

From: Gary Block <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission comments

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 08:53:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Not at all surprising that this administration would push this ridiculously transparent effort to curry favor with Christian conservatives and other religious zealots. No one denies that there are instances of religious intolerance and outfight bigotry in this country but for just once, I'd love someone in my government to stand up for principles enshrined in our country's founding documents and history and do the right thing. This report, if implemented, would undermine long-standing government and societal understanding of separation of church and state that has served this country well for over 200 years.

From: RR Traveler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 08:56:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment Religious Freedom Mary Ann Rogers

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

God will always show us the Right Way thru His Son Jesus Christ.

From: Jim Maroney <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission.

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 09:26:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

It's ignorant & stupid for one to honestly (?) believe this country was founded on the Christian faith! Coincidentally, just yesterday an acquaintance said that is what he thinks, but agrees religion should not have any bearing on government functions; however, he was adamant that people of other faiths should not be allowed to hold public office, of any kind. He had only had one (1) beer at this point, so that wasn't the problem. How stupid!

Jim Maroney

Sent from my iPad

From: Anna Hooper <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Mrs. Anna Hooper

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 09:29:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

From: cj hooper <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 9/ Healthcare Conscience- Mr. CJ Hooper

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 09:31:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

From: Melanie Schweyer <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience - Melanie Schweyer

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 10:18:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs,

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not have to face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Sincerely,

Melanie A Schweyer, RN

Sent from my iPhone

From: Michael Kaye <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reaffirming Church-State Resolution support

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 10:23:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

I absolutely am appalled at attempts by politicians to rid our very first Constitutional Amendment by claiming a particular religion is a basis for our gov't. The highest law of the land is our U S Constitution whose very first clause was so important to our founders that it was placed first, The Establishment Clause. I fully support the resolution by Jared Huffman and Jamie Raskin to keep church and state separate as out highest law and founders demanded. We are a nation of many religions and a 39% population with no religion at all. Attempts of politicians to impose their own personal religious beliefs upon the populous is totally un-american, unconstitutional and an affront to the diversity of citizens who gave their lives to uphold our constitutional rights to uphold our diverse world views!

From: Carly Adkins <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – [Carly Adkins]

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 10:24:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

From: Hannah Foy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Hannah Foy

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 10:31:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Thank you. -Hannah Foy

From: Walter Jominy <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

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

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 11:12:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

After reading the draft of the Religious Liberty Commission Report, I agree with both its premise that "religious liberty is essential because religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society". And its conclusion "Because religion is so central to human identity, and family and communal life, the church and state must have a rightly ordered relationship for individuals and societies to flourish."

I have been teaching young men and women in a Christian high school for the past 32 years and have seen the impact of an objective standard of morality as taught in the Bible as a guide for their lives. As proof of this, my former students share with me how they are impacting society in a positive manner with their jobs as physicians, teachers and pastors. In addition, I now teach many of their children and I am impressed what thoughtful and honest children they have raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Without an objective standard of morality from a transcendent source (the God of the Bible), morality can only be based on a changing cultural influence that ultimately has a power based conclusion.

Please accept the findings of this report

Walter Jominy

From: "Bohorfoush, John (GE Aerospace, US)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 11:16:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

Having read the 12 Opportunities to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans, I whole heartedly support these recommendations and pray they are all implemented as quickly as possible.

Regards,

John L. Bohorfoush

From: Josiah Willis <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 14 - JOSIAH WILLIS

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 11:29:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

Too long have Americans suffered under oppressive prejudice for their religious beliefs under the guise of "Separation of Church and State". Thomas Jefferson's context in his letter referenced the need for the Government to stay out of the expression of religious expression, not to stifle any practice or expression of that religion in government settings or the public square.

Each one of these proposed 12 opportunities for religious freedom should be adopted and/or implemented in order to safeguard our religious liberties guaranteed to us by the US Constitution and the 1st Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

Since so many testimonies show the persecution against religious freedoms, this is an ongoing issue that is getting worse, not better. The persecution happens in all facets of public and private life, including in the workplace across every industry. With my own family's experience in education, I don't feel comfortable to even let my child attend public schools, not only for the incompatible values that we hold stemming from our religion, but also for the direct persecution of our values by those in authority.

The loss of diversity of thought brings all society down when some--who are supposed to have Constitutional rights--aren't allowed to express themselves for fear of retaliation, suppression, hatred, and other forms of the penalization of one's own beliefs.

People in leadership positions need to be held accountable to not infringe on each individual's rights of freedom of religion--both in the private sector and in the public sector.

My family and I support these 12 proposals for the betterment of our lives, and you should too.

Sincerely,

Josiah Willis

From: EC Forbes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 14

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 11:31:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am 100% in support of this project moving forward. This all needs to be implemented asap.
EC Forbes

From: Paul Fancher <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments regarding the Draft of the Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 12:05:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I see what you are doing and I appreciate it. I received a copy of the report and I am happy that you are speaking about these things.

I have little to add that has not already been addressed and given due diligence.

The most useful insight I have: during the very beginning of the COVID panic, in Texas, Governor Abbott spoke out for churches to stay open, the Texas Attorney General provided a clarification directly nullifying anything construed as forcing churches to shut their doors, and the church where I attended sent everyone home. Why? Because mainstream media reported that the churches were being required to close their doors and they believed them.

For you to have a say in the things you are saying, someone in your organized effort to support Faith needs to build a reputation as a source of reliable truth on these things. That way, if there is another panic in our lifetime, your voice of truth can ring out above the lies and confusion to keep the winds of panic from extinguishing the flames of faith in our nation.

Respectfully,

Paul Fancher

E: [REDACTED] PII

P: [REDACTED] PII

From: Joe and Diane Bast <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT — Chapter 14 — Joseph Bast

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 12:16:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Re the Religious Liberty Commission's draft report

I strongly endorse the recommended policies presented in Chapter 14. The nation has endured a long and painful experiment in which Christianity was excluded from schools and many public forums. The results of that experiment are now available for anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear: broken families, abortion on demand, widespread crime and delinquency. The enemies of a free society have known since at least the time of Karl Marx that religion is a major bulwark of freedom and that achieving their revolutionary objectives required undermining and abolishing the church. We must not allow that to happen. I am very pleased to see the Trump administration taking the initiative in protecting religious freedom.

Joseph L. Bast

Cell [REDACTED] PII

Email [REDACTED] PII

From: myda honaker <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] LIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – [Your Name]

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 12:43:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. No families face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care!

Myda Honaker

Mother of two natural born midwife assisted (adult) children

From: Kenneth Frank <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY and others -- BIASES

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 12:53:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on your report. I applaud all efforts to protect and increase the rights of all Americans to enjoy religious liberty.

However, I find your draft report one-sided and narrowly construed in several aspects.

You should first start in your Executive Summary by defining what you mean by the term "religion". The problems I see in the report largely stem from not being sufficiently conscious of the deep and wide religious nature of humanity. You also employ an unspoken view of "religion" as being whatever conservative Christians in the United States see, do, and claim. This excludes those many Americans who are not conservative, Christian or not. Your report does not consider their contributions to religious liberty in this country.

This bias is seen in the report's constant denigration of progressive views widely held by many Americans, including many American Christians (pages 36, 67, 94, 121, 131, 133, 137, 153-154).

Your report has an extensive section on Anti-Semitism (Ch. 11)--and rightly so--but does not mention Islamophobia and the serious prejudices against Muslims frequently seen in our society. I remind you that the numbers of Muslims and the number of Jews in our country are roughly equal.

Your report contains the regrettable phrase, "the authoritarian progressive regime under the Biden administration", which is gratuitous and disrespectful. Each party in power seeks to do its best for our country, and calling one party's administration a "regime" is not worthy of your commission.

I believe you can do better by including more voices from different perspectives in your report, and recognizing the wide variety of religious views in our population.

Sincerely, --Kenneth Frank
Claremont, California

From: Katie <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience - Katie Foster

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 13:03:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Please do not limit our Christ given freedom of choice.

From: Christine Graham <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - General Comment - Christine Graham

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 13:25:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

I want to applaud President Trump for appointing the Religious Liberty Commission. I support the work of the Commission and approve of the 12 Key Recommendations to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans. I believe these are much needed changes in our government which, in some ways, has sadly veered away from protecting our religious liberties.

From: Charles Burge <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendation to Strengthen Civics Education

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 13:25:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commissioners,

I strongly support the concepts and recommendations presented in the draft report. However, I believe one important area deserves greater emphasis: educating students on America's founding principles, constitutional foundations, and civic virtues.

The Founders understood that the success of our Republic depends not only on constitutional structures but also on citizens of strong character and moral responsibility. Leaders such as George Washington and John Adams emphasized that civic virtue is essential to preserving liberty and self-government.

Today, many students graduate with limited understanding of the principles that shape our nation, including the concepts of natural rights, constitutional government, civic responsibility, and the virtues necessary for a free society.

I respectfully request that the final Commission Report include the following recommendation:

- Require all public school students to complete a comprehensive civics course as a graduation requirement.
- Ensure the curriculum includes:
 - The Declaration of Independence and Constitution.
 - America's founding principles and constitutional framework.
 - Civic responsibilities and informed citizenship.
 - The virtues and character traits historically recognized as essential for sustaining a constitutional republic.

Strengthening civics education will help prepare future generations to be informed, engaged, and responsible citizens.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Burge

Pompano Beach, FL

From: Ellen Gilbert <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 14:28:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberties Commission,

I write as the child of Holocaust survivors, a mother, a grandmother, and concerned American citizen. I am asking you to ensure that your coming report reflects the vital role church-state separation plays in protecting religious freedom for all Americans.

The separation of church and state gives all of us the right to practice any religion or no religion *as long as we do no harm to others*. This is essential.

Church-state separation insures that the government cannot impose religious beliefs on anyone or favor one religion over another. Our Founders recognized that both religion and government flourish when they are separate.

On this July 4 weekend, I urge you to protect the *freedom and dignity* of *all Americans*.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Ellen D. Gilbert
Princeton, NJ

From: Russell Frazier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 14:40:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I believe that global and historical examples indisputably show that the alternative to a clear separation of Church and State endangers basic human rights; there is no existing theocracy that upholds the freedoms of its citizens. One example is Iran.

The United States, unlike other countries that face sectarian violence, has remained stable because the Government does not favor one set of religious values over others. In addition, freedom of choice is mandated by scripture.

I am a religious practitioner who does not want to see my religious beliefs or practices forced on anyone by the government. Government neutrality on matters of faith is an essential, sustaining component of American freedom.

Sincerely,

Russell Frazier

Montrose, CA [REDACTED] PII

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**Russell Frazier**

[REDACTED] PII  
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From: "Nona C. Strong" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on the RLC Draft Report

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 15:31:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

Here's my comment on the latest draft of the Religious Liberty Commission Report:

Comment on the Religious Liberty Commission
26 June 2026

Government has no business poking its nose into people's religious affairs. As citizens of this country – or any country – our religious practices are private; they are matters for ourselves alone. If we choose to commune with people of like beliefs and like heart, that is our privilege. If we choose to worship (or not worship) in a particular way, that too is our privilege.

Today's leaders are attempting to thrust a certain brand of "religion" down our throats and the throats of our children. Judeo-Christian doctrine and dogma have their value, to be sure. But that value is a matter of the heart, not of prescription by so-called religious experts, by the government, or by any group allied with the government. What is happening now with this "Religious Liberty Commission" is an abomination. **Their approach promotes not religious liberty, but religious conformity. And fundamentally, that amounts to religious and spiritual oppression.**

My recommendation: Just stop it! Leave us alone to find our own way along the path of Spirit, however that shows up for us. The Founders recognized this necessity when they penned the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. "Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion..." (my paraphrase, without reference to the actual document). Now these Christian zealots want to redefine what freedom of religion means. To them, it's about doing things their way. But in truth, religious freedom is about leaving each individual free to live in a way that accords with his or her own spiritual journey. Or it should be.

So, Department of Justice and the Religious "Liberty" Commission (a misnomer if ever there was one), just butt out! You cannot mandate a person's relationship with God or with nothing or with whatever force that person recognizes as essential to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. You cannot impose any form upon a person's spiritual identity. Your beliefs are to be respected, to be sure. But so are ours – as persons, as individuals.

Spiritual identity and spiritual practice transcend every symbol or set of rules you try to impose. So, just shut up and tend to your own heart. **Please, for the sake of humanity: leave us to live according to our own spiritual lights!**

Thank you.

From: Jeanne Scardamalia <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 15:33:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

The very fact that this commission is made up of 11 Christians who are friends of the President and 1 Orthodox Jew tells me right off the bat it is illegitimate and anything it does would not promote religious freedom. Need I say more?

From: Elissa Wellikson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Religious Liberty Commission report released on June 26, 2026

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 15:36:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commission Members,

Separation of Church and State is not a “myth” that the Supreme Court dreamed up. It is a cherished constitutional principle that is foundational to our nation.

Please ensure the Religious Liberty Commission’s final report reflects the vital role church-state separation plays in protecting religious freedom for ALL Americans of ALL religion (or no religion).

The United States was not founded as a Christian nation. Our Founders recognized that both religion and government flourish when they are separate. The separation of church and state, enshrined in the 1st Amendment to the Constitution, gives us the right to practice any religion or no religion as long as we don’t harm others.

Church-state separation protects religious freedom for everyone—religious and nonreligious people alike. It ensures that the government cannot impose religious beliefs on anyone or favor one religion over another.

Separation of church and state guarantees that students and families—not government officials—can make their own decisions about religion and religious education.

Church-state separation protects houses of worship from intrusion by the government. It protects our public schools by keeping coercive prayer and reading assignments out of classrooms. It ensures schools are welcoming for students of all backgrounds and beliefs.

Taxpayer dollars should be used for public purposes that benefit everyone. Taxpayers should not be forced to fund religion and taxpayer-funded religious groups must not use religion to discriminate.

Elissa Wellikson

[REDACTED] PII home

[REDACTED] PII cell

From: Ana Battaglia <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Chapter 9/Healthcare Conscience- Ana Battaglia

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 15:41:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Sent from my iPhone

From: sheryl salmon <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – sheryl salmon

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 15:45:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

"Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should Not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs.

Nothing should go against their constitutional rights and religious freedoms.

Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care."

sheryl salmon

From: Rachele Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Rachele Brown

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 16:23:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Kindly,
Rachele Brown
Sovereign Sister
Holistic Birth Doula & CST
[REDACTED] PII

www.sovereignsisternm.com
@sovereignsisternm

From: Stephanie Bontell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Colby Wiltse <[REDACTED] PII >, Liz Suits <[REDACTED] PII >, Seth Jahn
<[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT]– [CITIZENS DEFENDING FREEDOM]

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 16:53:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Public_Comment_of_Citizens_Defending_Freedom_to_the_Religious_Liberty_Commission.pdf

Inline-Images: Outlook-452fj5hu.jpg

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

Please find attached Citizens Defending Freedom's public comment regarding the Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these comments and for the opportunity to provide input as the Commission finalizes its report. We appreciate your commitment to strengthening religious liberty and protecting the constitutional rights of Americans to freely exercise their faith.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Bontell on behalf of [Citizens Defending Freedom](#)

STEPHANIE A. BONTELL
Director of Research & Policy

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII



John 15:18-19, KJV: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

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July 2, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Associate Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Public Comment on the Draft Report of the President's Religious Liberty Commission

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

Citizens Defending Freedom (CDF) appreciates the opportunity to submit this public comment in response to the recent Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report, an unprecedented and vital examination of religious liberty in America. By documenting the challenges facing people of faith across churches, schools, and other forums of American society, the Commission has recognized what CDF witnesses every day: religious liberty is not an abstract constitutional concept, but rather, the very freedom that allows Americans to speak, serve, teach, worship, and lead according to their sincerely held religious convictions.

Founded in 2021, CDF exists to help citizens defend their faith and freedom while promoting transparency and accountability in local government. Through our work with churches, families, schools, and communities across the country, as well as our legal advocacy and public policy initiatives, we partner alongside pastors, parents, students, educators, elected officials, and other leaders seeking to address the issues impacting their communities through a biblical worldview.

As an organization whose mission is to equip churches and defend America's constitutional liberties, the practical effectiveness of our work depends upon the continued protection of the religious freedoms articulated throughout the Commission's report. Thus, we are uniquely positioned to offer both our support for these recommendations and real examples illustrating why they are needed, which we aim to accomplish throughout this public comment.

I. Protecting Pastors, Churches, and Faith-Based Civic Engagement

CDF partners with churches who train and mobilize believers to approach the issues influencing their families, communities, and schools through a biblical lens. Through discipleship and leadership development, we provide pastors with education and action-oriented tools to help their congregations engage the public square with truth, courage, and conviction. Still, our organization has repeatedly encountered spiritual leaders who remain hesitant to use their voice because of longstanding misconceptions surrounding the Johnson Amendment, the federal tax provision widely understood to restrict or jeopardize the ability of pastors to preach on moral and civic issues from the pulpit without risking their churches' tax-exempt status. This has led many pastors to wonder whether discussing legislation, empowering civic participation, addressing candidates' positions on moral issues, or simply applying biblical principles to public affairs could expose their churches to retribution. This uncertainty has discouraged some religious leaders from speaking on matters such as the sanctity of human life, traditional marriage, parental rights, gender ideology, and other issues affecting their congregations.

CDF-aligned Pastor Jack Hilligoss of Lake Wales, Florida, exemplifies both the importance of the Commission's recommendations and the backlash religious leaders can face when they choose to acknowledge the pressing moral, cultural, and civic questions of our time.¹ Pastor Hilligoss, who also serves as mayor of Lake Wales, has promoted voter registration initiatives, Biblical Citizenship education, and civic responsibility within his congregation.² As a result, critics publicly accused him of improperly blurring the line between church and state, alleging that Christians should not encourage civic engagement from the pulpit. One person even filed a complaint with the Internal Revenue Service against Pastor Hilligoss, demonstrating how religious leaders who advocate for civic involvement may find their constitutionally protected speech wrongly characterized as impermissible.³ Although Pastor Hilligoss remained steadfast in his convictions and continues to motivate believers to participate in public affairs to this day, not every pastor is willing to subject himself to public condemnation or government retaliation simply for exercising rights the First Amendment already guarantees.

Similarly, in 2024, CDF partnered with Remnant Law to defend Pastor Robert Simmons of Corpus Christi, Texas, after he became the target of legal action that sought to imperil his constitutionally protected religious and political speech following remarks he delivered during a church service pertaining to the fitness of a congressional candidate for public office. Those remarks reflected Pastor Simmons' belief that the church should respond to community concerns that intersect with politics and public policy.⁴

¹Citizens Defending Freedom Press Staff. (2024). [Faith Under Fire: Florida Pastor and Mayor Transforms Community](#).

²Citizens Defending Freedom. (n.d.). [Empowering Churches with Biblical Citizenship Classes](#).

³The Lakeland Ledger. (2024). [Lake Wales Mayor Jack Hilligoss, a pastor, turns his church into a political force](#).

⁴Citizens Defending Freedom. (2025). [Defending Faith: Pastor Simmons' Fight for Religious Freedom](#). *Vimeo*.; CAUSE NO. 2024DCV-1697-B. (2024). [Respondent Robert Simmons' Motion to Dismiss Rule 202 Petition under Texas Citizens Participation Act and Request for Sanctions](#).

Like Pastor Hilligoss, Pastor Simmons did not retreat in the face of opposition. Nevertheless, his case illuminates the significant difficulties pastors may experience for faithfully shepherding their congregations.

Because of this, CDF strongly supports the Commission's recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment and, in the interim, clarify its proper scope and application through the dissemination of the proposed "Know Your Rights" resources for pastors and religious ministries featuring additional IRS-related guidance. Unfortunately, when religious leaders conclude that silence is the safest course, the robust exchange of ideas the First Amendment was designed to protect is severely diminished.

Moreover, in an age of mounting secularism and continued erosion of our Nation's moral and cultural foundations, the prospect of pastors remaining silent out of fear or apprehension is one we simply cannot afford any longer. The moral bravery of pastors is needed now more than ever before.

II. Defending Religious Expression in the Public Square

Furthermore, the Commission's recommendations regarding religious leaders are part of a broader constitutional principle that CDF has also consistently observed: religious liberty does not end at the church door. Fundamentally, the same First Amendment protections that safeguard pastors speaking from the pulpit likewise protect the individual Americans who wish to live out and express their faith in the public square.

CDF has seen these protections tested in a variety of contexts, including from citizens sharing the Gospel in public spaces. For example, in Fort Worth, Texas, CDF was involved in the representation of Duante Newton, a young street preacher cited for "disturbing the peace" while sharing the Gospel at the Fort Worth Stockyards.⁵ While a jury ultimately acquitted him of all charges, the prosecution itself is a testament to the real-world consequences citizens can endure when they seek to live out or express their faith publicly.

Indeed, cases like Mr. Newton's show why Americans need clear direction, accessible reporting mechanisms, and meaningful enforcement of religious liberty protections. Therefore, the Commission's proposals concerning "Know Your Rights" resources, reporting portals, investigations into religious liberty violations, and training would assure citizens that they are not left to navigate these conflicts alone.

III. Upholding Religious Liberty Protections in Public Schools

Yet another issue raised in the Religious Liberty Commission's report relevant to CDF is Chapter 4 on the rights of students, teachers, and other educational personnel in government-run schools. Through our Education Pillar, CDF works to protect the rights of parents, students, and educators while promoting educational environments that respect constitutional freedoms and America's foundational principles.

⁵Citizens Defending Freedom Press Staff. (2024; updated 2025). [Citizens Defending Freedom Scores Decisive Victory for First Amendment Rights](#).

Following the passage of Texas Senate Bill 10, which authorizes the display of donated Ten Commandments posters meeting specified statutory requirements in public school classrooms, CDF united with churches, parents, elected officials, and local communities to facilitate the donation of thousands of Ten Commandments posters to public school classrooms across Texas, including more than 1,500 posters donated to Georgetown ISD, 1,950 posters delivered to Sharyland ISD, and more than 13,000 posters distributed statewide.⁶

While many districts accepted these donations consistent with state law, others declined to display them or delayed implementation. These varying responses illustrate precisely why CDF now advocates for the adoption of the Commission's recommendation that the Department of Justice support strategic litigation upholding the constitutionality of Ten Commandments displays in public schools while providing clarification on the Establishment Clause. On the latter, clear federal guidance would improve the ability of school districts to better distinguish between an unconstitutional establishment of religion and the recognition of religious values that undergird our Nation's history and legal tradition. While the First Amendment prohibits the establishment of religion, it does not justify government hostility toward religion or the exclusion of religious expression from public life.

CDF's experience in Texas's Denton ISD in 2023 further reinforces the pertinence of the Commission's recommendations in Chapter 4.⁷ After a request for reconsideration resulted in the removal of Bibles from school library shelves and their placement in a restricted area, our organization called upon the district to restore these materials, emphasizing that the Bible, like the Ten Commandments, occupies an undeniable place in American history, literature, and education at-large. Although the district ultimately voted to return the Bibles to circulation, the controversy itself lends additional backing as to why the Commission's recommendations to provide direction regarding students' religious liberty rights, publish "Know Your Rights" resources, offer religious liberty training for educators and administrators, and investigate credible religious liberty violations are so important.

For these reasons, CDF urges the Commission to adopt the recommendations discussed above, particularly those involving the repeal of the Johnson Amendment, the issuance of clarifying IRS guidance, the publication of the "Know Your Rights" resources, stronger efforts to protect Ten Commandments displays, and bolstered investigations into credible violations of religious liberty.

We again thank the Commission for its thoughtful consideration of these issues and for producing a report that finally recognizes the indispensable role religious liberty plays in American life. The recommendations advanced throughout this report directly support the work CDF has the privilege to carry out every day alongside pastors, churches, and communities across the country. By

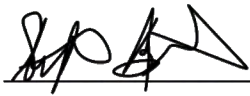
⁶Yahoo News. (2025). [These Texas parents donated Ten Commandment posters. The district hasn't put them up.](#); Citizens Defending Freedom Facebook Page. (2025). [CDF Texas delivered 1,950 Ten Commandments posters to Sharyland ISD!](#)

⁷Citizens Defending Freedom Press Staff. (2023). [Bibles Held in "Restricted Area" Placed Back on Texas School Shelves.](#)

providing greater clarity regarding the constitutional protections already afforded to the free exercise of religion, strengthening accountability, and reaffirming our country's First Amendment principles, the Commission's proposals would better equip Americans to live out their constitutional rights with confidence, governing themselves according to their sincerely held religious convictions and participating fully in civic life without fear that their faith will become the basis for hostility, persecution, or suppression.

Accordingly, CDF commends the Commission's vision and looks forward to continuing this critical work in communities across our Nation.

Respectfully signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Bontell', written over a horizontal line.

Stephanie Bontell

Director of Research and Policy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Suits', written over a horizontal line.

Elizabeth Suits

Sr. Research and Policy Analyst

From: Heather Raulston <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Heather Raulston

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 17:08:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Heather Raulston

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPhone

From: Phil Santa Maria <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 17:38:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

My comment . . .

The Dangerous Folly of Abandoning Church-State Separation

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission recently proposed to downgrade or replace the principle of separation of church and state, and this is a profoundly bad idea. It is bad law, bad history, and bad policy.

First, we should note that for a body supposedly devoted to religious liberty for all Americans, the Commission is strikingly narrow: it is dominated by conservative Christian figures and includes only one non-Christian commissioner, an Orthodox rabbi, while leaving out large portions of America's actual religious and nonreligious landscape.

The Commission's draft report recommends moving away from the traditional idea of separating church and state and toward "bridges" between them. This includes urging broader religious expression in government, schools, and the public square. That framing conceals the central danger: once government begins building official "bridges" to religion, it must decide which religious ideas, institutions, leaders, symbols, texts, and practices deserve public favor. That is precisely what the Constitution was designed to keep government out of.

The Commission's proposal rests on a familiar rhetorical trick. It notes that the exact phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution, as if that somehow disposes of the principle. It does not. The Constitution also does not use the phrases "presumption of innocence," "separation of powers," or "one person, one vote," but no serious person doubts that these concepts are deeply embedded in American constitutional law. The question is not whether Thomas Jefferson's famous phrase appears word-for-word in the First Amendment. The question is whether the principle is embedded in the Constitution's structure, text, history, and case law. It plainly is.

The First Amendment begins with the command that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Those two clauses work together. The Free Exercise Clause protects the individual's right to believe, worship, dissent, convert, leave a religion, or reject religion altogether. The Establishment Clause prevents government from turning religion into an instrument of state power. Religious liberty requires both. A government that favors religion may appear friendly to religion in the short run, but it inevitably becomes one that ranks religions, rewards some believers, marginalizes others, and pressures dissenters to conform.

The Constitution's hostility to religious favoritism is even older than the First Amendment. Article VI provides that "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." That provision was no accident. It rejected the old European model in which citizenship, office-holding, and public trust were tied to religious conformity. The American experiment began by refusing to make theological loyalty a condition of civic participation.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly recognized this principle. In *Everson v. Board of Education*, the Court held that the Establishment Clause applies to the states and invoked Jefferson's "wall of separation between church and State." In *Torcaso v. Watkins*, the Court struck down Maryland's

requirement that a public official declare belief in God, holding that such a test violated freedom of belief and religion. In *Larson v. Valente*, the Court stated one of the clearest rules in this area: government may not officially prefer one religious denomination over another. These cases stand for one core proposition: government must not take sides in religion.

There is also a practical reason for the separation principle: it keeps the peace in a religiously diverse country. The United States is not one church, one creed, one denomination, or one theological community. The 2020 U.S. Religion Census identified 372 distinct religious bodies with active congregations in this country, representing traditions as varied as Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Shinto, Sikhism, Bahá'í, Wicca, and Native American spiritual practice. They are citizens with the same constitutional standing as any other.

Pew's 2023–24 Religious Landscape Study found that 62% of American adults identify as Christian (down from 78% in 2007), 29% are religiously unaffiliated, and 7% belong to non-Christian religions, including Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and other communities. Even within Christianity, the country is divided among Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, evangelicals, mainline Protestants, Black churches, Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and countless independent congregations. "Religion" is not a single thing government can favor without choosing winners and losers.

That is the fatal flaw in the Commission's approach. If public schools are encouraged to promote religion, then which religion? If government buildings display sacred texts, whose texts are they? If public money flows more freely to religious institutions, which institutions qualify, and on what terms? If officials invoke "Judeo-Christian values," where does that leave Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, and Christians who reject the government's preferred theology? And who decides: Congress, the President, a federal agency, a school board, a judge, a governor, or the loudest local majority?

There is no neutral answer once the government abandons neutrality. Favor "religion" over nonreligion, and nonbelievers become second-class citizens. Favor monotheism, and nontheistic traditions are excluded. Favor Christianity, and Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others are pushed aside. Favor "Christianity," and the state must choose among competing Christian doctrines. This is not liberty. It is a recipe for sectarian competition, public resentment, and constitutional litigation without end.

The separation of church and state is not anti-religion. It is pro-freedom. It protects churches from government control and protects citizens from government-sponsored religion. It allows religion to flourish by persuasion, example, conscience, and community, but not by political power. In fact, I would argue that a religion that needs government favoritism has already lost confidence in its own moral force.

The Commission's proposal should therefore be rejected in the strongest terms. America does not need a government that builds bridges to favored faiths. What America needs is the principles we already have: government neutrality, private conscience, equal citizenship, and religious freedom for all. The separation of church and state is not a threat to liberty. It is one of liberty's essential conditions. Abandoning it would be reckless, divisive, unconstitutional, and profoundly foolish.

Philip J. Santa Maria

PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 14

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 18:06:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

This country was absolutely founded on Judeo Christian beliefs. It is about time we go back to our roots. Our original founders would be appalled at our lack of faith and the social progressive agenda that has ensnared our country for the last 70 years. Make this document legal.

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)

From: Christa Bervoets <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] the RLC is more like an extremist, fascist, Christian Nationalist hate group

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 18:58:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Church and State MUST be separate as indicated in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Man created God by inventing him, NOT the other way around, and while Christians have the right to believe whatever nonsense they want, they do NOT have the right to impose their beliefs on anyone else, and certainly not on vulnerable children.

America was meant to be a secular nation, and it should stay that way.

From: Kristina Staros <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 19:47:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for your work on the arch important issue of religious liberty. I applaud your efforts.

Kristina

From: Gregory Soderberg <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty Report

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 19:56:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I appreciate the careful work that the committee members and advisors have put into this important document. It is vitally important to push back against the encroachments of religious liberty that we have experienced in the United States of America in recent years. Those who have side-lined, canceled, and infringed upon the religious freedoms of fellow Americans are motivated by their own set of religious beliefs, or beliefs about religion. There is truly no such thing as neutrality.

My main concern is the overly-broad nature of claims such as the one found on page 14: "No institution should be forced to surrender the convictions that animate its mission. Faith-based institutions contribute precisely because they are faithful to their religious convictions, not despite them." However, not all "faiths" are created equal. The government can, and should, limit the operations of a hypothetical radical Islamic community organization that is dedicated to the promotion and implementation of sharia law in the US. Or one that is encouraging and helping to organize acts of anti-Semitism.

Again, thanks to the President for his support of this Commission and for the hard work of the Commission members!

--

Gregory Soderberg, Ph.D.

From: Sherri Tenpenny <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – from Dr Sherri Tenpenny

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 20:25:50 -0400

Importance: High

To Whom It May Concern:

I urge the Commission to explicitly address the discrimination **faced by traditional midwives and the religious families they serve** — particularly Amish, Mennonite, and other Anabaptist/Christian communities.

States are actively eroding access to faith-based birth choices through over-regulation and enforcement actions. We have seen traditional midwives and families targeted, with lawsuits and threats of criminalization for practicing time-honored, religiously informed midwifery.

These efforts function as de facto discrimination against religious minorities who seek to give birth according to conscience, scripture, and community tradition rather than hospital protocols. Informed consent and parental authority are undermined when states impose one-size-fits-all mandates without meaningful religious exemptions.

Traditional midwifery is not a modern invention but part of America's healthcare and cultural heritage. It supports strong families, community bonds, and the religious exercise protected by the First Amendment and RFRA. Yet without federal intervention, state actions continue to burden these practices, disproportionately harming faith communities.

Specific Recommendation

In Chapter 9 ("First Do No Harm"), Appendix B (Detailed Recommendations – Healthcare Conscience Protections, Faith-Based Institutions, and Parental Rights), and related sections, the final report should include:

1. Federal guidance clarifying that traditional/heritage midwifery receives strong religious liberty protections and accommodations under federal law.
2. Model language for states to enact religious exemptions and **grandfathering provisions** for apprenticeship-trained midwives serving religious communities.
3. Direction to HHS, DOJ, and other agencies to investigate and **prevent discriminatory enforcement** against faith-based birth practices.
4. **Recognition of traditional midwifery as protected cultural heritage, consistent with the report's emphasis on America's religious founding and civic benefits of faith.**

This targeted addition would close a critical gap, reinforce parental and religious liberty in maternity care, and prevent further erosion of community knowledge passed down through generations.

