Freedom to choose when He taught valuable lessons using parables instead of making command statements.

Please let God do His work without us mixing Cesar's politics. Thank you for reading my letter. May God continue to Bless and protect the people in our nation.

**From:** Rawle Watkins Jr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:07:29 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I support the separation of Church and State and I ask that you consider not making a bridge between the two as everyone has a right to religious freedom and expression. This right should not be overruled by one group of people to set the standard for everyone else. God gives us the Freedom of Choice and would not accept our worship otherwise. This joining of the Church backed by the power of the state sets the precedent for abuse of power by the Church similar to what was seen during the Dark Ages. This will ultimately limit people's religious freedoms and become a despotic dictatorship to the likes we have not seen in modern times! Please keep the separation of church and state SEPARATE.

"You have to go wholeheartedly into anything in order to achieve anything worth having" Frank Lloyd Wright

**From:** Sandra Blake <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:07:50 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a proud American and greatly value the Separation of Church and State that our founders espoused. I respectfully urge you to uphold the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state, a cornerstone of our nation's commitment to religious liberty. America's founders, many of whom fled religious persecution and the coercive union of church and government in Europe, established a constitutional American system that protects the free exercise of religion while preventing governmental establishment or favoritism toward any faith. This framework has safeguarded both religious freedom and civil liberty for 250 years.

History consistently demonstrates that whenever church and state unite, tyranny and religious persecution follow as demonstrated by the Inquisition of the Dark Ages that our forefathers fled, and currently the persecution by the Taliban. A government that remains neutral in matters of religion best protects the rights of all citizens, regardless of their beliefs.

Accordingly, I respectfully oppose the use of public funds to support religious nonprofit activities, religious education, or religious clubs on public campuses. Taxpayer resources should be used for public purposes that serve all citizens equally, without advancing or endorsing particular religious beliefs.

I also urge you to preserve the Johnson Amendment, which prohibits tax-exempt churches and charitable organizations from participating in partisan political campaigns. Maintaining this longstanding provision helps preserve the independence and integrity of religious institutions while preventing the use of tax-exempt organizations as vehicles for partisan political activity.

The First Amendment protects both the free exercise of religion and guards against governmental establishment of religion. These complementary protections have enabled people of every faith—and those of no faith—to live together in freedom. Preserving this constitutional balance is essential to protecting the liberties of all Americans.

I respectfully ask that you continue to defend these founding principles by opposing measures that erode the separation of church and state and by supporting policies that preserve religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and equal protection for every citizen.

May our country continue to flourish for the next 250 years as 'a country without a king and a church without a pope.' Thank you for your service and for your thoughtful consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,  
Sandra Blake

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**From:** Troy Wiggins<[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Response letter

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:09:54 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Pillar\_of\_Freedom\_Letter.docx

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Dear Members of the Opposition,

I am writing to express my strong disagreement with efforts to combine church and state. Our country's history has shown the importance of protecting both religious freedom and the government from religious control. The separation of church and state does not oppose religion; it protects every person's right to practice a faith, change their faith, or follow no religion at all.

Please consider the consequences of weakening this principle. Doing so will deepen divisions, make our country more vulnerable, and threaten the freedoms we all cherish. When the government begins favoring one religion or set of beliefs, people of other faiths and convictions will lose equal protection. Once one fundamental freedom is weakened, others will also become vulnerable.

Dr. Ben Carson and other leaders supporting this position, please remember the diverse country you represent and the principles that have allowed people from many backgrounds to live together. Political decisions affect all of us, including those who make them.

I urge you to reconsider this position and defend religious liberty, equal rights, and the constitutional separation of church and state. These protections are essential to preserving the freedom and unity of our nation.

Sincerely,

Adam W

**From:** Glenn Ballard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State and Religious Liberty – Glenn Ballard

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:10:33 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to express my serious concern regarding the direction of the Commission's draft report, particularly its treatment of the separation of church and state and the expanding role of government in matters of religion.

I write as a committed Christian who deeply values the Bible, the public expression of faith, and the right of every individual to live according to sincerely held religious convictions. My opposition to the direction of this report does not arise from hostility toward religion. On the contrary, it arises from a concern for the preservation of genuine religious liberty.

Religious liberty is safest when government protects the conscience rather than attempting to promote, define, or advance religious belief. History repeatedly demonstrates the danger that arises when civil authority becomes entangled with religious institutions or uses the power of government to favor particular religious expressions.

I am especially concerned by recommendations encouraging greater government involvement in religious instruction and religious displays in public institutions. As a Christian, I believe the Ten Commandments are sacred. It is precisely because I regard them as sacred that I am uncomfortable with the civil government assuming responsibility for their promotion or display by force of law. The government that possesses the authority to advance my religious convictions today may possess the same authority to advance another religious conviction—or suppress mine—tomorrow.

The First Amendment must protect more than the ability of the religious majority to exercise influence. It must protect the conscience of the minority, the dissenter, and the individual whose religious convictions may be unpopular with those currently holding political power.

America's history of religious liberty should not be reduced to a choice between hostility toward religion and government-supported religion. There is a third and historically vital principle: a government restrained from establishing or favoring religion while vigorously protecting the free exercise of every person's faith.

I respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider recommendations that weaken this distinction. Religious faith does not require the machinery of the state to survive or flourish. The proper role of government is to protect the freedom of conscience, not to become an instrument for promoting religious belief.

True religious liberty must apply equally to Christians, Jews, Muslims, members of minority faiths, and those who profess no religious belief. Once government crosses the line from protecting religion to promoting religion, the liberty of all becomes dependent upon who holds political power.

For these reasons, I respectfully oppose the direction of the draft report where it weakens the historic safeguards separating civil authority from religious establishment. I urge the Commission to preserve a strong and impartial protection of religious liberty for every American.

Respectfully,

Glenn Ballard

**From:** Ana Paula Swingle <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ana Paula Swingle

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:10:33 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of this blessed country 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.

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,

Ana Paula Swingle  
Centerville, Tennessee

**From:** Jay Razzouk <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – General Response to Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty– Jay Razzouk, Esq.

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:12:09 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** 26-07-13\_JNR\_to\_RLC\_re\_Comments\_to\_Draft\_Report.pdf

**Inline-Images:** image001.png

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I attach comments to the June 2026 draft of the Religious Liberty Commission Report.

Jay Razzouk, Esq.



Jay Razzouk,  
Attorney at Law

[REDACTED]  
PII  
PII

This message and any attachments are confidential. If you received this message in error, do not use it or rely upon it. Instead, please inform me and then delete the message. Thank you.



JAY RAZZOUK  
Attorney at Law

PII

PII

July 13, 2026

**VIA EMAIL**

Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

PII

**Re: Public Comment – General Response to Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, June 2026**

Dear Commission Members,

I write on my own behalf, as a member of a Christian community that deeply cherishes the religious liberty guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Specifically, I live in the Blue Zone® of Loma Linda, California, a community known worldwide for its unique intersection of health and religion.<sup>1</sup>

I offer these comments with respect to the Commission's June 2026 Draft Report (the “**Draft Report**”). In general, I believe the Commission makes many excellent points. These included, without limitation, the following:

1. Noting that freedom of religion is for everyone (p. 29);
2. Explaining how the loss of religious freedom often means the loss of all freedoms (p. 29);
3. Noting that religious morals help "keep[] tyranny at bay", while driving "corrective" change to defend the rights of oppressed groups (p. 30);
4. Recognizing that for a self-governing country to prosper, the citizenship must be sufficiently virtuous, and that religion has historically been the source of that virtue (pp. 30-31);
5. Observing that religion has historically – and to this day – been a major driver of charitable work within America (pp. 31-32);
6. Pointing out religion's importance to the family, which is in turn the “backbone” of society (p. 32);
7. Highlighting religion's contributions to health, happiness, and community (p. 33);
8. Recognizing that religious liberty means governmental power should generally be restrained to the extent it would interfere with religious beliefs and practices (p. 34); and
9. Observing that a “free society must be a society in which people of all faiths can live together harmoniously” (p. 35 (quoting *Am. Legion v. Am. Humanist Ass’n*, 588 U.S. 29, 38 (2019))).

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<sup>1</sup> "Blue Zone" is a registered trademark of Blue Zones, LLC.

To borrow medical language, I believe the Draft Report identifies the correct symptoms, but identifies the wrong cause, and thus offers the wrong prescription.

## **A. THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK PROTECTING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

I respectfully suggest that the Draft Report is somewhat askew in its explanation of how the Constitution protects religious liberty.

For example, the report states: "When the Founders chose to declare independence, they thought deeply about the meaning of freedom and the rights **which government must protect** to avoid tyranny." Draft Report at 38.

I respectfully disagree. Our nation's Founders were **not** so much concerned about the **government protecting freedoms**. Rather, they were concerned about **protecting freedoms from government**.

This is reflected in the language of the First Amendment itself, which 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.*

Notably, the Bill of Rights, including our much-cherished First Amendment, was added to the Constitution **by amendment** to address serious concerns about the powers of the proposed federal government. Many Founders stated vigorous objections to the new Constitution because it failed to impose restraints on federal power. One such objection was stated by George Mason in his 1787 "Objections to This Constitution of Government." There, he said:

*There is no Declaration of Rights, and the laws of the general government being paramount to the laws and constitution of the several States, the Declarations of Rights in the separate States are no security.*

On the other side of the aisle, the Federalists did not disagree with the idea of restraining government power. Rather, they pushed back against a bill of rights primarily on the grounds that the federal government was going to be so limited in enumerated powers that a declaration of rights was unnecessary. In fact, they were worried it might imply powers otherwise not intended. For example, in Federalist No. 84, published in 1788, Alexander Hamilton stated:

*I go further, and affirm that bills of rights, in the sense and to the extent in which they are contended for, are not only unnecessary in the proposed constitution, but would even be dangerous. They would contain various exceptions to powers not granted; and on this very account, would afford a colorable pretext to claim more*

*than were granted. For why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? Why for instance, should it be said, that the liberty of the press shall not be restrained, when no power is given by which restrictions may be imposed? I will not contend that such a provision would confer a regulating power; but it is evident that it would furnish, to men disposed to usurp, a plausible pretense for claiming that power. They might urge with a semblance of reason, that the constitution ought not to be charged with the absurdity of providing against the abuse of an authority, which was not given, and that the provision against restraining the liberty of the press afforded a clear implication, that a power to prescribe proper regulations concerning it, was intended to be vested in the national government. This may serve as a specimen of the numerous handles which would be given to the doctrine of constructive powers, by the indulgence of an injudicious zeal for bills of rights.*

James Wilson shared similar concerns at Pennsylvania's 1787 Ratifying Convention:

*But in a government consisting of enumerated powers, such as is proposed for the United States, a bill of rights would not only be unnecessary, but, in my humble judgment, highly imprudent. In all societies, there are many powers and rights, which cannot be particularly enumerated. A bill of rights annexed to a constitution is an enumeration of the powers reserved. If we attempt an enumeration, everything that is not enumerated is presumed to be given. The consequence is, that an imperfect enumeration would throw all implied power into the scale of the government; and the rights of the people would be rendered incomplete.*

So the question before the Founders was not how to get government to protect religion. Rather, they debated how best to protect religion from government. And it was that debate that shaped the Constitution into what it is.

## **B. PROPERLY DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM**

If we view American religious liberty as a sick patient to whom we want to prescribe the proper cure, we must correctly diagnose the cause of its condition.

The Draft Report misdiagnoses the cause of the problems that have been threatening religious liberty. The cause is not the state's lack of funding of religion. It is not a lack of state-mandated curricula on religion. It's not a lack of "bridges" between church and state. See Draft Report at 45. And it is not because barriers of entry are too high for "faith groups seeking to serve". See Draft Report at 44.

The greatest problem facing America and religious liberty today is the very same problem that troubled the Founders centuries ago. The problem is a government that is so big and so powerful



that it frequently intrudes upon the free exercise of religion. The Federalists thought a government of limited, enumerated powers would prevent such a problem. The Anti-Federalists thought the Bill of Rights, specifically barring Congress from infringing the free exercise of religion or passing laws establishing religion, would keep the government in check. History has proven both wrong. None of the founders anticipated the leviathan that today threatens religious liberty by its unmatched power and unrivaled size.

Although it comes close, the Draft Report fails to recognize this as the true problem. For example, on page 41, it states, "In the early twentieth century, lawsuits related to religious liberty began to emerge as the country grew in size and economic diversity."

True, the country grew in size and economic diversity during this time when religious liberty litigation exploded. But that is correlation, not causation.

I respectfully suggest that the primary **cause** of the spike in religious liberty litigation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the massive expansion of government during that time. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we saw the rise of the regulatory state. Under the early years of the F.D.R. administration alone, the following agencies, among several others, were created:

- The Federal Emergency Relief Administration
- The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
- The Public Works Administration
- The Securities and Exchange Commission
- The Federal Communications Commission
- The Federal Housing Administration
- The National Labor Relations Board
- The Social Security Board.

During the 1940s and 1950s, several more prominent agencies were created, including the following:

- The National Institute of Mental Health
- The Atomic Energy Commission
- The National Science Foundation
- The Small Business Administration
- The Federal Aviation Administration

During the 1960s and 1970s, we added yet more agencies, including:

- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Transportation

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Consumer Product Safety Commission
- Department of Energy
- Department of Education

The several states mimicked the federal government, establishing their own parallel agencies and implementing their own parallel regulatory regimes.