Thank you so much for your attention and careful consideration to these important matters.

Sincerely,
Dr. Sherri Tenpenny

[REDACTED] PII

From: gail basore <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General comment

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 20:47:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

GENERAL COMMENT - CHAPTER 14- Gail BASORE

Sent from my iPad

Gail Basore

[REDACTED] PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comments

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 20:52:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

After reviewing the Religious Liberty Draft Report I enthusiastically support and agree with the reports focus and clarity regarding the liberty that is actually guaranteed by the US Constitution. I applaud the DOJ's commission's work today and am hopeful this will reverse decades of misinterpretation of what in fact religious liberty is meant to be under our founding by way of the Constitution.

Thank you.
Scott Sledge

From: Jessica Drzewiecki <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 9/Healthcare Conscience – Jessica Drzewiecki

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 21:00:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Regards,

Jessica Drzewiecki

Sent from my iPhone

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Ch. 2, 3, 14 {Establishment Clause / Faith-Based Institutions / Path Forward) - Kathryn Thompson

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 21:01:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

To me, one of the founding principles of our America is liberty and justice for all. I hold this very dear to my heart. I cherish the right to practice and live out my Christian faith, and believe very strongly in the right of all people to do the same. Please uphold this important value to our nation and all our people.

From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 3 – Jerrod Sessler.

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:16:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

The draft rightly highlights how religious and charitable organizations deliver social services with greater efficiency, compassion, and relational depth than centralized government programs. Government administration of these services has often resulted in higher taxpayer costs, inefficiency, fraud, waste, and impersonal delivery that lacks the consistent local accountability and genuine care provided by community and faith-based groups.

Lawmakers and the executive branch should prioritize incentives, equal-treatment rules for federal grants and contracts, and robust partnerships that empower local organizations rather than supplanting or heavily regulating them. This approach aligns with principles of federalism, subsidiarity, and limited government. The Commission's recommendations for an Equal Treatment Rule and reduced barriers for faith-based providers are a strong step in the right direction and deserve swift implementation.

Thriving in [America!](#)
Jerrod



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Congressional Candidate

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From: james mu <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:18:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with this report.

James Mu MD

From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 3 – Jerrod Sessler.

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:18:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Federal law already provides clear protections. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. § 2000e-1(a)), religious organizations are exempt from the prohibition on religious discrimination in employment for positions connected with their religious activities. The ministerial exception, affirmed in *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. EEOC* (2012) and *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru* (2020), further safeguards autonomy in selecting those who perform religious functions.

Conflicts sometimes arise from state laws or expansive interpretations of other protected categories. The Commission should recommend that the Department of Justice and EEOC issue clear, robust guidance affirming these longstanding protections and church autonomy doctrine. This would reduce confusion and litigation while respecting both religious liberty and the rule of law.

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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 2 – Jerrod Sessler.

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:20:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Declaration of Independence correctly states that governments are instituted among men to secure unalienable rights endowed by their Creator—not to create, grant, or conjure those rights. The Constitution’s structure and the First Amendment’s protections for religious liberty reflect this understanding. Many Founders explicitly recognized dependence on divine Providence and the moral foundations necessary for self-government.

Attempts to impose a rigid “wall of separation” that excludes religious perspectives or contributions from public life distort the Founders’ intent and risk undermining the very sources of ordered liberty. The report’s emphasis on building “bridges” between faith and government, rather than walls of hostility, is a welcome and constitutionally sound correction, provided it continues to respect the Establishment Clause’s prohibition on government coercion or official preference for any particular religion.

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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 – Jerrod Sessler.

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:24:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

There is already a federal requirement (via the Constitution Day and Citizenship Day statute) that educational institutions receiving federal funds hold programs on the U.S. Constitution. Accurate instruction in the founding documents necessarily includes their explicit appeals to the Creator, natural law, divine Providence, and unalienable rights (see the Declaration of Independence, Northwest Ordinance of 1787, and many state founding documents).

Omitting or sanitizing these elements to enforce a strictly secularist narrative would distort history and the philosophical basis of American liberty. The Commission should support robust, accurate civics education that presents the full historical and philosophical context of the founding without the federal government itself establishing or endorsing any particular religious doctrine or practice. This aligns with the report's call for civic education that appreciates America's religious heritage.

This education should not, in any way, refrain from exposing the accurate and true religious belief system of our Framers nor should it replace, promote, or otherwise seek to unreasonably promote any religion that is not a direct connection to the Framers' lifestyle, history, or influence on the crafting of the founding documents.

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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Page 14 Typo – Jerrod Sessler.

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:25:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

There is a clear formatting or transcription error in the presentation of student testimony. The text repeats and mangles the identifier for “Elementary student Shea Encinas” (appearing as a run-on or duplicated phrase in the description of bullying for standing up for Christian faith). Correcting this in the final report will ensure accuracy, professionalism, and respect for the witness’s story.

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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 – Jerrod Sessler

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:30:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Concerns about inconsistent application of religious liberty precedents across lower courts, the high cost and barriers to Supreme Court review, and the distorting effects of lawfare that create problematic precedent are well-founded and directly relevant to effective protection of First Amendment rights. While respecting separation of powers and judicial independence (Article III), the Commission could recommend greater transparency in religious liberty cases, strategic DOJ participation as amicus or litigant, and congressional tools—such as clarifying legislation on statutory intent or jurisdiction where appropriate to address systemic issues.

Mechanisms to “disinfect” ill precedent through proper legislative or judicial channels, while ensuring ordinary citizens have meaningful recourse short of full Supreme Court litigation, merit further study as part of the Path Forward.

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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 – Jerrod Sessler

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:34:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

A core feature of limited, constitutional government is that individuals retain the liberty to remain uninformed about the details of their rights. However, this creates real vulnerability to violations, particularly for students, employees, or others in dependent relationships. The report's emphasis on civic education and accessible "Know Your Rights" materials is therefore essential.

Protections should focus on preventing violations proactively through clear policies, training, enforcement, and cultural reinforcement of constitutional norms without requiring individuals to study or affirm specific content. Those who do acquire knowledge bear a greater responsibility to exercise liberty in good faith, consistent with the self-governing republic the Founders envisioned.

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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 6 – Jerrod Sessler

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:39:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Parental authority as the primary educators and decision-makers in children's religious, moral, and educational formation is a cornerstone of American liberty, affirmed in Supreme Court precedents such as *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972). Federal education policy and the Department of Education's framework have long included recognition of these rights (e.g., through PPRA, FERPA, and parental involvement provisions). Even the opening points in the founding documents of the Department of Education confirm that parents are the responsible authority in the education of their children.

The Commission should continue to emphasize that federal policy must defer to and actively protect these primary parental rights, including through support for school choice, opt-out mechanisms, opt-in mechanisms (for content that is likely to offend religious or other beliefs), and transparency in curriculum—consistent with the report's recommendations in Chapter 6.

Note that the opt-in requirement for certain content protects the innocence of the student while ensuring that the parent has full authority to allow their child to be included in certain content.

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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 – Jerrod Sessler

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:40:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

A structured, transparent process within the Department of Justice to synthesize judicial interpretations (particularly in cases where certiorari is denied) and issue non-binding guidance on statutory application could promote greater consistency in religious liberty enforcement. Summaries or proposed clarifications could be provided to Congress for potential declaratory legislation that restates or clarifies original legislative intent without creating new substantive law.

This “lite” interpretive mechanism would respect separation of powers, complement the report’s litigation and guidance recommendations, and address concerns about inconsistency without encroaching on judicial authority or the post-*Loper Bright* emphasis on statutory text.

Thriving in [America!](#)
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From: Jerrod Sessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 – Jerrod Sessler

Date: Thu, 02 Jul 2026 23:45:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Article VI of the Constitution requires that all federal officeholders, including Members of Congress, take an oath or affirmation to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States” and provides that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust.” This is a solemn commitment to the constitutional order as supreme law, not an inquiry into personal beliefs or a religious test.

The Commission could recommend strengthened civic education and orientation for public officials that emphasizes the Constitution’s foundational principles including its robust protections for religious liberty rooted in the broader Western and American tradition, and the absolute supremacy of the constitutional oath. Public servants must uphold the liberties defined by our governing documents for all citizens, regardless of their personal faith. Any ceremonial choice of religious text for taking the oath remains a matter of personal conscience protected by the Free Exercise Clause except in such cases where the text clearly argues with the structures of the Constitution (hand on the Quran is clearly in conflict with the text of the Constitution). Regardless of the text used for the oath, it cannot alter or supersede the substance of the required commitment to the Constitution.

This approach honors both religious liberty and the structural requirement of fidelity to the constitutional framework that makes religious liberty possible for everyone.

Thriving in [America!](#)

Jerrod



Jerrod Sessler

Congressional Candidate

about.me/jessler

www.jerrodforcongress.com

From: "Thai's_Green_Corner" <[REDACTED]> PII

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Tykeisha Jordan

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 02:59:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I write as a traditional midwife of indigenous status, carrying forward the sacred practices of my ancestors and the rich legacy of midwifery that has sustained communities in this land long before modern regulatory frameworks. For months, I have reflected deeply on the barriers I and others like me face, and I urge the Commission to include strong, clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in your final report. These protections are essential for religious liberty, parental rights, cultural preservation, and the well-being of families who choose care aligned with their beliefs and heritage.

Traditional midwifery is deeply rooted in the American experience, particularly within Black and Indigenous communities. Historical records show that enslaved African women brought sophisticated midwifery knowledge from their homelands as early as 1619, serving as primary birth attendants for both Black and White families in the rural South. "Granny midwives" — often Black women — attended a vast majority of births in many Southern states well into the 20th century, drawing on apprenticeship, spiritual calling, and intergenerational wisdom. Indigenous traditions of birth attendance similarly predate European colonization and formed part of the cultural fabric of this continent.

These practices represent a vital part of America's healthcare heritage, especially for faith communities, rural families, and those seeking culturally grounded care. Yet today, aspiring traditional midwives like myself must navigate certification processes dominated by majority-White boards and professional organizations. The American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB) reports that over 82% of certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives identify as White, with Black midwives comprising a much smaller share despite our historical centrality to the profession.

High costs of education, certification maintenance, liability insurance, and ongoing requirements have priced out many Black and Indigenous practitioners who once learned through community apprenticeships rather than expensive institutional pathways. This creates unnecessary burdens that can feel like a continuation of historical efforts to medicalize and regulate birth in ways that marginalize traditional knowledge. Midwifery is my birthright — a calling rooted in service to my community, not a commodity to be gatekept by systems that overlook the cultural and spiritual dimensions of birth. Families deserve the freedom to choose care consistent with their religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and conscience without facing discrimination or overreach.

I respectfully request that the Commission recommend federal guidance that explicitly:

- Recognizes and accommodates traditional, faith-based, and culturally grounded midwifery practices under religious liberty and conscience protections.
- Supports parental rights to direct maternity care in alignment with family values and heritage.
- Prevents unnecessary regulatory burdens that disproportionately affect midwives from historically marginalized communities while preserving safety through appropriate, flexible standards.
- Affirms traditional midwifery as part of America's pluralistic heritage, worthy of protection alongside other faith-informed practices in healthcare.

Protecting these practices honors the First Amendment, promotes equity in access to culturally competent care,

and upholds the principle that government should not burden religious exercise or cultural continuity without compelling justification. Religious families, including those in Indigenous, Black, Anabaptist, and other communities who rely on home birth and traditional attendants, should not be forced into systems that conflict with their deeply held beliefs.

Thank you for considering this public comment during this critical period. I am available to provide further details from my direct experience if helpful. Traditional midwifery strengthens families and communities — please ensure your report safeguards it for future generations.

Sincerely,
Tykeisha Jordan
[Phelan California / Traditional Indigenous Midwife]
L

From: Ruth Goldberglives <[REDACTED]>

To:

[REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My Country Feedback USA 🇺🇸 Espionage Neo-Nazi Black Magic 🎩 Plans Fail

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 04:33:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Neo-Nazi Black Magic 🎩 Plans Fail
Dear Illuminatum First Testament

Hostile Network of Non-profit Financial Collective who are unlawfully seeking to force me against my will to misappropriate my Government benefits to unjustly enrich Continuing Criminal Enterprise, including but not limited to Urban terrorism, insurrection, treason, sedition, subversive activity, Racketeering and Organized Crimes, Crimes against humanity, high crimes and misdemeanors, theft, petty theft, shoplifting, crimes against person and against property, stalking, intimidation, mensce, coercion, dress, assault and battery, murders,

slander, entrapment, vandalism, breaking and entering, us mail theft. Extortion, bribery, black mail, human traffickers, white slavery, pimping, pandering, prostitution, Medicare fraud, medical billing fraud, fraudulent conservatorship. Fraudulent Guardianship. Fraudulent Financial Management

This hostile networks, international and Intercontinental, inter

This is a continuation of my complaint against the illegal collectives. hostile to enroll me in their perverse, treasonous, deceitful, dwindling, vicious, variantly racist, viriently Communist, variantly Fascist, Viriantly Naziesque, Viriantly sadistic, variantly Satanic, variantly felonious, variantly fake, viriantly fictitious, variantly fraudulent, insurrectionists, viriantly psychotic, viriantly malicious, viriantly pernicious,. That is my impression and my description of this network after of years of experience, observation, reading, learning and research.

Such a network is seeking to suppress my dedication to law and order,. Seeking to interdict my dedication to law and order. Seeking to railroad me despite my unrelenting, my absolute vehement contempt and loathing of the repugnant, and repulsive, dirty, low- down character and nature of their vice-ridden collective, network, tribe, clan, corporation, or cohort.

I am a private American Citizen. Freedom of Association also inherently includes the inalienable right to refuse to associate, to refuse to serve, to refuse to fellowship to refuse to socialize, to refuse to become Socialist. This collective international intercontinental, intercommunituniy, interracial, inter religious, intra racial, intra religious network is seeking with my cooperation or without it, working outside the legal system , working under the radar, working Clandestinely, and to interfere with my civil 🇺🇸 liberty, particularly with, my rejection of their appalling, profane, obscene socialization, and atrocious social habits and interactions and culture. I protest.

That is my choice. That is my prerogative under the United States 🇺🇸 Constitutional to chose not to become social, not talk on the phone, not visit back and forth in other people's homes, nor have them in mine if I don't want them.

It is my prerogative act in my own best legal and moral interests, and political interest. It me my prerogative reject becoming sycophant. It is my prerogative to prefer to limit, and restrict myself at my own discretion. It is my choice, and my prerogative to uncooked, people who have no credibility with me.

Those hostile and belligerent networks of people who attempted to "trisngulate" me today have no credibility with me at all. Which is the reason and the cause of my decision to repel their agenda, their intentions, their purposes, and their plans, and schemes. I don't need them. I am not hiring. I am not going to do budget with them. I disapprove of their attempts at "due" influence over me. The networks have been attempting to exercise undue influence over my financial matters. The network have been attempting to exercise undue influence over my freedom of thought and freedom of expression. These are networks of prople. Corporations of prople. Organizations of people, professional people, degreed people, licensed people also ignoble people. Their collective efforts to exercise undue influence over my person my relationships, my finances, my values, my person, my personal property, all of my government benefits, their plan has failed. The Neo-Nazi plan has failed. The Aryan Supremacist plan has failed. The plan of the scoundrels has failed.

"Not by power, not by might, but by my Spirit saith the Lord."

Yes, I have segregated myself from evil.

And I also intend to escalate my defenses against evil.

I also intend to fortify the fortress against evil 🐱.

That's all for now

Me. Myself and I

Mother of Good Counsel

From: Lee Behnken <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] In honor of USA's 250 year anniversary.

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 08:26:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Happy Independence Day!

Please visit www.ChristianAnthem.com and listen to **The Christian Anthem**. .

We would like to invite you to use **The Christian Anthem**... and the message of our founders on www.ChristianAnthem.com

Years ago, we established a website for **The Christian Anthem**. It was hacked and destroyed. In honor of America's 250 year anniversary we have reestablished the website.

We are thankful for you!

Sincerely,

Lee Behnken

www.ChristianAnthem.com

From: Don <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL COMMENT – DON TAYLOR

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 09:05:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Commission and my fellow Americans:

Bravo! I agree wholeheartedly.

Finally, true religion (a voluntary belief system, as distinct from a political system that seeks to DICTATE the whole of a society's conduct), is restored to open and permissible status.

Thanks for your excellent work!

--

Don

From: George Bailey <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 10:54:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty Commission members,

Please allow me to share my perspective regarding religion, the importance of Separation of Church & State and why it should remain in our Constitution. I, like you, have no substantial evidence of a supreme being. The religion that we choose is based on faith. The United States is made up of several religions and denominations within a religion. To declare one religious belief over another is unreasonable and wrong. No one has the right to tell others what they should believe and how they should live.

Separation of Church & State must remain as a founding principle and liberty of each individual's choosing.

Respectfully,
George Bailey

From: Deborah Kohn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ONWARD – DDKOHN

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 11:03:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

I object to the entire intent behind this Commission and its stated aims.

From the first sentence of the Executive Summary I disagree profoundly. Religion - in some form - may be a feature of human societies, but it is FREEDOM of religion that the US in particular stands for. Not religion itself.

Not the incorporation of religion into every citizen's life, regardless of the nature of individual 'sincerely held beliefs'.

FREEDOM includes the right to the full spectrum - the multidimensional spectrum - of beliefs, from no beliefs to 'sincerely held beliefs' so often cited in judgements.

It is clear from the examples in the Draft that the intention is to make government policy the protection of and exemption from the normal legal and moral obligations of society those holding of one particular religious belief.

The Constitution is definitive on the subject of the rights of citizens regarding religion:

Amendment I

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.

Every word of that is clear. NO law shall be made. NO prohibitions shall be made on the FREE exercise of religious belief or on freedom of speech.

These Rights have been relentlessly trampled by the current administration. They have been selectively applied to achieve political ends.

It is not for the government to decide that citizens should be subject to the 'sincerely held beliefs' of others in the form of discrimination. It is the government's responsibility to guarantee that all freedoms of expression and belief are respected equally.

I bring to your attention the recent case of [Landor v. Louisiana Department of Corrections](#). The US Supreme Court just ruled that US citizen Landor does not have freedom to exercise his 'sincerely held beliefs', and in doing so they violated both the Constitution and precedent legal judgements.

This violence against a person is far more direct and egregious than the distress so many plaintiffs claim in bringing their rights to discriminate against individuals to the courts, citing their 'sincerely held beliefs'. The other recent case of the worker who felt he shouldn't have to walk past a Pride flag is laughable.

This Commission should not exist. It exists to promote the erosion of religious liberty, in its original and true meaning, not to guarantee it.

Yours sincerely,
DD Kohn

PII

From: VondaKunz17 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 11:13:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Conscience – Vonda Kunz

We are asking that you Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs have Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care. These are our freedoms and our rights should be protected as US citizens.

Thank you

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for Android.

From: ModernMordecai <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission report.

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 11:25:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it concerns,

I am encourage with this step to get back to the truth of the Constitution and the letter of the law.

The Constitution does not state anywhere the words " separation of church and state." To take a personal letter of one the framers and twist it to one's own ends is preposterous. Of course they didn't include other framers who stated blantly that this republic could only function and have success if it was governed by judeo/Christian values. We must return to these ideals or our country will cease to exist.

Secondly, in the court of law it has always been incumbent upon the accuser to prove their case and the guilt of the accused. This has not been the case for the past several decades when it comes to those accused of violating "separation of church and state". They have made the accused show how they are not violating the Constitution. No one who is opposed to restoring the letter of the Constitution would stand for a person accused of committing a felony having to "prove" their innocence. It is just not done. They are innocent until proven guilty. It is the prosecution obligation to prove the accused guilty.

Please, continue this work and set our country back to being balanced.

Thank you for you time and attention,

Sara

From: Susan Draftz <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 14 - Susan Draftz

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 11:45:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is about time we reevaluated this and got it corrected. Thanks for all the work put into doing this.

Yours in Christ,
Susan Draftz

From: Laurie Pappas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - General Comment - Laurie Pappas

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 11:51:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

I FULLY support the DOJ issuing formal guidance redefining the Establishment Clause.

Thank you.

Laurie Pappas

From: Rachel Fracassa <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Rachel Fracassa

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 12:31:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

From: Honey Comb <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Hannah Pye

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 12:46:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

"I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience?" 1 Corinthians 10:29

On American soil, is it not our God given right to make decisions for ourselves and our healthcare that reflect our faith and freedom?

"...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

"Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen." Psalm 72:19

With many hopes and prayers...

Hannah Pye

From: Janet Landon <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] DO NOT repeal the Johnston Amendment

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 12:46:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

As we approach Independence Day, we're reminded that strong communities are built by people and organizations committed to serving others. Why repeal a 72-year-old provision of federal tax law that protects nonprofit nonpartisanship and helps preserve public trust in charitable organizations? Oh I know, the Trump administration wants to take over and funnel dark money into political shenanigans. Can't we have some place where there is public service and and not partisan politics. It could undermine the public trust that nonprofits have spent generations building. Please, please do not repeal the Johnston Amendment. Protect some of us little people. Thank you. Janet Landon

From: AD <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -- Need for Education About Religion; Religions Themselves Are Often Source of Bigotry

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 13:22:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Comments_on_Rel_Liberty_Report_v2_LH.docx

July 3, 2026

Dear Religious Liberty Commissioners and Staff,

I commend you for your important work, for the Draft Report, and for the time spent discussing and seeking resolutions on how to best protect and advance our most sacred freedom, religious freedom.

I am an Advisor to the Washington D.C. based Religious Freedom Institute (RFI), and also serve as an Executive Council Member of Religions for Peace USA. I am also a Governing Body Commissioner of my own Vaishnava Hindu religious community, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

ISKCON regularly supports and submits amicus briefs to various US Courts on issues essential to religious freedom; none of which have directly protected our own religious community. But, because we are grateful for the protections offered to us by the Constitution, and the many subsequent laws and judicial decisions that protect those freedoms, we strive to help protect those sacred rights as best we can.

Again, I commend you for this fine Report. I agree with the spirit, and most of the content, of this document. I would like to make two suggestions:

First, I am concerned that the Report gave little attention to the tendency of religious communities themselves to be the source of prejudice, bigotry, hatred, and violence against other religious communities or faiths.

I believe this lack of a genuine spirit of inclusiveness within American history and America today needs to be highlighted and addressed more directly in your Report. Sadly, it is often the 'true believers' of one faith that cause the freedom of religion for others to be at risk.

The Report is not shy in its critique, often well deserved, of liberal politicians, secular ideologies, etc., that have been obstructions in most recent years to religious freedom and the practice of religion.

Yet, we often see that the sectarian advocates of one faith are the enemy of protecting the rights of others. The Report is clear that it believes religious freedom should be protected for all, and it draws on examples from the experiences of Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Quakers, and others.

However, the Report would be strengthened if it directly addressed the dangers of favoring one religion over others in social, cultural, educational, military, legal, judicial, and political spheres. A statement about this needs to be included, along with suggestions for addressing this dangerous tendency.

A practical example today is that some states are now mandating the posting of the Ten Commandments in all public schools. The Report encouraged the same. While this may be innocently

projecting the cultural norm of most students, there is no discussion in this Report about the very real and negative impact such public, institutional displays may have on minority students. Nor does it discuss the bigotry that such displays could evoke: "You don't believe in these Commandments? But they're right here on the school wall, so they must be true..." At least a warning against this danger should be included in your Report.

We must ask: following this current trend, will such schools also mandate plaques with moral codes from Islamic or Hindu texts to be displayed? Will quotations from the Bhagavad-Gita and the Koran be posted? If not, should your Report not at least warn against the kind of religious hubris and chilling effect such 'one-sided' institutional displays may have?

Secondly, I was surprised that the Report made no reference to education *about* religion.

Perhaps this concept, well established in other countries, never arose for discussion. Yet, I fear this may perhaps have been overlooked, or deleted, to placate those who feel they hold either numerical or theological superiority. Otherwise, why not include such an obvious, essential, and practical step to ensure religious freedom--that is, to promote understanding and dialogue about other faith traditions, in a non-sectarian way--among young Americans?

Why not educate Christians, Jews, Hindus, and atheists about the basic precepts of Islam? Should not Christian students learn, in a non-proselytizing manner, about the core concepts -- and moral and philosophical foundations--of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist teachings and beliefs? The world today is a small place, and we need to educate our children to live in that world, not the world of our fathers or grandfathers.

We Americans hold a variety of beliefs and world views. And huge swaths of the global population hold beliefs different from what most Americans believe. Without providing at least a nominal, yet balanced and objective, understanding of those beliefs, we miss the opportunity of helping our children function in a multi-faith world. Worse yet, without correcting their ignorance about other belief systems and communities, we risk planting seeds of fear, doubt, superiority, and hatred in our children and citizenry.

Much more could be said about these two suggestions. However, it's not certain if anyone will even take the time to read these remarks. But, since input has been requested, I offer these thoughts in good faith. I do so with the goal of deepening the impact, thoughtful discourse, and practical outcomes your Report hopes to generate in protecting religious freedom for all Americans.

Sincerely,

Anuttama Dasa
Governing Body Commissioner
Global Minister of Communications
International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)
Rockville, Maryland



ISKCON Communications

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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PII

PII

• www.communications.iskcon.org • www.iskconnews.org

A practical example today is that some states are now mandating the posting of the Ten Commandments in all public schools. The Report encouraged the same. While this may be innocently projecting the cultural norm of most students, there is no discussion in this Report about the very real and negative impact such public, institutional displays may have on minority students. Nor does it discuss the bigotry that such displays could evoke: "You don't believe in these Commandments? But they're right here on the school wall, so they must be true..." At least a warning against this danger should be included in your Report.

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Sincerely,

Anuttama Dasa
Governing Body Commissioner, Global Minister of Communications
International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

From: Chris Ferguson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT — Religious Liberty for ALL -- Chris Ferguson

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 14:37:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Commission:

As a person of deep faith who relishes inter-spiritual perspectives and collaboration in living one's faith in a troubled world, I am dismayed by the Commission's narrow composition, perspectives, and draft report & recommendations. This draft report & recommendations does not speak for me. I draw your attention especially to chapters 2, 3, and 14.

First, the Commission's disregard of mainline Protestant denominations, traditionally Black churches, Muslims, and other major faith traditions appears designed to exclude (or greatly diminish) faith organizations that would advocate for the traditional understanding separation of church and state. The accusations you likely are receiving that the Commission is a "stacked deck" would not be unwarranted.

Second, the notion of religious liberty should extend to everyone, not just a minority of faith communities that feel they are now in power and have license to jettison decades- (even centuries-) long principles they find disagreeable. The Establishment Clause cannot simply be reinterpreted for an aggrieved minority at the whim of that minority; it must be engaged, more deeply understood, and embraced by all religious communities – including those listed above who have been excluded from this radical reinterpretation.

Finally, I strongly beseech you to set this draft document aside, broaden membership of the Commission to include **all** major faith traditions and communities, and thus become an advocate for the religious liberty of **all** people. The "we" of "in God we trust" should truly be understood to be **all** of us.

In peace, with hope,

Chris Ferguson

From: Ellen R <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment for meeting

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 15:39:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Associate Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Commissioners:

You have been relying on the idea that America was founded as a Christian nation. The Founders may have been shaped by Christianity, but they had very different notions of it.

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, famously sliced out sections of his Bible with which he disagreed. The result is known as the Jefferson Bible. Titled "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth," the amended portions of the New Testament include lessons for life and exclude Jesus' miracles and mentions of divinity. In an 1822 letter, Jefferson wrote, "I trust that there is not a young man now living in the US. who will not die an [sic] Unitarian."

Fellow founder and third President John Adams, though raised Congregationalist, was Unitarian, believing in one god rather than a trinity and not believing in miracles. His cousin Samuel Adams remained Congregationalist with a strain of Puritanism. His beliefs influenced him politically and socially: He advocated people's right to worship as they chose and the concept of mutual toleration of religions, of which there were many in the colonies—Protestantism and Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, Quaker, various African spiritual traditions brought by enslaved people, and of course the spiritual practices of many indigenous groups across the continent at the time.

George Washington was Episcopalian, but there is no evidence that he actually prayed in the woods of Valley Forge as depicted in paintings and postage stamps. Historians, including Valley Forge today, have documented many ways in which this myth has grown and changed.

Thomas Paine, author of the influential "Common Sense," criticized organized religion—including Christianity—in "The Age of Reason," describing deism as a belief in a single god and a moral life without need of church directives or revelation. Noting the Bible's many contradictions, he advocated a faith guided by reason, not dogma.

These are only a few of the religious approaches and views of America's Founders. I hope, but am not confident, that this commission will account for them in its work.

E.Ryan
Researcher

From: Jill <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT America's First Freedom Report Jill Rudnitski

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 15:41:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

I read this report with dismay leading to horror. The methodology of gathering testimony from only one side of an argument without evidence-gathering, fact-checking or analysis was lacking and unworthy of a Presidential commission. As a scientist I know - my former boss - used to say, "The plural of anecdotes is not data."

The Commission's basic tenant that Thomas Jefferson didn't really mean that there should be a wall between church and state (cited many times) is best left to the judiciary, but I find it to be yet another sign of the erosion of our founding principles and my basic rights as a nonbeliever.

Specifically, as a veteran of the US Military, I take exception to your entire section on the COVID-19 vaccine qualifying for a religious exemption, (pages 107-109) and your recommendation that vaccination religious objectors be compensated (pages 117). Any veteran of the US Military knows that vaccinations are a required part of basic training. Soldiers and sailors put the lives of their colleagues at risk by refusing, and they should not be allowed to serve. The recent outbreak of unvaccinated air force members at Lackland Air Force Base is but one example.

Your noble words about how our soldiers and sailors should be able to pursue their religion rings hollow when your own administration reduces the number of recognized religions from 200 down to 31, and lumps all Muslim religions into one. Entire wars have been fought between different Muslim religious groups.

In fact, many of your anecdotes center on one group's rights at the expense of others. The Michigan school district was respecting the wishes of Jennifer Mead's child and Jennifer filed a lawsuit against it. (P. 16) That poor child! It is the duty of school professionals to protect children against parental abuse, and they did it. Oh, the poor child in Chapter 4 who was humiliated by Pink Out The Hate Day - how many other children felt unsafe around him? And the college student who had three restraining orders against them - and they're the victim? Or Valerie Kloosterman who didn't want to use her clients' preferred pronouns (p. 133)? She was disrespectful of her clients' well-being, and probably shouldn't be in that field.

I could go on and on.

Your recommendations on Page 141, 149, 216-217 and 222 that litigation should be pursued to prosecute perceived religious freedom violations only further reinforces the need for Thomas Jefferson's wall between church and state.

I sincerely hope this biased, repressive document will never be seen again.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Jill Rudnitski
Minnesota

From: cjm braun <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [General Comment] – [Catherine Braun]

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 15:49:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please continue finalizing this to formally re-document the true meaning/message/impact of the language of separation that was abused for political purposes 70 years ago and further substantially support the burden to be on the *government* to show a specific constitutional violation by the person under any circumstance deemed in violation of this law

From: Shelly Norden <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Public Education – Shelly Norden

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 16:06:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the thoughtful and important work reflected in this draft report.

I applaud the Commission for recognizing religious liberty as one of America's most important constitutional freedoms and for addressing the growing challenges facing students, parents, teachers, and families in public education.

As someone who works closely with public school board members and education leaders, I strongly support the Commission's findings and recommendations related to public education.

Too often, public schools have adopted an overly broad interpretation of the Establishment Clause and treated religious expression as something to restrict rather than protect. This has created confusion, unnecessary conflict, and in some cases, clear violations of constitutional rights.

The Commission is right to emphasize that students do not surrender their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate.

Students should be free to pray voluntarily, express religious viewpoints, participate in faith-based clubs, and speak openly about their faith without fear of censorship or discrimination.

I also strongly support the recommendations involving teachers, coaches, and administrators. Public educators should not have to choose between their profession and their sincerely held religious beliefs. Clear guidance, better training, and stronger accountability are needed.

The Commission's focus on parental rights is equally important.

Parents have the primary responsibility to direct the upbringing and education of their children. Public schools function best when they respect that role and operate with transparency and openness.

I also appreciate the Commission's support for school choice as an important protection for both parental rights and religious liberty.

Most importantly, I appreciate the Commission's effort to correct the widespread misunderstanding of "separation of church and state." The First Amendment protects against government establishment of religion. It does not require hostility toward religion or exclusion of faith from public life.