Whereas the American Founders envisioned a small government of limited powers regulating on the margins, government now controls and shapes nearly every aspect of life. Work. Education. Health. Food. Transportation. Virtually everything is now within the auspices of government's mighty sphere of influence.

The massive expansion of government involvement in the day-to-day lives of Americans naturally meant that there would be more opportunity for conflict between regulation and religious practice. Now that there are government-required unemployment benefits, the question arises regarding whether a person who cannot find work due to their religious beliefs can qualify for state unemployment benefits. *See Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963). Now that the government bans certain "controlled substances", the question arises whether such a ban applies to banned substances if ingested as part of a sacramental ceremony. *See Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990). We could go on and on with such examples.

One of the most hotly contested battlegrounds between religious liberty and the state is the area of education. Education had historically been an "enterprise of religious bodies,"<sup>2</sup> but over time it became a service provided by the state itself. Former Hillsdale College history professor Allan Carlson describes this as a "great shift in direction":

*When the United States was founded, the historical record shows, church and school were closely bound together and there is no convincing evidence that the founders of this nation, taken as a whole, intended for the situation to be otherwise.*

*The great shift in direction ... came about 1850 when state predominance in educational affairs began to supplant that of the church.*

Carlson, Allan C. (1983) "Religion, the State and the Schools: Reflections on the Deweyan Perspective," *Education and Culture*: Vol. 03: Iss. 1, Article 3, p. 22.

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<sup>2</sup> George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Because government got into the business of education, naturally the question emerged regarding what government could or could not say in matters pertaining to religion. And to this day, we still grapple with this issue. The questions are not easy to resolve. For example, what should public schools teach regarding the origin of life? Just evolution? Just the traditional Judeo-Christian view of creation? A mix of the two? And what about other worldviews on the topic? And then there are the issues with prayer and the display of religion, as noted in the Draft Report. See¶. 41.

I agree that in many ways it has seemed like “religious people gradually began to be pushed to the fringe.” Draft Report at 42. Sometimes it can seem like they are now second-class citizens, who pay taxes for government services that may often seem antagonistic and at times disproportionately benefit contrary worldviews (including atheism). But this is the symptom of a much larger problem.

### **C. PRESCRIBING THE RIGHT PILL FOR THE PROBLEM**

Our founders feared a government so powerful, that those in authority might dictate matters of conscience for the masses under threat of persecution. As explained by James Iredell, a founder and one of the first justices of the U.S. Supreme Court:

*Those in power have generally considered all wisdom centered in themselves, that they alone had a right to dictate to the rest of mankind, and that all opposition to their tenets was profane and impious. The consequence of this intolerant spirit has been, that each church has in turn set itself up against every other, and persecutions and wars of the most implacable and bloody nature have taken place in every part of the world.*

Speech at North Carolina Hillsborough Convention, July 30, 1788.

The Draft Report correctly observes that federal and state governments over the past century or so – and especially during the Obama and Biden administrations – in effect institutionalized a godless religion that met traditional religion with “hostility or simple overregulation”. Draft Report at 41, 44. This intolerance and arguable persecution very much resembles the evils of state-established religion that Iredell and others warned about and hoped to prevent.

But the solution is not to swap out the current godless religion with a Christian-friendly religion. Nor is it to equalize the disparate treatment through special benefits. All that will achieve is temporarily making Christianity today's government-favored religion while maintaining disparate treatment of other faiths and viewpoints (including atheism). And tomorrow, a new administration could easily institute a different most-favored religion.

The only solution that is truly fair, stable, and true to the constitution would be a return to a limited government that gets out of the business of funding and regulating every aspect of life.

I do not believe this shift should be achieved overnight. That would be far too disruptive. There would have to be slow and steady withdrawal from various spaces, giving time for the private sector to reabsorb the load.

I can give some specific examples of how this might be done. For **education**, for example, the government can cease to own and manage schools altogether. Perhaps the involvement will be limited to overseeing credentialing bodies and ensuring certain minimal standards. And to make sure education is still accessible to everyone, the government could provide parents a flat payment (such as \$20,000 per child per year). Parents must then either use that money at the school of their choice (assuming it meets minimal accreditation standards) or use it to help fund homeschooling if they so desire.

In terms of **government funding of nongovernmental organizations**, this practice should be studied to see whether, and to what extent, it can be dropped altogether. It seems that over the past year or so, we have seen how many NGOs are potentially being misused to divert taxpayer money to support political or ideological pet projects. It should be a universally unacceptable practice—regardless of whether it is done by the right or the left, or by atheists or Christians.

But wouldn't cutting this governmental support hurt beneficial causes? Again, this matter should be carefully studied. Yet we are becoming increasingly aware of an astonishing amount of fraud and waste in the government-funded nonprofit sector. Too many of these tax-payer supported nonprofits seem to enrich those who run them, while only pennies on the dollar actually go to support the intended beneficiaries. Allowing taxpayers – private individuals – to hold onto more money, and in turn use that money to support institutions they know and trust, might result in a better, more equitable allocation of funds.

#### **D. RELIGION WOULD BE BEST IF LEFT ALONE.**

Ultimately, a small government is the best thing that can happen for religion. In modern times, we have replaced God with Gov.

Rather than depending on God for provision, the masses stick their hand out to Gov.

Rather than turning to church charities for care, individuals entrust themselves to a government system.

As president Gerald Ford stated at a Joint Session of Congress on August 12, 1947: “A government big enough to give you everything you want is a government big enough to take from you everything you have.”

We should not put our trust in Gov. Our religious liberty does not need any affirmative help from the state. It just needs a government that is smaller—one that does **not**:

July 13, 2026

**Public Comment – General Response to Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, June 2026**

Page 8

- pick winners and losers in areas of business or charity,
- dictate curriculum in the classroom,
- tell people what to do or not do with their bodies, or
- create any other number of dilemmas for people of any faith (or no faith).

Iredell, mentioned above, believed that religion did not need help from the new government. In speaking about the constitution at the North Carolina Hillsborough Convention, on 30 July 1788, he stated:

***It would be happy for mankind if religion was permitted to take its own course, and maintain itself by the excellence of its own doctrines. The divine author of our religion never wished for its support by worldly authority. Has he not said, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it? [Matthew 16:18] It made much greater progress for itself, than when supported by the greatest authority upon earth.***

Iredell was correct then, and his words are true now. If we are to preserve religious liberty—if not all the basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution—we must carefully roll back the past century of government expansion.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jay Razzouk". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jay N. Razzouk, Esq.

**From:** Mary Ashcroft <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:12:19 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm so thankful for the Religious Liberty that we have enjoyed in this nation for the 250 years we have had it. The Lord was with our nation as predicted in scripture.

To try to take away the wall of Separation on paper sounds good BUT isn't a good idea. Before you know it Religious persecution will begin here (as our founding fathers fled when they founded this country).

Thank you for hearing my plea.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ashcroft  
Chewelah, WA

Yours in Christ,  
Mary Ashcroft

**From:** Jolene Blehme [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Jolene B.

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:13:24 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As an American citizen, I am opposed to and very troubled by your recommendation to tear down the wall that separates church and state, and replace it with a bridge.

Our forefathers fled their home countries in Europe, to escape persecution and state sponsored religion. They wanted a place where they could choose to worship or not worship God, according to the dictates of their own conscious. This knowledge was imperative to our founding father's decision, to specifically include religious freedom in the first amendment of the constitution. They knew that if they separated church from state, it would ensure freedom from political influences and government funding in organized religions.

Church is the one place where engaging in political partisanship is not allowed. By repealing the Johnson Amendment, the church no longer remains a neutral place, and removes the healthy boundary between church and state. Pastors have a large sway over their parishioners. It's not hard to imagine a pastor being financially influenced, by wealthy interests, to sway the votes of their congregation towards a particular political leader or party. Let's keep political influences out of the church. Don't allow churches to become weaponized, by making them an instrument of partisan political power. I implore you, do not repeal the Johnson Amendment.

My request of you, don't try to fix what isn't broken. American is a beacon of light to those who are persecuted. Our freedoms shine brightly and, by removing the separation of church and state, you will dim that light. America was founded as a place of freedom for all. Many soldiers have sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we all enjoy. Fully enforce the Johnson Amendment and preserve the separation of church and state. This will keep the future of America, a home of the free.

I respectfully ask the commission to take my comments into consideration about this matter. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,  
Jolene B.  
Adams, NE

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Nolan Graves <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- CHAPTER 2: SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE – NOLAN GRAVES

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:13:36 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to dispute the draft report's treatment of the "wall of separation between church and state" as a constitutional misconception and its proposal that religious liberty should instead be understood as a "bridge" through which church and state strengthen and support one another. The report acknowledges that the phrase itself does not appear verbatim in the Constitution, but this does not make the principle unconstitutional. The words "separation of powers" do not appear in the Constitution either, yet the principle is plainly embodied in its structure. In the same manner, the First Amendment's command that the government make no law "respecting an establishment of religion" creates a jurisdictional separation between civil authority and religious authority.

The report appears to confuse two entirely different things: separating the **church from the state** and separating a **religious person from public life**. I fully agree that religious Americans must not be excluded from public office, public employment, education or civic participation merely because they practise their faith. That is free exercise. But protecting a believer's right to participate in government is not the same thing as inviting religious institutions and civil government to form a cooperative political relationship. The wall does not run through the conscience of the believer. It stands between the institutional authority of the church and the coercive power of the state.

The report states that church and state "strengthen and support one another" and suggests that religious liberty acts as a bridge between them. This is not a harmless change of metaphor. It changes religious liberty from a boundary restraining governmental power into a means of cooperation between religious and civil authority. History repeatedly demonstrates where that road leads.

When Christianity became allied with the Roman imperial state, the church gained political influence but lost spiritual purity. Doctrinal disputes that should have been answered through Scripture, persuasion and conscience became matters of imperial decree, exile and civil punishment. The state did not become truly Christian; the church became political.

During the medieval union of ecclesiastical and civil authority, religious conformity was enforced through government power. Dissenters were imprisoned, dispossessed and killed. The church borrowed the sword of the state, while the state borrowed the claimed sacred authority of the church. Both were corrupted.

The Protestant Reformation did not automatically cure this evil. Where Protestant churches became established by law, Catholics, dissenting Protestants, Baptists, Quakers and others again suffered civil disabilities and persecution. Even in colonial America, established churches used taxation, fines, imprisonment and banishment against those whose consciences differed. It was precisely this repeated history—not hostility to Christianity—that made religious **disestablishment** necessary.

This principle protects the church as much as it protects the citizen. Government support never comes without government influence. Once the state begins favouring, funding, promoting or coordinating with religion as religion, political officials must eventually decide which religious organisations qualify, which doctrines are acceptable and which practices serve the public good. Religion then becomes dependent upon political favour, and political power begins using religious authority to sanctify its policies.



A wall between church and state is therefore not a wall between God and government, morality and law, or believers and civic life. It is a wall against the union of religious authority with civil coercion. It permits the church to preach, persuade, serve, warn and worship freely. It permits individual believers to carry their convictions into public life. What it forbids is the transformation of spiritual influence into governmental force.

As a Christian, I am especially concerned because Scripture warns that this historical pattern will recur. Revelation 13 describes a religious-political power receiving the cooperation of civil authority and ultimately causing the earth to worship the beast. It “causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast,” commands that an image be made to the beast, and finally decrees that those who refuse its worship should be killed. It further uses economic pressure so that dissenters may neither buy nor sell. The progression is clear: religious influence joins civil power, worship becomes the concern of government, and persuasion finally becomes coercion.

The danger does not begin only when a law explicitly forces worship. It begins when the boundary between church and state is recast as an unfortunate barrier and cooperation between them is presented as the proper model of religious liberty. The proposed “bridge” provides the easement by which religious institutions may approach the machinery of government and by which government may enter matters belonging to faith and conscience.

No present assurance that such cooperation will remain voluntary can answer the historical record. Every religious establishment claims to serve truth, morality, order or the common good. Yet once government possesses authority in religious matters, liberty depends upon the goodwill of those holding power rather than upon an inviolable limitation on that power.

The report itself recognises that Europe was once soaked in the blood of religious conflict and that governments used their power to crush disfavoured religious ideas and people. That history should lead the Commission to defend the boundary more clearly, not weaken it.

I therefore urge the Commission to remove the language portraying separation between church and state as a constitutional myth and to reject the “bridge” analogy. The final report should clearly distinguish the free public exercise of religion from institutional cooperation between church and state. It should affirm that religious liberty depends upon both halves of the First Amendment: government must neither prohibit the free exercise of religion nor use its authority to establish, sponsor, advance or enforce religion.

The church must remain free to be the church, and the state must remain without jurisdiction over worship and conscience. To abandon that distinction is to pave the way toward both religious and constitutional apostasy. History has already shown us the result, and Revelation warns that the same union will arise again.

Respectfully,

Nolan Graves

**From:** Sandy Sergeant <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Protecting Religious Liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:13:57 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Department of Justice and the President's Religious Liberty Commission,

As a Christian, I support the separation of church and state because it protects religious liberty, preserves the independence of the church, prevents government favoritism toward religion, and safeguards freedom of conscience for all Americans.

**Key Points:**

- The separation of church and state protects religious liberty and is not hostile to Christianity.
- Church and government have distinct God-given roles. The church should not depend on political power, and the government should not favor or establish any religion.
- Genuine faith cannot be legislated, compelled, or sustained through government authority. Matters of conscience belong to God alone.
- The Free Exercise Clause and Establishment Clause work together to protect both religious practice and freedom of conscience.
- Religious liberty is best preserved when government remains neutral in matters of faith and protects the rights of all citizens equally.
- Churches are most effective when they remain focused on their spiritual mission rather than becoming extensions of political campaigns or partisan organizations.
- History demonstrates that religious minorities often suffer when government aligns itself with a particular religious group. America's constitutional safeguards were designed to prevent such abuses.

**Closing Argument**

The separation of church and state is not a threat to Christianity—it is one of the greatest protections of both religious liberty and the integrity of the church. The gospel advances through persuasion and conviction, not through political power or government coercion. By preserving a clear distinction between the institutions of church and state, our nation protects the sacred right of conscience and ensures that all people remain free to worship according to their beliefs. I respectfully urge the Commission to uphold these constitutional principles and reject any effort to weaken the protections that have served both faith and freedom so well throughout our nation's history.

Respectfully,

Sandra Sergeant, RN



**From:** jackieanne\_82 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:14:25 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I ask that you change your recommendations that would weaken the separation of church and state. History shows us that this only leads to greater religious persecution which I believe is not the result you are intending. I object to government funding of religious institutions and schools as I believe it causes our churches to be subject to government requirements in a way that may cause them to go contrary how the Bible and God tells us we should be doing things. For example, government may require churches to hire gay or lesbian teachers in the schools or promote programs teaching this lifestyle when the Bible teaches us that that is not the way God wants us to live. We are to love everyone but that doesn't mean we want to allow sinful practices and messages in our schools and churches.

The work you are undertaking is an important one and I appreciate your efforts to preserve religious liberty.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Strickland

Gentry, Arkansas

Sent from my Galaxy

**From:** Brian Shepard <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:14:35 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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We must try not let the church and state unite as one it will bring Religious persecution to the people that worship on God Sabbath and obey him. The Sabbath is part of his character, let us stand strong in faith and prayer for the true God.

**From:** jackie brennecke <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- Separation of Church and State – (jackie brennecke)

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:15:13 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission: I am upset to know the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." I don't feel this is a fair move.

That wall wasn't built 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, it brings persecution as seen in history where there was no separation of church and state in other countries.

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

Sincerely,

Jackie Brennecke

Stuart Virginia

**From:** iJudyi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:16:22 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Liberty\_of\_Conscience\_Letter.docx

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To the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Please see my attached letter.

Best regards,

Judy Armstrong

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

July 13, 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:

I am writing to urge you to keep liberty of conscience and the separation of church and state to remain as it is. Many presidents, Supreme Court justices and political leaders have declared the separation of church and state to be a crucial part of American life. Indeed, since the first amendment was adopted, separation of church and state is part of the U.S. Constitution but was written without using those exact words.

The foundation of our nation is deeply rooted in the sacred principle of religious liberty. Our founders recognized that true freedom is impossible without the absolute right to individual conscience. They established a system designed to ensure that the government can never dictate, restrict, or penalize personal faith, creating a safe haven where people of all beliefs—and those of none—can coexist equally and in peace.

The foundation of our nation on religious liberty is not a relic of the past, but the very lifeblood of our democracy. By guaranteeing freedom of conscience, our founders ensured that no single faith could dictate the law of the land, thereby protecting believers and non-believers alike. This principle allows a diverse society to coexist peacefully, fostering an environment where individuals can live authentically according to their deepest convictions. These convictions come from God and conscience. It is not in the government's purview to dictate one's conscience.

By the time of the American Revolution, the diverse mix of religious groups across the colonies made a single national religion impractical and dangerous. The founders recognized that true liberty required protecting the mind and conscience from government coercion.

Key milestones solidified this principle into law:

- **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1786):** Drafted by Thomas Jefferson, this landmark legislation argued that God created the mind free and that forcing someone to support a religion they disbelieved was "sinful and tyrannical." It completely separated church and state in Virginia and served as the direct inspiration for the nation.



- **The U.S. Constitution (1787):** In Article VI, the framers explicitly banned any religious tests for holding public office, ensuring the federal government remained open to citizens of all faiths or no faith at all.
- **The First Amendment (1791):** To permanently secure this liberty, the Bill of Rights began with the **Establishment Clause** (preventing the government from establishing a national religion) and the **Free Exercise Clause** (protecting citizens' rights to practice their religion as they choose).

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." — The First Amendment*

Through these foundational steps, the United States became the first nation to explicitly strip the state of the power to dictate human conscience, establishing religious freedom not as a privilege granted by the government, but as an inherent human right, given to us by God. To declare the United States a Christian nation means that laws will be needed to uphold Christianity. But which form of Christianity will be declared? Even among Christians, there are many different beliefs, philosophies and doctrines. Not to mention the non-Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Atheists. By declaring our country "Christian" this inevitably will cause discrimination among Christians and non-Christians alike. This will ultimately mean that all Americans will encounter not only separation from other fellow Americans, but also persecution. Creating laws of "Christianity" strips Americans of their liberty of conscience.

Our nation's foundation on religious liberty grew directly from the lived experiences of its early European settlers. Many of the first colonists—such as the Pilgrims, Puritans, and Quakers—fled severe state-sponsored religious persecution in Europe, seeking a place where they could practice their faith freely.

However, early colonial life wasn't automatically tolerant. Several colonies initially established their own official religions and punished dissenters. It was through the visionary leadership of individuals like Roger Williams (who founded Rhode Island on the premise of absolute liberty of conscience) and William Penn (who established Pennsylvania as a haven for religious diversity) that a new blueprint emerged. They proved that a society could be stable and prosperous without forcing religious conformity.

As a Bible-believing Christian, it is my duty to exercise my liberty of conscience to obey God. 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. My belief is that God created all humans equal with free will to choose to believe or not. This country was founded on those principles. To preserve the soul of our democracy, this foundation must remain entirely unyielding. Government interference in matters of faith inevitably breeds division, erodes trust and ultimately leads to persecution.

We must continue to fiercely protect the right of every citizen to choose their own spiritual path, ensuring our laws defend personal conviction rather than prescribing it. When we protect religious liberty, we safeguard all other fundamental freedoms, including free speech and assembly.

Let us remain committed to upholding this vital shield, ensuring that our country continues to be a sanctuary for conscience, diversity, and mutual respect for generations to come.

Very sincerely,

Judy K. Armstrong, MA

**From:** Cathy Marsh <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTS - Separation of Church & State - Cathy Marsh

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:16:27 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Linda Winnes [REDACTED] PII >

**To:** [REDACTED] PII

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:16:40 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I don't personally agree  
with our Government  
combining Church and  
State together. It then  
does not give me my  
right to believe as my  
conscience dictates from  
Scriptures of the BIBLE.

I also don't agree with our Government  
taking away our right to be a  
Conscientious Objector to enter our  
Military Services if we want that....  
Medics are really needed for all.  
Very Sincerely, L Winn  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Brent Geraty <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Maintaining Religious Liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:16:41 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Religious Liberty Commission:

Please do what you can to maintain the United States' historical separation of church and state. I know there are those who want a closer tie between God and government, but inevitably that would lead to persecution of unpopular religious views. We care, or I hope we care, in this country about freedom, including the freedom to worship as one pleases (or not to worship at all).

Thank you for considering my view.

Brent Geraty

**From:** Patricia Hart <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:17:28 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To Whom It May Concern:

Please count me among those who strongly object to the view that there should be no separation between church and state.

The state has no authority to legislate worship according to anyone's conviction or conscience. Without individual freedom of conscience there can be no freedom at all.

God bless and direct your efforts to insure religious freedom for all—not just a favored majority or minority.

Sincerely and prayerfully,  
Patricia Hart  
Hayward, WI

**From:** Benadyne Phillips <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Benadyne Phillips

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:17:45 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write because religious liberty matters to me, and because the Commission's report will shape it for years to come. I ask you to keep civil government out of the business of religion. 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.

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.

There is no generic religion for the state to adopt. Even the Ten Commandments are contested ground — as Jones noted, "the difference between Protestants and Catholics with respect to the decalogue is irreconcilable." A mandated display must pick a version, making the government an arbiter among faiths — the very thing the Establishment Clause forbids.

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

Respectfully,  
Benadyne Phillips  
Nuevo, Ca

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Naomi Olivier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State support of churches

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:17:56 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The final words of our thrilling national anthem come to mind: "Oh, say! does that star-spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

America has been a place where people could live in freedom. Freedom is a truly wonderful thing, and it is worth preserving.

History has shown that when church and state unite, freedom goes away. The union of church and state provides the conditions that inevitably lead to the coercion of conscience, as well as an environment in which political corruption may more easily flourish.

Any form of mandated worship dishonors our fundamental human need to worship according to conscience and from the heart. True love from one person to another is real love: love that springs from a place of understanding, a non-forced and non-manipulated choice, and genuine commitment. True love for God is the same way. As a committed Christian myself, I sincerely do not desire for professors of any religion, or those who claim no religion, to be forced to worship God, whom I love greatly. I do not desire anyone to have a forced, pretend walk with God.

I invite your commission to seriously look through historical examples; both in America and in Europe, of where church and state were united. I invite you to consider whether there was freedom of conscience or not. I also kindly invite you to recall why the pilgrims came to America in the first place. I pray that the struggles our forefathers went through may not be in vain.

I thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns. I respectfully request 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 I would enthusiastically support.

Sincerely,  
Naomi Olivier  
Hot Springs, NC



**From:** Dana Little <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:18:19 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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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,  
Dana Little  
Bloomfield, CT

**From:** "L.G." i<[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [about the intention heard publicly of the Religious Liberty Commission Report]

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:18:19 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This principles are not merely constitutional- they are biblical. When questioned about civil authority, Jesus Christ, declared: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mathew 22:21) In those few words, Christ established a distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience. Government possesses legitimate authority over civil order and the protection of equal rights, but worship, doctrine and the relationship between an individual and God remain beyond its lawful reach.

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

Americans understood this lessons well. Many of the earliest settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled governments that enforced religious conformity.

The Founders sought to break from that centuries-old pattern by denying the federal government any authority over religion.

Article VI prohibits religious test for public office, and the First Amendment forbids law respecting an establishment of religion. These provisions were not accidental. They were deliberate safeguards designed to preserve liberty of conscience for every citizen.

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

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

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

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

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

We, the undersigned, adults residing on the territory of United States, twenty-one years of age or older, hereby respectfully but firmly request your honorable corporation, not to admit any Bill relating to the Sabbath or the Lord's day, as well as to any other religious or ecclesiastical institution or rite, or to favor in any way the adoption of any resolution for the Amendment of the national Constitution that could tend in some way, directly or indirectly, to give preference to the principles of any religion or religious body over others, or that in any way it approves the practice of legislating on religion, but to maintain forever as our Fathers established it, - the total separation between religion and the state as secure by the Constitution as its exist now.

Respectfully submitted

Luis [REDACTED] PII

**From:** David Condo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Feedback on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:18:39 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I was a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation for 25 years, and I am not religious. In fact, there are many examples of patriots in the military, law enforcement, and other areas of public service who are not religious. Your commission failed to have representation for the 29% of Americans (source: Pew Research Center. 2025. "2023-24 U.S. Religious Landscape Study Interactive Database." doi: 10.58094/3zs9-jc14) who are either not religious or are unaffiliated, including tens of millions of Americans who are atheist, agnostic, humanist, and/or freethinkers. We are living proof that the United States is not entirely "one nation under God" (despite the change to our motto in the 1950's); we are one nation under the Constitution and the rule of law - a truly unifying concept.

My other feedback about the report is more eloquently described by the Freedom From Religion Foundation:

Unfortunately, the Commission's draft report does not present a balanced or historically accurate assessment of religious liberty in the United States. Instead, it advances a predetermined ideological agenda that 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.

At its core, the report rests on a false premise: that the constitutional separation between religion and government is somehow hostile to religion. The opposite is true. The Establishment Clause protects religious liberty 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 report repeatedly dismisses the longstanding understanding of the Establishment Clause while failing to acknowledge the overwhelming historical evidence that the Framers intentionally supported a broad separation between religion and the government. James Madison warned that government involvement in religion corrupts both institutions. Thomas Jefferson described the First Amendment as building a "wall of separation between church and state." The constitutional commitment to government neutrality toward religion is firmly rooted in our nation's founding principles.

The report also repeatedly conflates private religious exercise with government-sponsored religious activity. Individuals unquestionably possess robust rights to pray, worship, speak about their faith, and exercise their religion. Government officials likewise retain their individual religious rights outside of their official duties. Those rights, however, do not authorize government entities to sponsor religious observances, coerce participation in religious exercises, or use governmental authority to promote one faith over others. The report largely ignores this critical constitutional distinction.

Equally troubling is the Commission's treatment of Americans who do not subscribe to the Commission's preferred religious viewpoint. The report gives scant attention to the rights of atheists, agnostics, humanists, religious minorities, and those who simply wish to be free from government-sponsored religion. Religious

liberty belongs equally to every American, including those who practice no religion at all. A government that favors Christianity necessarily diminishes the equal citizenship of everyone else.