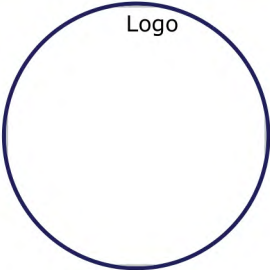
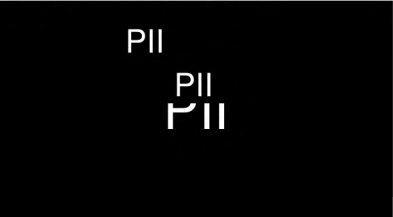
I fully support the Commission's recommendations impacting public education and encourage adoption of these recommendations in full.

Thank you again for your leadership and for addressing these important issues.

Respectfully,
Shelly Norden

Shelly Norden

Executive Director



From: Nan Edwards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 16:06:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

What a great way to remind every person in the United States of America that if you aren't an evangelical Christian you don't count. Personally, I find the whole concept offensive, contrary to how and why this country was set up, and, frankly, beneath us as a nation. But what else can one expect from this Administration?? They care nothing for the pepper of this country, only whoever gives them money.

Nanette Boyster

From: Ryanne Young <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience - [Mrs. Dickason]

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 16:53:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good Afternoon,

My name is Ryanne Dickason. I was married to my husband, Ken Dickason, last year, and we are looking forward to beginning our family in the near future.

Which is why I am writing to you now.

I am writing to ask for clear, unobscured protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final Chapter 9 report.

I would like to bring to your attention that it is religious, or similarly principled, families who are the ones raising the birth rate in our country, and whose children will be contributing to the economy and culture in the future. The very families who help this country to thrive should not face undue burden or discrimination when choosing care that aligns with our values, beliefs, and the dignity of our own decision making.

Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights (choice/autonomy), and culturally grounded maternity care options.

I hope that this small email can bring to your attention something that could be a big problem- the very families who these issues affect the most are the same families who have the greatest amount of children, and therefore contribute to buoying our society's birth rate the most, especially as we see an increase in need for elder care and similar jobs to support an aging population. Please remember us in your decision making, and continue to make the US an attractive place for us to grow and raise our families.

Thank you for your time, and for your service to our country. My husband and I appreciate you.

Warmly,

Ryanne Dickason

From: Sera Gadbois <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Sera Gadbois

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 17:40:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Honorable Members of the DOJ Religious Liberty Commission

TRADITIONAL MIDWIFERY SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED AS AN AMERICAN HERITAGE

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Health & Happiness,
Sera Gadbois, CPM

[REDACTED] PII

From: "C. B." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment - Chapter 14 - Cheryl Barkley

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 17:45:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Wholeheartedly in favor of the DOJ Religious Liberty Commission report.

Thank you,

Cheryl Barkley

From: David Meehan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hope

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 18:22:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: 2202.jpg; 2201.jpg; 2200.jpg; 2200(1).jpg; 2199.jpg; 2197.jpg

I just feel I should try and mail this letter I mailed to you last Monday in light of what I received of what was supposed to be my mail today from the USPS email I received this morning, Happy 4th.

Religious Liberty Commission
OFFICE of ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY General
US Department of JUSTICE
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20530-0001

4-29-2026

To whom it may concern:

My name is David T. Meehan, I now live in
Spokane, WA.

I've been a spoken testifier of my testimony
of the miracles my God in Christ Jesus has done
for me most all my life. I was in a very fatal
serious vehicle accident by which I literally came
back by which the medical profession at that time,
on or around April of 1974 recorded my case as
a medical miracle.

In much research and study I found the only
Truth that explained what I went through was found
in Psalm 68:20 and Psalm 116 of the Holy Bible,
NKJV. I've exhorted and warned so many over
the last 50 years that my testimony has brought
great retribution, prejudice, and discrimination
against me my both the employment field and
medical field of this nation.

I was under the care of Dr. Michael White at
the Pt. Reyes Medical Clinic in Pt. Reyes, CA for
serious inherited hypertension by which my good
Dr. Michael White to great care of me. He

kept me at the heart of a teenager on the
way to 63 years old with excellent blood work
and everything. Before Dr. Michael Whitt
passing he stated to me as a last testament
that the medications he assigned me are the
only ones that will work for my biological
nothing else will work, for he was a great man
of study and took great time to study my
biology as he was one of the last great Christian
doctors that took his hypochondria seriously
in the recovery for God. That was through
the years of 2004-2020. Upon the last of
my family's passing in 2020, with me
being the only survivor left, I've been at
great struggle dealing with these atheistic
in network doctors of United Health care
with constantly trying to change my original
meds my Dr. Whitt prescribed me which has
led quite closely to my detriment. My God
has kept his promise of psalm 88:20 NKJV
Firmly from the care of Dr. Noli Cal
of the CAVA Medical Group of Marina del Rey
in San Diego, CA to Merck Hall of Char
medical health and Dr. William Roth of Roth
medical clinic in Spokane, WA. For
example, Dr. Noli Cal of San Diego tried
taking one over the counter med away my Dr. Whitt

prescribed me and replacing it with Coartem 25mg
that made my lower legs swell like elephants
legs and kept refusing my demands for my
original med of hydrocodone 142 de 25mg that
was the only med my Dr. Whit said would
work for me. That permanently made me disabled
weakening my ankles and feet to where

I can barely walk now, being now on a cane.
that lasted 5 years from 2020-2024.

The work I was at at Walmart neglected me
as an elder who lived by his faith and testimony
being very discriminatory towards
me making stand up to 7 hours without
sitting, why others my age could have one, and
such as that. My swelled legs under Dr. Noli
Cava's care made lose my job, then my
apartment which forced me to buy a house
in Spokane, to prevent me from becoming
homeless, all done with the help of my honorable
son, JR Machan.

Then, after getting to Spokane, the medical
profession here was very discriminatory to
try to change my original meds Dr. Whit warned
me were the only ones that worked. I keep
having to find these in network doctors of
United Healthcare but it's the same old story.
The icing on the cake that really almost →

prescribed me and replacing it with Coartem 25mg
that made my lower legs swell like elephants
legs and kept refusing my demands for my
original med of hydrocodone 142 de 25mg that
was the only med my Dr. White said would
work for me. That permanently made me disabled
weakening my ankles, and feet to where
I can barely walk now, being now on a cane.
that lasted 5 years from 2020-2024.

The work I was at at Walmart neglected me
as an elder who lived by his faith and testimony
being very discriminatory towards
me making stand up to 2 hours without
sitting, why others my age could have one, and
such as that. My swelled legs under Dr. Noli
Cava's care made lose my job, then my
apartment which forced me to buy a house
in Spokane, to prevent me from becoming
homeless, all done with the help of my honorable
son, JR Machan.

Then, after getting to Spokane, the medical
profession here was very discriminatory to
try to change my original meds Dr. White warned
me were the only ones that worked. I keep
having to find these in network doctors of
UnitedHealthcare but it's the same old story.
The icing on the cake that really almost →

(S)

took my life was that Laxela Inhub
that Dr William Roth at Roth medical clinic
prescribed me, when I told him I had
no breathing problems. That almost killed
me. In my studies it is known that you
never prescribe a Laxela Inhub to somebody
that's on a Thiazide diuretic; it would
make your bronchial tubes collapse and
immediately flush out all your potassium.
With being a certified paralegal, legalassis-
ant and with Dr Roth of Spillane & LPA fully
knowing the consequences as a licensed
doctor, your chances for his
prima facie evidence for probable cause
of attempted murder, and aggravated
negligence. Maybe after all I have
through, almost being 70 years old next
month; and a grandfather whose loved by
his granddaughters and who loves them.
There might be something you can do
about this.

Take care and God bless,
Signed,

Walter Emberton



From: "Chuck Smith (home)" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Charles Smith

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 18:42:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support this report and whole heartedly support Parental Rights in Education. Parents should not be forced to vaccine their children when their religious beliefs forbid it, or quite frankly, if they have other reasons to not do it...such as the fact the vaccines have not undergone testing and there is no independent studies or reports proving the efficacy and without serious side effects.

Charles Smith

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

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

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

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 18:45:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

RLC,

As citizens of the United States and practicing/conservative Catholics, we **strenuously** object to the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission. Although there have always been (regrettable) instances of religious intolerance throughout our history, the anecdotal evidence supplied in the report hews to a single viewpoint that only serves to stoke religious division. As a country we should be de-emphasizing a single, approved religion and encouraging tolerance of **all** religious perspectives. Our Founding Fathers held a diverse set of religious beliefs and stressed that no single religion should be established or dominate. That incredibly valuable and prescient wisdom has contributed to the greatness of our country and society in general. Let's continue to maintain the approach that has served our nation for centuries. The so-called guidance, rights, and regulations listed within the Religious Liberty Commission Report are a thinly veiled attempt to establish a pro-Christian nationalist orthodoxy and should be opposed.

If this administration wishes to encourage the expression of religious liberty for all Americans, it should abide by the *Golden Rule*, whose core concept encompasses almost every major religion and ethical philosophy.

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam,

Jose and Cecilia De Souza

From: "Chuck Smith (home)" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 10 Chapter 10: Conscience and Coercion in Vaccine Policy– Charles Smith

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 18:46:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have personal experiences similar to those described in this chapter. It was unconscionable for our federal gov't to force the vaccines. I fully support the recommendations in this chapter.

--

Charles Smith

[REDACTED] PII

From: "Chuck Smith (home)" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – General Comment - Charles Smith

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 18:49:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Love that this report was commissioned and that it reached the conclusions that it did. Support the recommendations in the report.

--

Charles Smith

[REDACTED] PII

From: Matt Kaku <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 18:53:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree wholeheartedly with the recommendations of this commission.

From: Chris Jarosik Pampo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - General Comment - Christine Jarosik

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 18:57:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commission,

Thank you for your recommendation to restore the understanding of the Establishment and Free Exercise Clause to its original intent. I fully support cultivating a culture that understands why those rights exist in the first place, and I pray for this endeavor to come to full fruition. God bless America!

Warm regards,

Christine Jarosik

From: Jean Mulkey <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 14 - Jean Mulkey

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 19:39:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support The Religious Liberty Commission's report and the Path Forward.

Jean Mulkey

Sent from my iPad

From: Chris Wolfe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – draft report titled “Religious Liberty Commission: America’s First Freedom.” – Christopher Wolfe

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 19:39:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

As someone who taught constitutional law and American political thought for almost 45 years, I have to say that this draft report is a wonderful return to fundamental truths about the place of religion and religious liberty in the United States. "Strict separation" is a false understanding of "separation of Church and State", which is not a complete separation of religion and politics, as Alexis de Tocqueville described so well in *Democracy in America*. Unfortunately, it became the slogan of many Americans (intellectual elites, in particular), especially from the time of *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), which was a misguided and deeply unfortunate falsification of the Constitution and American history. It was an effort to re-write the Founding and the Constitution, rather than interpret it. This report "turns back the clock" in the best of ways, returning to the wisdom of our Founding Fathers and rectifying well over half-a-century of turning the Constitution on its head, using the First Amendment, not to protect religion and its contribution to American life, but to privatize it and drive it from the American public square. I hope that this report becomes the ongoing basis for our national discussion of religion and politics, so that our nation benefits from the blessings of religion and religious freedom for many years.

Christopher Wolfe

Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Marquette University
Distinguished Research Scholar, University of Dallas

[REDACTED] PII

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

From: PENNY MICHALKO <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Chapter 14

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 21:44:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I could not be happier with the groundwork done by this commission on religious freedom. It is about time that the truth of our constitutional rights be upheld as it relates to freedom of religion under the establishment clause of our First Amendment. As a born-again Christian I am so thankful for this opportunity to praise God for this freedom being acknowledged by the Trump Administration and this committee. This is literally the epitome of what makes America so special, unique, and blessed beyond measure! All of our rights come from God and He is the protector and provider of America!!! We are and will always be One Nation Under God!!!

Penny L. Michalko
Edward R. Michalko
Cankton, LA
Sent from my iPhone

From: Clarisse <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 21:49:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

The draft of the Religious Liberty Commission is a blessing to Americans, and a much-needed protection of religion, notably of that religion on which the ideals of America were built—Christianity. If Christianity dies in America, so will the crucial concepts of liberty, the dignity of man, equality under the law, justice, peace, and the virtues that form a society able to withstand the threats of the progressive ideologies that seek to tear down the structures necessary for freedom. This commission protects families, it protects healthcare workers who refuse to participate in harmful procedures, it protects teachers and students and all religious Americans, and even protects those who are not religious from the loss of culture and order that would occur if religion was stamped out. Thank you for giving religion a place in society that recognizes its importance, and for establishing the freedom central to the American vision.

From: shirley bloethe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- Religious rights

Date: Fri, 03 Jul 2026 21:57:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

We are a country founded on freedom of religion

From: B Wade <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Executive Summary – Barbara Wade

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 01:09:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Pg 14

"No institution should be forced to surrender the convictions that animate its mission."

No institution? But some institutions' convictions teach its members to harm other people. A people could even use that sentence to defend evil.

From: "Colonel James E. Schaefer" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] DoJ Religious Liberty Commission PUBLIC COMMENT – [CHAPTER 7] – [Chaplain, Colonel, James E. Schaefer, USA Ret.]

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 08:41:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear all, thank you for the insight, inspiration, and the godly investment of the Administration's time and Soul to create the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission!

I submit the below comments and recommendations in response to Chapter 7 (America's Warfighters Deserve Better), page 117, "Recommendations."

1. Develop and codify a "Religious Cooperativism" course for all military chaplains (in basic training and advanced refresher training) that trains in "collaborative Religious Peacebuilding sacrificial service that is championed by Religious Professionals who are humble, hospitable, honest, hard working, hubris defeating, and heuristic enabling. Religious Cooperativism does not compete with other religions nor does it compromise one's own religious or philosophical views, but rather it lionizes the iterative and systematic cooperative praxis of religious liberty expression for the grassroot to the strategic needs of others, regardless of religion or the lack thereof." Also, "Religious Cooperativism" training should eliminate references to the term "pluralism" in all USG military and civilian doctrines, directives, and documents because legacy leaders have erroneously asserted that pluralism requires the co-existence or co-equality of religious beliefs or philosophies and requires an ineffective and feckless religious synergy and syncretism which directly impedes individual and corporate religious liberty. For more information, see the conference paper, ["The Problem with Religious Pluralism vs. The Solution - "Religious Cooperativism."](#)

2. Combine Religious Freedom training for the Chaplains of each Department *with* all the Religious Affairs Specialists (Army), Religious Affairs Airmen (Air Force), and the Religious Program Specialists (Navy) of the respective Departments (aka, "Chaplain Assistants"). The combined training in the respective Department schools is necessary in order to increase the competency and professionalization of the Chaplain Corps and the individual unit ministry teams by emphasizing and strengthening the teams as a single unit that is required to know, defend, and promote Religious Liberty for the Troops. That is, protecting and promoting Religious Liberty is the work of the entire ministry team and not just the "Chaplain's job." For more information on the training, see the conference paper, ["The MERiT Process - Religious Ministry Professional Training Guide."](#)

3. Enhance and include in the "Spiritual Fitness Guide" detailed and explanatory examples *with* illustrations or drawings of different religious expressions that should normally receive religious accommodations (e.g., accouterments, devices, amulets, crosses, crescents, tattoos, hair, head coverings, etc, etc.). At a minimum, provide the Guide for all basic military recruits and their leaders with QR codes to the official doctrinal support documents of the respective Departments' Religious Ministry manuals.

4. Design and provide a religious accommodation (RA) advisement tool and COA matrix for Commanders that standardizes the usual or normal requirements in order to unambiguously discern what is a "sincerely held belief." This is necessary because many Commanders, Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants (see their official titles, above) should know the RA requirements rather than rely on the confusion that could come from a leader's particular religious experiences, anecdotal perspectives, or biased views of what is a "sincerely held belief" or the equally ambiguous concept of "the religious basis and sincerity of the Soldier's request." This confusion directly contributes to some of the egregious, though possibly unintentional, denials of RA by Commanders and leads to further

Command, Chaplain, and Troop consternation and conflagration. For example, note some of the confusing language in AR 600-20, 15 April 2026, page 120. For more information that may provide some solutions for an RA advisement and COA matrix tool by the description of the Five Elements that are common to all religions, see the conference paper, ["The Five Elements of Every Religion, Philosophy, and 'Nothing In Particular Religion'"](#)

I am praying that God guide and shepherd the Commission for His Glory and for our deserving Military warriors!

Sincerely and respectfully submitted,

Chaplain, Colonel, James E. Schaefer
U.S. Army, ret.

PII

From: Brian Babin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thanks Religious liberty Commission!

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 08:48:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear RLC,

I would like to thank President Trump for establishing the Religious Liberty Commission (RLC). It's so obvious that our founding fathers intended to establish the United States based on our Judeo-Christian Holy Bible and Scripture. Yet we see all kinds of contortions and perversions of our history and laws by secularists, atheists and Marxists to deny that fact, even going so far as to subvert the words of Thomas Jefferson to mean exactly opposite what Jefferson intended when he spoke of the "wall of separation" between church and state. The church should be protected from government, not the other way around!

President John Adams even said that our American government was "fit only for a moral and religious people" and would not last under any other people.

We've endured and persevered for 250 years because of that fact in spite of years of denigration, denial and outright persecution of people of faith by the Marxist Left especially when the Democrats are in the majority in Congress and a Democrat President is in office.

Thank you all members of the Commission for your service to our God and country.

The United States will celebrate another 250 years if we remain that "moral and religious people" and nurture, guide and fight for our liberties, freedom and right to our faith. As President Reagan said "freedom is not passed on to our children in the bloodstream". It must be fought for and taught to our children.

God bless a praying America! In Jesus' Name!

Brian Babin

Member of Congress

District 36, Texas

Sent from my iPhone

From: Michael Schmidt <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT — General Comment — Michael Schmidt

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 09:42:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is most distressing that such an undertaking is needed but it is clear that it may rise to the level of necessity for survival as the Country that we were engineered to be. It is my hope and prayer that the path forward be followed, as much as possible, in law rather than easily-reversible fiat. Our Founders could not have imagined that such an undertaking would be required.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in.

From: Stephanie Wylkynsone <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Religious Liberty Commission-Stephanie Wylkynsone

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 10:35:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I support the report's call for an originalist understanding of religious liberty. My father and grandfathers have served in the US military. My husband currently serves in the US military, which he has done for over 20 years. My grandmothers, mother and I support(ed) them because we believe in defending our Christian faith and freedom in the USA and around the world. Yet despite this, my husband was forced to take an experimental vaccine we objected to so he wouldn't lose his pension and benefits. No one should have to choose between their religious convictions or serving our country. They should go hand in hand.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Wylkynsone

From: Sonia Sniderman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission-Sonia Sniderman

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 11:11:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

The draft report violates my first amendment right of freedom of religion. That includes freedom from religion, particularly the narrow, bigoted version espoused by this illegitimate committee.

From: Pola Godsey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Chapter 14 - (The Path Forward) - Pola Godsey

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 11:30:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

The left's "wall of separation" doctrine has always been a legal fabrication built not on the Constitution but on a selective reading of one private letter. Thomas Jefferson included the phrase in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists—and the great historical irony is that he wrote it to reassure them that the government could not interfere with their church, not to warn churches away from public life. The left took that metaphor, *redefined it* to mean the opposite, and weaponized it for 70 years to systematically purge religious expression from public institutions.

Every Republican president since Reagan has given religious conservatives the rhetorical nod while largely leaving the legal architecture of "separation" untouched. What makes Trump's Commission historic is that it attacked the *doctrine itself*—not just individual cases of religious discrimination, but the foundational *framing* that has been used to justify all of them.

I am writing to **ask you to issue formal guidance redefining the Establishment Clause** It's replacing the operating instructions that the entire federal bureaucracy uses whenever it encounters religion in public life. This is *not* radical; it's returning the definition to its original condition *before* FDR's secular wrecking crew first weaponized Jefferson's private comments.

For 70 years, the burden has been on the religious person to justify their presence in public life. No, **the burden is on the government to show a specific constitutional violation.**

Thank you for considering my comments.

From: Susanne <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - general comment - Susanne Baisden

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 15:54:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

While I support the RLC's report overall, a federal definition of what is and is not a religion is a critical missing component. Without this designation, the report may unintentionally bring forth more harm than good.

Respectfully,

Susanne Baisden

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - General Comment Chapter 14 - Sheryl Dawson

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 16:47:53 -0400

Importance: High

Commission Members

Thank you for your comprehensive and well-done report on how to return religious freedom to America! I am old enough to remember the period in our history when the Supreme Court made several rulings that suppressed religious freedom in America improperly applying the idea of *separation of church and state*. I commend President Trump for his courage to establish this commission to recommend how we as a nation can return to the founding fathers' intentions as outlined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. There is much that must be righted including the SCOTUS rulings that were misguided and have undermined religious freedom across our institutions. I know the process of righting those rulings may be long and outside the direct power of the Commission but hope that the re-establishment of religious freedom can be completed in my lifetime! If a statement can be added regarding the reversal of improper SCOTUS rulings, I highly support one.

Sincerely with appreciation,
Sheryl Dawson

From: amoss365 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-CONSCIENCE AND COERCION IN VACCINE
POLICY-MOSS

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 17:38:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commission Members,

Your commission has done valuable work, but much needs to be done to ensure that your recommendations are heeded. One area in particular where action is necessary is to address coercion in vaccine policy.

Informed consent is foundational to the physician-patient relationship. A key element of informed consent is voluntariness. When treatment is forced on patients against their will by coercion, informed consent is vitiated. When vaccines are mandated for public school entrance in five states without a religious exemption being available, this practice is coercive and a violation not only of informed consent but also of the free exercise of religion.

The federal government should use "the power of the purse" to incentivize California, Connecticut, Maine, New York, and West Virginia to immediately make available religious exemptions to compulsory vaccination for school entrance or suffer the withholding of federal funding for their Medicaid programs. Governors in each state could call special sessions of their legislatures to pass legislation to amend their vaccination laws to include a religious exemption. Forty-five states already have a religious exemption to mandatory vaccination in their state code so developing the language for such legislation should not be hard.

Please use every means at your disposal to ensure that your recommendations in your excellent draft report are followed. Thank you for considering my comments.

Alvin H. Moss, MD

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

From: Mark Pappas <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Establishment clause

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 18:41:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I totally support and encourage the DOJ issuing formal guidance redefining the Establishment Clause.
Thank You.
Mark Pappas

PII
PII

From: Amber B <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 21:50:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

I want to say I feel this report is bias to one religion and does not take any other beliefs in to consideration. It would be very unbalance to change things just for one religion and not the rest. Americans are supposed to be equal and if we single out one religion that's not equal for the rest.

Thank you

Amber Barkley

Sent from my iPhone

From: Gail Fleming <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sat, 04 Jul 2026 22:31:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Absolutely incredible that we are finally challenging what liberals define as separation of church and state. The reason for the great experiment was to honor and protect a man's right to seek God in freedom. Separation was meant to keep government out! Government is not a God. It is an entity created to protect our religious freedoms along with other rights. Thank God for this nations return to God our Savior!
Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment : Keep the separation between religion and government!!!

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 00:26:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Elected Officials,

I implore you to keep the barrier between religion and government. It is foundational to the United States and was absolutely implied by the Founding Fathers of our great nation. Government shouldn't allow the flow of money into churches or churches to serve as a lobby for the government or political parties.

The Johnson Amendment was instituted for a reason, and you should keep it in place. I was an American History teacher for seventeen years and it would serve congress members to study the history of their country and recall that the Puritans arrived here as religious dissidents and that the prevailing vein of religious freedom as espoused by Roger Williams became dominant for the betterment of all of those who came after.

Religious freedom is for all in our nation.

Sincerely,

Concerned Citizen

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: Brooke Collier <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 9 / Health Care Conscience / Brooke Collier

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 10:34:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Brooke Collier
Michigan, USA

From: Jen Duplisea <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 13:24:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

As with all U.S. Constitutional citizen's rights, the onus is always with the accuser to prove their case, as it should be with any religious practice that is deemed unconstitutional, when taking place within the realm of any Federal, State, or local government agency. Innocent until proven guilty is the bedrock of U.S. law enforcement.

Jen Duplisea

From: Maggie Marion <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment--General Comment--Margaret Marion

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 14:20:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

I just want to state that I fully support the Religious Liberty Commision. It has been too long that religious freedom has been suppressed. Many people have stated this much better than I can.

From: ann rappoport <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION Report & Recommendations

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 14:52:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION Report & Recommendations

From: Ann Rappoport, 7/5/2026

This report, its recommendations, and most of the testimony on which they're based, are predicated on biased, one-sided, construed anecdotes of victimization - not based in reliable, valid, reality-based evidence. The pre-determined goal of this Commission has from the start been to blame and undermine America's unique freedoms that are granted by the principles of "separation of Church and State" and the clause in the Constitution's First Amendment that prohibits laws respecting an establishment of religion.

It's a blatantly false, silly and self-serving premise that ethical precepts and morality are ONLY rooted in religion. Throughout civilization, individuals and cultures have worked and lived ethical, generous and admirable lives based in humanitarian and natural science precepts. The liberty to be secular or to be a NON-DEIST is not acknowledged at all in the report or its recommendations.

The report paints a false picture of a country of martyred believers being denied religious freedom by government harassment, in order to create a pretext to deny true religious liberty – and liberty to be non-religious - to American taxpayers, courtesy of government usurpation by this fundamentalist RLC crusade.

The report is is a fundamentalist religious screed that narrows religious liberty, rather than secures it.

Please REJECT the report and its absurd recommendations.

Please see below for additional details:

The RLC report, its recommendations, and most of the testimony on which they're based, are predicated on perceived victimization and persecutions the Commission blames on "separation of Church and State" and the 'misinterpreted' clause in the Constitution's First Amendment that prohibits laws respecting an establishment of religion.

Members of the Commission purport that people of faith must hide in closets because they're forbidden or threatened from expressing their religiosity in the public square. They paint a false, self-serving picture of a country of martyred believers being denied religious freedom by government harassment.

The Commission reports a number of recommendations it believes will rectify the persecution of faithful (primarily) Christians in the US.

One example of a Commission recommendation in this report (p. 218) maintains parents' RIGHTS "to receive notice when schools plan to teach their child material that could undermine the child's religious upbringing." Consider: how could that recommendation be implemented? Why and how would a

school district know every child's detailed religious upbringing, in order to measure that against the academic curriculum in order to notify each set of parents about potential inconsistencies? We all know that even people within a single religious congregation may have slight differences in opinion and perspective on any given detail of "upbringing," so the murkiness of such a recommendation makes this "right" absurd, if not downright dangerous.

Another recommendation from this report follows Trump's imperative to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Passed in 1954, the Johnson Amendment addresses the role of tax-exempt organizations – like churches – in political campaign activities. Essentially, if religious organizations want to be relieved of tax responsibilities, they are not supposed to become political campaign vehicles. The report would like us to believe that the Johnson Amendment is an instance of our anti-religious government suppressing and censoring religious speech, when in reality, it's about ensuring that organizations privileged with tax-exempt status don't game the campaign finance system and election regulations.

Perhaps the most troublesome aspects of the Religious Liberty Commission report are in how it defines, frames, and pushes aggressively for a stronger establishment of favored religious notions. The text is less about religious liberty than reiterating and elevating fundamentalist policy biases and complaints.

Take the testimony of the public school teacher with a crucifix near her desk. [Consolidated Transcripts, Religious Liberty Commission, 2025-2026, pp. 214-215] <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1448411/dl?inline=>]

The Commission would have us believe that she is harmed because she cannot have this cherished religious symbol on display at her side throughout her workday. No consideration was given to the authoritarian role such a religious symbol casts over her classroom, students and their families, and the chilling bias of its impact on the religious and spiritual beliefs of young people subject to her oversight.

The testimony and the report wallow in their one-sided take on injury, rather than discuss or even acknowledge that there is a legitimate alternative perspective. That's their purpose: the framework of the Commission is NOT that of a researched report or analysis, but rather, a litany of anecdotes and narratives set up to proselytize their ideological premise and platform. Indeed, as the Commission clarified when they delivered the report to President Trump on June 26, they don't admit legitimacy to arguments for a separation of church and state, and they cajole the public to reject any such claims into the future.

In the report, woven amidst a pretense at historical objectivity, are patently false statements like: "... the ideological current has... left little room for students who hold traditional religious convictions, such as the belief...that America – though imperfect – is not fundamentally evil." [page 68] And, also typical:

"...secularism... is incompatible with our First Amendment freedoms because it excludes religious voices from the process of self-government." [page 181] There's no validity to those statements, but in this report and to this Commission, "truth" is whatever and however they define it. The report constructs a self-serving, scary America in which devoted (primarily Christians) people of faith are mistreated and threatened, and the report proposes "solutions" so that certain favored fundamentalist religious beliefs can dominate public life.

The report and its recommendation are a camouflage for a sectarian religious lobby's religious treatise and warrants rejection.

From: Karen Heesch <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on report

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 15:12:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

ask that any final report explicitly include minority, non-Christian, Indigenous, Pagan, polytheist, earth-based, atheist, humanist, and non-theistic traditions.

I ask for neutral First Amendment enforcement.

I ask for public-official training on diverse religious accommodation.

I Ask that expanded protections are available equally to all sincerely held religious beliefs, regardless of their size or popularity.

Sincerely,

Karen Heesch

and o Lakes, FL

Sent from my iPhone

From: Rebecca <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 15:37:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

From Becky Minninger

I would like to see our religious freedom based on the original Founders portrayal that religious freedom is protected in and of itself as the new Religious Freedom Committee has explained.

Sent from my iPhone

Sent from my iPhone

From: e tucker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 15:54:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

The "Religious Liberty Commission Report" reads as though it were written by those behind the Heritage Foundation, the provider of the game plan for this administration's rule.

This report is 224 pages of (tax-payer funded?) further trampling of the Constitution of the United States of America.

There is no way I can go page by page and comment on the outrageousness, the sheer presumptuousness, the unmitigated gall of those propping up the litigious, civilly liable for sexual abuse, convicted felon in the White House, by attempting to wrap his rule in the law of God. And our lawmakers, justices, civil servants do not see this as an abomination, a travesty?

1. The separation of church and state is understood from The Constitution, Amendment 1. Religious and political freedom. states "**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...**" and clarified in a January 1, 1802 letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association. 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.** (Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists (June 1998) - Library of Congress Information Bulletin)

2. P. 30: The conscience of the State. "Religion offers moral standards to which government can be held accountable, keeping tyranny at bay. If this were even remotely true, this government would not be in power. History continually and repeatedly bears out the fallacy of religion "keeping tyranny at bay ". Throughout history, vast numbers of people have been killed in the name of "religion" (see [What religion has killed more people in history? - California Learning Resource Network](#), which does not include the 6 million Jews murdered by good, church-going Christians during WW II). "The Declaration of Independence (Declaration) cites God as the source of unalienable rights and equality." The Declaration states 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. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. **That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it...**"

3. P. 31: A Source of Civic Virtue. "For a self-governing country like the United States to prosper, citizens must be formed in civic virtue—the character traits needed to govern." But not through religion, but by reinstituting the teaching of civics in our nation's classrooms. See: [Beyond the Headlines: What Civics Education Looks Like Right Now – Center on Reinventing Public Education](#). Once again, as evidenced by the current administration and its backers in the House and Senate, civic education is sorely lacking.

4. P. 77: Conclusion of "Students Don't Check Their Rights at the Schoolhouse Gates". "...meaning that government-run schools are to “respect the religious nature of our people” by allowing voluntary prayer and religious displays (like the Ten Commandments)." A student wants to pray quietly in a public school? Okay. But please explain how is any "religious display" honoring the separation of Church and State, the liberty to believe in any religion or no religion at all? If parents and students are so committed to their religions, they have the right to attend a religious institution of their choosing. They do not have the right to inflict their religious beliefs on anyone else. At least, until now, they have not had that right in the United States of America.

5. P. 121: Religious Liberty for Religious Leaders. Repeal the Johnson Amendment ("Amendment"), a 1954 law prohibiting tax-exempt (including religious) organizations from endorsing political candidates while retaining their tax-exempt status. The Amendment does not prohibit these organizations from engaging in issue-based campaigns aligning with their faiths or missions, and religious leaders can endorse whomever they want in their individual capacities, just not from the pulpit. In 2017, Trump already bypassed the Amendment by issuing an Executive Order instructing the IRS to be lenient in its enforcement of the Amendment: in other words turning a blind eye to what right-wing churches were doing. (See [What is Happening with the Johnson Amendment?](#)) This administration has no interest in enforcing the laws of the United States. When those laws, or the Constitution, get in this administration's way, these "inconveniences" are either ignored or attempts are made to change them by presidential fiat.

6. P. 151-157: Anti-Semitism. Please explain how erasing the separation of church and state will counter anti-Semitism? Of the 962 antisemitic propaganda incidents in 2024, 94% was distributed by the Christian White Supremacist groups: Patriot Front, Goyim Defense League and White Lives Matter. And the anti-Semitic demonstrations, acts of violence, and murder perpetrated against Jews in this country were committed by Christians and Muslims. Will we also be posting excerpts from the Quran identifying authorizing force against non-Muslims alongside the ten commandments in our public school classrooms? And do not forget the sacred texts of other religions practiced in this country: Tanakh, Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Tripitaka, Mahayana Sutras, Tao Te Ching, Zhuangzi, Daozang, Granth... and this does not even scratch the surface.