Many of the report's recommendations would further entangle government with religion rather than protecting religious freedom. Among other proposals, it calls for 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. Taken together, these proposals threaten the constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and equal treatment for believers and nonbelievers alike. Because these proposals threaten the constitutional rights of millions of Americans, FFRF provides below a point-by-point response to each of the Commission's 12 recommendations.

The report relies heavily on testimony from witnesses representing one side of deeply contested constitutional questions while giving comparatively little attention to scholars, historians, civil rights advocates, religious minorities, or organizations dedicated to preserving governmental neutrality toward religion. As a result, the report cannot claim to be an objective examination of religious liberty but only an advocacy document supporting a specific political and theological movement.

True religious liberty does not require government support and promotion of religion. It requires government restraint. Americans remain free to pray or not pray, attend religious services or abstain, preach, evangelize, criticize religion, change beliefs, or reject religion altogether precisely because the Constitution prohibits government from taking sides in matters of faith.

For more than 200 years, the First Amendment has safeguarded our nation's extraordinary religious diversity by ensuring that the government neither promotes religion nor interferes with its free exercise. That constitutional balance has enabled Americans of every faith—and none—to live together as equal citizens. The Commission should reaffirm that enduring principle, not undermine it.

Accordingly, FFRF respectfully urges the Commission to **substantially** revise or withdraw those portions of the draft report that seek to redefine the Establishment Clause, diminish governmental neutrality toward religion, or recommend policies that would privilege particular religious beliefs through governmental action. Any final report should accurately reflect the constitutional text, the historical record, and the equal rights of all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs or lack thereof.

#### FFRF's Response to the Commission's 12 Recommendations

1. Instruct the Department of Justice to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state.

The commission does not seek clarification; it seeks an administrative end-run around longstanding constitutional doctrine. For decades, the Establishment Clause has protected Americans of every faith and none by preventing the government from officially supporting religion. The commission instead urges the Department of Justice to abandon longstanding constitutional safeguards in favor of an interpretation that permits extensive government promotion of religion, particularly Christianity. Such guidance would erode religious equality, invite government favoritism, and increase constitutional conflict rather than resolve it.

2. Require the DOJ, HHS and EEOC to issue "Know Your Rights" posters regarding religious liberty.

Americans should certainly understand their constitutional rights, but these materials must accurately explain both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause. The commission's report consistently presents religious liberty as protecting only religious believers while largely ignoring the equally important rights of nonreligious Americans and religious minorities to be free from government-sponsored religion. Public

education materials should emphasize that religious freedom includes the right not to participate in religion and that public officials may not use their positions to promote their personal faith.

3. Require written notice before disciplining public employees for allegedly improper religious expression. Government employees already enjoy extensive due process protections. This proposal creates a unique procedural privilege for religious expression that is unavailable for virtually any other workplace misconduct. More importantly, it blurs the distinction between private religious expression, which is protected, and official government action, which is not. Public school teachers, coaches, judges, and other officials do not possess a constitutional right to use their governmental authority to promote religion while performing official duties.

4. Create religious liberty hotlines and reporting portals. Existing federal civil rights enforcement mechanisms already investigate legitimate violations of religious liberty. Creating specialized “religious liberty” hotlines only encourages frivolous complaints whenever government officials comply with constitutional limits on religious promotion. Experience has shown that organizations advocating for expanded religious privilege frequently characterize neutral enforcement of the Establishment Clause as discrimination. Federal resources should protect everyone’s constitutional rights rather than creating redundant systems designed to privilege one category of claims.

5. Nominate judges committed to deciding religious liberty cases “on the merits.” Judicial nominees should be selected for their commitment to faithfully applying the Constitution, not for advancing any ideological vision of religious liberty. The commission’s recommendation implicitly equates deciding cases “on the merits” with reaching outcomes favorable to religious claimants. Courts should remain independent and impartial, applying constitutional text, precedent, and facts without political pressure from either branch of government.

6. Create a DOJ Religious Liberty Task Force. The Department of Justice already possesses ample authority to enforce federal civil rights laws. Recreating the Justice Department’s failed 2018 “Religious Liberty Task Force” would merely repeat a costly exercise in promoting religious privilege rather than protecting genuine religious liberty. The previous task force was largely devoted to advancing claims that individuals and institutions should be exempt from generally applicable laws based on religious objections, while giving scant attention to Establishment Clause violations or the rights of those harmed by government-sponsored religion. A new task force would predictably skew enforcement priorities in the same direction. The federal government should devote equal attention to protecting citizens from government-imposed religion, not merely defending those seeking exemptions from generally applicable laws.

7. Combat antisemitism. FFRF strongly supports vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws against antisemitism and protection from religious discrimination. Genuine religious liberty requires protecting Jewish Americans, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, atheists, and members of every other belief system from discrimination, harassment, and violence. However, efforts to combat antisemitism should not become a vehicle for restricting protected political speech or criticism of governments or religious institutions.

8. Protect religious Americans from government-led litigation targeting free exercise. The government should never target individuals because of their religious beliefs. However, governments may and sometimes must enforce neutral laws against religious organizations and individuals when they violate civil rights laws, labor protections, child welfare laws, or other generally applicable statutes. Religious belief does not create immunity from the law. Characterizing ordinary law enforcement as persecution undermines legitimate civil rights protections.

9. Repeal the Johnson Amendment.

The Johnson Amendment protects both churches and the integrity of elections by ensuring that tax-exempt charitable organizations do not become vehicles for partisan political campaigning. Religious organizations remain entirely free to speak about public issues, advocate policy positions, and address moral questions. If churches wish to engage in partisan electoral politics, they may either relinquish their tax-exempt status or establish separate political organizations to conduct that activity, as countless other organizations already do. Taxpayer subsidies should not finance partisan electioneering.

10. Streamline religious accommodations within the military.

Military personnel should receive reasonable religious accommodations whenever doing so does not undermine military readiness, unit cohesion, discipline or the rights of fellow service members. The military's unique mission requires balancing individual liberty with operational effectiveness. Religious accommodations should not permit discrimination, refusal to perform essential duties or conduct that jeopardizes military effectiveness or equal treatment.

The commission's call for expanded religious accommodations is also difficult to reconcile with the Defense Department's recent decision to eliminate approximately 180 recognized religious and nonreligious belief systems from its official affiliation codes. Those codes help ensure that service members' religious needs are identified and accommodated. Removing dozens of minority faiths and nonreligious worldviews makes it more difficult for affected personnel to identify themselves and request appropriate accommodations. Rather than strengthening religious liberty, the administration appears to be privileging favored religious traditions while making it harder for members of minority faiths and nonreligious service members to receive equal recognition and equal treatment. A genuine commitment to religious liberty must protect the rights of all service members, not merely those who adhere to the majority's faith.

11. Restore benefits to service members separated over COVID-19 vaccine objections.

This recommendation ignores the extraordinary public health and national security circumstances surrounding the pandemic. Military vaccination requirements have existed for generations because infectious diseases pose a direct threat to military readiness. While legitimate religious accommodation requests deserve careful consideration, blanket restoration of benefits regardless of individual circumstances would undermine commanders' ability to protect the health and operational readiness of the armed forces and would disregard those who complied with lawful military requirements.

12. Create a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty and First Freedom Hero Awards.

A government-sponsored award devoted specifically to "religious liberty" risks becoming a vehicle for recognizing individuals who seek religious privilege rather than equal liberty. Existing civilian honors already recognize extraordinary public service. If such an award were created, it should celebrate those who defend the religious freedom of all Americans—including those who uphold church-state separation—not merely those advancing one ideological vision of religious liberty.

I hope you give the above points your highest consideration.

Best regards,  
David Condo

PII

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

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Response to the Presidential Draft on Separation of Church and State - Religious Liberty Commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:21:06 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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July 13, 2026i@ 13:20

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

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

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

The Separation of church and state is vital because it protects the unalienable right of every individual to follow their own conscience in matters of faith without governmental interference or religious oppression. Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the United States of America as a nation. These principles are the secret of America's power and prosperity. Millions have sought its shores, and the United States has risen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth.

I remember Roger Williams after making his way at last, after months of change and wandering, to the shores of Narragansett Bay, he there laid the foundation of the first state of modern times that in the fullest sense recognized the right of religious freedom. The fundamental principle of Roger Williams's colony, was "that every man should have liberty to worship God according to the light of his own conscience." His little state, Rhode Island, became the asylum of the oppressed, and it increased and prospered until its foundation principles—civil and religious liberty—became the cornerstone of the American Republic.

The United States of America was established on the principle that a just government exists to protect natural rights, not to enforce religious duties. This total separation is inherent in the principle of a republic, as it ensures that the government remains free and independent of all ecclesiastical control. When the state and religion are united, it inevitably leads to the subjection and enslavement of the individual conscience, a lesson learned through centuries of suffering and blood.

- **Freedom of Conscience:** Every person has the right to worship God according to the light of their own conscience .
- **Protection of Rights:** Governments are instituted to secure public liberty by neither invading the rights of any sect nor allowing one sect to invade the rights of another.
- **Equality Before the Law:** True liberty requires that all opinions are equal before the law, preventing the establishment of a "claim to infallibility" that characterizes the Roman model of church-state

union.

I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. America will continue to prosper and be the most powerful nation in the world if we maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,  
*Jen Ferrell*



**From:** Randy Zerothi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – “Religious Liberty: The Bridge Between God and Government” – Randy Zeroth

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:21:39 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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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:** Gratiela Sabangan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Gratiela Sabangan

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:22:44 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a person who treasures the separation of church and state in my country of the United States, I am writing to earnestly ask that the Commission continue to respect that separation and would NOT seek to build the proposed bridge between church and state. History is replete with examples of what happens when church and state are not kept separate: injustice, coercion, compulsion, restriction, and persecution are the inevitable result.

Civil and religious liberty are the cornerstones of the American Republic. Please do not attempt to blur the lines between church and state by attempting to build a bridge between them. Keeping church and state separate and distinct is the only way to ensure that our civil and religious liberties are maintained.

Respectfully,

Gratiela Sabangan

**From:** Cherith Faith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:22:59 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a young adult, and since I was a child, I have been taught to treasure the freedoms we have in America and have always been proud of them. However, the issue of repealing the Johnson Amendment has concerned me greatly, knowing from reading history what this would lead to. I am also a person of faith and strongly believe in the Bible as the guide for my life. However, if I were to "enforce" that guide on my neighbor's life, that would be wrong. Freedom is as good as it goes until it starts impinging on someone else's freedoms. Even God is a God of freedom and liberty. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is a Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." If it is the true spirit of the Lord leading, there will be liberty for all. Right becomes wrong when forced. Separation between church and state was made to protect all people. Uniting church and state in government is what led to the Dark Ages, to massive murder and persecution of thousands of people. This is why our fathers came to America – to escape being in a society founded on that, because of what it leads to. It leads to darkness and destruction. This wouldn't be the land of the free anymore if we repealed the Johnson Amendment. This is what saddens and concerns me greatly. Please don't go forward with this. This is my plea to you. For us, the people, for me as a young person, let us keep separation of church and state completely. For us now and to give us a future of freedom as well. Otherwise, we will not have a future of freedom. We will not be the great nation of freedom, of liberty and justice for all. I am praying for the leadership of this nation I love and pray that we will uphold the standards of liberty and that we remember the past to protect the future.

Sincerely,  
Cherith Hickman  
Athol, Idaho

**From:** Richard Chapel <[REDACTED] PII >

**To:** Department of Justice <[REDACTED] PII >

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty: The real foundation!

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:23:31 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Department of Justice:

When considering anything relating to or entering upon any matter concerning RELIGION - One's relation to God, Especially the "Creator God" spoken of in the Declaration of Independence wherein is stated "Endowed by their Creator." Please consider the FACT that God, yes the Creator God is the beginning of Freedom of Conscious. It is His Character: summed up as: God valued your freedom of worship so much that:

He (God) was more willing to subject His only Son (Jesus) to the cruelty of the Cross than to deny you your right to reject Him!

God the creator is the foundation of liberty of conscious, Man or men (includes women) should never go where God's character will not go!

It is always In the name of God (religion) that the most cruel atrocities have ever been instituted by men.

Sincerely

Richard Chapel,  
a Veteran!

**From:** Carmen Thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state/ religious freedom

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:23:43 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

The separation of church and state has been so basic to our American freedom! The Commission's report raises important questions about the balance between religious liberty and government involvement.

Our first amendment guarantees us the right to our religious beliefs without privileging one religion over another in state office.

Many of our founders did not want a state religion dictating how funds are used in the country. The history of church-state separation in America is complex. Roger Williams' 1644 work on the "wall of separation" and the colonies' experiments with disestablishment shaped early American thought. The First Amendment reflects this principle, protecting faith.

How can we ensure religious freedom without entangling church and state? This is where I believe our focus should be directed. Thank you all for your service to our great country!

Sincerely,  
Carmen Thomas  
Angwin, California

..and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him!

**From:** Marti Hartnell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Preserving our liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:23:52 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To whom it may concern,

We, as Americans must preserve our liberty of conscience, liberty to make up our own minds with our faith, with our health, with our everyday decisions.

There must be segregation between church and state.

We request that the Johnson amendment be fully enforced.

We request that there be no funding for religious nonprofit activities, or the funding of religious education on public campuses. In order to maintain our freedom of religious liberty, we must not be put under the possibility of the government controlling our decisions and directing our path.

America leads the way in the world, and we must keep separate the church and the state to maintain our God-given rights of freedom! Freedom of choice with what we want to put into our bodies, what we want to put into our minds, and what God we choose to serve.

We must keep America free!

Preserve our liberty!

Concerned, citizens of the United States of America!

Mr. and Mrs. B Hartnell,

Born and raised and proud to be in America!

**From:** Janice Eteme <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT The Importance of Maintaining the Wall of Separation Between Church and State by Janice Chandler Eteme

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:24:25 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Copy\_of\_application-for-employment.pdf; LTJ\_Offer\_Letter\_New\_PhD\_-Janice\_Eteme.docx; 8fa08-406-1a83-c56-dfad305b77ca\_1\_Major.pdf; Understanding\_Symphony\_Structures\_\_A\_Beginner's\_Guide\_-\_Serenade.pdf

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To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

Dear PRL Commission,

The United States of America's Great Commission is to uphold Freedom to Worship according to one's own conscience. This is one of the most important foundational principals of our republic. It is important to site the viewpoint of Thomas Jefferson, one of the framers of our Constitution:

Thomas Jefferson

"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 the whole American people which declared that their legislation 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'.

Roger Williams,(1644) the founder of Rhode Island was exiled for challenging state-enforced religion; Williams championed a WALL OF SEPARATION to protect the church from state interference. Baptists later carried this idea to James Madison and the first amendment.

It is incumbent upon us all to uphold the principles of the FRAMERS OF OUR CONSTITUTION. These men, though imperfect, were dedicated to providing guideposts to ensure that this American Experiment would not fail to uphold the most basic right of every man, woman, boy a girl. The right to be free in one's own mind and to live and choose one's own faith and how to practically carry out those choices without the molestation of a magistrate, prelate, pope, state or federal official.

Let us STAND ON THEIR VISION. Let us encourage the American People to cherish such bold declarations of freedom and pass on this same legacy to ALL OF OUR CHILDREN.

In 1888 Alonzo T. Jones a Seventh-day Adventist minister and religious liberty advocate testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Education and Labor to oppose Senator Henry W. Blair's proposed National Sunday Law. Jones stated that religious observance is strictly a personal matter between and individual and God. Therefore, civil government has no right to legislate religious practices. He famously argued that government should only

regulate conduct relating to a person's fellow human- the last six of the ten commandments; leaving the relationship with God (the first four) up to the individual's free will.

Jones also argued the "Exemption" for SDA's and Seventh-day Baptists and Jews was "Tolerance in Disguise" because the government would still be acting as the arbiter of religious observance.

Jones also cited the danger of "Theocracy": Drawing on his understanding of historical and Biblical parallels (specifically comparing the proposed U.S. Sunday law to the union of religion and state in the Roman Empire) This union between church and state in the Roman Empire led to one of the most oppressive eras in history and facilitated the Spanish inquisition which lasted for 350 years.

As American citizens, we have within the fabric of our existence, the courage and fortitude to build families, create thriving communities, make products, educate our children and practically enact the vision of our framers.

Now is not the time to abandon our lofty and pure principals, nor our collective faith, for a cheap, dumbed down version of our beloved country. If we forsake our GREAT AMERICAN COMMISSION OF FREESOM, we will give way to those who have always hated our SHINING CITY ON A HILL and consequently, our light will dim and we will fail to light the way for future generations.

Please reject this harmful ideology that is operating in the shadows to rob us ALL OF WHAT WE AS A NATION HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO ATTAIN....A FREE AMERICA!! AN AMERICA WHERE EACH PERSON WORSHIPS OR CHOOSES NOT TO WORSIP GOD, ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE. An America where the Wall between Church and State continues to stand.

Thank you for considering this important matter,

Janice C. Eteme



**From:** Dean Stump <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Separation of Church and State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:24:43 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I pray that you will seriously revisit the proposal that you have placed for President Trump to sign. I was alarmed by the fact that you want to "bridge" church and state. Our founding fathers purposely wrote the Constitution in such a way that this country would not be subject to a dictator or have a set religion for all to follow. Our founding fathers were adamant in protecting the people. They had learned what this combination does to a society. We are to follow our own conscience. We are not to be coerced into a set way. Morality cannot be legislated. Jesus himself never forced anyone to worship a certain way. If the Johnson Act is repealed, the thought of government money funding churches and churches expressing political agendas frightens me. We, of faith, are to serve/worship God, not political philosophies. Jesus stated, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17. Keep politics and religion separate. History shows that when religion and state/country are together, persecutions come about.

Sincerely,

Nancy Stump  
Reading, PA

**From:** Jason Penner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Concerns Regarding Draft Report on Church–State Separation

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:24:50 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Response\_to\_Commission.pdf

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Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and Members of the Commission,

I'm writing to express my strong disagreement with the draft report's claim that the Constitution "neither creates nor requires" the separation of church and state. The attached response by Jonathan Zirkle outlines in detail that this principle is not a modern invention but a foundational American safeguard. Roger Williams articulated it in 1644, the colonies adopted it long before the Revolution, and the First Amendment was ratified only because Baptists and other dissenters insisted on this protection. As Zirkle notes, without separation of church and state, the Constitution itself would not have been adopted.

Weakening or denying this separation is not only historically inaccurate—it is dangerous. Once the government signals that church–state separation is optional, every religious group gains equal constitutional footing to demand state endorsement, funding, or recognition. If one faith may claim the Constitution permits government partnership, then any faith—including those teaching doctrines most Americans reject, such as satanism—may claim the same. The inevitable result is government pressure to choose winners and losers among religions, which is precisely what the First Amendment was written to prevent.

As the attached response states, refusing to fund religious doctrine is not hostility toward religion; it is the necessary restraint that keeps government from deciding religious questions. Removing that restraint guarantees conflict, litigation, and ultimately the erosion of religious liberty for all.

History shows that religion flourishes most when government remains neutral. Tocqueville observed that Americans of every denomination credited "the complete separation of church and state" for religion's strength. Abandoning that principle now would invite the very sectarian conflict our founders worked so hard to prevent.

For these reasons, I urge the Commission to revise its historical account and withdraw any recommendation suggesting that church and state are not separate. To claim otherwise invites constitutional instability and undermines the freedoms the First Amendment was designed to protect.

Respectfully,

Jason Penner

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII



# PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 6, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

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

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines this principle by proposing to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall of separation was not a secular invention imposed upon religion — it was built by people of faith, to protect faith. Breaching that wall will set the churches against one another in competition for government money and favor, and set the church against the state as each seeks power over the other — eroding the very freedom the Commission claims to defend. The Commission has recommended increasing government funding of religious activities and recommended repealing the Johnson Amendment. Both of

these recommendations, if followed, will bring the corruption of the political process into the churches. In making its recommendations the Commission has relied upon a faulty retelling of our history.

### **The American Development of Separation of Church and State**

The establishment of a wall of separation between the church and the state first appeared in the modern world in 1636 when Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island. The success of Roger Williams' experiment would later inspire the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and to a lesser extent other colonies to roll back their religious legislation long before the Revolution of 1776. By 1790, all but three of the original 13 had disestablished their churches, and by 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, had disestablished its church as well. No state would ever enter the Union with an established church. The United States had learned from the colonies that liberty prospered better where church and state were separate. While the states themselves would take some time to extricate themselves from religious entanglements, the drafters and signers of the Constitution recognized the value of religious liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman who toured the United States from 1831 to 1832, observed this about the cause of religion's power in America and how religion indirectly influenced the nation.

In order to learn more about [the separation of church and state], I questioned the faithful of all communions. . . . To each of them I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts, and I discovered that they differed among themselves only on matters of detail: to a man, they assigned primary credit for the peaceful ascendancy of religion in their country to the complete separation of church and state. I state without hesitation that during my stay in America I met no one — not a single clergyman or layman — who did not agree with this statement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alexis 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.<sup>2</sup>

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-

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 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.<sup>3</sup> 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,"<sup>4</sup> and that religion flourished better without government patronage.<sup>5</sup> George Washington's diplomats negotiated, and John Adams signed the Treaty

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<sup>3</sup>Roger 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.

<sup>4</sup> James Madison, "Detached Memoranda" (c. 1817), in Elizabeth Fleet, "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 534–568.

<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> President Fillmore said that “Church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled.”<sup>7</sup> President Grant said, “Keep the church and the state forever separate.”<sup>8</sup> 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.”<sup>9</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt said there must be “complete severance of Church and State.”<sup>10</sup>

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-

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<sup>6</sup> 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).

<sup>7</sup> *The Ovation to Mr. Fillmore: Speeches of Mr. Fillmore*, 1856.

<sup>8</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, Address to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 29, 1875.

<sup>9</sup> James A. Garfield, Letter Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (to Hon. George F. Hoar), July 12, 1880.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 361; the statement originated in T. Roosevelt’s 1915 public letter opposing public funding of sectarian schools in New York.

ed. This is an *ad hominem* attack commonly used in the highly charged political debates of today, but counterproductive to finding truth and establishing unity. It is only useful in persuading the uninformed. The suggestion that *Everson* “tracked” with Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, or later critical theory is historically implausible. Foucault’s major works postdated *Everson*, Sartre was never a source of American Establishment Clause doctrine, and the Court grounded its reasoning in American sources: Madison, Jefferson, disestablishment, and the First Amendment tradition. To attempt to smear the Supreme Court with Justice Black’s much earlier Klan membership and with Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre is disingenuous. While Justice Black held that the Constitution established a wall of separation between the church and the state, in the same decision, the decision attacked by the Commission, Justice Black held that government reimbursement for transportation to Catholic schools was constitutional. How ironic! The Commission faults Justice Black for anti-Catholic bias from his Klan past, yet the very decision it attacks is one in which he upheld government support benefiting Catholic school-children. And it faults him for following philosophies that no serious legal historian would argue influenced the Court’s reasoning.

The Commission correctly states that much of the hostility towards religion in America today is based upon a “broader cultural assumption that religious belief should remain invisible while secular ideologies enjoy full freedom to influence public institutions.” Report at 21. The Commission is correct to say, “People of faith should not be required to leave their religious convictions behind when entering the workplace, engaging in commerce, serving their communities, or participating in public debate,” and that “institutions should foster environments in which citizens with divergent convictions can work together while maintaining fidelity to conscience.” Report at 21. Nevertheless, the Report goes on to continually overstate the case by saying that the “wall of separation” ideology creates a wall between personal faith and public life. While this may be true when the idea of a wall of separation is misconstrued and weaponized by secular atheists, it is not true that the wall of separation erected by the Constitution and so often referred to by generations of leaders who have gone before us is a wall between personal faith and public life. The true wall of separation is between the state and the church. It is



there so that a person can freely exercise their personal faith and freely engage in the public sphere, without prejudice or persecution. To deny that there is complete separation of church and state in the Constitution, aka “the wall,” and to deny that the wall can serve a useful purpose in protecting individual freedom is un-American and counter to both our experience and the knowledge and intent of our forefathers. The wall of separation is not a wall between religious people and public life; it is a wall between ecclesiastical power and civil power, protecting both religion and civil freedom.

### **The Commission’s Objectionable Recommendations**

Based upon the above arguments, the Commission recommends that the United States adopt its recommendation to post in the workplace, to teach our students, and to teach as many citizens as possible that the Constitution neither creates nor requires the separation of church and state, and that there should be no wall of separation between church and state. If this false ideology is embraced by the people, it will allow for many different “reforms,” and eventually be used to justify any oppressive religious legislation so long as it is for the good of the people or represents the will of the majority. This is a radical teaching that has the potential, over time, to roll back the freedoms we enjoy in this nation, and return us to the political conflicts and tyranny our forefathers came to America to escape. This is the underlying philosophical foundation of additional, objectionable recommendations that the Commission makes.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations. It bases its argument on the idea that in times of need, to separate the physical help from spiritual help is to deny the full scope of the help that the person in need requires. This may be true in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this is an argument to the church that wishes to provide those services to fund them internally, and not rely upon the state. For religion to rely upon state funding is for religion to take the role of an imposter, pretending to provide aid, when in fact it is the state that is making the aid possible. It also allows the religion that is relying upon government funding to use that funding as an

aid in indoctrination and evangelism, thus the government is not remaining neutral. The Commission argues that church members today must leave their religious beliefs at home to engage in humanitarian work. That should never be true for work that they do without the aid of the state, and should only be true to the extent the state is providing them assistance. This is for the protection of religion as much as it is for the state and its citizens. Anytime government money is available, a religion will modify its beliefs to adhere to the values of the government so that it can obtain funds. Public money always brings public control. Furthermore, different religions may claim fairness requires equal funding, even though they do not provide equal services. This certainly will devolve into a quagmire that the state would do well to avoid.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious education. All the reasons against supporting religious philanthropy apply here, as well as additional reasons. The Commission argues correctly that the state benefits from a religious people. But the Commission errs in thinking the state can be involved in making people religious. In education, it is important what is taught. By supporting religious education, the state will be making decisions about what doctrines can be taught. This most commonly takes the form of accreditation. Many sectarian schools are not accredited for this reason. But it can go further. Will the state support a school whose religion teaches interracial marriage is a sin, or that women should not receive higher education? Will the state support a school that teaches polygamy? What about a school that doesn't teach many things, like the Amish? This puts the state into the business of determining what values are worth supporting and what values are not. Don't think that the decisions will only be required for that which may seem obvious to us today. Today the Commission is recommending that the Ten Commandments be posted in schools and courthouses. Which Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments of Exodus or Deuteronomy? One is more Jewish focused, one more focused on creation, both requiring the keeping of the seventh day, not the first day? Or maybe the Ten Commandments of a Roman Catholic catechism, which a Protestant will tell you dispenses with the law against graven images and a Catholic priest will tell you merely divides the commandments differently. Or maybe the state can just abbreviate the Ten Commandments, number

them like a Protestant, and hope everybody is happy. That is the solution in Texas. Texas is getting into the business of doctrine. A government that refuses to fund religious doctrine is not thereby endorsing secularism, rather, it is refusing to decide religious questions. That restraint is not hostility to religion; it is the condition under which religious communities remain free and prosperous.