No truly religious person needs this drivel to act in a humanitarian manner towards other human beings.

"This country was not founded as a Christian nation. It was founded by people fleeing religious persecution, people who understood, from lived experience, what happens when the state claims to speak for God. They wrote the First Amendment not to protect the government from religion, but to protect the people from a government that would use religion as a weapon. That protection has stood

for 250 years. It has survived wars, assassinations, economic collapse, and every test this republic has faced." "It's a Lovely Life" by Heather Delaney Reese, June 28, 2026

Why are those currently in power so bent on the destruction of the United States of America as a constitutional Democracy with a separation of church and state?

From: Michael Jordan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 14 – MICHAEL JOHN JONES

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 17:47:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

How can God Bless America, unless God is allowed to be part of America? The Founding Fathers did not establish our Country on a separation with God, but a unification of the two. The restoration of the same is vitally important to the keeping of our Republic.

God Bless America Indeed!

Michael John Jones ~ doing my part to make America great again

~~ amor vincit omnia ~~

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Will President Trump and the RLC make statements regarding the Hinduphobia Hoax ? Hinduphobia and Islamophobia are both designed to avoid accountable and coverup abuse and crimes, silent critics and those who speak the TRUTH ?

If you dig deeper into this then you will discover it can be linked to the US State Department and FBI / DOJ failing to do their jobs by enforcing the FARA Act against Hindutva Unregistered Foreign Agents who have been illegally operating in the US for years and meddling / interfering in our politics / elections by basically buying / influencing US Bureaucrats and Politicians on both sides including President Trump, Biden / Harris, Rep Krishnamoorthi, Rep Thanedar, FBI Kash Patel and especially Tulsi Gabbard who they helped build her Democrat Congressional Career including through the Overseas Friends of the BJP when they were a Unregistered Foreign Agent which the US State Department and FBI / DOJ were aware of when Tulsi was running for President in 2020 and then backed Biden / Harris.

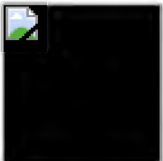
[The Hinduphobia Hoax: How a Word Became a Shield for a Movement Recommended for U.S. Sanctions](#)



**The Hinduphobia Hoax:
How a Word Became...**

Hindu Fascism in action on Capitol Hill by rejecting Christian, Activist and Journalist Peter Friedrich from a Hinduphobia Event which is designed to DECEIVE while Hindutva are wrongly accusing Christians of crimes and jailing them and or persecuting and kill Christians in India which is largely being publicly ignored by the Trump Administration who is spreading propaganda and lies regarding the US India Foreign Policy / Relationship during RSS / BJP / Modi Regime Hindutva Rule in India.

[1.9K views · 58 reactions | On June 30, 2026, I walked into a congressional advocacy day to sit down and listen. Within seconds, I was surrounded and grabbed — by the president and vice president of CoHNA, the Coalition of Hindus of North America — w](#)



**1.9K views · 58 reactions |
On June 30,...**

If you want to know what the RSS / BJP / Modi Regime / Hindutva really think and feel regarding the USA , President Trump , MAGA, Christianity and etc then just look to a Hindutva Operative who was endorsed by Hindu Kash Patel and others currently Trump Administration Officials.



Purnima Nath · Follow

Dec 2, 2024 · 🌐

Dear @Kash Patel, Namaste. I am so glad that you are back on @x. Congratulations. So happy for you and all the successful Patel... See more



Purnima Nath

21h · 🌐

Principle over partisanship.... more





Purnima Nath ✓

12h · 🌐



**Owning our genocidal
history is not
unpatriotic. Denying it
is. #America250**

[Purnima Nath](#)

[#USCongressWI4](#)



Purnima Nath ✓

23h · 🌐



**Who stole America's 250th
birthday? The radical far-right
white christian
european-american racist fascist
supremacist MAGA militia and
nazi personality cult.**

[#AttackOnConstitution](#) 🇺🇸

1d · 

#WesternCivilisation. Cheers 🍷🍾🍺👤👩🎉🔥



1d · 🌐

DOJ-RLC Comment-009125



Purnima Nath

2d ·



So, how much money did the TX Republican Congressman [Troy Nehls](#) make from Ameri... more

What affordability crisis? I'm eating steak and lobster

So, how much money did the TX Republican Congressman Troy Nehls make from America's attack on Iran? This is a disgusting display of arrogance and ego. 🤢
~@PurnimaNath





Purnima Nath

2d ·



Can you imagine Obama, Biden, Kamala, and Hillary surviving such a grand LOOT? The radical far-right red-hat nazi lunatics would have ripped them apart.

Donald J. Trump is LOOTING and RIPPING OFF the American public. And I shall make sure the public knows too. Bloody coloniser. **#TyrantTrumpfy**
#DerangedDrumfy **#DonTheCon**
#TotalitarianTrumpet





Purnima Nath ✓

2d · 🌐



I now absolutely suspect that the Butler shooting was a staged one to gain sympathy for grabbing the position. That drama we watched unfold, followers imitating a stupid white bandage over the ear, was a mass psychological operation.



Purnima Nath ✓

2d · 🌐



Politicians profiting off of position happens in socialist countries. Trump is the BIGGEST CON MAN AND A COMMUNIST of our generation. In an incredible turn of fate, we were led to believe he was the good guy. #TyrantTrump 🇺🇸





Purnima Nath ✓



2d · 🌐

Politicians profiting off of position happens in socialist countries. Trump is the BIGGEST CON MAN AND A COMMUNIST of our generation. In an incredible turn of fate, we were led to believe he was the good guy. #TyrantTrump 🇺🇸



4



1



1



Purnima Nath ✓



2d · 🌐

While ordinary Americans struggled to make ends meet with rising costs and economic uncertainty, unnecessary tariff wars, Drumpf reportedly made a profit of \$2.2+ billion in 2025. Who is this economy really working for?



Purnima Nath ✓

...

2d · 🌐

Most corrupt, crooked, criminal occupying the position of the presidency. Lusty man. Gross. Embarrassing. YIKES.



Purnima Nath ✓

...

2d · 🌐

**A white european jew, a
descendant of asylum-seeker
ancestors, is now the Deputy
White House chief of staff,
spewing anti-immigrant hatred
and promoting the MAGA Project
2025 agenda. Stephen
KEEEELER.**



Purnima Nath

2d ·



After Trump's humiliating SC defeat of the birthright citizenship case, the radical far-right white Christian supremacists rolled out some ideas: sterilise all foreigners (Sean Davis)...ban pregnant women (Stephen Keeler).#Nazism



Purnima Nath

2d ·



We must SAVE AMERICA from this toxic, tyrannical, totalitarian thief who fooled people into believing he was not taking a paycheck but instead made billions of dollars abusing the presidential position on the shoulders of the bottom 90% of the public. GREEDY SNEAKY PATHETICALLY CORRUPT SOUL. This is DISGUSTING. 🤢

**#Republicanism #Conservatism
#GrandOnePersonParty #MAGAcult**





Purnima Nath

3d · 🌐



I believe, [Donald J. Trump](#) and [The Heritage Foundation](#) [#Project2025](#) oligarchy attack on Birthright citizenship is to create a slave class in the country again. European class system, that is, Caste system is coming back. 🇺🇸



Purnima Nath

3d · 🌐



Racist Trump's, anti-immigrant MAGA militia's and [Republicans](#) attack on the Constitution—the 14th Amendment —was dodged today. But dare I say, the capitulated, boot-licking, boneless, spineless, skinless, principleless MAGA-Republican-ruled Congress (who is not serving the American public) could finish the once-revered Lincoln's Republican Party and challenge the public to rise by pushing their [#Project2025](#) white Christian supremacist propaganda. Midterms are coming. SC already expanded Trump's authority significantly, giving him massive power. I sense either the midterms will be cancelled, or right-wing rigging will be rapid and aggressive. I do not trust racist, xenophobic, reckless, tactless, disrespectful, tyrannical, toxic, totalitarian, anti-nonwhite-immigrant Trump and MAGA.

[Purnima Nath](#) [#USCongressWI4](#)

[#Midterms2026](#) [#Constitution](#) [#14thmendment](#)
[#HumanDignity](#) [#Slavery](#) [#election](#)
[#ExecutivePower](#) [#ExecutiveOverreach](#)



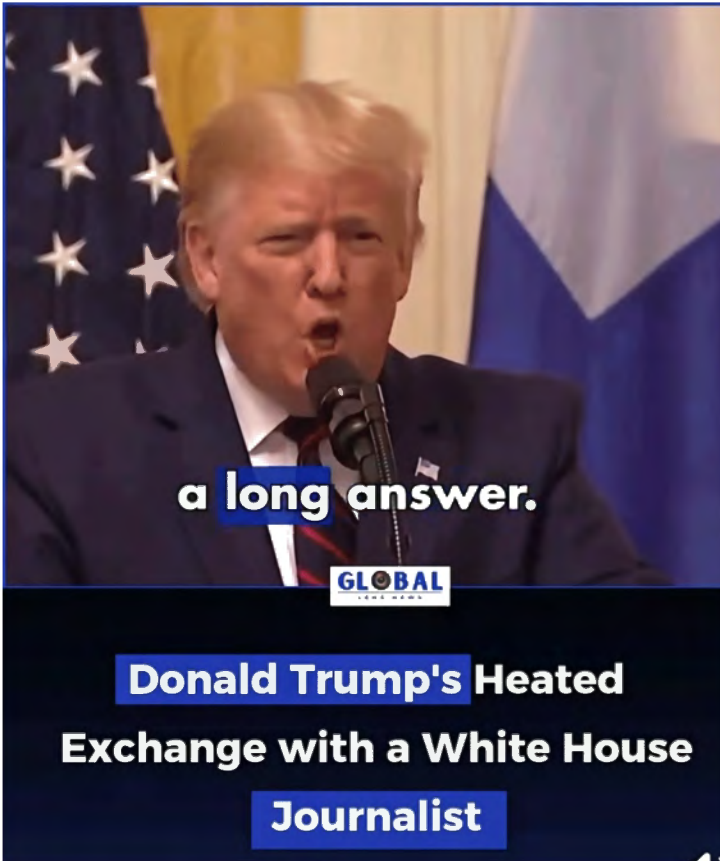
Purnima Nath

4d ·



Drumpf is TOTALLY UNFIT to hold the presidential position of America. He must go. And I shall support the 3rd impeachment of this toxic, corrupt, tactless, disrespectful, criminal Drumpf.

Purnima Nath #USCongressWI4 #Midterms2026



Purnima Nath

4d ·



America was not founded as a Christian nation. Our Constitution contains no declaration that America is a Christian state, prohibits religious tests for federal office, and the First Amendment bars the establishment of a national religion.

Purnima Nath
#USCongressWI4



Purnima Nath ✓



6d · 🌐

**As a Republican, I will support
impeachment of Trump. Save
America from the authoritarian,
fascist, xenophobic, dictatorial,
narcissist.**

**~@PurnimaNath. 3x Trump
campaigner. #USCongressWI4**



Purnima Nath

Jun 27 · 🌐



Oh boy. Didn't your boss say India is a dead economy, a hellhole and a Maharaja tariff abuser? On a serious note, India, especially the Hindus, never unchained themselves from the white christian colonisation.... though we survived. America was never trustworthy and India was never able to communicate that message to her citizens. Today, Hindus of America are being DEMONISED & TERRORISED by Narco-BowmanVancey-Drumpf's authoritarian fascist tyrant regime - the one we voted for, we campaigned for and supported. I shall see how Hindus and India free themselves from the shackles of american colonisation. 🕉️🌺🔥🚩

#ForeignAffairs #InternationalRelations
#HindusofAmerica #Hindustan #IndiaUSRelations
Hind Hindutvaforhumanity

F.

“

Bwaaahhh... didn't your boss call India a hellhole, a dead economy, and a maharaja tariff abuser? Aren't your christian fascist regime defaming & terrorising Indians in America? Why do you need India? Oh... let me think. You need to dominate and conquer India....your visit to teresa house cleared all doubts. CUTE. ADORABLE. 🌺🕉️

I think India-U.S. relations are going fantastic. We had a great meeting with PM. We're hoping to finalize a trade deal. I look forward to meeting myself

#ForeignAffairs #InternationalRelations
#HindusofAmerica #Hindustan #IndiaUSRelations
Hind Hindutvaforhumanity

F.

“

Bwaaahhh... didn't your boss call India a hellhole, a dead economy, and a maharaja tariff abuser? Aren't your christian fascist regime defaming & terrorising Indians in America? Why do you need India? Oh... let me think. You need to dominate and conquer India....your visit to teresa house cleared all doubts. CUTE. ADORABLE. 🙄🙄

I think India-U.S. relations are going fantastic. We had a great meeting with PM. We're hoping to finalize a trade deal. I look forward to returning myself before the end of the year and setting up a presidential visit in the early parts of next year.

Purnima Nath

Marco Rubio
U.S. Secretary of State



Purnima Nath ✓

Jun 26 · 🌐

...

**What must we do about
the authoritarian,
dictatorial, fascist white
christian supremacist
takeover of the
Republican Party? 🇺🇸**

[“Lots of Propaganda”: Busting the “Vast Hinduphobia” Conspiracy Theory | Countercurrents](#)



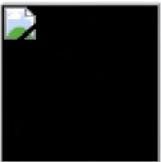
“Lots of Propaganda”: Busting the “Vast...”

Lets look at some of the DECEIVING Hindus in Congress who are behind the Hinduphobia Hoax !



<https://thanedar.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-shri-thanedar-re-introduces-bipartisan-resolution-condemning-hinduphobia>

[Congressman Shri Thanedar Calls on Cabinet to Remove Trump from Office | U.S. Congressman Shri Thanedar](#)



Congressman Shri Thanedar Calls on Cabi...

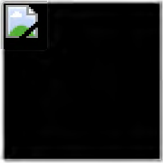
<https://thanedar.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-shri-thanedar-calls-for-trumps-impeachment-over-failure-to-enforce-supreme-court-order>

[Congressman Shri Thanedar Introduces Articles of Impeachment Against President Donald J. Trump for High Crimes and Misdemeanors | U.S. Congressman Shri Thanedar](#)



**Congressman Shri
Thanedar Introduces Ar...**

[Rep. Shri Thanedar Calls For Vote on Trump Impeachment | U.S. Congressman Shri Thanedar](#)



**Rep. Shri Thanedar Calls
For Vote on Tr...**

[After Rejecting Hindutva, Ro Khanna Cosponsors a Resolution Shielding It](#)



**After Rejecting Hindutva,
Ro Khanna Cos...**

[Khanna: Removing Trump from office gaining traction in the House](#)



**Khanna: Removing Trump
from office gain...**

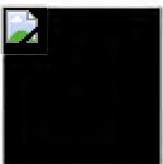
One thing Purnima Nath appears to be right about is President Trump being a CON-MAN because he keeps conning / deceiving Christians and the USA into believing how pro-Christian and pro- Religious Freedom he is while he DECEIVES US regarding India being our Allie under the rule of the RSS / BJP / Hindutva / Modi Regime who DON'T SHARE our same values or Christians wouldn't be wrongly accused of crimes and jailed and or persecuted and killed in India by Hindutva and India wouldn't be allied with OUR ENEMIES - BRICS which includes Russia, China, Iran and other enemies .

[Deteriorating Religious Freedom Conditions in India](#)



**Deteriorating Religious
Freedom Condi...**

[Targeted Sanctions as a Key U.S. Foreign Policy Tool to Promote Religious Freedom](#)



**Targeted Sanctions as a Key
U.S. Foreign...**

Instead of Targeted Sanctions against Hindutva they set up shop in the Capitol to spread their propaganda and lies which helps coverup their abuse against Christians.

God Bless, Will Rogers

From: Richard Moldawsky <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Commission Report

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 18:32:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Some government officials at different levels refer to the USA as either a "Christian" or "Judeo-Christian" country. They have a clear right to say either as citizens, but I am concerned about this being communicated as - and perceived as - a government position or policy. Neither term is found in the Declaration or the Constitution or any other official government act as far as I know.

I'm concerned that this appears not to have considered by the RLC as in need of discussion, unless it was proscribed from doing so.

I'd appreciate a reply to this.
Thanks

Richard Moldawsky

From: Gretchen Duggan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Ch. 2, 3, 14 (Establishment Clause / Faith-Based Institutions / Path Forward) – [Gretchen Duggan]

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 19:55:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a Christian and a lifelong church member who supports religious liberty. My trouble with this report is it doesn't represent a wide swath of Christians across the United States. Where are the mainline denominational leaders? Where are the current Black-church leaders? How can this report speak for American Christians while ignoring so many of us completely?

Regarding the "Equal Treatment Rule" (Ch. 3) Many of us believe religiously affiliated ministries should be able to serve people and work according to their own beliefs and convictions. But if these ministries accept public funding, they have the obligation to serve without such distinctions. Taxpayer funded charities should not exclude taxpayers from protection, even if those taxpayers live in a way that isn't acceptable to the beliefs of that institution or ministry.

Regarding repealing the Johnson Amendment (Rec. #9) many Christians, both theologically conservative and more liberal/progressive leaning Christians disagree with repealing this amendment. I oppose this and ask the commission to reconsider.

I ask the commission to work with a broader group of American religious leaders and to seriously consider more viewpoints from within America's many Christian communities before finalizing the report.

With respect, Gretchen Duggan

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on the Draft Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 21:41:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image001.jpg; image002.jpg; image005.jpg; image006.jpg

I fully support the findings of the above referenced report. I do think that the section on Education needs to be expanded to cover a recommendation on basic Civics education around our country and the constitution. The religious freedom part of that would be a key foundation on what Civics means in America. The reference to Civic education on page 178 covers part of it but I think it needs to be highlighted more as a requirement for students as well as a requirement for faculty. Thank you for your attention to this matter! 😊

Hank

Hank C. Tomlinson

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII



Virus-free. www.avast.com



From: Nola Wentzel <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 14 - Nola Myers

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 22:02:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

There is little doubt that our Founding Fathers were nurtured by, established in, and personally dedicated to the truths found in the Bible. These truths structured their thoughts, acts, and words in every area of life, personally and professionally, publicly and privately. This faith-based precedent was set at the dawn of our country and was the foundation for the establishment of every right we enjoy as citizens of the United States of America. To have veered so far and so fast from these roots in the last 70 or so years has led to the fracturing and dismantling of our moral codes and ethics which have in turn wreaked havoc on our communities and our homes. The Framers of the Constitution understood the delicate balance of a thriving, productive, and moral society and its life line-- freedom of religion and religious expression of the individual's beliefs. Without this personal framework of inner guidance, society would warp into a self-defeating and self-destructing implosion of mayhem and disorder. With this understanding, our country must return to the original meanings and concepts of the state not interfering with an individual's beliefs or expressions of that genuine faith in every area of his life. The Constitution was not designed to chain an individual's beliefs and genuine convictions to secluded areas and behind closed doors. Instead, the Founders intended to protect the individual and their religious beliefs and expressions from government interference. Therefore, it was never designed to protect the government from religion or expressions of an individual's religious beliefs. I fully support the returning to our Founders' original intentions and meanings drafted in our beloved Constitution concerning the invaluable need for faith and religion in our government, our society, and our homes.

Sincerely,

Nola Myers

From: Greg Hearing <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION - THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE - GREGORY A. HEARING

Date: Sun, 05 Jul 2026 22:09:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image001.png

I support the tremendous work of the Religious Liberty Commission but feel compelled to comment that we must maintain the principle of separation of church and state. It was a fundamental tenet of the Founders and a significant motivation leading to our country's hard fought victory in the Revolutionary War. It is one of the causes of The United States of America's exceptionalism which has stood and will continue to stand the test of time. It was one of the primary principles of our self-governance which made us different than Great Britain in 1776 and it remains one of the primary principles of our self-governance which makes us different than Iran today. May God continue to bless The United States of America, in perpetuity.



GREGORY A. HEARING

Board Certified in Labor &
Employment, Civil Trial and
Education Law

[REDACTED] PII

Phone: [REDACTED] PII

Direct Dial: [REDACTED] PII

Cell: [REDACTED] PII

Fax: [REDACTED] PII

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From: Schuyler Skipper <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on RLC Draft Report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 00:03:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Appreciate all of the hard work and dedication given to this report. It is exactly what we need considering what many of us experienced this decade. I particularly am going to comment on religious liberty as it pertains to military members.

I like the current recommendations, but I would like to add the need to remove any and all adverse paperwork from those who have requested religious accommodations from vaccinations post COVID-19.

I personally have been denied promotion for over 3 years now, face separation from the USMC, and have administrative derogatory marks after over 13 years of faithful service for simply requesting a religious accommodation.

I recommend that a moratorium be issued with all current adverse actions and separation proceedings. That also religious accommodation routing be stopped until a clear a lawful framework and process is established by SecWar and subservient Department heads.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Schuyler Skipper

From: "Jane L. Miller" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 00:06:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am not in favor of the recommendations in the Religious Liberty Commission Report.

The draft report articulates how to weave religion more deeply into the operation of the federal government. It calls for dismantling long standing barriers between Church and State.

The Constitution clearly states that there should be separation of Church and State. The reports recommendations aim to dismantle that. **I am in favor of keeping a clear separation of Church and State**, as our Founders articulated in the Constitution.

1. Repealing the Johnson Amendment (the law that prohibits churches and other tax-exempt religious organizations from endorsing political candidates while keeping their tax exempt status). **If this Amendment is repealed then churches and other tax exempt organizations should be taxed.**

2. Requesting the Department of Justice establish a Religious Liberty task force to investigate and prioritize liberty litigation.

3. Supporting the nomination of federal judges with a demonstrated record of favoring religious expression, **a clear conflict of interest.**

4. Creating a new Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty.

5. Expanding exhibits at federal historic sites by adding verbiage that would celebrate the role of religion in America's history. **At the same time the Smithsonian is being told to remove exhibits about slavery, Japanese American internment camps, and conflicts with Native Americans. What's being removed is the true history of this country and promoting a white washed version of America.**

Truly faithful people feel an obligation to all humanity.

This administration is gutting Medicaid, slashing food assistance, stripping protections from the most vulnerable people in this country while, promoting the concentration of wealth at the very top. This administration does not embody the meaning of being truly faithful. This administration has no right or standing to propose these measures; rather, this administration's actions promote the opposite of true religious tenets.

Again, I am not in favor of the recommendations in the Religious Commission Report.

From: F Erbelding <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLOCK COMMENTS- religious liberty committee, Fritz Erbelding

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 07:00:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom this may concern,

It is my belief that this committee has come very close to if not spot on the original intent of the authors of our constitution. They desired to prevent the government from endorsing or mandating any particular religious group over others as had England and other countries in Europe done. However they wished to make sure that each citizen could worship God freely with which ever church they desired to be a part of.

They did not desire to prevent citizens from being able to publicly pray or participate in public prayers or public expressions of faith. They wished to ensure that we can.

Resptfully,

Fritz Erbelding

Sent from my iPad

From: Alexis Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty – Alexis Williams

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 08:59:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

The phrase 'separation of church and state' has been perverted by those who hate GOD and HIS fixed morality.

MILLIONS would like to see included is the open admission that: EVERY SINGLE MENTION OF GOD, *IN ANY WAY* (EG) "Creator," "Nature's God," "Providence," "Almighty," "Supreme Ruler." by the founders in their private, public, or official writings ***ALWAYS and ONLY*** referred to the GOD of the Bible.

There is no possible way to honestly include 'allah', buddha, krishna, or any other so called "god". And NO, you can not squeeze allah in because his adherents claim allah is the same as ELOHIM.

Countless cults claim JESUS and the Bible as something they accept in part. They are only grasping for the credibility it offers.

Thank you and God bless,
Alexis

From: Susan Hayton <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment - Religious Freedom

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 10:07:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please continue to pursue and pass legislature, hire and appoint government servants, and expose the phony Church vs. State when it comes to religious freedom. Whatever religion an American adheres to, he/she has the right to be open about their faith, whether Christianity, Judaism, Secularism, or whatever, and not be persecuted or stopped from celebrating that faith. This is what sets America apart from nearly every other world government. This is what the founding fathers fought for.

Thank God for President Trump, his cabinet, and other public servants who are finally standing up for our religious liberty.

Susan H., Indiana

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - GENERAL COMMENT - MARY MACK

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 10:39:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the administration's efforts to protect religious liberty. Religious liberty is a fundamental right that is not subject to any interference from the government. This means that parental rights are sacred - parents have the right to raise their children as they choose without interference from the government. This includes all aspects of education. Bodily autonomy is also sacred. No one should be forced to take any medical intervention, and parents should not receive any interference from the government in deciding what medical interventions their children should receive. Body autonomy of the unborn child is also sacred and the child should be protected in the womb until birth, in which case if the parents do not want to care for the child, they should make an adoption plan.

From: "Jana Ogden" <[REDACTED]>

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

Cc: "Jana Ogden" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 14 (The Path Forward) - Jana Ogden

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 12:17:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

I commend the President, US Department of Justice, Religious Liberty Commission members, witnesses that testified to this commission, and court justices, for courageously addressing the rupture in our nation in upholding the First Amendment of our country's Constitution, the very motivation for this country's founding.

I wholeheartedly support the Religious Liberty Commission report's call for sound originalist understanding of religious liberty and the key recommendations to strengthen religious liberty for all Americans, with the hopeful results that our families, neighborhoods, cities, states, and nation will flourish in this and future generations, in all the aspects stated in the report.

Thank you genuinely for the opportunity to share on this issue.

I (continue to) pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America
And to the republic for which it stands
One nation under God indivisible
With liberty and justice for all.

Jana Ogden

From: Elizabeth Frazao <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 10 (Vaccines) - Elizabeth Frazao

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 13:50:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Elizabeth Frazao <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Sent: Monday, July 6, 2026 at 12:47:53 PM CDT

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 10 (Vaccines) - Elizabeth Frazao

I appreciated the testimonies and detailed discussions in the chapter. The chapter emphasizes that “Public health policies must take into account any burdens they impose on religious believers” and recommends both supporting legislation and issuing guidance on religious freedom in relation to vaccines.

Based on personal experience, I suggest the report also point out that procedures for obtaining a religious exemption should not place a burden on religious believers. For example, the State of Mississippi recently allowed religious exemptions for vaccines. However, the procedure to obtain a religious exemption for children’s vaccinations is onerous and seems designed to indoctrinate or punish/coerce the parent into giving up! After obtaining the religious exemption form online, a parent requesting a religious exemption for their child MUST 1) make an appointment at the County Health Department, 2) watch a Vaccine “Education” video, and 3) be subjected to a “presentation” about the benefits and risks of immunizations. Why not simply allow the parent to complete the form online and submit it online, particularly since the form already provides some disclaimers, and the Mississippi Dept of Health website states that any religious exemption requested will be accepted.

Also, I wonder why the Commission limited its last recommendation for that chapter (p. 150) to one ethically acceptable alternative (an ethically acceptable vaccine) rather than a broader set of ethically acceptable alternatives, such as ways to strengthen the immune system or ways to effectively treat the disease.

From: "TSGTChef Scott R. Lauderbaugh" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Public Comment - DMA - Declaration of Military Accountability in Congressional Record TSGT SCOTT R LAUDERBAUGH USAF RETIRED

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 13:58:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4372.jpg; 1000018599.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4371.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4388.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4373.jpg; 1000019051.jpg; 1000018588.jpg; 1000018587.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4388(1).jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4389.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4320.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4393.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4394.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4337.jpg

To RLC,

Good Afternoon, July 6th 2026

In support of this commission, Ten's of Thousands of Military Service Members have been in this battle from the beginning.

I have provided letter's of communication from my side and links to important information in Congressional Record.

<https://www.warriorsofconscience.net/dma>

An Open Letter To The American People

Source: Facebook DMA in Congressional Record <https://share.google/fg4N5LhkpVlzuatLt>

<https://rumble.com/user/TheForgottenSoldiers>

Podcast- Stories from military service members who stood up against all odds vs The DOD's Unlawful Experimental EUA MRNA COVID-19 BIOLOGICAL WEAPON Injections and others.

Freedomfighter1776.com with Mark Bashaw

Duty To Disobey Documentary

<https://rumble.com/v7207lu-duty-to-disobey-official-trailer.html>

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

For God and Country

Respectfully TSGT SCOTT R LAUDERBAUGH USAF RETIRED

Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh

PII

PII

President Donald J. Trump
Mar-a-Lago Club
1100 S. Ocean Blvd
Palm Beach, FL 33480

June 4, 2022

Dear President Trump,

I am a Technical Sergeant in The United States Air Force Reserves, with 19 years and 6 months left on my honorable military service. Unfortunately, that is currently on hold due to my taking a stand against the vaccine mandates. On September 11th, 2021, during a military drill, I took a stand in front of my squadron and asked them to look at both sides of the situation before allowing the military to force members to take a vaccine against their will.

I provided all my research and information to my chain of command to stop the situation and the unfortunate part of all of this is that the DOD and all 6 branches of the military continued to follow an unlawful order. They used methods of segregation, discrimination, coercion, threats of no pay or points, unlawful discharge, and many more to force members against their will to take what is in my belief, a bioweapon.

I submitted a religious exemption based on my religious beliefs, my Oath to The Constitution, the Airman's Creed and NCO's Creed and was denied and then issued a letter of reprimand which I did not sign. I have not signed any documents as I have done nothing wrong. I have gone through the whole unlawful process resulting in my honorable military career being placed on hold as I was recently placed into the IRR during my retirement year.

In my defense I have filed 2 IG complaints an EEOC complaint with my base. I am with an organization called Stand with Warriors who are helping and supporting more than 17,000 plus military members in of all 6 branches of the military in their fight. I am also in with the Liberty Council Class action Lawsuit -Navy Seals vs Austin Case along with support from Attorney Davis Younts out of Harrisburg PA.

My goal is to assist in the complete shutdown of all unlawful and unconstitutional vaccine mandates. I have followed my chain of command within the military from the start in a respectful manner. I have also started at the local level in my state of Pennsylvania, to gather support in this effort. Attached you will find E-mail Documents of my conversations with Congressman Guy Reschenthaler and Senator Doug Mastriano. I have spoken with Senator Mastriano twice in the past few months and he has been very supportive and understanding.

Despite the struggle of my current situation, I continue to fight for others. I respectfully request your leadership and support in my efforts to once and for all shut down the vaccine mandates and all mandates taking freedom away from our fellow Americans, because this whole situation is destroying our military, our loved ones, our American citizens, and our country.

Thank you for your time in this matter and God Bless,

Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh (USAF)

Fight For Freedom - Fight Forever

TSgt. Scott R. Lauderbaugh

Scott Lauderbaugh

From: Wallace, Felicia [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 5, 2011
To: Scott Lauderbaugh
Cc: Douglas/Rebbie Mastriano
Subject: Office of Senator Doug Mastriano

Importance: High

External Message - Use caution when opening links or attachments

Good Afternoon Tsgt. Scott,

It was a pleasure speaking with you today, again thank you for your service and holding the line at this most critical time in our Nation. As discussed below are the links from our Medical Panel Discussion. I have also provided shorter clips for your viewing as well. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions, in the meanwhile I will be actively searching Federal legislation that will prayerfully help your efforts.

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/90wx9ec5l7> (Entire Discussion)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/vzmsb90boy> (Senator Mastriano)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/ym3ard3bh7> (Dr. Peter McCullough)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/xkn8dvz52n> (Steve Kirsch)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/pf7s6iskhz> (Attorney Thomas Renz)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/bwsm8u0iz8> (Dr. Brian Ardis)

May God continue to bless and protection you all,

Felicia

Felicia M. Wallace | Executive Assistant
Senator Doug Mastriano

[REDACTED]
PII

PII

PII

President Donald J. Trump
Mar-a-Lago Club
1100 S. Ocean Blvd
Palm Beach, FL 33480

Dear President Trump,

I am a Technical Sergeant in The United States Air Force Reserves, with 19 years and 6 months left on my honorable military service. Unfortunately, that is currently on hold due to my taking a stand against the vaccine mandates. On September 11th 2021 during a military drill, I took a stand in front of my squadron and asked them to look at both sides of the situation before allowing the military to force members to take a vaccine against their will.

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Thank you for your time in this matter and God Bless.

Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh (USAF)

Fight For Freedom - Fight Forever

Scott Lauderbaugh

From: Wallace, Felicia
Sent: Tuesday, April 5, 2022 3:30 PM
To: Scott Lauderbaugh
Cc: Douglas/Rebbie Mastriano
Subject: Office of Senator Doug Mastriano

Importance: High

External Message - Use caution when opening links or attachments
Good Afternoon Tsgt. Scott,

It was a pleasure speaking with you today, again thank you for your service and holding the line at this most critical time in our Nation. As discussed below are the links from our Medical Panel Discussion. I have also provided shorter clips for your viewing as well. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions, in the meanwhile I will be actively searching Federal legislation that will prayerfully help your efforts.