The Commission has one more recommendation that has the potential to expand the breach in the wall of separation. The Commission recommends repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment prohibits churches from engaging in partisan politics, specifically supporting a candidate for election. It does not prohibit the church from speaking on the issues of the day, or even telling its members how to vote regarding issues, such as abortion and the right to life. What would repealing the Amendment do? Churches would become fabulous non-profit vehicles to engage in political activities. Pastors are known to exhibit tremendous sway over their congregations. It is not hard to imagine the intense pressure that a pastor could feel to deliver his congregation's votes for money. It is not hard to imagine that wealthy and powerful interests might attempt to influence political causes through the churches. Combine that with a patronage system whereby the congregations could receive government grants based upon the Commission's other recommendations, and there is a recipe for disaster. What failing congregation won't make a little compromise for a little financial gain? As scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV. As financial interests invade the churches, invariably the public will be able to smell hypocrisy, and any gains either the church or the state thinks may be had by their union will be lost. Only a dead, lifeless church on government life support will remain.

Today, the Johnson Amendment is already being dismantled by non-enforcement. In *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, the IRS and several religious plaintiffs proposed a settlement that would have substantially narrowed enforcement of the Johnson Amendment as applied to churches. This settlement was opposed by the Baptist Joint Committee and Americans United, two reputable religious liberty advocacy organizations, not secular humanists. A federal district court found that it lacked juris-

diction on March 31, 2026. The effort to remove the barrier between tax-exempt churches and partisan campaign activity is expected to continue. The Commission should reverse its recommendation for repealing the Johnson Amendment, and instead, recommend its enforcement.

### **The Commission Correctly Identifies a Peril, but Not the Solution**

Commissioner Bishop Robert Barron made an important observation about secularism. He said, “[T]here’s a philosophical issue which is secularism proposing itself as some kind of neutral ground, but it’s not neutral ground. Secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system. It wants to dominate the whole of life and therefore to exclude religion [from the public square].” Report at 181. Commissioner Kelly Shackelford makes a particularly insightful comment that “the one thing a totalitarian regime will never allow is citizens who hold an allegiance to one higher than the government. So, whenever that type of power of coalescing comes together, the first flashpoint is always going to be religious freedom. And if you lose there, you will lose everything else. So, what we’re really dealing with here is the precipice of all our freedoms.” Report at 29. This should be particularly sobering when combined with the Commission’s observation that “contemporary progressive opposition to religious liberty ... seek[s] freedom for its own views but coercion of religious groups whose traditional beliefs conflict with current trends such as transgenderism.” Report at 35-36. The Commission is correct in urging the courts to view atheism and atheistic determinism as ideologically and functionally similar to religion. Just as secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system, religion, when granted power, tends toward the same result. Combining church and state together, financially or otherwise, will result in one or the other demanding power and control over the other. History has shown us that the stronger the bond between church and state, the more oppressed the society. The union of church and state is the recipe for the kind of totalitarian regime warned about by Commissioner Shackelford. This is not a new discovery. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams wrote, “Checks and Ballances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them, are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body.—Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as Soon as either

Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unballanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!”<sup>11</sup> 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-

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<sup>11</sup> 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.”<sup>12</sup>

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.”<sup>13</sup> 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...”<sup>14</sup>

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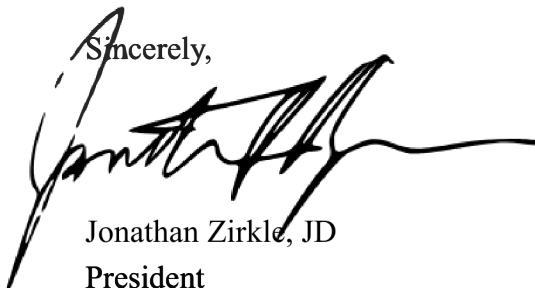
<sup>12</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

<sup>13</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 340.

<sup>14</sup> 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:** Roger Peughi<[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty (PRLC) Draft Report

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:25:02 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** MIneola\_SDA\_Church\_Template\_for\_Approvals.xlsx

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July 13, 2026

Sent by 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 (PRLC) Draft Report**

Dear Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Carson, and all other members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission (PRLC):

It is the position of our local church, the Mineola Seventh-day Adventist Church, that after reviewing the Draft Report, which was recently submitted by the PRLC for review and comment, we must take issue with both the basis and the proposals of this Commission.

Our biggest and most compelling issue is easily that of the proposal to weaken, dismantle and eventually totally remove the idea of the **Separation of Church and State**. Although technically these words do not exist within the First Amendment of the Constitution, the idea and principle behind that phrase certainly do exist when analyzing the wording of the establishment clause. We also know that it has existed as it is today, since 1791 without change. It has been successful for a period of 235 years!

So why would we want to change it now, when it has been central to our religious freedom? Also keep in mind that it was not created as a secular invention imposed upon religion but instead built by people of faith to protect the faith of all people. If the wall between church and state is destroyed, it will create a power struggle between the two that will have negative ramifications for both sides, that doesn't have to happen. Additionally, once a system for receipt of government funding is mandated, the motivation of the religious entity becomes corrupted by everything from threats of survival to greed that changes the organization from being an outlet for the benefit of all of humanity, to self-aggrandizement, where the church primarily justifies its ability to advance more like a business, to the point of being ruthless, than seeking to fulfill the mission of Christ's love towards the world.

Finally, the cost for receipt of those government funds eventually comes due. It is not paid back with a return of funds but typically by conforming to the dictates of the entity that made those funds available. Another word for this is Control. With the loss of one's control of one's destiny, comes the loss of freedom. This is a place where no one, whether it is a single church or an entire religious organization, ever wants to go.



If this were to happen to our church and our organization, both would be crippled and leave its members to face their individual dangers, put forth by evil men in power, while continuing to obey the law of God at their own peril.

Prophetically speaking, we know from the Bible that this time will eventually come to this nation and that there are signs, including the work now of the PRLC, that will accelerate the coming of that day. So, we oppose the work and existence of this commission because we see it as detrimental to true religious freedom, a freedom which allows us to continue the work of leading people to the Lord, our Savior, for as long as He allows us to do so.

All the known activities that are currently being sought after by this commission are objectionable to our church body as well. Accordingly, we have attached a spreadsheet to this letter that shows the actual intent of our members, regarding these topics.

Please give this letter your sincere consideration. Just as Roger Williams sought after a land that would truly be a haven of true religious liberty, when he came to these shores, which was eventually accomplished, we today still look for and hope for those same standards of religious freedom to remain, which has set us apart from every other nation in the world, allowing us to be a peculiar people blessed by our great and faithful God.

Most Sincerely,

Roger D. Peugh  
Religious Liberty Leader  
Mineola SDA Church

P II

P II

P II

| Mineola SDA Church Scoring Template for Approval responses re the PRLC Report items |                                                                                                 |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Objection or Request #                                                              | Objection or Request-Approval Votes                                                             | Vote Ratio of respondents approving | %          |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1                                                                                   | 21                                                                                              | 21:21                               | 100        |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2                                                                                   | 21                                                                                              | 21:21                               | 100        |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3                                                                                   | 21                                                                                              | 21:21                               | 100        |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4                                                                                   | 21                                                                                              | 21:21                               | 100        |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5                                                                                   | 21                                                                                              | 21:21                               | 100        |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6                                                                                   | 21                                                                                              | 21:21                               | 100        |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Totals</b>                                                                       | <b>126</b>                                                                                      | <b>126:126</b>                      | <b>100</b> |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Description</b>                                                                  |                                                                                                 |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1                                                                                   | Objecting to government funding of religious non-profit activities                              |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2                                                                                   | Objecting to government funding of religious education and religious clubs on public campuses   |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3                                                                                   | Objecting to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities     |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4                                                                                   | Request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced                                            |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5                                                                                   | Objection to special treatment for Jewish people and the Jewish State of Israel due to religion |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6                                                                                   | Objection to efforts to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state                 |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                     |                                                                                                 |                                     |            |  |  |  |  |  |

# Document Produced in Native Format

**From:** "Randall & Wendy Ingelse" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re. Recommendations of Religious Liberty Commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:25:40 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I would like to express my desire for you to maintain this country's current principle of separation of church and state, which has been our mode of operation since the United States of America was first founded.

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. I would urge you to put these into effect.

Let's keep our consciences free. Let's keep America free.

Sincerely,

Randall Ingelse

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\* If the need is fulfilled, but requires a compromise, then it is not a blessing, but a test. -J. Lomacang

\* Even the right decision, if made too late, can be the wrong decision. -Alvaro Souza

\* The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits. - Albert Einstein

\* In an age of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act. -George Orwell

**From:** Diana [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:26:40 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To Whom It May Concern:

As a loyal MAGA supporter, I have been very happy with much that President Trump as his administration have done to bring law and order back and end woke dominance in our culture. I believe the role of a good government is to enforce the last 6 Commandments of the Decalogue.

I also believe that Christians should be active in our government and should uphold their personal values. They should not compromise them and let those religious values guide their decisions.

However, we must encourage the separation of church and state as our founders saw it: in that government has no right to impose or legislate regarding the first 4 Commandments, which affect an individual's personal relationship with God and his conscience.

Different churches/denominations have different beliefs. The separation of church and state means the members of various churches are allowed to believe and practice those beliefs as they understand from the Word of God without fear of persecution or coercion to go against their understanding.

I strongly encourage the current administration and the Department of Justice to uphold those freedoms, which have made our country great for the past 250 years!

Thank you kindly for your attention to this matter,

Diana [REDACTED] PII  
[REDACTED] PII  
[REDACTED] PII

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

**From:** sylvana s <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Establishment Clause – Sylvana

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:27:27 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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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.

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.

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.

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

Respectfully,  
Sylvana  
Shaffer

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Raquel Bobst <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:27:28 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Religious Liberty Committee Members,

As a Christian I strongly believe that as our founding fathers wrote the Constitution for our Country on behalf of all of us. I do not agree with making changes to the Constitution. I feel that we are losing the right to believe what it is in the Bible, the freedom of conscience and choice. As our family moved here many years ago we have been enjoying the freedom here and I will appreciate if there is no changes in the constitutions. Sincerely, Raquel L. Bobst.

**From:** bernelda gonzales <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Preserved separation of church and state

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:27:48 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent government from establishing or favoring religion. In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Bernelda Gonzales



**From:** Лилия Ситдикова <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Liliya Sitdikova

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:28:05 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

The founding fathers, such as Thomas Jefferson wrote that the First Amendment's Establishment Clause was intended to build a firm boundary, protecting religious freedom by preventing the government from interfering in the affairs of religious organizations. I strongly believe that the successful outcome of this great nation in the United States of America was because of the separation of the church and state. We all know what happened when the state or the government was ruling over the churches and religious activities in the dark ages. It caused many to flee and seek asylum and freedom in our country. I ask you to reconsider the idea of the church and state union letting people exercise their freedom of faith expression and giving them a chance to personally get acquainted with God. By "bridging" the path of the union of church and state, we are going to risk the freedom that has made us free in this country. If we intend to continue letting this country grow and show that life with God is better, having the church and the state separated is what will keep us safe.

Sincerely,  
Liliya Sitdikova

**From:** CJI<[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State is a Constitutional Principle

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:28:11 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to oppose the claim that the separation of church and state is not a constitutional principle.

Although the exact phrase “wall of separation between church and state” does not appear in the Constitution, the principle is clearly expressed in the First Amendment, which forbids government from establishing religion while protecting the free exercise of religion.

This separation does not exclude Christians or other religious people from public life. It protects everyone by preventing religious institutions from gaining civil power and preventing government from controlling religion.

History repeatedly shows that when church and state unite, both are corrupted. The church becomes political, the state claims religious authority, and freedom of conscience is gradually replaced by religious pressure, discrimination and eventually coercion. This occurred under imperial Rome, medieval church-state systems, established Protestant churches and even in parts of colonial America.

Religious liberty is safest when the church is free to teach, persuade and serve, but has no power to enforce belief through government.

As a Christian, I am also concerned because Revelation 13 warns that religious and civil powers will unite again, leading eventually to forced worship, economic penalties and persecution against those who refuse to conform.

For this reason, replacing the wall of separation with a “bridge” between church and state is dangerous. It creates an easement through which religious influence may gain access to civil power and government may enter matters of faith and conscience.

I urge the Commission to defend both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause, and to clearly affirm that government must neither suppress religion nor unite with it.

The separation of church and state is not hostility toward religion. It is one of the strongest protections of religious liberty ever established.

Respectfully,

Cheryl Johnson

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for iOS.

**From:** Vic & Carol Swayze <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] To members of the Religious Liberty Commission

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:28:25 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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History is replete with instances in which government oversight of religion resulted in persecution of those who wished to follow a faith other than that legislated by the government. Often one major religion has worked behind the scenes to influence the government to restrict the freedom of minority religions to worship and practice as their conscious dictates. We cannot afford to bridge the gap between religion and government else America is no longer the land of the free!

Carol and Victor Swayze

West Liberty, Iowa

**From:** Imaginit Studio <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Separation Of Church & State - Religious Liberty– Rayshard

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:28:38 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Hi my name is Rayshard

Firstly, I want to express gratitude that people in government are interested in the gospel of Jesus being represented in this nation. However, my concern is this methodology that's being considered. Regardless of how we feel about the phrase "separation of church and state", historically speaking, the merging of the civil and the ecclesiastical has caused the deaths of millions of people over the course of hundreds of years. I don't mean to lump the proponents of these considerations into the same category as those who have persecuted those of different moral persuasions historically, but my concern for this nation is that as we remove this freedom, evil men and women in office further down the line will take something meant for good and use it for evil. I do not agree with the secularism that has pervaded this nation. So I get it. But as an American, I am only concerned with the soul of this nation. As a believer, I am concerned with the souls of this nation. Every man or woman has a right to choose whom he or she will serve. A nation's laws can never stand in the place where God resides.

Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar

And render unto God the things that belong to God. Matthew 22:21.

Thank you for your time in reading my letter.

**From:** "PII" <PII>

**To:** "RLC (OASG)" <PII>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of church and state - Annie Morgan

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:30:29 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to ask you to keep the wall of separation between church and state. This is important to me and my family.

The wall between church and state protects our freedom from government control of each persons right to liberty in matters of conscience.

Thank you,

Annie Morgan

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Marie Ritland <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Church - State

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:30:40 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

---

Keep religion out of public schools!

/m

**From:** Miles Kim <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report - Miles Kim

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:31:56 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To those involved,

I am writing because I am concerned about the recent Religious Liberty Commission Report, specifically with the sentiment that the separation of church and state is unconstitutional or unimportant. I do not believe that the separation of church and state can be disregarded without serious long-term consequences.

The separation of church and state started because of persecution of Christians by other Christians who did not respect the concept, and it is a safeguard to keep one religious group from using the state to impose its religious beliefs on others, even within the same group. The lack of separation of church and state caused untold horrors in the Middle Ages, and it will have the same effect in our day if it is not respected. Roger Williams, one of the originators of the idea, was very strong on this, highlighting historical abuses that resulted from the union of church and state.

As a Christian, I believe that Jesus Himself, though king of the universe, did not base his kingdom on the state or on political power. He even told the Roman governor of His time, who represented the state, that His kingdom was not of this world, and thus, His servants would not fight for Him (John 18:36).

Finally, the separation of church and state is indeed constitutional. The Constitution prohibits a religious test for public office. The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from political involvement, ensuring that churches do not engage in political campaigns. Christianity should not be enforced using public funding in any way, including in public schools. Separation of church and state may seem abstract now, but it will have tangible consequences in the future should it be discarded.

Blessings,

Miles Kim

**From:** Kathy Purvis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:31:58 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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

As a citizen of the United States and a Christian, I am seriously troubled about the proposal to tear down the wall of separation between church and state.

I see lots of trouble ahead. One of the largest is that the bridge for church and state to act together will bring more corruption. Churches will start competing for grants and answer to politicians instead of to God. It will also lead to church persecution. All we have to do is read church history to see this.

Please reconsider the recommendations in your report that weaken this separation, and repeal the Johnson Amendment.

Our Founding Fathers wanted separation and that is how our country has maintained its greatness!

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kathy Purvis



**From:** David Dickerson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 1st Amendment Comment

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:32:04 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear President Trump and the Religious Liberty Committee:

The Emperor has no clothes.

The first Amendment is very clear that Government and religious need not be married or even relatives. Yes, "Separation of Church and State" is not in the constitution. But what do you think the 1st Amendment is addressing? This is a stupid slippery slope that you guys no better than to go down.

What is your real agenda?

I am a Protestant Christian who FREELY exercises my faith in the Great USA! I don't need any changes.

Maybe you guys should be cool with true freedom of religion. That means freedom for even Satanists. That's right. Religious LIBERTY.

Now, if the US bans immigrants who are Islamist because they want to change the foundation of what the US stands for, that's different. That's a piece of a religion that wants to come to our country and take the right of women to drive cars and girls to go to school. That's just crazy town.

Why are you wanting to unite Government and Religion closer? What is your agenda?

Mr. Trump, you and your blind followers don't understand what "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." means birthright citizenship. And now you act like you don't understand what the 1st Amendment says. come on guys!

What is your agenda?

And don't think I'm some raging liberal. I can't support a group that celebrates killing babies. And I can't support a group that is so stupid.

I voted for Liz Cheney.

Middle. the Middle is where Americans want things. No boy's in girls sports and no government getting involved in our religious freedom. It's good the way it is!

Stop meddling with perfection geniuses.

Thank you,

--

David Dickerson

[REDACTED] PII



**From:** Linda Hallocki <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:32:11 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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***Separation of church and state is already clear in the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Therefore, I object to the Religious Liberty Commission's recommendation #1, "Instruct the Department of Justice to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state."***

***The Johnson Amendment is necessary to maintain separation of church and state. Therefore, I object to Recommendation #9, "Repeal the Johnson Amendment."***

**From:** Stephen Boyde <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:32:41 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

---

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to express my support for religious liberty. I am concerned that some of the proposed measures, however, will actually work to hinder religious liberty.

Repealing the Johnson Amendment would open the door for churches to become vehicles to engage in political activities. This could lead to political and even financial pressure to influence religious decisions. Please keep the Johnson Amendment!

We all know that religion is a matter of the heart and personal belief. Politics has to do with laws, policies, and funding. Mixing the two will inevitably lead to political pressure regarding religious convictions. This may lead to compliance, but can never effect a change of heart. Governments are God-ordained and necessary for society, but using their lawful authority in an unlawful way (to influence religion) will spell disaster for any nation.

Finally, religious liberty means liberty for ALL. We pledge allegiance to our flag and nation which commits to "liberty and justice for all." This includes Jews and Muslims, Whites and Blacks. NO ONE IS EXCLUDED!

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Deborah Boyd

Durham, Maine

**From:** stuzzyz Rios <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Sunday Law

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:34:11 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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No , to the Sunday law because it breaks our constitutional rights which our government was founded upon, which was freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

If you unite church and State again then we're just going to see a major decline in society the greater division than never before

A mass uprising against the laws of the land

From an evil doing that, none of our foreign fathers have committed in times time in half a time

Really think about what your legislation is about to push out,

You may think bringing religion back into the United States may bring a whole deal back may bring back the government as one nation under God

But you deceive yourselves, knowing forcing religion upon people will be the most destructive thing any society can do.

So again, I say really think about this decree that you are preparing to set out 📖 and if it's truly worth it, do not let the opinions of others truly rabble you up to making a foolish decision

I understand you want us to grow in **society**, and there are many other ways of doing it of helping us progress as a people by uniting civil power with religious power never been has been good from the time of the great inquisition to the time of Constantine to the time of 1798 there's a reason why we broke church and State and their unity. Please do not bring back what took so long to break to give people true freedom. Amen.

**From:** Marie Ritland <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:34:18 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

---

Keep separate - church and public schools. Separation of church ant state should continue. We don't need to develop fanatics.

/m

**From:** Gladys Navarro <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:34:34 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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TO THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION:

"Protecting freedom of conscience is a duty of the State and the limit of its authority in matters of religion"

"Congress shall make no laws to establish a religion, or to interfere the free exercise thereof."

That this be fulfilled is the most important request I can make of whoever directly or indirectly governs my life in this world.

Thank you very much for considering my request

May God bless and prosper the nations and the rulers or leaders who uphold these principles.

**From:** "Jorgette Juul" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:34:38 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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I am in opposition to the unification of church and state. I believe this union to be a foundational mistake to the liberties we now receive and upon which our great nation was established. Although it is the Christian objective to bring others into the saving relationship with Christ our Saviour, God Himself, accepts only willing service. Exodus 35:21; 1 Chronicles 28:21; Psalm 54:6; Psalm 119:108.

God does not force service, worship, or obedience.

- And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15
- And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. 1 Kings 18:21

God clearly makes it known that

- "The wages of sin is death and the gift if God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Roman 6:23)

The choice is ours to worship as we wish or not to worship at all. If God does not force our religious liberty and freedoms, what right does man have to legislate them? It has long been understood that there are two tables of the decalogue (10 commandments). The first table dealing with our relationship with God. No man can force the conscience or enact laws to outline or dictate our service, allegiance, or worship as it relates to the first four commandments. Our constitutional rights pertaining to the 1<sup>st</sup> table of the decalogue have always been protected by the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment.

Government has only been given the authority to uphold order, related to the 2<sup>nd</sup> decalogue (laws between mankind), by enforcing laws against crimes such as perjury, murder, and theft.

During the time of the Roman empire, the Jews (the Church) and the Romans (Government/State) could not agree on anything. Both (church/state) striving against the other constantly for supremacy and power found a common goal to unite them. That unity and most unholy alliance joined them in oneness of mind to crucify our Lord!

Our nation, the United Staes of America, became a sanctuary from the persecution, vicious torture, and murder of millions of Christians of over a thousand years when church/state were united. Here, in this land, man did not have to fear the dictatorship of a king (State) or total authority of a Pope (Church). This was the liberty upon which our very freedoms were established at its inception. Jesus himself recognized the separation.

- And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Mark 12:17
- And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's. Luke 20:25

Persecution always follows the union of church and state no matter the perceived good intention.



In summary, I respectfully, reiterate my strong objection to the unity of church and state. I pray for the discernment from the Holy Spirit to those who unwittingly place those God given freedoms at risk. I can only think back to the words of Jesus.

- **Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34**

Prayerfully,  
Jorgette Juul

**From:** Interfaith Alliance <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENTi- PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY  
COMMISSION DRAFT REPORTi- INTERFAITH ALLIANCE

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:34:42 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

**Attachments:** Interfaith\_Alliance\_RLC\_Draft\_Report\_Public\_Comment\_20260713.pdf

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To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

Please find attached Interfaith Alliance's public comment submitted to the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission in response to the Commission's draft report. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and urge the Commission to consider these concerns carefully.

**PUBLIC COMMENT  
TO THE PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION**

Submitted via PII

July 13, 2026

Interfaith Alliance

Interfaith Alliance is a national, nonpartisan organization dedicated to protecting the integrity of religion and democracy and to ensuring that people of diverse faiths and beliefs are treated equally under the law. We are committed to defending democracy and preventing authoritarian theocracy through advocacy, public education, and local and statewide political organizing. Since 1994, we have mobilized people of diverse faiths and beliefs to respond to the weaponization of religion in America to harm vulnerable communities and distort our politics.

Upon reviewing a draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, we believe it confirms many of our worst fears about the Commission and its agenda. These concerns informed our decision to bring a lawsuit against the Religious Liberty Commission, *Interfaith Alliance v. Trump*, which alleged that its unequal composition violated the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) that requires a fair balance of viewpoints on advisory committees.

Over the course of the RLC's seven hearings, the Commission engaged with only a small subset of America's diverse religious communities. The Commission did not adhere to the transparency requirements under FACA, failing to publish meeting materials in advance and only publishing transcripts and notes about its meetings months after they had taken place. The draft report allowed for only a 15-day comment period for members of the public to respond, an unusually short window of time that fell partially over the 4th of July holiday weekend. The Commission has not provided a meaningful opportunity for anyone outside of its handpicked representatives to provide input about how to uphold religious liberty in America, a basic freedom upon which all of us rely in myriad ways.

Indeed, rather than actually supporting religious freedom for all, the recommendations issued in the Commission's draft report reflect its narrow scope. If implemented, this report's conclusions would undermine the freedom of religious exercise for communities not privileged by the Commission.

In response to this draft report, Interfaith Alliance submits this comment responding to the recommendations of the Commission. We ask that you consider it carefully and take appropriate action to safeguard the rights and dignity of all Americans of diverse faiths and beliefs.

**1. Attacking Faith-Based Institutions**

While the Commission frames its recommendations as protecting faith-based institutions, it omits any mention of the harmful impacts of this administration's policies on the ability of the full

diversity of religious communities in America to practice their faith freely. Since the start of 2025, Interfaith Alliance has documented how the administration's attacks on faith communities and its institutions have undermined religious freedom. Such attacks have included the denigration of faith leaders such as Bishop Mariann Budde and Pope Leo XIV, the detention of faith leaders such as Ohio Chaplain Ayman Soliman, escalating anti-Muslim rhetoric, and the persecution of religious organizations serving immigrants and asylum seekers.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the viewpoints expressed in the draft report advance an understanding of religious liberty that privileges certain theological viewpoints, and only politically conservative stances, while disregarding the equal rights and dignity of diverse religious expressions and accompanying perspectives on social policy. The report's emphasis on allowing institutions to operate "in accordance with their beliefs" is deployed selectively, particularly in ways that would enable discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals under the guise of religious freedom and allow for religious exemptions to COVID-19 vaccine mandates that would undermine public health.