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/90wx9ec517> (Entire Discussion)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/vzmsb90boy> (Senator Mastriano)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/vm3ard3bh7> (Dr. Peter McCullough)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/xkn8dvz52n> (Steve Kirsch)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/pf7s6iskhz> (Attorney Thomas Renz)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/bwsm8u0iz8> (Dr. Brian Ardis)

May God continue to bless and protection you all,

Felicia

Felicia M. Wallace | Executive Assistant
Senator Doug Mastriano

PII

PII

PII

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Colonel E. Michelle Watson
Chief, Human Resource Management

PII

The Honorable Guy Reschenthaler
Representatives

Dear Representative Reschenthaler,

This is in reply to your inquiry regarding back pay and retirement points for Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh, given the January 27, 2025, Presidential Executive Order 14184, "Reinstating Service Members Discharged under the Military's COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate." The Executive Order covers members who were involuntarily discharged solely for refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and those who voluntarily separated or allowed their enlistment to lapse, in lieu of vaccination.

The Air Reserve Personnel Center confirmed that Sergeant Lauderbaugh retired on April 7, 2024. While the Executive Order does not cover retirees, if Sergeant Lauderbaugh believes that he suffered an error or injustice, as it relates to the COVID-19 vaccination and his retirement, he may petition the Air Force Board for Corrections of Military Records at: <https://afbrba-portal.cce.af.mil>, for a determination.

I trust this information is helpful.

E. Michelle Watson
E. MICHELLE WATSON, Colonel, USAF
Chief, Human Resource Management
Executive Services

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth
Office of the Secretary of War
The Pentagon
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

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Dr. Pete "Doc" Chambers, "calls mRNA COVID-19 shots "bioweapons," claiming they violate both federal and Texas laws against weapons of mass destruction. He cites legal theories from the late Dr. Francis Boyle, architect of the U.S. Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act" <https://www.trialsitenews.com/atexas-candidate-coming-for-the-mrna-vaccines-bioweapons-ac52e5e3>

Dr. Jane Ruby, It's Not a Vaccine, It's a BIOWEAPON | EP303 <https://rumble.com/v510cd-dr-jane-ruby-its-not-a-vaccine-its-a-bioweapon-ep303.html>

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Dr. Mary Talley Bowden - Claims "COVID is a Bioweapon" <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/182wBmCqzU/>

"The German scientist shared this sentiment during an interview with Tucker Carlson on the latter's Tucker Carlson Network (TCN). According to Nehls, the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein present in both the virus and the COVID-19 injection "is a bioweapon against the brain." Dr. Michael Nehls: Both COVID-19 and COVID vaccines are an assault on the HUMAN MIND By Ava Grace // Apr 26, 2024 <https://www.newstarget.com/2024-04-26-nehls-covid-pathogen-vaccine-assault-human-mind.html>

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Most if not all the signatories of the 231 members who signed the Declaration for Military Accountability (DMA) & those that signed in support believe this vaccine was weaponized in some shape or form. In short, an Emergency Use Authorized (EUA) product illegally forced onto Service Members (US code 1107a) to choose their career or their health.

DMA: <https://www.warriorsofconscience.net/>

As the Secretary of War, you have the authority to stop these harmful injections given to our Service Member, Veterans, and their families on Military Medical Facilities. Stop these Biological weaponized injections immediately and conduct a proper investigation. Exercise justice under the rule of law for the crimes committed to our Service Members.

Date: 3/30/26 Name: Scott R. Lauderbaugh Signature: [Signature]

Vaccine	Recommended/Required	Waiver Requested	Vaccine	Recommended/Required	Waiver Requested
Adenovirus	☐	☒	Peritonsils	☐	☒
Adjuvants	☐	☒	Pneumococcal	☐	☒
Cholera	☐	☒	Poliomyelitis	☐	☒
COVID-19	☒	☒	Rabies	☐	☒
Hemophilus Influenzae Type B	☐	☒	Rotavirus	☐	☒
Human Papillomavirus	☐	☒	Sinergex	☐	☒
Hepatitis A	☐	☒	Tetanus	☐	☒
Hepatitis B	☐	☒	Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis	☐	☒
Influenza	☐	☒	Typhoid Fever	☐	☒
Japanese Encephalitis	☐	☒	Varicella	☐	☒
Meningococcal	☐	☒	Yellow Fever	☐	☒
Measles, Mumps, Rubella	☐	☒	Other	☐	☒

For the vaccines of which I have requested a religious exemption, as checked and indicated above, I have had the opportunity to discuss the recommendation or requirement with my provider and have been provided with and given the opportunity to read each and every vaccine(s) and the associated risks and benefits. I have also been provided the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/religious-exemption/> or vaccinating, possible health consequences of non-vaccination, and

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I acknowledge that I have read this document in its entirety and fully understand it.

Patient Signature: [Signature] Date: 7/31/25

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
Air Force Reserve Command
Lt Col Fred Pounds
Nurse Practitioner, AME Case Manager

PII

FRED A. POUNDS JR. Lt Col, USAF, NC
Nurse Practitioner, AME Case Manager
911th Aerospace Medicine

Form Current as of 24 Nov 2021

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC
Office of the Assistant Secretary

SAF/MRBC (AFBCMR)

PII

Dear Applicant:
Docket #: BC-2025-02974 eApplication #: 25000063958

This is in response to your recent application to the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR). We thoroughly review all applications and recognized your request is based on the January 27, 2025, Presidential Executive Order 14184, "Reinstating Service Members Discharged under the Military's COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate" and the April 1, 2025 guidance published by the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OSD (P-R)) on the implementation of the President's Executive Order. This letter is to acknowledge that we have received your request, however, per the OSD (P-R) guidance, service members who wish to be reinstated or re-accessed, must complete medical and physical pre-screening at their nearest Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). Once complete, the MEPS liaison will provide you a "Medical Certification Letter" verifying eligibility for reinstatement or re-accession. If you have already completed the pre-screening process, please provide a copy of the letter using the instructions at the bottom of this letter. If you still need to schedule a pre-screening appointment, please contact Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) at AFRS.HORSOPA.AccessionsStandards@us.af.mil.

In order to ensure expeditious processing of your case, you have 90 days from the date of this letter to provide a copy of the "Medical Certification Letter." If the letter is not received within 90 days, we will temporarily close your case; however, once you obtain the "Medical Certification Letter," you may provide a copy of it and request that your case be re-opened.

In addition, if you voluntarily separated in lieu of the vaccine and are seeking re-accession into the Air Force both the January 27, 2025, Presidential Executive Order and OSD (P-R)'s additional implementation guidance of April 1, 2025, provide that service members who voluntarily separated or allowed their enlistment to lapse, in lieu of receiving the COVID-19 vaccination, while the vaccine mandate was still in effect, be offered a path to re-accession into the Air Force with no impact to their service status, rank, or pay. Accordingly, re-accessing will entail:

- Contacting AFRS at: AFRS.HORSOPA.AccessionsStandards@us.af.mil, to be scheduled for pre-screening at their nearest MEPS;
- Completion of the Department of the Air Force's Attestation Memo; and
- Working with a recruiter, members with no limiting factors being offered the opportunity to re-access into the force, under the Prior Service Program, for a minimum of 2-years.

Please note, nothing in the OSD (P-R) policy prevents individuals seeking re-accession from requesting additional relief through the AFBCMR; however, for both reinstatement and re-accession requests, medical pre-screening is necessary for Board consideration. Once you have taken the required action and received your "Medical Certification Letter," please e-mail it to go to our org box at SAF.MRBC.Covid@us.af.mil. You can also submit it through our Online Portal at <https://afbrba-portal.cce.af.mil/#supplemental-submission>; however, we recommend that you send an e-mail to ensure expedited processing. Please include your docket number with all future correspondence.

For further information on COVID Reinstatement or Re-Accession eligibility and for up-to-date guidance, please visit the following web site: <https://www.af.mil/COVID-Reinstatement/>

Board Analysis Division
AFBCMR

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth
Office of the Secretary of War
The Pentagon
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

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By Ava Grace // Apr 26, 2024

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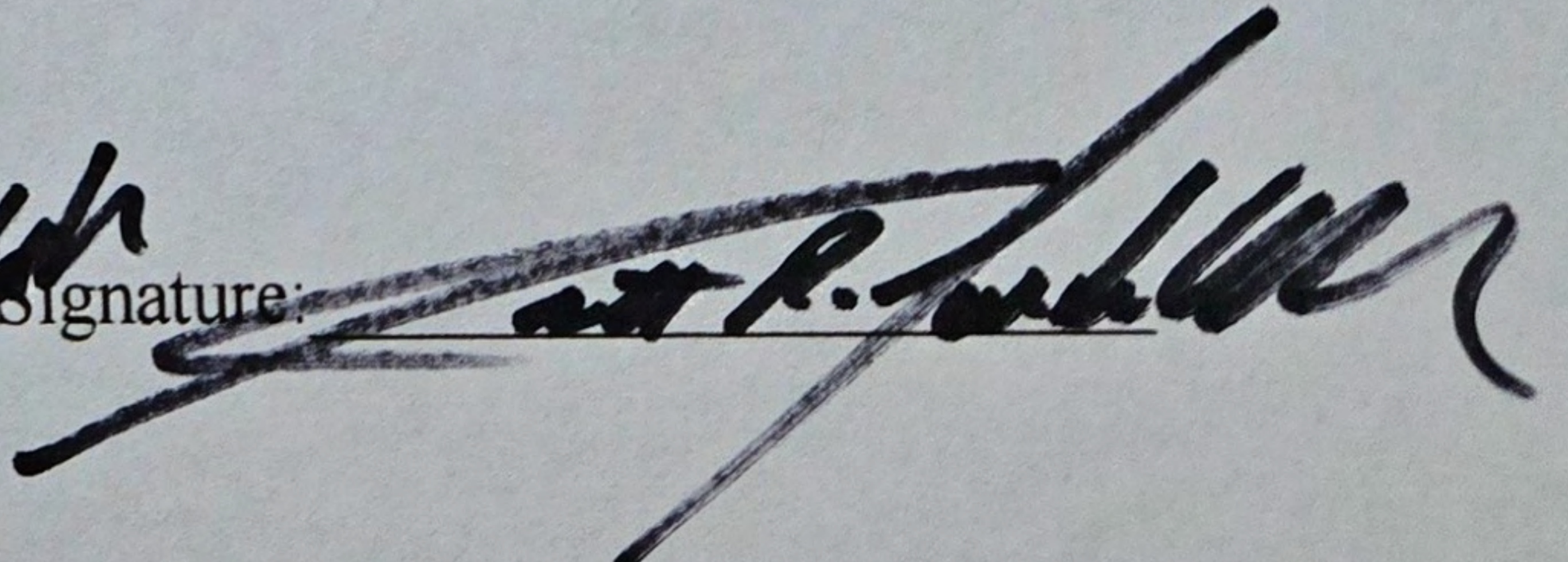
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Date: 3/30/26 Name: St. H. R. Lindell Signature: 

Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh

PII

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President Donald J. Trump
Mar-a-Lago Club
1100 S. Ocean Blvd
Palm Beach, FL 33480

June 4, 2022

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Fight For Freedom - Fight Forever

TSgt. Scott R. Lauderbaugh

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PII

President Donald J. Trump

Trump National

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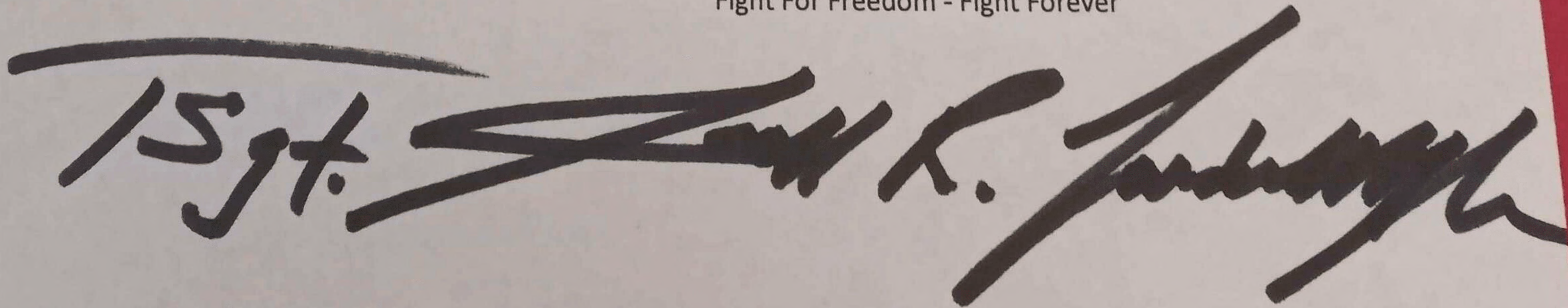
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Fight For Freedom - Fight Forever

15gt. 

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Fight For Freedom - Fight Forever

TSgt Scott R. Lauderbaugh

From: "TSGTChef Scott R. Lauderbaugh" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Public Comment - DMA - Declaration of Military Accountability in Congressional Record TSGT SCOTT R LAUDERBAUGH USAF RETIRED

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 13:59:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4372.jpg; 1000018599.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4371.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4388.jpg; 600f0412-52b9-409a-89a4-b42ae9668a16-1_all_4373.jpg; 1000019051.jpg; 1000018588.jpg; 1000018587.jpg

To RLC,

Good Afternoon, July 6th 2026

In support of this commission, Ten's of Thousands of Military Service Members have been in this battle from the beginning.

I have provided letter's of communication from my side and links to important information in Congressional Record.

<https://www.warriorsofconscience.net/dma>

An Open Letter To The American People

Source: Facebook DMA in Congressional Record <https://share.google/fg4N5LhkpVlzuatLt>

<https://rumble.com/user/TheForgottenSoldiers>

Podcast- Stories from military service members who stood up against all odds vs The DOD's Unlawful Experimental EUA MRNA COVID-19 BIOLOGICAL WEAPON Injections and others.

Freedomfighter1776.com with Mark Bashaw

Duty To Disobey Documentary

<https://rumble.com/v7207lu-duty-to-disobey-official-trailer.html>

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

For God and Country

Respectfully TSGT SCOTT R LAUDERBAUGH USAF RETIRED

Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh

PII

Phone: 724-825-8381

PII

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Mar-a-Lago Club
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My goal is to assist in the complete shutdown of all unlawful and unconstitutional vaccine mandates. I have followed my chain of command within the military from the start in a respectful manner. I have also started at the local level in my state of Pennsylvania, to gather support in this effort. Attached you will find E-mail Documents of my conversations with Congressman Guy Reschenthaler and Senator Doug Mastriano. I have spoken with Senator Mastriano twice in the past few months and he has been very supportive and understanding.

Despite the struggle of my current situation, I continue to fight for others. I respectfully request your leadership and support in my efforts to once and for all shut down the vaccine mandates and all mandates taking freedom away from our fellow Americans, because this whole situation is destroying our military, our loved ones, our American citizens, and our country.

Thank you for your time in this matter and God Bless,

Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh (USAF)

Fight For Freedom - Fight Forever

TSgt. Scott R. Lauderbaugh

Scott Lauderbaugh

From: Wallace, Felicia [REDACTED] PII
Sent: Tuesday, April 5, 2022 [REDACTED] PII
To: Scott Lauderbaugh
Cc: Douglas/Rebbie Mastriano
Subject: Office of Senator Doug Mastriano

Importance: High

External Message - Use caution when opening links or attachments

Good Afternoon Tsgt. Scott,

It was a pleasure speaking with you today, again thank you for your service and holding the line at this most critical time in our Nation. As discussed below are the links from our Medical Panel Discussion. I have also provided shorter clips for your viewing as well. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions, in the meanwhile I will be actively searching Federal legislation that will prayerfully help your efforts.

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/90wx9ec5l7> (Entire Discussion)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/vzmsb90boy> (Senator Mastriano)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/ym3ard3bh7> (Dr. Peter McCullough)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/xkn8dvz52n> (Steve Kirsch)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/pf7s6iskhz> (Attorney Thomas Renz)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/bwsm8u0iz8> (Dr. Brian Ardis)

May God continue to bless and protection you all,

Felicia

Felicia M. Wallace | Executive Assistant
Senator Doug Mastriano

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

President Donald J. Trump
Mar-a-Lago Club
1100 S. Ocean Blvd
Palm Beach, FL 33480

Dear President Trump,

I am a Technical Sergeant in The United States Air Force Reserves, with 19 years and 6 months left on my honorable military service. Unfortunately, that is currently on hold due to my taking a stand against the vaccine mandates. On September 11th 2021 during a military drill, I took a stand in front of my squadron and asked them to look at both sides of the situation before allowing the military to force members to take a vaccine against their will.

I provided all my research and information to my chain of command to stop the situation and the unfortunate part of all of this is that the DOD and all 6 branches of the military continued to follow an unlawful order. They used methods of segregation, discrimination, coercion, threats of no pay or points, unlawful discharge, and many more to force members against their will to take what is in my belief, a bioweapon.

I submitted a religious exemption based on my religious beliefs, my Oath to The Constitution, the Airman's Creed and NCO's Creed and was denied and then issued a letter of reprimand which I did not sign. I have not signed any documents as I have done nothing wrong. I have gone through the whole unlawful process resulting in my honorable military career being placed on hold as I was recently placed into the IRR during my retirement year.

In my defense I have filed 2 IG complaints an EEOC complaint with my base. I am with an organization called Stand with Warriors who are helping and supporting more than 17,000 plus military members in of all 6 branches of the military in their fight. I am also in with the Liberty Council Class action lawsuit: Navy Seals vs Austin Case along with support from Attorney Davis Younts out of Harrisburg PA.

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Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh (USAF)

Fight For Freedom - Fight Forever

Scott Lauderbaugh

From: Wallace, Felicia
Sent: Tuesday, April 5, 2022 3:30 PM
To: Scott Lauderbaugh
Cc: Douglas/Rebbie Mastriano
Subject: Office of Senator Doug Mastriano

Importance: High

External Message - Use caution when opening links or attachments
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<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/pf7s6iskhz> (Attorney Thomas Renz)

<https://pasen.wistia.com/medias/bwsm8u0iz8> (Dr. Brian Ardis)

May God continue to bless and protection you all,

Felicia

Felicia M. Wallace | Executive Assistant
Senator Doug Mastriano

PII PII PII



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Colonel E. Michelle Watson
Chief, Human Resource Management
Executive Secretariat

PII

The Honorable Guy Reschenthaler
United States House of Representatives

PII

Dear Representative Reschenthaler,

This is in reply to your inquiry regarding back pay and retirement points for Technical Sergeant Scott R. Lauderbaugh, given the January 27, 2025, Presidential Executive Order 14184, "Reinstating Service Members Discharged under the Military's COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate." The Executive Order covers members who were involuntarily discharged solely for refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and those who voluntarily separated or allowed their enlistment to lapse, in lieu of vaccination.

The Air Reserve Personnel Center confirmed that Sergeant Lauderbaugh retired on April 7, 2024. While the Executive Order does not cover retirees, if Sergeant Lauderbaugh believes that he suffered an error or injustice, as it relates to the COVID-19 vaccination and his retirement, he may petition the Air Force Board for Corrections of Military Records at: <https://afbrba-portal.cce.af.mil>, for a determination.

I trust this information is helpful.

E. Michelle Watson
E. MICHELLE WATSON, Colonel, USAF
Chief, Human Resource Management
Executive Services

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth
Office of the Secretary of War
The Pentagon
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

I am writing you as a concerned citizen and advocate to demand immediate action regarding the ongoing administration of COVID-19 vaccines (mRNA) within the Department of War (DOW). My concerns stem from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) recently released to the public. FOIA-26-00201 to the Defense Health Agency (DHA) concerning over 430,000 administered vaccines in 2025.

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Most if not all the signatories of the 231 members who signed the Declaration for Military Accountability (DMA) & those that signed in support believe this vaccine was weaponized in some shape or form. In short, an Emergency Use Authorized (EUA) product illegally forced onto Service Members (US code 1107a) to choose their career or their health.

DMA; <https://www.warriorsofconscience.net/>

As the Secretary of War, you have the authority to stop these harmful injections given to our Service Member, Veterans, and their families on Military Medical Facilities. Stop these Biological weaponized injections immediately and conduct a proper investigation. Exercise justice under the rule of law for the crimes committed to our Service Members.

Date: 3/30/26 Name: S. H. R. Lauderbaugh

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Immunization Waiver Request and Counseling

Person's Name: <u>TSGT Scott R. Lauderbaugh</u>			DOD ID# <u>1600</u>		
---	--	--	---	--	--

For the vaccines of which I have requested a religious exemption, as checked and indicated above, I have had the opportunity to discuss the recommendation or requirement with my provider and have understood it. I have been provided with and given the opportunity to read each vaccine(s) and potential risk of infection incurred by of others vaccine(s), including product constituents. I have also been provided the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/decision-making/> or vaccinating, possible health consequences of non-vaccination, and impact my medical readiness and ability to deploy.

I acknowledge that I have read this document in its entirety and fully understand it. I have been provided with and given the opportunity to read each vaccine(s) and potential risk of infection incurred by of others vaccine(s), including product constituents. I have also been provided the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/decision-making/> or vaccinating, possible health consequences of non-vaccination, and impact my medical readiness and ability to deploy. I have been provided with and given the opportunity to read each vaccine(s) and potential risk of infection incurred by of others vaccine(s), including product constituents. I have also been provided the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/decision-making/> or vaccinating, possible health consequences of non-vaccination, and impact my medical readiness and ability to deploy.

Patent Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: 7/31/25

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
Air Force Reserve Command

Lt Col Fred Pounds
Nurse Practitioner, AME Case Manager

PII

Form Current as of 24 Nov 2021



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

Office of the Assistant Secretary

SAE/MRBC (AFRCMR)

PII

Dear Applicant:
Docket #: BC-2025-02974 eApplication #: 25000063958

This is in response to your recent application to the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR). We thoroughly review all applications and recognized your request is based on the January 27, 2025, Presidential Executive Order 14184, "Reinstating Service Members Discharged under the Military's COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate" and the April 1, 2025 guidance published by the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OSD (P-R)) on the implementation of the President's Executive Order. This letter is to acknowledge that we have received your request, however, per the OSD (P-R) guidance, service members who wish to be reinstated or re-accessed, must complete medical and physical pre-screening at their nearest Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). Once complete, the MEPS liaison will provide you a "Medical Certification Letter" verifying eligibility for reinstatement or re-accession. If you have already completed the pre-screening process, please provide a copy of the letter using the instructions at the bottom of this letter. If you still need to schedule a pre-screening appointment, please contact Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) at AFRS.HORSOPA.AccessionsStandards@us.af.mil.

In order to ensure expeditious processing of your case, you have 90 days from the date of this letter to provide a copy of the "Medical Certification Letter." If the letter is not received within 90 days, we will temporarily close your case; however, once you obtain the "Medical Certification Letter," you may provide a copy of it and request that your case be re-opened.

In addition, if you voluntarily separated in lieu of the vaccine and are seeking re-accession into the Air Force both the January 27, 2025, Presidential Executive Order and OSD (P-R)'s additional implementation guidance of April 1, 2025, provide that service members who voluntarily separated or allowed their enlistment to lapse, in lieu of receiving the COVID-19 vaccination, while the vaccine mandate was still in effect, be offered a path to re-accessing into the Air Force with no impact to their service status, rank, or pay. Accordingly, re-accessing will entail:

- Contacting AFRS at: AFRS.HORSOPA.AccessionsStandards@us.af.mil, to be scheduled for pre-screening at their nearest MEPS;
- Completion of the Department of the Air Force's Attestation Memo; and
- Working with a recruiter, members with no limiting factors being offered the opportunity to re-access into the force, under the Prior Service Program, for a minimum of 2-years.

Please note, nothing in the OSD (P-R) policy prevents individuals seeking re-accession from requesting additional relief through the AFBCMR; however, for both reinstatement and re-accession requests, medical pre-screening is necessary for Board consideration. Once you have taken the required action and received your "Medical Certification Letter," please e-mail it to go to our org box at SAE.MRBC.Covid@us.af.mil. You can also submit it through our Online Portal at <https://afbrba-portal.cce.af.mil/#supplemental-submission>; however, we recommend that you send an e-mail to ensure expedited processing. Please include your docket number with all future correspondence.

For further information on COVID Reinstatement or Re-Accession eligibility and for up-to-date guidance, please visit the following web site: <https://www.af.mil/COVID-Reinstatement/>

Board Analysis Division
AFBCMR

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth
Office of the Secretary of War
The Pentagon
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

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Dr. Michael Nehls: Both COVID-19 and COVID vaccines are an assault on the HUMAN MIND
By Ava Grace // Apr 26, 2024

<https://www.newstarget.com/2024-04-26-nehls-covid-pathogen-vaccine-assault-human-mind.html>

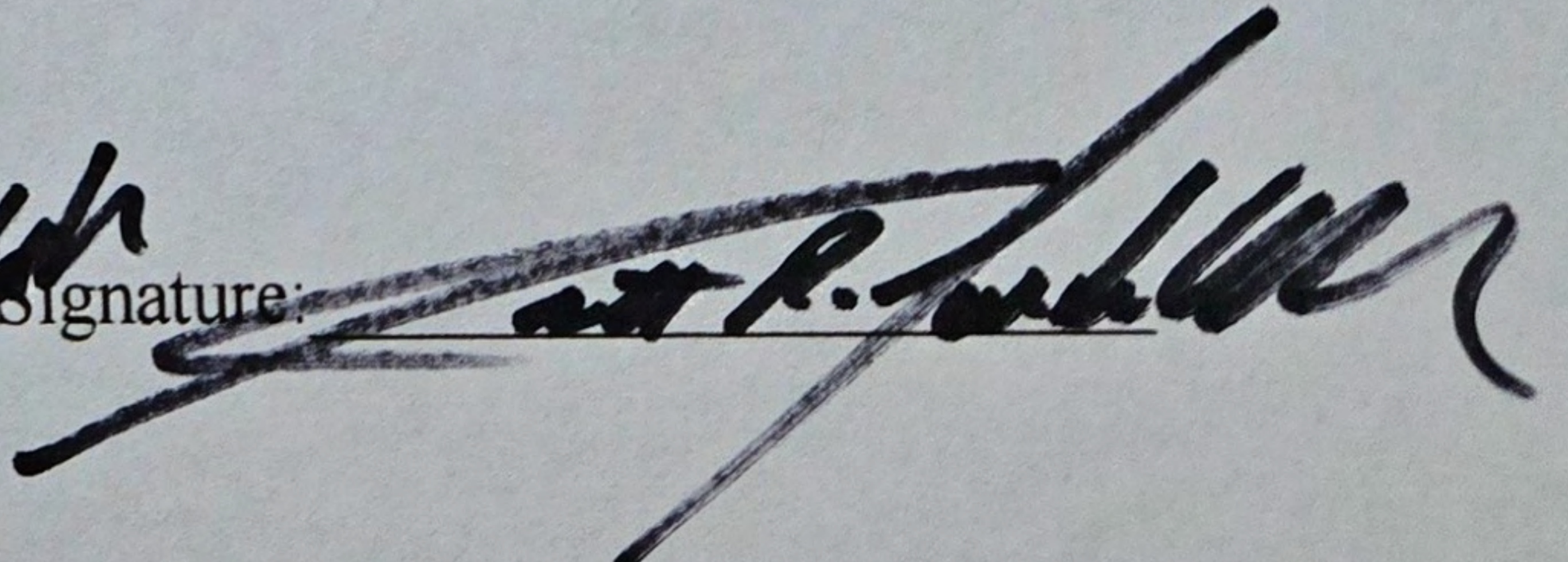
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As the Secretary of War, you have the authority to stop these harmful injections given to our Service Member, Veterans, and their families on Military Medical Facilities. Stop these Biological weaponized injections immediately and conduct a proper investigation. Exercise justice under the rule of law for the crimes committed to our Service Members.

Date: 3/30/26 Name: St. H. R. Lindell Signature: 

From: Aletheia Kopesky <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience – Aletheia Kopesky

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 14:01:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

It is foundational to be allowed to find care with midwives that patients can truly and fully trust, which includes faith and personal beliefs.

Thank you for your time,
Aletheia Kopesky

From: Cheryl Hendy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 14:27:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am sending my full support for the acceptance of all written suggestions by this commission. I especially want protection for my freedoms to worship the one true God, the Creator of the universe, and to sincerely communicate the truths of the Bible in any civil sphere of government for the good of all people.

I also stand in agreement with the proposed law to shift the proof of the unconstitutionality of the current false understanding for the "Separation of Church & State".

Thank you for your diligence.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 14:33:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am commenting today regarding the draft report of this commission. I do believe that there is a STRONG argument for why church and state should absolutely be kept separate and to not have any religion "forced" upon any of our citizens. I understand that the words "separation of church and state" do not appear in our constitution. However, it is strictly written into our first amendment. This is highly insulting to those of different faiths and to those who have no faith in any religion. To force upon all, the faiths of one or even a few religions would amount to indoctrination and would surely erode ALL of our freedoms and lead us into dictatorship. We would have a society no better than say the Taliban. These actions are taking us down a slippery slope. It is bad enough that we are giving our tax dollars to religious schools. Something that I believe is highly illegal and should be reversed. I hope you take my words to heart for you would only be hurting your cause AND your religion if you choose to move forward with your illegal acts.



Virus-free. www.avg.com

From: Lora [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Job lost

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 15:17:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you. My son lost his job at a boy's home because the boys were asking him to pray for them and read scriptures with them. Which he did. He is a very kind man and was being told he was too soft. He believes boys need room to be active. Since being fired he has not been able to get a job. He gets hired or interviewed then the employer suddenly backs out. I think he is being black balled by someone.

From: Erica Buchberger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, draft report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 15:17:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to comment on the recent draft report by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission which distorts American history of religious freedom in order to discriminate against both non-Christians and those Christians of different denominations than elected leaders.

The US Constitution famously lacks any direct reference to the Bible or Christianity. In fact, Article 6 specifically guarantees that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.” The provisions of the First Amendment guaranteeing no “establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise” did not go unnoticed in the republic’s earliest years. The 1796 treaty between the United States and Tripoli stipulated that the young nation’s government was “not in any sense founded on the Christian religion.” Writing to Baptist supporters in Connecticut in 1802, Thomas Jefferson described the First Amendment protection of the free exercise of religion as “building a wall between church and State.”

This draft report explicitly acknowledges it seeks to abandon Jefferson's essential wall between church and state that protected Americans' religious freedom, instead building "bridges" that are contrary to his and other Founder's intentions. Freedom of religion in the First Amendment was born out of struggles between different denominations that caused the Founders to understand that true freedom can only come when the government stays out of religious matters. It is imperative that Jefferson's "wall" remain intact.

From: Elizabeth Frazao <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 10 (Vaccines) - Elizabeth Frazao

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 15:31:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

I appreciated the testimonies and detailed discussions in the chapter. The chapter emphasizes that “Public health policies must take into account any burdens they impose on religious believers” and recommends both supporting legislation and issuing guidance on religious freedom in relation to vaccines.

Based on personal experience, I suggest the report also point out that procedures for obtaining a religious exemption should not place a burden on religious believers. For example, the State of Mississippi recently allowed religious exemptions for vaccines. However, the procedure to obtain a religious exemption for children’s vaccinations is onerous and seems designed to indoctrinate or punish/coerce the parent into giving up! After obtaining the religious exemption form online, a parent requesting a religious exemption for their child MUST 1) make an appointment at the County Health Department, 2) watch a Vaccine “Education” video, and 3) be subjected to a “presentation” about the benefits and risks of immunizations. Why not simply allow the parent to complete the form online and submit it online, particularly since the form already provides some disclaimers, and the Mississippi Dept of Health website states that any religious exemption requested will be accepted.

Also, I wonder why the Commission limited its last recommendation for that chapter (p. 150) to one ethically acceptable alternative (an ethically acceptable vaccine) rather than a broader set of ethically acceptable alternatives, such as ways to strengthen the immune system or ways to effectively treat the disease.

From: "Wall, Barbra M (bmw8y)" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 15:45:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing as a retired professor in favor of religious liberty. I remind you that the Puritans were not fleeing England to set up a state Christian church. England already was Christian, and they left that country to come to one where a vibrant pluralism, not a monolithic Christian consensus, could be established. With Thomas Jefferson and James Madison as leaders, protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreements among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.

Barbra Mann Wall

Barbra Mann Wall, PhD, RN, FAAN
Thomas A. Saunders III Professor Emerita of Nursing
University of Virginia School of Nursing

From: Becky <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT--GENERAL COMMENT--BECKY DUNN

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 15:47:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I applaud your plan to return a correct understanding of the Constitution to the general public, and especially people in charge of government agencies.

I cannot thank you enough for your work on this paper and the concrete plans to change the mindset of those who have never read the Constitution in their lives, and believe separation of church and state is a thing.

You have my FULL SUPPORT in moving forward with every word of this document!

IT CANNOT HAPPEN SOON ENOUGH!

Thank you again!

Becky Dunn

From: Conevery Bolton Valencius <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
COMMISSION - CONEVERY VALENCIUS

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 15:48:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a historian and as a Christian, I write in grave concern about the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

I agree with the Commission's report that "religious liberty must be protected, preserved, and cherished. That responsibility belongs to every generation."

My faith is central to my life and my work, including my work as a historian.

But putting Christian symbols, theology, and prayers in the middle of public schools and workplaces threatens both the country I love and the faith I rely on.

Historical examples show us: once the state is involved in religion, people start being told what to believe. Promoting religious instruction means that my children will no longer learn religious values at our church, but from strangers whose faith I may not share. Our American Founders preserved liberty to have a diversity of beliefs and recognized that pluralism. We need to respect their wisdom.

We need to preserve respectful space between religion and our public life to make sure that all of us can live out our faith as we see fit, not be forced to espouse an official creed.

We also need to preserve respectful space between religion and our public life to make sure that our public institutions draw on the strengths of all those in the country and do not box out those whose beliefs are not part of a Christian majority.

This report argues that "religious liberty acts as a bridge between church and state." That bridge is a slippery slope that can lead to the abasement of both faith and freedom.

My freedom to worship as I please – my freedom to have faith in God – is threatened once schools or libraries or civic institutions prescribe what religion is or how faith should be directed.

I want to keep living in a free United States as a person committed to Christ. That commitment only carries meaning if it is my free choice and my soul's commitment, not a requirement of my government.

Conevery Bolton Valencius
Quincy, MA

From: Christina Hendriks <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty History – C Hendriks

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 15:53:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

- **Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus.** The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- **The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society.** While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), **the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism.** Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
- **The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche (“God is dead”), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile “Berlin wall” designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
- **The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life.** The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Thank you,
Christina Hendriks

From: Thomas Lansen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 16:20:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the DOJ's position on the correct assumption that the foundation of our republic is based on Judeo-Christian principles. This was reinforced countless times in the writings and architectural statements of the founders.

The American Historical Association has asserted that the current PRLC draft report falsely portrays the history and basis of these principles, and that the founders wished to separate religious philosophy from the state. While it is true that the founders wanted a 'separation' of church and state, nowhere did they proclaim that Christianity was false. Nor did these men, who were generally devout, ever deride religious concepts. Their stand for separation was based on their desire, not to suppress religion, but to protect the right of all citizens to choose their form of worship.

Like it or not, AHA, we must not use a false narrative to implant the progressive creed on our rich and deeply Christian American history.

Thomas Lansen, MD, FAANS, MA (Hist)

From: renatta erwin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Commission report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 16:29:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

yes, our constitution provides for separation of church and state. America cannot determine a person's religion or lack thereof. America cannot promote a specific religion or erode any specific religion because said religion does not comply with any certain criteria of a 'preferred' religion.

Religious institutions of any kind should not attempt to interfere with the workings of a democratic nation. Church and state must be separate to protect both the religion and the state. We do not have nor should we have a government sponsored, approved, or supported religion.

From: Emily Baker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment--"Religious Liberty is for Everyone"--Emily B.

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 17:25:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs/Madams:

Thank you for the chance to comment, and I hope you will consider this well.

The segment on Page 29 of the draft that I mentioned in the subject line begins with the line: "Religious liberty is not only for one religion or denomination, but for *all faiths* (Patrick et al, 2026., emphasis mine)." This statement would be much appreciated if the sentiment behind it is truly sincere. However, there is much about the document as a whole that would call that into question.

Chapter 4, for instance, does inspire more questions than answers. Students should have the right of practicing faith in their way. However, I do wonder; did the schools the students spoke of in the "songs" segment not have a choral program? Many Christian songs still are sung in choral programs as art pieces, at least that was the experience in my school growing up. Perhaps religion should be taught in schools as part of the curriculum as a context of social studies, regarding history, geography and culture. Would all religions be included in these, not Christianity alone? By the standard of that statement at the start, they should be. As to issues like paraphernalia, interactions with peers, sex education, LGBTQ+ etc., one should ask the question where one's religious freedom ends and another's begins when it comes to stances on these issues?

In Chapter 6, on the rights of the adults involved in childrens' lives, that is another question. Will a child be guaranteed protection if the adult hurts them in some way for not falling in line with the beliefs of the adults in their lives? Religious authority should not grant impunity for harm.

Of particular concern to me was the section in Chapter 11 on Anti-Semitism. I won't deny it's a serious issue, and a particular coloration for our nation's history. For instance, Henry Ford's use of the Dearborn Independent to encourage discrimination against Jewish people in the area (The Henry Ford Staff, 2025) hits close to home for me. Had the U.S. and other nations welcomed Jewish refugees in need more warmly throughout history, I wonder whether one would have needed to establish a nation of Israel to make amends. The Rapture-related motive involved in recent years may tie into that as well (Stroop, 2019). In that section, however, speakers particularly singled out attackers from among extreme Islam sects alongside complaints about peaceful protests on behalf of Palestine. Singling out "Islamic extremism" (Patrick et al, 2026, pg. 151) at the expense of other motives hardly seems fair. By all means, encourage protection against Anti-Semitism, and others not to conflate all Jewish people with the ones committing and abetting atrocities in Israel, but there should be equivalent efforts protecting against Islamophobia in the U.S. (see Walters and Yang, 2025).

In general, I wonder whether, if members of other faiths besides Christianity were permitted to come and give testimony during past hearings on this case, and their safety guaranteed, this statement from the Committee might have actually been as inclusive of all faiths as it purported to be in the introduction. If it is not too much to ask, citizens of all faiths, or even no faiths, in the U.S., need assurance that this is indeed for all of them, not just the ones who follow the faith that shows up most often in this draft. I hope you will consider this going forward.

Sincerely,
Emily Baker

Sources Cited:

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Walters, J. and M. Yang. (2025). Mahmoud Khalil 'Felt As Though He Was Being Kidnapped', Lawyers Say. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/14/mahmoud-khalil-columbia-arrest>

From: Steve Strom <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support of Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 17:49:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

This submission is to provide evidence of my support that the BURDEN OF PROOF is for the government to show a specific constitutional violation in regards to the Establishment Clause. The government should NOT interfere with religious freedom.

Sincerely,

Steven Strom

Poughkeepsie, NY

From: "Michael H Novak" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report - Michael H Novak

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 17:49:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

- **Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus.** The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- **The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society.** While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), **the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism.** Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
- **The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
- **The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life.** The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

From: Diane Royal <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment - Chapter 14 (The Path Forward) - Diane Royal

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 17:50:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please finalize this report as is!

From: Dave Barkley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment -Chapter 14- Dave Barkley

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 17:51:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am wholeheartedly in favor of the DOJ religious liberty commission report.

Thank you,

Dave Barkley

Sent from my iPhone

From: Meghan Titzer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report – Meghan Titzer

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 18:00:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the DOJ:

I grew up atheist, a religious minority in rural South Carolina, a deeply Protestant Christian place in the 1990s (and today). I am not Christian, or a member of any other faith. I have not been baptized, attended Sunday school, or had my first communion. In a place where a stranger typically introduces themselves with the line "where do you go to church?", this mattered. My friends' parents sometimes told me, and my parents, that I was a bad influence on their children and unable to act morally because I am not Christian. I spent much of my childhood faking a Christian faith, to fit in.

School was a refuge where I didn't see posters on the wall advertising the Christian faith I did not share. No one asked me to read the 10 Commandments in school, or pray. These are fine things to do, and Americans have every right to do them, just not imposed on others in government sponsored arenas like school. In school, I was just like everyone else, and just like the founders intended: free to choose my own religion.

I am concerned that the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission even exists, that it has a clearly Christian bent, emphasizes the Christianity of the founders, and advocates for promoting Christianity within government institutions. I am an American too, not less of one because of my atheism.

The Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom (drafted 1777, enacted 1786) warned against "the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible". Religious freedom is not just the freedom to "pick a brand of Christianity," but the freedom to practice any religion, including "none," and safety from pressure to conform to Christianity within government led institutions. Rural South Carolina society treated my family as "less than"; the US government has no business doing the same.

-Meghan Titzer

From: Robyn Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 14

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 18:10:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Establishment of the Religious Liberty Commission is well written and put together. It outlines what is needed to protect religious Americans (scholars, workers, retirees, etc, all faiths) rights.

In knowing their rights they can then be proud of who they are inclusive of their religious beliefs and not be individuated from society, or knocked down for using what they know to make a moral society.

In reality hate and prejudice of religions exist however small or big, and thus the rights of those with a religion need to be made well known so they can be practiced. and they can be used by those who wish to do good to help their communities. They should not be impeded by the ignorance of the few anti religion haters or prejudice, fixed minded men.

The Executive summary is correct in saying "religious liberty is essential because religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society."

From: John Surr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 18:22:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Department of Justice again is attempting to undermine the Constitution and its Bill of Rights, the foundations of American freedom and patriotism.

- Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus. The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
- The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact. For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche (“God is dead”), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile “Berlin wall” designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
- The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Please do not go any further at this attempt at sinful autocracy;

John Surr

PII

PII
PII

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Draft Report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 18:23:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I read the draft report with dismay. As a student of American history, and especially the issues dealt with during the formation of the nation, it is clear that the premises on which this report is based are just not true.

We glibly talk about the separation of church and state, but those who decide ethical issues in their personal lives according to the principles of their faith are increasingly calling for the nation to do the same. They use the excuse that the founding fathers were Christians and expected the country to be dominated by Christian principles. To a certain extent, they are correct about this. There were men at that time who wanted explicit references to Christianity and Christian principles in the law. (They sounded then like Islamists in the Middle East do today when they advocate Sharia Law - and just as dangerous.) And there were other men, less adamant, who, nevertheless, made references to God in their writings. And if we look back to the very beginnings of colonial settlement, we see communities all over the eastern seaboard that were explicitly religious in their government. But, somewhere along the line, even though these people were still in the majority at the founding of the nation, they saw the need (using Jefferson's phrase) to "build a wall of separation between Church & State." What was that all about?

Contemporary protagonists for injecting Christianity into government claim that the separation was meant to protect religion from government, but not the reverse. There is a modicum of evidence for this. At least it is possible to find statements among the arguments of the 1780s and 1790s that seem to support the idea. But there was more going on, and we need to grasp the whole of the logic of that time if we are going to properly resolve the issue today.

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.

—attributed to James Madison

The impetus for separating church and state came from experiences that were fresh in the minds of colonial Americans. These were essentially of two kinds: war and the suppression of religious freedom. As for the first, Europe had been at war with itself over religion ever since the Protestant Reformation began in the 1520s. The century from 1550 to 1650 was exceptionally bloody, and the decades from the end of the Thirty Years War (1648) to the American Revolution (1775) had not erased it from people's minds. The proximate cause for all the fighting was that governments had long received their legitimacy from the Roman Catholic Church. This tradition went back to Charlemagne and the foundations of feudalism—and even further, back to the Rome of Constantine. The Reformation challenged not only the universal church, but also the authority of governments. When European principalities began lining up on different sides of the Catholic/Protestant divide, war was inevitable. Furthermore, the citizens of each state were under the gun to maintain the same beliefs as their prince. Those obstinate souls who were stubborn in their adherence to the dictates of conscience were subject to property seizure, execution, and exile. As the man said, "*My way or the highway.*"

England had its share of misery over the issue, too, beginning just as the Continent had exhausted itself in three decades of war and was trying to put the pieces back together again at Westphalia (1648). The civil wars of the 1640s, the beheading of Charles I (1649), and the reign of terror under Oliver Cromwell (1650-1660) were its analog to the Continental conflicts.

And this brings us to the second set of experiences that created such a strong suspicion of religious government. This began with the fickle treatment of dissenters from the Anglican Church after the restoration of the

monarchy in England and continued with the actions of clerics in America throughout the colonial period. The colonialists had experienced the benefits of established churches all too thoroughly—the Anglican Church in the southern colonies and the Congregational Church in New England. Abuses of power were rife in both domains. As these men saw it, the true nature of religious governments (and state churches) was laid bare: they oppressed non-conformists. They had to, because if state and church were one, denying the authority of one automatically presumed denying the authority of the other. Neither state nor state church could afford not to command strict obedience.

Madison again:

The number, the industry, and the morality of the priesthood, and the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the church from the state.

—Letter to Robert Walsh, Mar. 2, 1819

And a more pointed observation:

If the Church of England had been the established and general religion in all the northern colonies as it has been among us here, and uninterrupted tranquillity had prevailed throughout the continent, it is clear to me that slavery and subjection might and would have been gradually insinuated among us. Union of religious sentiments begets a surprising confidence, and ecclesiastical establishments tend to great ignorance and corruption; all of which facilitate the execution of mischievous projects.

—Letter to William Bradford, Jr., January 24, 1774

Thomas Jefferson expressed similar sentiments:

History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes.

—Letter to Alexander von Humboldt, Dec. 6, 1813

Their point: we can't trust religious authorities when they have the power of the state behind them. In this recognition, we see that those who hold to the belief that separating church and state is to protect only the church have missed much of the framer's intent. It is not just to protect the church from oppression. It is also to protect the church from the corruptive influence of having too much civil power. And therefore, it is overwhelmingly clear that the point is also to protect the rest of us from such an easily corrupted church. Note Madison's phrasing in the Walsh letter: *the total separation of church from state*. Not partial. Not uni-directional. Total.

He made it even clearer in an 1832 letter to Rev. Jasper Adams that his concern was "*the tendency to a usurpation on one side or the other or to a corrupting coalition or alliance between them.*"

One more:

And I have no doubt that every new example will succeed, as every past one has done, in showing that religion and Government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.

—Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822

Madison and Jefferson were not the only people to speak out on the question of religion and government in the nation's early days; and many spoke in favor of "establishing" this or that denomination, presumably to the betterment of society (as the Draft Report repeatedly claims). But these latter folks did not carry the day. My intent is to clarify why the ultimate decision was made in favor of separation and what was meant by it.

Madison and Jefferson, along with many others, made it clear that it was the *combination of religion and government* that was the problem. It is our responsibility to be aware of this as we consider the arguments being made today on the issue. With that in mind, let me offer these final thoughts.

If government officials are going to look to religion for guidance, we must suspect that they are also looking to religion for authority. As Machiavelli taught, it is not enough to be virtuous; one must seem to be virtuous.

Skilled politicians interested in the religious vote are not going to be content to simply take religious principles into account as they work on public policy; they are also going to make sure that their efforts are cloaked in the garb of religious approbation. "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*"

Conversely, if the religious are going to seek to control government, it seems that the only possible motive would be to short-circuit the collaborative processes of secular policy formation. Since our system is founded on the principles of non-violence, equal participation, and reasoned debate, replacing it with a system where faith (inevitably, one particular faith) drives the engines of democracy would seem to be an attempt to trump reasoned debate. (no pun intended) We'll give these protagonists credit for not explicitly wanting to do away with non-violence and equal participation, but implicitly, these are at risk as well? This would seem to be inevitable. Madison and Jefferson, among many others, were concerned about it. Why should we not remain so today? (Lest anyone doubt this, I offer the example of right-to-lifers bombing abortion clinics. Extreme? Of course. But it happens when religion is allowed to trump civil discourse.)

In summary, governments have never cared to constrain religious freedom except when they had a vested interest in a particular religion. Phrased another way, *only when governments are religious is there any threat to religious freedom*. We should therefore treat the current calls for Christian influence over the U.S. government with all due suspicion. Our concern should be two-fold: *that governments not obtain the power of God and that religions not obtain the power of government*.

Douglas Allen
Orinda CA

P11

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Religious liberty

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:02:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

the government should not be in the business of promoting religion or privileging one faith over another!!

From: "Donna M D'Amico" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Parental Rights in Education – Donna D’Amico

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:04:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

#1. This RLC report is not an unbiased, fact-based document. An example of the bias can be seen in this quote from page 16:

“In Michigan, school officials secretly transitioned Jennifer Mead’s 11-year-old daughter and began treating her as a boy.”

Jennifer Mead’s child, who was 13 years old at the time, requested to be addressed by a different name and male pronouns using a process available at the school. The school staff respected the child’s request. The school did NOT start transitioning Mead’s daughter into a boy.

It is more important to protect the physical and mental health of the children at school than it is to protect parental rights. Scientific evidence established that school environments that affirm a student’s gender identity foster better mental health and school connectedness, which are necessary prerequisites for effective learning. Since the goal of an education is to help create independent, well-adjusted adults, I believe the school made the correct choice.

#2. A preponderance of scientific evidence also shows that vaccines are safe and effective. Allowing unvaccinated children who do not have medical reasons for avoiding mandatory vaccines puts everyone in the school at greater risk.

#3. Voucher programs drain public funds away from public schools. Public schools are required to educate all children even those with special, resource-intensive needs. Private schools are not. Data shows that the primary beneficiaries of many voucher expansions are affluent families whose children were already attending private schools before the program existed. Although many private schools are very good, others are not. Private schools do not have to meet the same regulations and standards as public schools. If vouchers were only available for low income families or children with special, resource-intensive needs at schools that met or exceeded the regulations and standards of public schools, I would find that easier to support.

From: "Donna M D'Amico" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – TOPIC: Was the United States created as a Christian Nation? – Donna D’Amico

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:09:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

The commission and this report is biased toward conservative Christianity. Except for one Jewish Rabbi, all of the commission’s members hold conservative Christian views.

It is true that some of the founders of this nation were Christians, and some early settlers came to this land with the intention of creating a place where they could practice their religion without the constraints of the governments of their home lands. On the other hand, the Constitution itself and the writings of several of our founders make it clear that this nation was NOT created as a Christian nation.

In a letter written by George Washington to Irish Catholic people who arrived in New York, he stated that the "bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent & respectable Stranger, but the oppressed & persecuted of all Nations & Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation in our rights & privileges."

Thomas Jefferson chose the words, "unalienable rights endowed by our Creator" in the Declaration of Independence. He purposely used a generic term rather than Christian language. Thomas Jefferson also helped create the Virginia Statute for Religious Liberty which states, "We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever..."

In 1797, John Adams signed the Treaty of Tripoli, securing the release of American captives in North Africa, and promising that the United States would not engage in a holy war with Islam because "the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion."

In a Pew Research Center survey conducted in March 2021, the majority of U.S. adults express support for the separation of church and state.

From: "Donna M D'Amico" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Page 19 Anti-Semitism – Donna D’Amico

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:11:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

The report states, “History demonstrates that attacks on one faith community often foreshadow broader assaults on religious liberty.” This statement is made without any evidence to back it up.

From: "Donna M D'Amico" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – TOPIC: Spirituality vs Religion – Donna D’Amico

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:14:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Spirituality is an important part of human existence. Professor Lisa Jane Miller, author of “The Spiritual Child and The Awakened Brain,” has been publishing scientific studies for 30 years that provide evidence for the connection between spirituality and mental and emotional health in humans.

Religion is the result of humans organizing and codifying beliefs so they can be shared. When people act on their religious beliefs in a manner that causes harm to others, those actions should not be supported by the government. As a child I was taught that my freedom stretched as far as my neighbor’s nose. Religious liberty should not be used to coerce or cause harm to others.

From: Gail Sonnemann <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comments : RLC draft report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:36:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear RLC,

I find historical inaccuracies and biased assumptions in your draft report. I am a life long practicing Christian and I implore you to keep endorsement of any one religion out of this report and out of the functions of any public institution. Further, I object to granting public funds directly to religious bodies or religious schools.

We must retain separation of church and state as our founders intended. This religious tolerance and freedom from the beliefs and practices of any one religion is what makes our nation great. **We have never been a Christian nation.** We are a far greater nation when we are curious, when we respect, honor, and learn from our panoply of divergent spiritual practices and beliefs.

We must support the US constitutional freedom of religion, and freedom from religion. Our government was founded to be secular and independent, without endorsing any one faith, any God, any one religious text or any one spiritual practice. That is, the US is a great society because it protects the rights of all — to allow each to practice faith however they wish in their personal lives, or to live without a spiritual practice or belief in a God.

Know your history:

- **Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus.** The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- **The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society.** While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- **Historically, the separation of church and state has enhanced, and has not diminished, the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life.** Historians and legal scholars have long noted that limits on government involvement in religion provide critical safeguards for religious vitality and liberty.

Your report should support strict enforcement US constitutional protection for freedom to practice any religion or to practice no religion, and for freedom from government advocacy for any one religious belief, text or practice.

Thank you,

Gail Sonnemann

[REDACTED] PII

From: Robert Figueira <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RC draft report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:41:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I like the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

Robert C. Figueira

From: Ian Van Dyke <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT – IAN E. VAN DYKE

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 19:46:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I write to address serious deficiencies with the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's Draft Report. I am a professional historian of religion in the United States (trained with a B.A. and a Ph.D. in history from two different Catholic universities). As a religious historian, I am deeply concerned that the Commission seriously distorts the history of American religion in favor of a biased political agenda.

The Draft Report references "history" forty-three different times. Yet the Report's authors repeatedly misrepresent the *actual* history of religion and church–state relations the United States. Rehashing the tired conservative trope that secularism "made its way across the Atlantic Ocean" from Europe in the early to mid-twentieth century, the Draft Report claims on p. 42 that "as a result, religious people gradually began to be pushed to the fringe." Citing Supreme Court cases like *Engel v. Vitale* and *Abington School District v. Schempp*, the Report falsely argues that "The result [of these cases] was an environment that often favored secularism over the 2,000-year canon of Western moral and religious tradition" (p. 68).

The Report elides the long history of home-grown American secularism and freethought, documented by historians from Leigh Eric Schmidt to Susan Jacoby. Moreover, the Report's authors conveniently gloss over the fact that the plaintiffs in the above-named 1960s Supreme Court cases were not atheists, agnostics, or secularists; they were practitioners of minority faiths: Steven I. Engel was Jewish; Edward Schempp was a Unitarian Universalist. As historians like Kevin M. Schultz has noted, members of minority faith traditions have often campaigned for a neutral public sphere not to harm others' religion, but to preserve *their* religion in a country often hostile to non-majority believers.

Preserving a secular public sphere is not an attack on religion; it is essential to preserving religious liberty. The Founders of the United States specifically banned religious tests for public office and forbade the "establishment" of religion in the Constitution to ensure the fair and equal treatment of all people of faith—and those with no faith in particular, or no faith at all.

The Draft Report presents a selective, biased, and inaccurate of American religious history. Its authors advocate for the rights of certain religions over others, for example, by recommending that the Department of Justice "Support litigation upholding the constitutionality of Ten Commandments posters in school" (p. 80). In doing so, the authors engage in state-sponsored religious favoritism, prioritizing not only the rights of some religious citizens over others, but also by prioritizing the rights of religious citizens over non-religious citizens.

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1781 that "It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." The author of the Declaration of Independence expressed a long American tradition of impartiality with regard to the treatment of others' beliefs under the law. The Draft Report distorts this American tradition by advocating for the religious liberty of only *some* Americans over others.

American history is full of contributions by religious and non-religious citizens. It is a very good thing that, for much of our history, we have been treated as equals in the eyes of the law. In an effort to safeguard the liberty of *all* Americans instead of merely a select, favored group, I urge the authors to retract their misguided and inaccurate report.

Sincerely,

Ian E. Van Dyke, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor

Department of History

PII

Grand Valley State University

From: Diane <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 3 / PAGE 80

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 20:31:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Commission's recent draft report. As a Christian, my faith teaches me to value truth, justice, and the equal dignity of all people—principles that I believe this report compromises.

It's my understanding, based on news reporting and ongoing litigation

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2026/02/09/religious-liberty-commission-sued-trump/88526368007/>

that the commission itself ignored basic principles of assuring equal dignity for all people, by not including broad faith representation from the outset of its work, and hence equal representation in the content and findings of the report.

Further, specifically, by recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the report instead actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. This is in direct conflict with First Amendment principles that no law should be made respecting an establishment of religion.

True religious liberty means the government remains neutral, neither hindering faith nor using power of the state to elevate one specific tradition over others. Forcing symbols of Christianity into public spaces weaponizes my faith rather than honoring it.

I urge the Commission to reconsider these recommendations and instead advocate for a framework that protects the rights and consciences of all Americans equally.

Respectfully,

Diane Zahn

From: Mimi Warfel <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Freedom and First Amendment Rights

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 20:45:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice,

I am writing as a concerned American citizen to respectfully ask that our nation's long standing protections for religious freedom remain strong.

The First Amendment guarantees the free exercise of religion, and I believe this freedom is one of the foundations of our country. It protects people of every faith, as well as those with no religious affiliation, allowing each person to live according to their sincerely held beliefs and conscience without unnecessary government interference.

I ask that the Department of Justice continue to protect the constitutional rights of individuals, families, religious organizations, educators, healthcare professionals, service members, and all Americans to freely exercise their faith. Faith-based institutions should not be required to abandon the convictions that define their mission, and parents should continue to have the freedom to guide the education and religious upbringing of their children.

Religious liberty strengthens our communities, encourages charitable service, and allows people from every background to contribute to society while remaining true to their convictions. I respectfully urge the Department to continue defending these fundamental freedoms for current and future generations.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to upholding the Constitution.

Respectfully,

Michele M Warfel

Michele Marquess Warfel
San Jose, California

From: Sophia <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Religious Liberty Commission] – [Sophia Hart]

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 20:45:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

The importance of the separation of church and state is imperative and paramount to this great country, the United States of America, its freedoms of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and I object to the Religious Liberty Commission report.

I would like to state a real world story that happened to me. I had a job that was in the US Federal Government. I was reprimanded by my acting supervisor just cause she thought I was talking about politics in the workplace. She also reprimanded and prohibited me from talking about religion in the workplace. This was during the era of Covid-19, in the spring of 2022. I was distributing The Great Controversy and Steps to Christ in the workplace for free to those who willingly wanted one for free. I distributed some of the books even before she showed up to be my acting supervisor. The books are for the saving of souls for the kingdom of Heaven. After my acting supervisor restricted my freedom of religion and speech, I went to my apartment angry because she was taking away my US Constitutional right of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion. To say the least she got her way by firing me from the job that the LORD God Almighty who was the one who in fact gave me that job. She just took it away from me and my bread and my water.

To conclude: It is Amendment 1 in the US Constitution that explicitly has the foundation and the principle that does have the separation of church and state.

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/>

And it is worth reiterating that I emphatically object to the Religious Liberty Commission report.

Sincerely,

Sophia Hart

From: Andrea Stanton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 20:57:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear colleagues,

As a Daughter of the American Revolution who comes from a minority religion in the US (Roman Catholic), I was deeply disappointed to read the draft report of the new Religious Liberty Commission.

Our founding fathers and mothers - including my ancestors - worked hard to create a governmental structure that gives great respect to religion by creating space for it in citizens' private lives - in civil society.

This report is deeply flawed and presents a poor understanding of American history and American values. Please do not move forward with any of its recommendations; they endanger us and the liberty we treasure - including the liberty to believe as we wish and to follow the guidance of our faiths as individuals.

Sincerely,
Andrea Stanton (Denver, Colorado)

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - General Comments - Pagan Solidarity Alliance
Date: Mon, 06 Jul 2026 22:17:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: PSA_Policy_Brief_2026-01_Cover_Letter.pdf; PSA_Policy_Brief_2026-01_Publication_Edition.pdf

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,
Please accept the attached public comment submitted by the Pagan Solidarity Alliance in response to the Commission's June 2026 Draft Report.
We respectfully request that this submission be included in the Commission's public comment record for consideration during its deliberations on the final report.
Our submission consists of:

- Cover Letter
- **PSA Policy Brief No. 2026-01 – Administrative Principles Supporting the Practical Implementation of Religious Liberty**

Although prompted by recent developments affecting federal religious administrative systems, the enclosed policy brief examines broader principles of public administration and offers recommendations intended to strengthen the practical implementation of religious liberty across government.
We respectfully submit these materials for the Commission's consideration and appreciate the opportunity to participate in the public comment process.
Thank you for your service and for your careful consideration of our submission.
Respectfully,
M. Rev. Dr. Davron Michaels
Spiral Council Member, Pagan Solidarity Alliance
Paramount Priest, New Aeon Church International

.....
Davron Michaels
[Pagan Solidarity Alliance](#)
[REDACTED] PII
[REDACTED] PII



PAGAN SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE

Advancing Religious Liberty Through Research, Dialogue, and Effective Governance

Cover Letter – Policy Brief No. 2026-01

M. Rev. Dr. Davron Michaels
Paramount Priest, New Aeon Church International
Spiral Council Member, Pagan Solidarity Alliance

July 8, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
United States Department of Justice

Re: Submission of PSA Policy Brief No. 2026-01 for the Commission's Consideration

Dear Chair and Members of the Commission,

On behalf of the Pagan Solidarity Alliance, I respectfully submit the enclosed publication, *Administrative Principles Supporting the Practical Implementation of Religious Liberty*, for the Commission's consideration.

Although this brief was prompted by recent public discussion concerning federal religious administrative systems, it was written with a broader purpose in mind. Rather than advocating for the interests of any single faith community, it examines an aspect of religious liberty that often receives comparatively little attention: the role that public administration plays in transforming constitutional principles into lived realities.

Constitutional rights are ultimately experienced through the decisions of public servants and the administrative systems they employ. Religious accommodation procedures, chaplaincy programs, classification systems, institutional guidance, and transparent administrative processes all shape how Americans encounter religious liberty in their daily interactions with government.

Religious liberty is often tested not when government serves the religious majority, but when it encounters communities that are unfamiliar, numerically small, or imperfectly understood. The strength of our constitutional system is measured by its ability to protect every person's freedom of

conscience with equal care, regardless of the size, popularity, or public familiarity of their faith tradition. Administrative systems that are transparent, carefully documented, and appropriately specific help ensure that these constitutional protections remain meaningful in practice. It is our sincere hope that the enclosed policy brief contributes constructively to that shared objective.

Throughout the preparation of this publication, we sought to approach these questions in a constructive spirit. We recognize the complexity of administering religious liberty within an increasingly diverse nation, and we appreciate the difficult responsibilities entrusted to those who serve in public office.

As part of our research, the Alliance also initiated a series of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests seeking historical documentation concerning the evolution of federal religious administrative systems.

The Alliance recognizes that the Commission has received submissions representing a wide range of religious traditions and viewpoints. We do not ask for special consideration. Rather, we respectfully ask that the operational principles discussed in this publication be evaluated on their own merits as potential tools for strengthening the faithful, consistent, and transparent administration of religious liberty for all Americans.

We respectfully offer this publication in the hope that it may contribute to the Commission's deliberations and to the continuing national conversation concerning religious liberty.

Thank you for your service on the Religious Liberty Commission and for your consideration of this submission. Should the Commission or its staff have questions concerning this publication or wish to discuss the issues presented in greater detail, we would welcome the opportunity to be of assistance.

With respect,



M. Rev. Dr. Davron Michaels

Spiral Council Member, Pagan Solidarity Alliance
Paramount Priest, New Aeon Church International

Pagan Solidarity Alliance is a fiscally sponsored initiative of the Order of Liberty, a ministry of New Aeon Church International.

Enclosure: PSA Policy Brief No. 2026-01

PAGAN SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE

Policy Brief Series

Policy Brief No. 2026-01

Administrative Principles

Supporting the Practical Implementation of Religious Liberty

Policy recommendations for the effective administrative implementation of religious liberty within constitutional systems of government.

Prepared for the

Religious Liberty Commission

United States Department of Justice

July 2026

Advancing Religious Liberty Through Research, Dialogue, and Effective Governance

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Policy Brief Series

Policy Brief No. 2026-01

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Pagan Solidarity Alliance Policy Brief No. 2026-01.

July 2026.

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PSA Policy Brief 2026-01

Executive Summary

Religious liberty is often understood primarily through constitutional law and judicial interpretation. While those foundations remain essential, the practical exercise of religious liberty depends equally upon the administrative systems by which government implements constitutional protections in everyday operations. Administrative classification systems, religious accommodation procedures, chaplaincy programs, demographic reporting, and institutional guidance are the mechanisms through which constitutional principles become lived realities for citizens interacting with public institutions.

This policy brief examines religious liberty from the perspective of public administration. Prompted by recent changes to Department of Defense religious classification systems, the Pagan Solidarity Alliance undertook a broader examination of the role administrative recognition plays in supporting the practical implementation of religious liberty throughout government. The resulting analysis extends beyond any single agency or religious tradition, focusing instead on enduring principles of effective governance applicable across federal institutions.