The Commission fails to grapple with the longstanding legal principle that participation in public funding opportunities carries with it obligations to uphold the government's interest in nondiscrimination and in protecting public health. By suggesting that religious institutions should receive federal funding without accountability to civil rights protections and other laws, the report undermines religious freedom itself, as well as equal protection under the law and the public's general safety and well-being.

## **2. Undermining Religious Freedom in Public Schools**

In September 2025, Interfaith Alliance gathered more than 100 legal experts, faith leaders, and community activists for a conference focused on defending religious freedom in public schools.<sup>2</sup> As an organization long committed to upholding the separation of church and state in public education, Interfaith Alliance finds that the Commission's recommendations on public education dramatically mischaracterize the current state of religious freedom in public schools. They promote policies that would erode both the Constitution's protection of free exercise of religion and its prohibition on government establishment of religion.

Public schools already protect students' rights to pray, express religious beliefs, and form religious clubs, and the report's claim that religion is being "excluded" from public education ignores this well-established legal framework. Instead, its proposals for expanded school choice initiatives and voucher programs risk diverting public funds to religious education without adequate safeguards for religious minorities, raising serious concerns about church-state

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, "One Year of The Trump Administration's Attacks on Faith Communities and Abuse of Religion," *Interfaith Alliance*, January 21, 2026. <https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/one-year-of-the-trump-administrations-attacks-on-faith-communities-and-abuse-of-religion>

<sup>2</sup> Bill Zeeble, "Interfaith summit meets in Dallas to address 'coordinated' religious push in schools," *KERA News*, September 17, 2025. <https://www.keranews.org/news/2025-09-17/interfaith-religious-freedom-schools-summit-texas>

entanglement and the privileging of one religious belief over others, in clear violation of the Establishment Clause.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the report's framing of parental rights—particularly in the context of LGBTQ-inclusive curricula—elevates the religious beliefs of some families over the rights, safety, and dignity of other students, as well as other parents who want LGBTQ-inclusive curricula for their children. Religious freedom in schools must protect all students, including those from minority faiths and perspectives, rather than privileging one set of beliefs at the expense of others.

### **3. Marginalizing Religious Minority Servicepeople in the United States Military**

The Commission's treatment of religious liberty in the military fails to account for the unique context of military service, where cohesion, readiness, and the protection of diverse service members is critical. The report's focus on COVID-19 vaccine exemptions overlook the military's longstanding responsibility to maintain force readiness and protect the health of all personnel. Elevating individual exemptions without regard for these broader considerations risks undermining both mission effectiveness and the equitable treatment of service members.

Furthermore, the Commission does not adequately address the experiences of religious minorities within the military, who have historically faced discrimination and marginalization. Most recently, a new grooming policy would likely marginalize and demean Sikh servicepeople who maintain facial hair in accordance with their religious traditions. The Department of Defense also recently remade its list of recognized religious traditions from more than 200 down to 31, including by initially removing the Church of Latter Day Saints from its established list of Christian traditions and removing humanism, Unitarian Universalism, and other religious traditions altogether.<sup>4</sup> A truly comprehensive approach to religious liberty would recognize these concerns and look to rectify deeply harmful policies.

### **4. Restricting the Rights of Religious Americans to Healthcare**

In the context of healthcare, Interfaith Alliance finds that the Commission's recommendations prioritize the conscience claims of providers in ways that could significantly restrict patients' access to care. While protecting individual moral and religious beliefs is important, the report fails to acknowledge that patients, including religious patients, also have rights to timely, evidence-based medical treatment. Expanding refusal rights without clear limitations risks creating systemic barriers to care, particularly for women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those in

<sup>3</sup> Zev Mishell, "Religious Freedom Means No State-Sponsored Scripture on Our Public School Classroom Walls," *Interfaith Alliance*, April 29, 2026.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/religious-freedom-means-no-state-sponsored-scripture-on-our-public-school-classroom-walls>

<sup>4</sup> "DOD Faith List Cuts are Latest Escalation in Trump Administration's Christian Nationalist Crusade," *Interfaith Alliance*, June 5, 2026.  
<https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/dod-faith-list-cuts-are-latest-escalation-in-trump-administrations-christian-nationalist-crusade>



rural or underserved communities without ready access to other medical facilities. The report's approach could allow institutions and providers to deny services based on religious objections without ensuring that patients can obtain care elsewhere, effectively imposing one set of religious beliefs on others. Religious freedom should not mean that individuals are denied healthcare or subjected to discrimination. A balanced framework must ensure that both providers' beliefs and patients' rights are respected, rather than privileging one at the expense of the other.<sup>5</sup>

## **5. Misusing the Fight Against Antisemitism and Ignoring the Threat of Anti-Muslim Hate**

While the Commission correctly identifies antisemitism as a serious and growing threat, its recommendations are in line with the administration's broader failed approach to genuinely addressing this issue.<sup>6</sup> By linking antisemitism to unrelated political and ideological priorities and emphasizing punitive or security-focused responses, the report overlooks the need for comprehensive, community-centered strategies to address hate. As leading Jewish organizations have made clear, efforts to combat antisemitism must be grounded in accurate data, strong civil rights protections, democracy preservation and coalition-building across communities.<sup>7</sup> The Commission's approach, however, raises concerns about the potential for overreach, including the conflation of legitimate political expression with antisemitism. Addressing antisemitism effectively requires partnership with the full diversity of Jewish communities, most of whom were not meaningfully represented in the Commission's makeup or deliberations. Without this inclusivity, the report's recommendations risk doing more harm than good.

At the same time, the Commission's treatment of religious discrimination fails to adequately address anti-Muslim bigotry, which, like antisemitism, poses a serious and persistent threat to religious freedom in the United States. Since the start of the new administration, anti-Muslim rhetoric has dramatically escalated, as has hate-motivated violence against Muslim communities. Indeed, there have been numerous recent violent attacks on Muslim community leaders, leading Muslim political figures, and houses of worship.<sup>8</sup> There have also been hearings in the halls of Congress that have served to exacerbate anti-Muslim bigotry and

<sup>5</sup> Interfaith Alliance, "The Religious Freedom Argument for Reproductive Freedom," *Medium*, September 23, 2021e <https://medium.com/@intrfthalliance/the-religious-freedom-argument-for-reproductive-freedom-1bf6d5537edf>

<sup>6</sup> Zev Mishell, "Dear President Trump: We See What You Are Doing with Antisemitism," *Interfaith Alliance*, July 7, 2025. <https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/dear-president-trump-we-see-what-you-are-doing-with-antisemitism>

<sup>7</sup> Zev Mishell, "Jewish Communal Responses to Trump's Antisemitism Agenda", *Interfaith Alliance*, February 27, 2025. <https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/jewish-communal-responses-to-trumps-antisemitism-agenda>

<sup>8</sup> Zev Mishell, "In the Wake of the New York City Mayoral Primary, Muslims and Jews Stand Together Against Hate," *Interfaith Alliance*, June 30, 2025.

<https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/in-the-wake-of-the-new-york-city-mayoral-primary-muslims-and-jews-stand-together-against-hate>; Zev Mishell, "The Trump Administration's Latest Attacks on Muslim Community Leaders," *Interfaith Alliance*, September 29, 2025.

<https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/the-trump-administrations-latest-attacks-on-muslim-community-leaders>; Zev Mishell, "Manufacturing Anti-Muslim Hate," *Interfaith Alliance*, April 30, 2026.

<https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/manufacturing-anti-muslim-hate>; Guthrie Graves-Fitzsimmons, "Anti-Muslim Bigotry Betrays America's Founding Promise," *Interfaith Alliance*, May 1, 2026.

<https://www.interfaithalliance.org/post/anti-muslim-bigotry-betrays-americas-founding-promise>

violence.<sup>9</sup> Interfaith Alliance has consistently emphasized that efforts to combat religious bigotry must recognize that attacks on one community often accompany or enable attacks on others.<sup>10</sup>

Policies that single out antisemitism without also giving robust attention to anti-Muslim discrimination risk setting up a hierarchy of protection for religious minorities rather than advancing true religious freedom for all. Such tactics create the false illusion of scarcity and competition, suggesting that America is only capable of protecting the religious liberty of a few of those who are actively threatened.

A credible commitment to protecting religious liberty must confront both antisemitism and Islamophobia with the same urgency, resources, and moral clarity. Such a commitment must also seek to build coalitions across communities to resist all forms of religious bigotry and keep all religious Americans safe.

## **6. Infringing on the Private Sector**

The Commission's claims that private employers are broadly hostile to religious expression are not supported by systemic evidence and rely heavily on isolated anecdotes. Existing federal law already provides robust protections against religious discrimination in the workplace, requiring reasonable accommodations for employees' sincerely held beliefs. The report's proposals to expand these protections without clear boundaries could create conflicts with other legal rights, including protections against discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and reproductive health decisions. In practice, this could enable employees or employers to invoke religion as a justification for actions that harm others. A balanced approach must recognize that religious liberty in the workplace coexists with other civil rights. Elevating one set of rights above all others risks undermining the inclusive workplaces that federal law seeks to promote and which ultimately enable religious liberty itself.

## **7. Conceptual Failings**

At its core, the Commission's report reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the First Amendment and the principle of church-state separation. By dismissing the "wall of separation" as a mere metaphor, the report overlooks decades of constitutional interpretation that have safeguarded both religious freedom and American democracy.

The Establishment Clause does more than prevent the formal establishment of a national religion; it ensures that the government does not privilege or endorse particular religious views. This principle is essential to protecting a pluralistic society in which individuals of diverse faiths

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<sup>9</sup> "Tell Sen. Ted Cruz: Cancel anti-Muslim hearing for good," *Interfaith Alliance*, May 2026.

<https://support.interfaithalliance.org/a/tell-sen-ted-cruz-cancel-anti-muslim-hearing>

<sup>10</sup> Zev Mishell, "Together Against Hate," *Interfaith Alliance*, January 2025,

[https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6797af6da5a0b6a204834faf/67ab905d0a676fd9ecb2093c\\_Together-Against-Hate.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6797af6da5a0b6a204834faf/67ab905d0a676fd9ecb2093c_Together-Against-Hate.pdf)

and beliefs can participate equally. The Commission's attempt to recast religious liberty as requiring greater integration of religion into government risks eroding these protections and opening the door to privileging one religion over others. Rather than strengthening religious freedom, this approach would undermine it, particularly for minority communities whose rights depend on a robust separation between religion and state.

A truly faithful commitment to religious liberty must be grounded in inclusivity, neutrality, respect for the Constitution and for the full diversity of beliefs in the United States. After a careful review, it is clear that the Commission's report falls short of this standard. If these recommendations are implemented, they would pose significant risks to the inclusion and wellbeing of faith communities all over the country.



**From:** Nic Cole <[REDACTED] PII >

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

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] preserving separation between church and state

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:35:08 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment.

I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is one of America's greatest blessings because it recognizes that faith is a matter of conscience and that every person is accountable to God for his or her own beliefs.

Scripture teaches that civil government has an important role in maintaining justice and order. It also teaches that worship belongs to God alone. Jesus Himself distinguished between the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of faith when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This principle has served as a foundation for religious freedom throughout our nation's history.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve this distinction. Government best fulfills its role by protecting every citizen's freedom of conscience rather than promoting, endorsing, or compelling any form of religious practice. The rights guaranteed by the First Amendment protect not only those whose beliefs are popular, but also those whose convictions differ from the majority.

History repeatedly demonstrates that whenever civil authority becomes closely joined with religious authority, liberty of conscience is eventually weakened. The strongest safeguard for religious freedom is a government that neither interferes with sincere religious practice nor uses its authority to advance religious observance. Faith is most genuine when it is embraced freely, never through pressure or coercion.

As the Commission develops its recommendations, I encourage you to continue strengthening protections for the free exercise of religion while also preserving the constitutional principles that prevent government from establishing or favoring religion. In doing so, you will help ensure that Americans of every faith—and those of no faith—remain free to follow the dictates of conscience without fear of discrimination or compulsion.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to our nation.

Respectfully,

Nicole Spann

**From:** Desreen Robinson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

**Date:** Mon, 13 Jul 2026 14:37:18 -0400

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have been a Christian all of my life. I have always sought to practice the moral standards that God has given in the Bible. I am grateful that my walk with God is a personal one. It is a journey that I take because I am responding freely to God's beautiful and sustaining love.

Any form of mandated worship dishonors our fundamental human need to worship according to conscience and from the heart. True love from one person to another is chosen and practiced from a place of understanding and non-coerced commitment. True love for God is the same way.

History has shown that when church and state unite, freedom goes away. The union of church and state provides the conditions that inevitably lead to the coercion of conscience. I support the right of every person to worship according to the dictates of individual conscience.

I thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns. I respectfully request 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 I would enthusiastically support.

Sincerely,  
Desreen Robinson  
Hot Springs, NC