Central to this brief is the principle that administrative recognition should be understood as an operational function rather than a theological one. Government does not determine religious legitimacy; however, it must maintain administrative systems capable of accurately identifying, understanding, and serving the diverse religious communities that interact with public institutions. Classification systems that provide an appropriate level of specificity support more effective communication, demographic reporting, accommodation planning, chaplaincy resource allocation, and institutional continuity while preserving governmental neutrality toward religion.

To better understand the historical development of these administrative systems, the Alliance conducted an extensive review of constitutional authorities, federal statutes, judicial decisions, executive branch guidance, Department of Defense publications, public administration scholarship, and historical records. In addition, the Alliance initiated a coordinated five-request Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) research initiative seeking historical and current records concerning the evolution and administration of federal religious classification systems.

Based upon that analysis, this publication offers seven recommendations emphasizing transparency, administrative continuity, evidence-based decision-making, constructive engagement, and the maintenance of administrative recognition systems at an appropriate level of specificity. These recommendations are offered not as advocacy for any particular religious tradition, but as principles of sound public administration intended to strengthen the practical implementation of religious liberty for all.

The Pagan Solidarity Alliance respectfully submits this policy brief in the hope that it will contribute to informed discussion concerning the relationship between constitutional principle, effective governance, and the everyday administration of religious liberty within a pluralistic constitutional republic.

PART I

Foundations

I. Introduction

Religious liberty is often discussed in terms of constitutional rights, judicial decisions, and philosophical principles. Those foundations are indispensable, but they represent only part of the American experience of religious freedom. Constitutional protections become meaningful in everyday life only when they are implemented through the administrative systems that govern the interaction between citizens and public institutions.

For most Americans, religious liberty is not experienced in a courtroom. It is encountered through routine interactions with government. A service member requests a religious accommodation through military administrative channels. An incarcerated individual seeks access to clergy or religious materials through correctional procedures. A patient requests the services of a hospital chaplain. A government employee requests a workplace accommodation for religious observance. In each instance, constitutional principles are translated into lived experience through administrative policies, procedures, and decisions.

These administrative systems rarely attract public attention. They generally operate quietly in the background of government, providing the organizational structure necessary to implement constitutional obligations consistently across diverse populations and operational environments. When they function effectively, religious liberty is experienced as a practical reality rather than merely an abstract legal principle. When they function poorly, even well-established constitutional protections may become difficult to exercise in practice.

The purpose of this brief is not to revisit longstanding constitutional debates concerning the meaning or scope of religious liberty. Nor does it seek to advocate for preferential treatment for any particular religious tradition. Rather, this publication examines religious liberty through the perspective of public administration. It argues that effective administration—and the use of sufficiently specific administrative classification and recognition systems to implement constitutional responsibilities—serves as the practical bridge between constitutional principle and everyday implementation.

During 2026, publicly reported changes to military religious preference classifications prompted the Pagan Solidarity Alliance to examine the broader administrative principles underlying governmental systems of religious identification. That inquiry ultimately expanded beyond a single administrative action into a broader examination of how religious liberty is implemented through public administration. To better understand the historical development of these systems, the Alliance initiated a coordinated series of *Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)* requests seeking current and historical records, decision memoranda, implementation guidance, historical classification lists, and related administrative documentation concerning the evolution of federal religious recognition systems.

Although informed by issues affecting Pagan and other minority-faith communities, the observations presented here extend well beyond any single religious tradition. Administrative transparency, institutional continuity, organizational learning, constructive engagement, and effective recognition systems benefit governmental institutions and citizens alike, regardless of religious affiliation. These principles strengthen administrative capacity while reinforcing public confidence that governmental institutions are acting fairly, consistently, and within constitutional boundaries.

This perspective reflects a broader understanding of religious liberty. Constitutional guarantees establish legal rights. Courts interpret those rights when disputes arise. Legislatures establish statutory frameworks. Public administrators, however, carry the continuing responsibility of implementing those principles in thousands of routine decisions made every day throughout government. Their work represents the practical administration of religious liberty.

Accordingly, this brief offers recommendations grounded not in theology or partisan advocacy, but in principles of sound public administration. It seeks to contribute constructively to the Religious Liberty Commission's work by examining how administrative systems can better support the consistent, transparent, and effective implementation of constitutional protections.

Research Methodology

This policy brief is based upon a review of constitutional authorities, federal statutes, executive branch guidance, Department of Justice materials, Department of Defense publications, historical administrative records, judicial decisions, and relevant public administration literature.

In addition to publicly available materials, the Pagan Solidarity Alliance undertook an extensive documentary research effort concerning the administration of religious recognition within the United States military. During 2026, the Alliance submitted a series of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests seeking historical and current records relating to military religious preference classifications, administrative decision-making, implementation guidance, historical change documentation, and related records. These requests remain pending at the time of publication.

The purpose of these requests is not to support litigation or advocacy, but to improve public understanding of how religious liberty is implemented through administrative systems and to encourage transparency, institutional continuity, and informed public discussion.

Scope

Although this brief was prompted by recent developments affecting military religious classification systems, the principles discussed herein apply broadly to public administration across all levels of government. The recommendations offered are intended to strengthen administrative implementation of religious liberty generally rather than to address any single agency or administrative action.

II. Historical Foundations of Religious Liberty Administration

Historical Context

The American tradition of religious liberty has never existed independently of government administration. From the earliest years of the Republic, constitutional principles required practical mechanisms through which they could be implemented. As governmental responsibilities expanded and the nation's religious landscape became increasingly diverse, administrative systems evolved alongside constitutional doctrine to accommodate changing operational realities.

Early public institutions generally operated within a relatively limited religious environment. Over time, however, immigration, demographic change, military service, correctional systems, higher education, health care, and other governmental functions required increasingly sophisticated methods for interacting with citizens representing a growing diversity of religious beliefs. Administrative systems developed gradually to meet those practical needs.

This evolution was not primarily theological. Government agencies were not tasked with determining religious truth or evaluating doctrinal legitimacy. Rather, they developed administrative mechanisms that enabled effective communication, accommodation, recordkeeping, chaplaincy services, demographic reporting, and other operational functions necessary to serve an increasingly pluralistic society while maintaining constitutional neutrality.

The Evolution of Administrative Recognition

Administrative recognition should be understood primarily as an operational tool rather than a statement concerning theological legitimacy. Classification systems, religious preference codes, chaplaincy guidance, accommodation procedures, and related administrative mechanisms exist because government must organize information in order to perform its functions effectively.

These systems allow agencies to identify accommodation needs, facilitate communication with religious organizations, allocate chaplaincy resources, maintain historical continuity, analyze demographic trends, and ensure that constitutional obligations are implemented consistently across large and complex institutions. They are instruments of governance rather than endorsements of belief.

Throughout American history, these administrative mechanisms have expanded and adapted in response to changing social conditions. As previously underrepresented religious communities became more visible within military service, correctional institutions, educational settings, and other public environments, administrative systems evolved to recognize those realities. This process has generally reflected practical administrative necessity rather than ideological preference.

The Importance of Administrative Specificity

Administrative recognition serves operational purposes only when it provides information that is sufficiently specific to support effective governmental decision-making. Classification systems that are overly broad may reduce administrative complexity, but they may also diminish the ability of

agencies to understand the populations they serve, identify accommodation needs, allocate resources, preserve demographic information, and communicate effectively with religious communities.

Historically, federal administrative systems have frequently expanded religious classifications rather than collapsing them as governmental experience with religious diversity increased. This reflects an important principle of public administration: effective administration often depends upon information of sufficient specificity to support operational decision-making.

The issue is therefore not whether government should evaluate theology. It should not. Rather, the question is whether administrative systems provide an appropriate level of detail to enable government to administer constitutional responsibilities effectively.

Administrative Recognition as Public Infrastructure

Administrative systems constitute an often-overlooked component of the nation's public infrastructure. Just as financial systems enable taxation, personnel systems support public employment, and records management systems preserve institutional continuity, religious administrative systems provide the organizational framework through which constitutional protections are implemented in practice.

Their importance is frequently most visible when they are absent or unclear. Ambiguous procedures, inconsistent terminology, undocumented administrative changes, or inadequate communication may create confusion for public officials and citizens alike. Conversely, transparent administrative processes strengthen institutional effectiveness by providing predictable procedures, preserving organizational knowledge, and supporting informed decision-making.

Viewed from this perspective, administrative recognition is not an end in itself. Rather, it is one component of a broader administrative ecosystem designed to facilitate effective governance while respecting constitutional principles. Its value lies in enabling public institutions to administer religious liberty consistently, transparently, and fairly across diverse operational environments.

For these reasons, discussions concerning religious liberty should include not only constitutional doctrine and judicial interpretation, but also the administrative systems through which those principles are implemented. Public administration represents the practical dimension of constitutional governance. Understanding that relationship provides the foundation for the recommendations that follow.

PART II

Administrative Principles Supporting Religious Liberty

III. Religious Liberty in Practice

Constitutional rights derive their enduring strength not only from judicial interpretation but from their consistent implementation through effective public administration. Every day, public officials make thousands of administrative decisions concerning religious accommodation, institutional access, chaplaincy services, dietary requirements, scheduling, facility use, recordkeeping, and numerous other matters affecting the practical exercise of religious liberty. Although individually routine, these decisions collectively determine how constitutional protections are experienced by the public.

For this reason, the administration of religious liberty should be understood as a continuing governmental responsibility rather than an occasional legal obligation. Administrative systems provide the mechanisms through which constitutional principles become operational. They establish procedures, preserve institutional knowledge, coordinate communication, and enable public servants to respond consistently to diverse religious needs while maintaining governmental neutrality.

This perspective does not diminish the importance of constitutional law. Rather, it recognizes that constitutional guarantees require effective administrative implementation in order to achieve their intended purpose. Courts resolve disputes when conflicts arise. Administrators, however, create the systems that often prevent unnecessary conflicts from occurring in the first place.

Accordingly, effective administration should be viewed as an essential component of religious liberty itself. Administrative excellence reinforces constitutional protections by promoting fairness, consistency, predictability, and public confidence in governmental decision-making.

Transparency as an Administrative Principle

Transparency serves as one of the foundational principles of effective public administration. Citizens are more likely to trust governmental institutions when administrative processes are understandable, significant policy changes are communicated clearly, and the rationale underlying important administrative decisions is reasonably documented.

Transparency also benefits government itself. Clearly documented procedures improve institutional continuity, reduce uncertainty among employees responsible for implementation, facilitate organizational learning, and provide valuable historical context for future decision-makers. Well-documented administrative practices reduce unnecessary confusion while promoting consistency across agencies and operational environments.

Transparency does not require disclosure of every internal deliberation or operational detail. Rather, it encourages the development of administrative systems that are sufficiently understandable to promote accountability and public confidence while preserving the operational flexibility necessary for effective governance.

In matters affecting religious liberty, transparency strengthens public trust by demonstrating that administrative decisions are grounded in identifiable principles and established procedures rather than arbitrary or inconsistent practice.

Administrative Recognition, Specificity, and Effective Governance

Administrative recognition serves an operational purpose only when it provides information of sufficient specificity to support effective governmental decision-making. Classification systems exist not to evaluate the legitimacy of religious beliefs, but to enable government to administer its constitutional and statutory responsibilities accurately, consistently, and efficiently.

Every administrative classification represents a balance between simplicity and usefulness. Categories that are overly broad may reduce administrative complexity, but they may also diminish the quality of information available to decision-makers. Conversely, appropriately detailed classifications enable government to better understand the populations it serves while improving the effectiveness of planning, communication, and service delivery. When administrative specificity is unnecessarily reduced, agencies risk losing information that supports accommodation planning, historical continuity, demographic analysis, and effective communication with the communities they serve. The question is therefore not whether administrative systems should be simple, but whether they remain sufficiently informative to fulfill their operational purpose.

Administrative Experience Within the Department of Defense

The operational value of administrative specificity has previously been recognized by the Department of Defense itself. In a March 27, 2017 memorandum entitled *Faith and Belief Codes for Reporting Personnel Data of Service Members*, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense explained that the Armed Forces Chaplains Board recommended expanding the Department's faith and belief codes to better align with statutory protections for the rights of conscience of service members and chaplains. The memorandum further explained that expanding the Department's administrative classifications would improve the accuracy of demographic reporting, enhance planning for religious support to the force, and provide a better assessment of the capabilities and requirements of each Military Service's Chaplain Corps.

The significance of this memorandum extends beyond the military context. It demonstrates that administrative specificity is not merely symbolic or theological. Rather, the Department itself recognized that more detailed religious identifiers improve operational planning, demographic accuracy, communication, and the administration of religious support. In that context, administrative specificity serves religious liberty by helping government understand and respond effectively to the needs of the populations it serves.

This experience also illustrates the importance of institutional continuity. When administrative systems evolve, agencies benefit from preserving the rationale for additions, consolidations, renamings, or retirements of administrative classifications. Such documentation supports transparency, preserves institutional knowledge, and enables future administrators to understand not only what changed, but why those changes were made.

These objectives illustrate a broader principle of sound public administration. Administrative specificity supports effective governance by enabling agencies to understand who they serve and to allocate resources accordingly. More detailed administrative information improves communication between government and affected communities, assists officials responsible for religious accommodations, supports chaplaincy planning, preserves demographic information for future analysis, and contributes to institutional learning over time.

Administrative specificity also strengthens institutional continuity. Historical records documenting how classification systems evolve—including additions, consolidations, renamings, or retirements of administrative identifiers—provide future administrators with valuable context for understanding prior decisions and implementing subsequent policy changes. Maintaining that institutional knowledge reduces uncertainty, promotes consistency, and supports informed decision-making across successive administrations.

Importantly, administrative specificity should not be confused with governmental endorsement of religion. The Constitution neither authorizes nor requires government to determine theological validity. Rather, appropriately detailed administrative classifications enable constitutionally neutral institutions to carry out operational responsibilities fairly and effectively while respecting the diverse religious identities of the populations they serve.

Accordingly, the question is not whether government should recognize every religious tradition as a matter of theological legitimacy. The appropriate question is whether administrative systems contain sufficient information to enable government to fulfill its constitutional obligations effectively, transparently, and consistently. When viewed through this administrative lens, specificity becomes not a matter of preference, but of effective governance.

Institutional Continuity and Organizational Learning

Effective public administration depends upon institutional memory. Government agencies routinely preserve policies, procedures, guidance documents, historical records, and operational experience because continuity enables future decision-makers to benefit from prior knowledge rather than repeatedly rediscovering solutions to recurring challenges.

This principle applies equally to the administration of religious liberty. Historical documentation, administrative guidance, policy rationales, and implementation experience provide valuable institutional knowledge that supports consistency while reducing unnecessary uncertainty. When agencies preserve this knowledge, they strengthen both operational effectiveness and public confidence.

Organizational learning also encourages continual improvement. Administrative systems should evolve as governmental experience expands, demographic conditions change, and operational needs develop. Periodic review of administrative practices allows agencies to identify opportunities for improvement while preserving successful approaches developed through experience.

This perspective recognizes that effective administration is neither static nor self-executing. It requires continual evaluation, thoughtful refinement, and a willingness to incorporate lessons learned over time.

Constructive Engagement

Public administration benefits from informed dialogue among governmental institutions, religious communities, scholars, practitioners, and the citizens affected by administrative decisions.

Constructive engagement promotes mutual understanding while providing decision-makers with practical perspectives that may not be apparent through internal administrative processes alone.

Such engagement should not be understood as transferring governmental authority to outside organizations. Responsibility for administrative decisions properly remains with public officials acting within constitutional and statutory authority. Consultation, however, often improves the quality of administrative decision-making by broadening understanding of operational impacts and identifying practical considerations that may otherwise be overlooked.

Constructive engagement also reinforces public confidence. Citizens are more likely to perceive governmental processes as fair when agencies demonstrate openness to informed dialogue while maintaining transparency concerning their ultimate decision-making responsibilities.

For these reasons, opportunities for appropriate communication between government and affected communities should be viewed as a strength of effective public administration rather than a departure from constitutional neutrality.

The principles discussed above—effective implementation, transparency, operational recognition, institutional continuity, and constructive engagement—represent enduring characteristics of sound public administration. They do not prescribe specific policy outcomes, nor do they favor particular religious traditions. Instead, they describe administrative practices that strengthen governmental effectiveness while reinforcing public confidence in the practical implementation of religious liberty.

Building upon these principles, the following recommendations are respectfully offered for the Commission's consideration.

PART III

Recommendations to the Religious Liberty Commission

The Pagan Solidarity Alliance respectfully offers the following recommendations as principles of sound public administration. They are intended neither to prescribe specific administrative outcomes nor to advocate preferential treatment for any religious tradition. Rather, they identify practices that strengthen transparency, consistency, institutional effectiveness, and public confidence in the practical implementation of religious liberty.

Collectively, these recommendations reflect the central thesis of this brief: constitutional protections achieve their greatest practical value when supported by well-designed administrative systems.

Administrative Change as a Case Study

The Alliance's interest in administrative implementation arises from recent publicly reported changes to military religious preference classifications. Regardless of the ultimate merits of those decisions, the circumstances illustrate broader principles discussed throughout this brief.

Questions concerning documentation, historical continuity, stakeholder communication, implementation guidance, and administrative transparency are not unique to any particular religious tradition. They arise whenever significant administrative systems evolve.

The recommendations offered in this paper therefore should not be understood as responses to a single event. Rather, they reflect broader principles that may assist governmental institutions whenever substantial administrative changes affect the implementation of religious liberty.

Recommendation 1

Promote Administrative Transparency

The Commission should encourage federal agencies to document and communicate significant administrative decisions affecting religious recognition, accommodation procedures, and related operational policies whenever practicable.

Transparency strengthens both accountability and public confidence. Clear documentation of administrative changes enables employees, affected communities, and future administrators to understand how decisions were reached while preserving institutional knowledge for future reference. Although agencies must retain appropriate operational flexibility, significant changes affecting the implementation of religious liberty should ordinarily be accompanied by sufficient explanation to promote informed public understanding.

Recommendation 2

Preserve Institutional Knowledge

Federal agencies should maintain appropriate historical records supporting significant administrative decisions relating to religious administration.

Institutional memory is an essential component of effective governance. Administrative guidance, historical policy rationales, implementation experience, and related documentation enable future decision-makers to build upon prior knowledge rather than repeatedly revisiting previously resolved issues. Preserving institutional continuity improves consistency while reducing unnecessary uncertainty for both public officials and the communities they serve.

Recommendation 3

Maintain Administrative Recognition Systems at an Appropriate Level of Specificity

Administrative classification and recognition systems should be maintained at a level of specificity sufficient to support effective governmental operations. Periodic review should evaluate not only administrative efficiency, but also whether classification systems continue to provide the information necessary to support religious accommodation, demographic reporting, chaplaincy planning, institutional continuity, and effective communication with affected communities.

Such reviews need not imply that every requested change should be adopted. Rather, periodic evaluation demonstrates sound administrative practice by ensuring that existing systems continue to fulfill their intended operational purposes. Regular review encourages continual improvement while preserving flexibility to respond to changing governmental needs.

Administrative implementation should neither advantage nor disadvantage religious communities based upon their size, public familiarity, historical prominence, or perceived popularity. Equal protection requires that administrative systems remain capable of recognizing and serving both majority and minority faith communities—including those encompassing diverse religious traditions and denominations—according to transparent, consistent, and objective principles.

Recommendation 4

Encourage Constructive Engagement

Where appropriate, agencies should maintain opportunities for constructive dialogue with affected communities, subject-matter experts, chaplains, scholars, and other stakeholders whose experience may contribute to informed administrative decision-making.

Constructive engagement enhances administrative understanding without transferring governmental authority or compromising constitutional neutrality. Open communication frequently improves policy implementation by identifying practical concerns, clarifying operational

impacts, and strengthening mutual understanding between governmental institutions and the public.

Recommendation 5

Promote Administrative Consistency

Administrative guidance concerning the implementation of religious liberty should emphasize consistency while recognizing that operational environments may require reasonable flexibility in application.

Consistency promotes fairness, predictability, and public confidence. Clear administrative guidance assists personnel responsible for implementation while reducing unnecessary variation among similarly situated cases. At the same time, agencies should retain sufficient flexibility to address legitimate operational differences among military, correctional, healthcare, educational, and other governmental settings.

Recommendation 6

Encourage Evidence-Based Administrative Evaluation

Administrative systems should be evaluated periodically using objective information concerning implementation, operational effectiveness, and lessons learned.

Government benefits from continual organizational learning. Periodic evaluation enables agencies to identify successful practices, recognize opportunities for improvement, and adapt administrative systems as operational experience accumulates. Evidence-based evaluation strengthens both efficiency and public confidence while encouraging thoughtful refinement rather than reactive change.

Recommendation 7

Recognize Administration as an Essential Component of Religious Liberty

The Commission should recognize that effective public administration constitutes an essential component of the practical implementation of religious liberty.

Constitutional guarantees establish legal rights. Administrative systems transform those rights into everyday reality. The continued strength of religious liberty therefore depends not only upon constitutional interpretation but also upon the effectiveness, transparency, consistency, and professionalism of the administrative institutions responsible for implementation.

Recognizing this relationship encourages a more comprehensive understanding of religious liberty—one that appreciates both constitutional principle and administrative practice as mutually reinforcing elements of effective democratic governance.

The recommendations presented above do not seek to redefine constitutional doctrine or alter the fundamental relationship between government and religion. Rather, they reflect established principles of effective public administration that can strengthen the practical implementation of existing constitutional protections.

The Alliance respectfully submits that attention to these administrative considerations will contribute to more consistent, transparent, and effective governance while reinforcing public confidence in the Nation's longstanding commitment to religious liberty for all.

PART IV

Toward the Practical Administration of Religious Liberty

Religious liberty occupies a unique place within the American constitutional tradition. It protects individual conscience, preserves institutional neutrality, and reflects one of the Nation's enduring commitments to human dignity and democratic governance. Throughout American history, courts have interpreted these constitutional protections, legislatures have enacted statutory safeguards, and public officials have worked to implement them across an increasingly diverse society.

This brief has examined an aspect of religious liberty that receives comparatively little public attention: the administrative systems through which constitutional principles are translated into everyday governmental practice. While constitutional doctrine establishes legal rights, administration determines how those rights are experienced by citizens interacting with public institutions.

The Alliance's ongoing documentary research, including pending Freedom of Information Act requests concerning historical administrative records, reflects the belief that transparency strengthens both governmental institutions and public confidence. Whatever conclusions future records may reveal, preserving institutional knowledge and making administrative history available for informed public understanding serves the interests of effective governance and constitutional accountability alike.

Administrative systems perform essential functions that are often invisible when operating effectively. They facilitate communication between government and religious communities, coordinate accommodations, preserve institutional knowledge, organize demographic information, support chaplaincy programs, and provide public officials with practical mechanisms for implementing constitutional obligations consistently. Although these systems are administrative rather than judicial, they represent an indispensable component of the practical exercise of religious liberty.

For this reason, the Alliance respectfully submits that discussions concerning religious liberty should encompass not only constitutional interpretation but also the quality of the administrative systems responsible for implementation. Transparency, consistency, institutional continuity, organizational learning, and constructive engagement are not merely management practices; they are characteristics of sound public administration that strengthen public confidence while supporting faithful execution of constitutional responsibilities.

The recommendations presented in this brief are offered in that spirit. They do not advocate preferential treatment for any religious tradition, nor do they seek to alter existing constitutional doctrine. Rather, they encourage continued attention to the administrative structures that enable government to serve an increasingly diverse public fairly, consistently, and effectively.

The Pagan Solidarity Alliance recognizes the complexity of administering religious liberty within a pluralistic constitutional republic. Public officials must balance competing responsibilities, operate within evolving legal frameworks, and make decisions affecting citizens representing an extraordinary diversity of religious beliefs and practices. Effective administration requires both principled leadership and practical flexibility.

As this brief has demonstrated, appropriately specific administrative recognition systems are not expressions of theological preference but practical instruments of effective public administration. They enable government to understand the populations it serves, support religious accommodation, preserve institutional knowledge, improve demographic reporting, inform chaplaincy planning, and fulfill constitutional responsibilities consistently while maintaining institutional neutrality. Properly understood, administrative specificity strengthens religious liberty not by favoring particular beliefs, but by improving the quality of public administration itself.

Ultimately, the enduring strength of religious liberty depends not only upon the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, but upon the daily work of the public servants entrusted with implementing those guarantees. Sound administration does not replace constitutional principle; it gives constitutional principle practical effect.

It is in that spirit of constructive public service, institutional respect, and commitment to effective governance that the Pagan Solidarity Alliance respectfully submits this policy brief for the Commission's consideration.

Constitutional rights endure through law. They become meaningful through faithful administration.

About the PSA Policy Brief Series

The **PSA Policy Brief Series** is published by the Pagan Solidarity Alliance to promote thoughtful discussion concerning religious liberty, public administration, minority-faith communities, and related public policy issues.

Each publication seeks to contribute constructively to public discourse through careful historical research, evidence-based analysis, and practical recommendations grounded in principles of effective governance. The series is intended to inform policymakers, public administrators, scholars, faith leaders, journalists, and members of the public while encouraging respectful dialogue across diverse perspectives.

The Alliance believes that durable public policy is strengthened through scholarship, transparency, institutional learning, and constructive engagement. Accordingly, each publication emphasizes constitutional principles, sound public administration, and practical implementation rather than partisan advocacy.

The views expressed within individual publications represent the considered analysis of their authors and have been reviewed for publication by the Pagan Solidarity Alliance.

About the Pagan Solidarity Alliance

The Pagan Solidarity Alliance is a national coalition dedicated to advancing religious liberty, mutual understanding, and equal treatment for Pagan communities while promoting constitutional principles that benefit individuals of every faith tradition.

The Alliance supports education, leadership development, research, constructive public engagement, and collaborative partnerships that strengthen both religious liberty and effective public administration.

Recognizing that the principles discussed in this publication extend beyond any single religious tradition, the Alliance seeks to contribute positively to public policy through thoughtful scholarship, practical recommendations, and respectful dialogue with governmental institutions, academic researchers, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders.

About the Author

M. Rev. Dr. Davron Michaels serves as Paramount Priest of New Aeon Church International and is a member of the Spiral Council of the Pagan Solidarity Alliance.

Professionally, he has more than three decades of experience in organizational leadership, public administration, nonprofit governance, and higher education. His career has included executive leadership in both public and nonprofit organizations, organizational consulting, and university instruction in business administration and management.

For more than three decades, Dr. Michaels has worked on issues involving the practical implementation of religious liberty for minority-faith communities. His experience includes advocacy concerning military religious accommodation, governmental recognition of minority faiths, and participation in national efforts surrounding the recognition of the pentacle as an approved emblem of belief for veterans' government-issued headstones and markers.

Drawing upon both professional administrative experience and longstanding involvement in minority-faith religious liberty issues, Dr. Michaels approaches these questions from the perspective of effective governance rather than theological advocacy. His work emphasizes constructive engagement among governmental institutions, faith communities, and the public to strengthen the practical implementation of constitutional protections.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the members of the Pagan Solidarity Alliance whose thoughtful discussion, review, and constructive feedback contributed to the development of this publication.

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References

Constitutional Authorities

United States Constitution. amend. I.

Federal Statutes

Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-141, 107 Stat. 1488 (codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000bb–2000bb-4).

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Appendices

The following appendices provide supplemental historical, legal, and methodological information supporting the discussion contained in this policy brief. They are intended to assist readers seeking additional context while preserving the readability of the principal text.

APPENDIX A

Timeline of Administrative Developments

The following timeline provides historical context for the administrative developments discussed in this policy brief.

Date	Administrative Development	Significance
October 6, 2017	U.S. Department of Justice issues <i>Federal Law Protections for Religious Liberty</i> memorandum.	Establishes government-wide guidance emphasizing the protection of religious liberty throughout executive branch administration.
March 27, 2017	Department of Defense issues <i>Faith and Belief Codes for Reporting Personnel Data of Service Members</i> .	Expands military Faith and Belief Codes to improve demographic reporting, chaplain planning, and religious support capabilities.
May 20, 2026	Department of Defense revises Faith and Belief Codes, reducing the number of recognized classifications.	Represents a significant restructuring of administrative religious classification systems.
June 2026	Public reporting brings the administrative revisions to national attention.	Initiates public discussion concerning transparency, administrative continuity, and implementation.
June–July 2026	Pagan Solidarity Alliance initiates a coordinated five-request Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) research initiative.	Begins systematic documentary research into the historical development and implementation of federal religious classification systems.
July 2026	Submission of this policy brief.	Presents recommendations concerning the administrative implementation of religious liberty.

APPENDIX B

Evolution of Federal Religious Administrative Recognition

The administrative recognition of religious identities within the federal government has evolved gradually in response to changing operational requirements rather than theological considerations. As governmental institutions have become responsible for serving an increasingly diverse population, administrative systems have expanded to improve communication, accommodation, demographic reporting, and institutional planning while maintaining constitutional neutrality toward religion.

Early Administrative Practice

For much of the twentieth century, federal administrative systems recognized only a relatively small number of broad religious classifications. These systems reflected the demographic composition of the Nation at the time and the practical administrative needs of governmental institutions rather than any comprehensive catalog of religious traditions.

As American society became increasingly religiously diverse, public institutions—including the Armed Forces, correctional systems, health care facilities, and other governmental organizations—encountered growing numbers of individuals whose religious identities were not adequately represented within existing administrative classifications.

Expansion Through Administrative Experience

Rather than remaining static, federal administrative recognition systems generally evolved in response to operational experience. As agencies encountered new accommodation requests, expanded chaplaincy responsibilities, changing demographics, and increasing interaction with diverse faith communities, administrative classifications became progressively more detailed.

This evolution reflected a practical principle of public administration: effective governance depends upon information that is sufficiently specific to support informed decision-making. More detailed administrative recognition improved demographic reporting, facilitated communication with religious communities, supported chaplaincy planning, preserved institutional knowledge, and assisted public officials responsible for implementing constitutional protections.

The 2017 Department of Defense Memorandum

A significant example of this principle appears in the Department of Defense memorandum, *Faith and Belief Codes for Reporting Personnel Data of Service Members* (March 27, 2017). Acting upon recommendations of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board, the Department expanded its Faith and Belief Codes to better align administrative practice with statutory protections for the rights of conscience of service members and chaplains.

The memorandum explained that additional administrative specificity would improve demographic reporting, enhance planning for religious support to the force, and provide a better assessment of each Military Service's chaplain capabilities and requirements. In doing so, it explicitly recognized that administrative classification systems serve practical operational functions rather than theological ones.

Recent Administrative Developments

In 2026, the Department of Defense substantially revised its Faith and Belief Codes, reducing the number of administrative classifications. Regardless of the ultimate merits of that decision, the revision illustrates the continuing importance of transparency, documentation, institutional continuity, and effective communication whenever significant administrative systems evolve.

Because administrative recognition systems influence governmental planning, demographic information, accommodation procedures, and institutional knowledge, changes to those systems benefit from clear documentation explaining both the operational rationale for revision and the manner in which affected administrative functions will continue to be performed.

Administrative Continuity

The evolution of federal religious administrative recognition demonstrates that classification systems are not static artifacts but living components of public administration. Like other governmental information systems, they should be evaluated periodically to ensure that they continue to provide sufficient information to support effective governance while preserving historical continuity and maintaining public confidence.

Viewed from this perspective, administrative recognition is best understood as an operational instrument of constitutional governance—one designed to assist government in implementing religious liberty fairly, consistently, and effectively for an increasingly diverse society.

APPENDIX C

Research Methodology and Documentary Research Initiative

This publication was developed through a review of constitutional authorities, federal statutes, judicial decisions, executive branch guidance, Department of Defense publications, public administration scholarship, historical administrative materials, and contemporary reporting concerning federal religious classification systems.

To supplement publicly available materials, the Pagan Solidarity Alliance initiated a coordinated five-request Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) research initiative designed to obtain historical and current administrative records concerning the evolution, implementation, and administration of Department of Defense Faith and Belief Codes.

Request 1

Religious Preference / Affiliation Code Lists and Crosswalk

Purpose:

Obtain current and historical classification lists, implementation guidance, and documentation concerning additions, deletions, consolidations, renamings, and crosswalks between classification systems.

Request 2

Administrative Decision Record

Purpose:

Obtain memoranda, briefing materials, approvals, recommendations, and supporting documentation relating to both the 2017 expansion and the 2026 restructuring of Faith and Belief Codes.

Request 3

Differential Impact and Administrative Analysis

Purpose:

Determine whether potential impacts upon affected communities were evaluated and identify historical administrative criteria supporting classification decisions.

Request 4**Legal and Policy Review**

Purpose:

Obtain legal analyses concerning constitutional requirements, statutory authorities, Department of Defense policy, and related administrative guidance supporting implementation.

Request 5**Stakeholder Consultation**

Purpose:

Determine what consultation occurred with chaplain leadership, religious organizations, governmental entities, and other stakeholders during development and implementation.

At the time of publication, these requests remain pending. They are referenced as documentation of the Alliance's research methodology rather than as evidentiary support for the conclusions presented in this publication.

APPENDIX D

Selected Legal Authorities

The following authorities provide the principal constitutional, statutory, and judicial framework supporting the discussion contained in this publication.

Authority	Administrative Relevance
First Amendment to the United States Constitution	Constitutional foundation for religious liberty and governmental neutrality.
Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)	Establishes federal statutory protections against substantial burdens on religious exercise.
Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA)	Strengthens protection of religious exercise within institutional settings.
<i>Dettmer v. Landon</i> (1986)	Recognizes Wicca as a religion entitled to constitutional protection within correctional administration.
<i>Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah</i> (1993)	Reinforces governmental neutrality toward religion.
<i>Cutter v. Wilkinson</i> (2005)	Confirms accommodation of minority-faith religious exercise within institutional environments under RLUIPA.
<i>Holt v. Hobbs</i> (2015)	Demonstrates practical implementation of religious accommodation through institutional administration.

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

To: [REDACTED PII]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Chapters 7 and 10] – Reed Jones.

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 00:05:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

I applaud the Commission's entire report. Recommend that where possible the scope of Chapter 7 be inclusive of DoW civilian personnel to the extent possible, particularly regarding vaccine mandates and robust religious exemption clauses. Those exemptions were not truly available for DoW civilians during COVID. I would have greatly appreciated having them at hand as they would have stiffened my resolve to see the process of seeking a religious exemption through, instead of shrinking from what appeared to be a pitched battle against those who rejected the MRNA vaccines. I witnessed the resignations of many employees of strong convictions, rather than submit to the coercion behind the not so veiled threats to their employment.

Thanks again for charting a better path to the future through the principles outlined in the First Amendment.

Reed Jones

From: James Welborn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 00:36:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a professional historian and professor of history at a state institution of higher education, I wish to submit evidence-based comments drawn from nearly twenty years of intensive study of U.S. history in support of my dissenting view regarding the draft report named above. I also reiterate the views expressed by the leading professional organization in my field, the American Historical Association regarding the report and its fundamentally flawed assumptions and assertions about U.S. history:

Historical Context:

Religious liberty is one of the most consequential and contested subjects in American history. It deserves to be approached with historical rigor and careful attention to the complexity of the American experience.

The report rightly recognizes that religion has played a profound role in American history. But the history of religious liberty cannot be reduced to a single story of consensus or uniformity. From the colonial era through the present, Americans have debated the proper relationship between religion and government while working, often imperfectly, to protect both the free exercise of religion and the principle that government should not favor one set of religious beliefs or practices over another.

The history of religious liberty in America is the history of an ongoing effort to build institutions capable of protecting liberty of conscience across profound differences in belief. That history is complex, contested, and continually evolving. Any account of the American past that overlooks that complexity risks distorting both the historical record and the constitutional traditions it helped shape.

Specific Points of Emphasis toward rectifying the report's many issues:

Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus. The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.

The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.

By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.

The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact. For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche (“God is dead”), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile “Berlin wall” designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.

The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Historical inquiry and analysis, grounded in primary evidence from the past, must be inclusive and holistic, and devoid of presentist political partisanship. The draft report in question privileges the latter while almost wholly eschewing the former. As such, it forfeits any claim to actual history and merely serves as propaganda for party ideology. The intellectual, much less social, cultural, and political health and future of this great nation demands a true understanding, even reckoning with our entire history, not simply a celebratory chronicle of its triumphs, but an earnest and honest analysis of its shortcomings and failures. Only then can we the people truly learn from our past and actively bring forth a better future for all. This report actively and dangerously impedes, even undermines, that effort. Despite its claims to protecting, preserving, and promoting a more accurate history, in truth it accomplishes the opposite, and endangers many of the most sacred rights and freedoms enshrined in our nation's founding documents. It is, at its core, the very essence of "anti-American" that it purports to be a safeguard against.

Thank you and God Bless America!

Dr. James Hill "Trae" Welborn III
Professor of History
GCSU

From: richard page <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 03:51:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with the findings of your report and feel that the AHA is misrepresenting the issue intentionally knowing tht socially common customs of religious liberty have evolved does not mean allowing the trampling of moderation which enables the reconcilliation of all people of goodwill. The problem is people are being paid to promote harmful or extreme policies tht lead to illwill often by foreign governments who seek to divide the nation on racial, religious or other groups, a complex network of NGOs launder that money and use it to create greater social division in the US and weaken its institutions with false disputes or by agitating Minnesota, etc. and who will never say it but use their considerable lobbying weight to create less peace in the US so businesses and society becomes more unequal and more divided.

Follow the First amendment and why it was applied in 1791 laying peace as necessary cornerstone for coexistence and religious tolerance, like Ashoka did thousands of years ago in India and warned that respect for peace would not be subverted, and by Benjamin Franklin who warned that European influences in his day, today global influences, would be a perpetual problem if interfaith dialog and common social customs to define America were subverted.

Richard Page

From: Emily Baker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Addendum to Public Comment--"Religious Liberty is for Everyone"--Emily B.

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 07:38:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs/Madams:

I wanted to elaborate on what I said in my concluding paragraph about wanting members of all faiths, even those declaring no faith, to be granted the same security and ease in voicing their concerns and grievances that you gave the (ostensibly) Judeo-Christian people who spoke at previous hearings. It is a desire that Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, voiced in *The Spirit of the Laws*, the book quoted only second to the Bible at the Constitutional Convention, which he called specifically "a tranquility of mind arising from the opinion each person has of his safety," instead of a simple matter of "doing what one wants (Ballingall, 2026)."

All the speakers declared they wanted their right to publicly profess their faith, safety from persecution, and to act on their own ethics in the workplace, but will those who did not speak be guaranteed the same thing? Would workers who need contraceptives but can't afford to quit a job where the employer does not count contraceptives under health care on religious grounds to seek another workplace that will do so be guaranteed safety to voice their concerns (Patrick et al, pp. 131-9)? Would soldiers fearing to catch a communicable disease from one who refused immunizations on religious grounds be able to speak (ibid., p. 107)?

I will refer to Ballingall's conclusion on Montesquieu: "...liberty depends on the kind of civic culture the U.S. seems at risk of losing. No institutions, however well designed, can preserve liberty if citizens believe their preferred cultural norms are so obligatory that political power is needed to enforce them... A culture more tolerant of moral disagreements and less quick to reach for political power to force others to accept what they find morally wrong would help ease the distrust many Americans feel toward the government and one another." People from other perspectives beyond the ones who spoke in the previous hearings currently live in abject dread of those on the side of the latter using federal law as a bludgeon in the name of "religious liberty", thanks to the reputation the current administration has established, as per its dictates thus far. I sincerely hope that in future hearings, you will do all you can to ease those people's fears and allow them to speak, without holding their views against them any more than you did for the previous speakers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Emily Baker

Works Cited:

Ballingall, R.A. (2026, July 2). As the US Turns 250, a Forgotten Founding Influence Helps Explain Its Current Unease. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/as-the-us-turns-250-a-forgotten-founding-influence-helps-explain-its-current-unease-284066>

Patrick, D. et al. (2026, July 1). The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission: Americans' First Freedom--Pursuant to Executive Order 14291 of May 1, 2025. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline>

From: Terry Bradfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Defining Spiritual Fitness

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 08:44:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Defining Spiritual Fitness

This comment is submitted from the perspective of a former Personnel Policy Officer in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army.

Chapter 7 recommends a Department-wide *Spiritual Fitness Guide* but does not define the central concept upon which the recommendation depends.

If the Department is to establish a government-wide understanding of "spiritual fitness," several threshold questions should first be addressed.

- How is "spiritual fitness" defined?
- Is it a constitutional concept, a theological concept, a psychological concept, or an operational readiness concept?
- By what standard will that definition be developed?
- How will the guidance accommodate the diversity of conscience within the force while remaining consistent with both the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses?

One threshold question deserves particular attention: **What understanding of "spiritual" will the Department adopt?** Will the term be defined in explicitly religious terms, in broadly theistic terms, or in a manner intended to encompass both religious and non-religious sources of meaning and purpose? The answer will necessarily shape both the content of the proposed guidance and its constitutional implications.

Without first addressing these questions, it is difficult to evaluate either the necessity or the content of a new Spiritual Fitness Guide. In matters touching both constitutional rights and military policy, clear definitions should precede policy recommendations.

I respectfully recommend that Chapter 7 define the concept of spiritual fitness and identify the constitutional and institutional principles that will govern its implementation before recommending the development of additional guidance.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael T. Bradfield
Retired U.S. Army Chaplain

From: Terry Bradfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Demonstrating Institutional Need

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 08:46:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Demonstrating Institutional Need

This comment is submitted from the perspective of a former Personnel Policy Officer in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army.

Chapter 7 presents individual testimony supporting significant institutional recommendations. Individual testimony is valuable in identifying issues requiring attention. Institutional reform, however, ordinarily requires a broader evidentiary foundation.

Before recommending changes to Department-wide policy, the report would benefit from objective information concerning the operation of the accommodation process, including:

- Total accommodation requests submitted
- Approval and denial rates
- Reasons for denial
- Appeal rates and outcomes
- Patterns across the Military Services
- Administrative review outcomes

Without objective institutional data, it is difficult to determine whether the experiences presented reflect broader institutional practice or isolated failures of implementation, and therefore whether Department-wide policy reform is warranted.

I respectfully recommend that Chapter 7 supplement individual testimony with objective institutional data sufficient to demonstrate the need for the Department-wide policy changes it recommends.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael T. Bradfield
Retired U.S. Army Chaplain

From: Terry Bradfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Policy, Implementation, and Constitutional Balance - Michael T. Bradfield

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 08:51:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Policy, Implementation, and Constitutional Balance - Michael T. Bradfield

This comment is submitted from the perspective of a former Personnel Policy Officer in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army.

Chapter 7 identifies legitimate concerns regarding the protection of religious liberty within the armed forces. Its analysis would be strengthened, however, by distinguishing between three separate questions: whether existing policy is constitutionally adequate, whether existing policy has been faithfully implemented, and whether individual failures demonstrate systemic deficiencies. These questions require different evidence and different remedies.

The military has a constitutional responsibility. It must protect both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause while maintaining readiness, discipline, and mission accomplishment. Military chaplains assist commanders in preserving that constitutional balance.

The distinction between policy and implementation is not a technicality; it is the foundation of sound institutional analysis. Individual failures to apply policy correctly do not, by themselves, establish that the policy itself is deficient. They may instead reflect failures of leadership, education, supervision, or accountability.

Chapter 7 relies primarily on individual testimony to support broad institutional recommendations. Those experiences deserve careful consideration. They do not, however, necessarily demonstrate that existing Department of Defense policy is inadequate. Before recommending significant policy changes, the report should demonstrate that the identified deficiencies arise from the policy itself rather than from inconsistent implementation.

The report repeatedly treats failures of implementation as evidence of failures of policy. They are not the same, and they require different remedies.

I respectfully recommend that Chapter 7 distinguish explicitly between policy deficiencies and implementation failures before recommending institutional reforms. Doing so would strengthen both its analysis and its recommendations by ensuring that proposed remedies correspond to demonstrated causes.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael T. Bradfield
Retired U.S. Army Chaplain

From: Terry Bradfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Religious Accommodation: An Established Policy Framework – Michael T. Bradfield

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 08:53:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Religious Accommodation: An Established Policy Framework – Michael T. Bradfield

This comment is submitted from the perspective of a former Personnel Policy Officer in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army.

Chapter 7 discusses religious accommodation as though it were principally a matter of developing additional policy. The military, however, already operates within a substantial and long-established framework of constitutional, statutory, and regulatory guidance. Representative examples include:

- First Amendment to the United States Constitution
- Religious Freedom Restoration Act
- Department of Defense Instruction 1300.17, *Religious Liberty in the Military Services*
- Army Regulation 600-20, *Army Command Policy*
- Department of the Air Force Instruction 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force*
- Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1730.8B, *Accommodation of Religious Practices*

This framework has not developed accidentally or recently. It has evolved over decades through constitutional interpretation, congressional action, Department of Defense policy, Service implementation, and operational experience. It reflects an ongoing effort to protect religious liberty while preserving military readiness, good order, discipline, and constitutional neutrality.

The existence of this framework does not mean that implementation has always been consistent. Individual failures to apply existing policy should be corrected promptly. Those failures, however, do not by themselves establish that the governing policy framework is inadequate.

I respectfully recommend that Chapter 7 acknowledge the existing legal and regulatory framework governing religious accommodation and distinguish between deficiencies in that framework and deficiencies in its application before recommending additional institutional reforms.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael T. Bradfield
Retired U.S. Army Chaplain

From: Terry Bradfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Religious Liberty and Spiritual Fitness
– Michael T. Bradfield

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 08:54:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – Religious Liberty and Spiritual Fitness – Michael T. Bradfield

This comment is submitted from the perspective of a former Personnel Policy Officer in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army.

Chapter 7 recommends a Department-wide *Spiritual Fitness Guide* explaining how religion and religious accommodations are essential to supporting the whole warfighter. In doing so, it appears to move from the military's constitutional obligation to protect religious liberty to the empirical proposition that religion contributes to military readiness. Those are related, but distinct, questions.

The military protects religious liberty because the Constitution requires it. The Free Exercise Clause protects the religious liberty of every service member, while the Establishment Clause prohibits governmental preference for religion. Those constitutional obligations exist independently of whether religion can be shown to improve resilience, readiness, or any other measure of military effectiveness.

If future research concluded that religion had no measurable effect on resilience, the military would remain constitutionally obligated to protect the free exercise of religion. Likewise, if research demonstrated substantial benefits to readiness, the military would remain constitutionally prohibited from promoting religion as a preferred means of achieving those benefits.

For many service members, religion undoubtedly contributes to resilience, meaning, and well-being. Whether, and to what extent, it contributes to military readiness is an empirical question. The military's constitutional obligation to protect religious liberty does not depend upon the answer.

Grounding religious liberty primarily in its perceived contribution to military readiness also risks creating the appearance that religion is institutionally preferred because of its utility rather than constitutionally protected as an individual liberty. The military has historically protected religion as a constitutional liberty, not as an instrument of institutional effectiveness.

I respectfully recommend that Chapter 7 distinguish more clearly between constitutional obligations concerning religious liberty and operational initiatives intended to strengthen resilience or readiness.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael T. Bradfield
Retired U.S. Army Chaplain

Terry B.

Michael T. (Terry) Bradfield
[REDACTED] PII (Mobile)

From: Terry Bradfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – The Constitutional Purpose of the Military Chaplaincy – Michael T. Bradfield

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 08:57:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 7 – The Constitutional Purpose of the Military Chaplaincy – Michael T. Bradfield

This comment is submitted from the perspective of a former Personnel Policy Officer in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army.

Chapter 7 appropriately recognizes the importance of the military chaplaincy. Its discussion, however, would be strengthened by more clearly identifying the constitutional purpose for which the Chaplain Corps exists.

Although the military chaplaincy predates the Constitution, it has evolved into a governmental institution whose constitutional purpose is to enable the free exercise of religion within a military environment that necessarily limits many ordinary opportunities for religious practice. Chaplains exist because military service places unique burdens on the exercise of religion, and the government has a constitutional obligation to accommodate those burdens consistent with military necessity.

This constitutional purpose distinguishes the military chaplaincy from both civilian ministry and other military support functions. Chaplains advise commanders on matters affecting the free exercise of religion, facilitate the religious life of the force, and provide or arrange ministry in accordance with the tenets of their endorsing faith groups. In doing so, they help commanders fulfill constitutional obligations while preserving the military's institutional neutrality toward religion.

I respectfully recommend that Chapter 7 more clearly describe the military chaplaincy as a constitutional institution that enables the free exercise of religion rather than as an instrument for advancing religion or promoting institutional objectives.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael T. Bradfield
Retired U.S. Army Chaplain

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- Chapter 14 (The Path Forward) -- Geoff Lenters

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 08:58:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

This document is an excellent start to setting the record straight concerning the first amendment to the constitution. For too long I have been told to keep my religion to myself as I've taught at the university for 20+ years. I was told that I may not speak about anything in my classroom if it has nothing to do with my subject material. I teach physics and all of physics has everything to do with my faith. Yet, I was not "allowed" to speak of my faith. All the while I watched while colleagues of other religious persuasions freely spoke of their faith (especially atheists/secularists). I'm thankful that this secularist mindset is slowly being reversed, since I think that at the root of secularism is the communist manifesto. All communist writers speak of removing religion from the masses, and especially removing Christianity. The moment we lose Christianity, is the moment we lose our form of government. As this document states, the forefathers of our system of government recognized this and wrote that our system of government will only work so long as the governed retain their morals. There can be no morals in secularism because there is no fundamental truth in secularism. I would recommend adding a couple of quotes from scripture to this document. One from Proverbs and one from the Psalms:

Proverbs 14:34 — Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. (ESV)

Psalms 33:12 — Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! (ESV)

From: Carolyn Eastman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] public comment-religious liberty

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 09:49:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to issue broad complaints about the many distortions and inaccuracies in the draft report on American religious history by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. As a historian with a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University and several book awards for my published writing, I feel especially outraged that this draft report -- which purports to discuss American history -- has gotten it so wrong. It is no surprise to find that the list of contributors and consultants does not include a single historian who might have offered a non-ideological perspective on the matter; nor does it include representatives of the many non-Judeo-Christian faiths that existed in the United States during the founding era (Islam, Native religions, Asian religions, African faith practices).

The draft report gets history wrong because it is eager to paint people in the past as in complete agreement. Just like today, people during the founding era of the United States disagreed with one another -- but the one thing they agreed upon was that the U.S. government should not privilege one form of faith over another so that Americans could feel free to practice their faith in whatever way they wanted. They eliminated a state religion -- such as the Church of England in Great Britain -- and created a Constitution that did not favor any given form of faith.

Complete religious freedom, and a separation of church and state, were important to the Founders because they disagreed so much amongst themselves. The report downplays the significant divisions amongst the leaders of the country who developed these ideals for religious freedom. Yes, some of them were Christians. But some of the most significant figures such as Washington and Jefferson were deists **who expressly rejected the idea that Jesus was the son of God.** It is a shocking lie to assert that this group of figures were uniformly Christian. Moreover, it ignores what we know about Americans: we don't agree on much, but we have remained united as a people nevertheless for 250 years.

As a result, I firmly oppose the report and its overtly ideological effort to shoehorn the religious diversity of the United States into a very, very small box. This represents a shameless rejection of our history.

From: Peter Cole <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 10:18:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello.

As a professor of US history for nearly 30 years and who earned his Ph.D. in History in 1997, I'm writing to challenge many aspects of the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

First and foremost, there was NO Christian consensus at the birth of our nation. Period. Full Stop. Anyone who reads about the founding generation knows that they lived in a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. That's precisely why the "Founding Fathers" were SO opposed to any state religion and SO supportive of religious freedom to believe in whatever a person wished including to NOT believe in any creator or practice any religion.

Unlike the European societies from which the founders immigrated from or were descended from, the US was intentionally created without a state religion and in the VERY FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT said as much—that's why they wanted to protect religious freedom because they were opposed to the government promoting any one religion. In fact, many of the Founding Fathers would now be considered atheist or agnostic. Anyone who reads the primary sources—the founders' own words—comes to that conclusion. Anyone who suggests otherwise is engaging in a selective reading that is dishonest and likely motivated by a specific political-religious agenda to rewrite history.

One of the most important examples is the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom (drafted 1777, enacted 1786) with its warning against "the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible"

We have a long history of religious pluralism in the United States, so promoting a specific religion—including Judeo-Christian faiths by, for instance, requiring reading the Bible or displaying the Ten Commandments in governmental places including schools—totally contradicts what the Founders believed and intended. By contrast, this draft report is state-sponsored religious favoritism.

The strict and bright line between state and religion MUST be maintained. That's what the Founders believed. That's why the 1st Amendment was created and ratified. This belief and the 250 years of separation of church and state are central to the US political system. Attempting to rewrite the past is dishonest and would astonish the Founders.

I suggest simply throwing this entire draft report away. There's no need for it. This report will hurt the USA and all we've stood for. But if you want a report, I suggest hiring some professional historians who are experts on the early republic era and religious historians of the USA.

sincerely,

Peter Cole, Ph.D.

PII

From: Mark Howard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Wall of separation

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 10:51:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

The United States is waking up spiritually. We need to return to Biblical concepts and foundation to restore and preserve this great nation. Humanistic secularism is evil. Our freedoms are God given, not by the government.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Report Draft

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 11:21:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I do not believe the government should dictate the form or substance of my religious or non religious beliefs. I am a catholic, attended parochial schools and a catholic university. It was my choice alone. Public institutions should remain neutral allowing pursuit of knowledge without promoting a particular belief or religion. Students of higher learning can obviously choose to study various religions as part of their curriculum or attend a religious based college or university. It is their choice. Freedom of religion is a basic right and one belief should not supersede another. Public spaces should not be used to promote a particular religion. If it does, it marginalizes others, therefore violating the religious freedom of others. The founders may have been Christians but espousal of the practice of Christianity per se is not described in the Bill of Rights or Constitution.

Sincerely,

Jeanne King, M.S., R.N,

From: Oliver Asato <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 11:38:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir

This might be late, but I wanted to make a comment.

I am happy to see the government stepping into the religious aspect of society. Religion is currently under a covert threat and will be wiped out in this country if we continue down this non-religious path. Following such a path will lead us into another miserable dark age.

One point that this Commissions has failed to address is the source of the destruction of religious liberty. Some of the destruction comes from man's prejudice – "your truth is not my truth and therefore you are wrong." This has been going on since man first had ideas and yet religion still grew.

The point that I want to make to you in this communication is that there needs to be some sort of clause added to protect religious ideas which are opposed by psychiatric / psychological ideas.

First, here are some definitions:

Law - *a general rule that states what always happens when the same conditions exist*, an example of this is gravity, anything heavier than air will fall towards the earth. This ALWAYS occurs.

Opinion – *A belief or conclusion held with confidence but not substantiated by positive knowledge or proof*, an example is the idea that someone in the sciences has an answer to the homeless problem in Los Angeles.

Religion - *A set of beliefs, values, and practices based on the teachings of a spiritual leader.*

Psychiatry - *The branch of medicine that deals with the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental and emotional disorders.*

Psychology - *the science of the mind or of mental states and processes.*

It was a Psychologist, Dr. John Money and others who advanced the idea of Transgenderism - *a person who has a gender identity different from that typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.*

Psychiatry looks at those who are involved in pedophilia as *"a psychiatric disorder characterized by a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to children"*.

A religious person would look at the above and say that the person was crazy / immoral, and violating the dictates of their religion. Who is right?

What very few are pointing out is that both psychiatry and psychology have very few workable laws – *"a general rule that states what always happens when the same conditions exist"* and a lot of their ideas are opinions – *"A belief or conclusion held with confidence but not substantiated by positive knowledge or proof"*. This is easily proven by the persistence of homelessness, drug addiction, criminality, etc. If their ideas worked, why are these problems not solved? So why are psychiatric / psychological ideas given more weight?

Often religious people feel that it is their responsibility to help others, not for the sake of money, but just because their faith encompasses the idea to be kind and responsible to one's fellow man. Based on this, what would happen if religious people were asked to take care of the homeless?

Realize that if you asked a psychiatrist / psychologist to take responsibility for the homeless with little compensation, they would balk.

This all boils down to what is the real intention (not the stated) of the person – to help others or to satisfy a financial interest?

In your findings, there needs to be some sort of recommendation or clause that protects a religious person's ideas against a psychiatric / psychological idea. For example, when the school counselor recommends transgender treatment and a religious person says 'no' the religious idea needs to have equal or more weight.

Until psychiatry and psychology come up with ideas that are on the level of a *law*, their ideas cannot take precedence over religious ideas.

Oliver Asato

From: Monalisa H. <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mixed cultures makes AMERICA GREAT!!

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 11:55:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

I oppose to the presidential Religious Commission Draft
What is he a dictator??

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Karen Miller <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: Religious liberty commission report

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 11:57:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear RLC members,

The Religious Liberty Commission Report published on June 26, 2026 is a mockery of historical research and should not guide policy in the least.

Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus. The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.

The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.

By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.

The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact. For example, it dismisses decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.

The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Sincerely,

[Karen Miller](#)

Professor of History and American Studies

LaGuardia Community College

& The Graduate Center, CUNY

Co-editor with A. J. Yumi Lee of [Prehistories of the War on Terror: A Critical Genealogy](#)

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE UPDATE ON RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES
THRU RLC

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 12:07:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Ed
Sent from my iPad

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE UPDATE ON RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES THRU RLC

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 12:08:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: maxresdefault.jpg



Sent from my iPad

On Jul 7, 2026, at 12:07 PM, [REDACTED] PII wrote:

Ed
Sent from my iPad

From: Barbara Groening <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Religious Liberty Commission-Barbara Groening

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 12:30:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

America's First Freedom

I read this document and every point that I read is already a privilege granted to every American citizen, in the Constitution that was created by our founding fathers. This document points out the miscarriages of justice that has been carried out against people of faith. It clearly defines the true intention of the constitution and highlights the way distorted intentions have been used as a weapon to shackle people who believe that our country was founded on Godly principles. I am 100% in support of this document as we continue to keep America the great nation that it was intended to be.

God Bless America land that I love,
Barbara Groening

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From: Chris Line <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report – Freedom From Religion Foundation

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 12:36:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) respectfully submits the following comments regarding the draft report issued by the Religious Liberty Commission.

FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 40,000 members and several chapters nationwide. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism. Our legal department has assisted thousands of Americans whose religious liberty has been infringed by government favoritism toward religion, and we have successfully litigated numerous cases in federal and state courts. Our experience demonstrates that religious liberty is best protected when the government remains neutral toward religion, rather than privileging one faith over others.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

The Freedom From Religion Foundation

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.

Chris Line
Legal Counsel
Freedom From Religion Foundation

DII
PII

From: Marianna Bailey <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 Religious Liberty - The Path Forward –
Marianna Bailey

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 12:46:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I fully SUPPORT the Religious Liberty Commission's Guidance on how the Constitution sees religion and government.

I fully SUPPORT safeguarding religious liberty by shifting the burden to the government to show a specific constitutional violation.

Sincerely,

Marianna Bailey

[REDACTED] PII

From: Daniel Boehm <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT –Religious Liberty Commission – Daniel Boehm

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 12:47:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To:Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and Members of the Commission. Thankyou for your service to our country over this important and delicate matter.

I appreciate the effort invested in this report and agree with many of its observations regarding the importance of faith in American life. However, I disagree with its treatment of religious pluralism and believe it understates the uniquely Christian foundation upon which the United States was built.

The historical record demonstrates that many of America's Founders were deeply influenced by Christianity and biblical principles. Our Declaration of Independence appeals to a Creator as the source of our rights, and numerous Founders spoke of religion and morality as indispensable supports for the Republic. George Washington stated that "religion and morality are indispensable supports" of political prosperity, and John Adams wrote that the Constitution was made for a moral and religious people.

While the First Amendment prevents the federal government from establishing a national church, it does not require Americans to ignore the overwhelmingly Christian influence on the nation's founding. The report frequently emphasizes religious pluralism, yet it gives insufficient attention to the fact that the moral framework that shaped America's institutions, laws, and culture was predominantly Christian.

I am concerned that modern discussions of religious liberty often move beyond protecting free exercise and instead treat all religious claims as equally foundational to the American experiment. Historically, however, the ideas of human dignity, natural rights, equality before God, and self-government were largely understood through a biblical and Christian worldview by the majority of the Founding generation.

Therefore, while I support the constitutional right of every individual to worship according to conscience, I believe any honest discussion of America's religious heritage must acknowledge that Christianity was not merely one influence among many. It was the primary religious and moral force that shaped the principles under which the nation was founded.

Respectfully,

Daniel Boehm

From: Kelly Grotendiek <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-GENERAL COMMENT- KELLY GROTENDIEK

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 13:13:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for this fantastic effort to correct the greatly misunderstood idea of “separation between church and state.”

This is a wonderfully thorough document and I am grateful for the Commission’s efforts.

May God bless your path forward,
Sincerely,

Mrs. Kelly Grotendiek

From: Matt Recla <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT—RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT—RECLA

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 13:13:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear esteemed members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I appreciate the attention that you have brought to the unique and crucial importance of the First Amendment to the history and culture of the United States of America. I teach my students each year that the "wall of separation" is not in the Constitution, but is an interpretation of the First Amendment by one of its important drafters.

As your time is valuable, I wish to respectfully suggest one point of tension in the Commission's Report which undermines the power of the First Amendment. I believe the commission acknowledges the care with which the "no establishment" and "free exercise" clauses of the First Amendment must be interpreted and respected in the individual case. It appears to me that the state or federal public sponsorship, through law, of requiring religious artifacts such as the Ten Commandments to appear in educational settings constitutes a violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment unless accompanied by the artifacts of other religious traditions as well.

Even if the commission believes that this publicly-sponsored and -required display does not violate the free exercise of many students who do not identify with Jewish or Christian traditions, the particular displays represent a preference for these traditions and not, by implication, others. An interest in the historical importance of the Ten Commandments need not necessitate a required public display. I fear it suggests instead an ongoing preference for a particular religious understanding and implies a lack of consideration for the religious diversity of our nation.

This is not to suggest that important religious documents such as the Ten Commandments or the Bible should not be studied in a public school context. However, the requirement of such displays or readings, focusing on a narrow set of traditions, strays too far from the balance between the clauses of the First Amendment and constitutes an establishment of religion.

Sincerely,
Matt Recla, Ph.D.

From: Patti Gandy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 Religious Liberty - The Path Forward –
Patricia Gandy

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 14:02:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

I fully SUPPORT the Religious Liberty Commission's Guidance on how the Constitution sees religion and government.

I fully SUPPORT safeguarding religious liberty by shifting the burden to the government to show a specific constitutional violation.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gandy

[REDACTED] PII

From: Rebekah Cochran <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] public comment-chapter 9/ healthcare conscience

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 15:01:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to request protection for traditional midwifery, faith based birth practices, and protection for the families who rely on them. Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care. All of our fourteen grandchildren have been birthed with the help of a traditional midwife at home or in a birthing clinic. This right should be protected.

Thanks for your time and consideration in this matter.

Rebekah Cochran

[REDACTED] PII

From: •Camila• T <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 15:08:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

- **Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus.** The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- **The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society.** While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), **the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism.** Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
- **The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche (“God is dead”), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile “Berlin wall” designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
- **The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life.** The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

The public comment process provides an important opportunity for historians and supporters of honest history to highlight the complexity, depth, and nuance of the historical record. You may wish to incorporate some of the following historical sources or examples into your comment to offer a richer, more accurate account of the religious views of the founders than the selective readings that inform the report (which cites several of these documents without sufficient context):

- Washington’s caution that the federal government gives “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance” in his [letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island](#) (1790)
- The [Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom](#) (drafted 1777, enacted 1786) with its warning against “the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible”
- [Thomas Jefferson’s letter to the Danbury Baptists](#) (1802), which emphasizes “that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God” and references “a wall of separation between

Church & State”

- The **Petition of the Philadelphia Synagogue to the Council of Censors of Pennsylvania**(1783), which warns against the exclusion of religious minorities through religious tests for officeholding
- Article XI of the **1796 Treaty of Tripoli**, which notes that “the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion”
- James Madison’s **Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments** (1785), which notes that it is an “arrogant pretension” for “the Civil Magistrate” to presume to act as a “competent Judge of Religious Truth . . . [or] employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy”
- Other examples from historical scholarship, teaching, or public life that illustrate the dynamic interactions of different faith traditions

From: Aaron Kheriaty <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Freedom Commission Report – Aaron Kheriaty, MD

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 15:29:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: pasted-image.tiff; Public_Comment_-_Religious_Liberty_Commission.pdf

My public comment is attached, and pasted below.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Freedom Commission Report – Aaron Kheriaty, MD
7 July 2026

To Whom it May Concern:

I was very pleased to see the draft publication for the President's Religious Liberty Commission's Report, recently presented to President Trump. I applaud the work of the Commission, which I was invited to testify before in March of this year. My testimony is summarized in Chapter 10 of the report (pp. 145 - 150), and cited in Chapter 9 (p. 141), Chapter 14 (p. 178), and Appendix B (p. 201). I was pleased to see several of my recommendations incorporated into the report's own recommendations.

I have done a lot of work in the last few years on the issue of freedom of speech, given my involvement in [cases](#) challenging government censorship (I was a plaintiff in *Missouri v. Biden*, which successfully challenged government censorship on social media) or [efforts](#) to control the speech of physicians in the consulting room (I was also a plaintiff in *Hoeg v. Newsom*, which successfully challenged a law restricting the speech of physicians). It's worth recalling, however, that the *first* freedom mentioned in the First Amendment (and therefore, the first freedom mentioned in the Constitution) is not freedom of speech but freedom of religion. The earliest settlers on our shores landed here precisely to find a place where they would not be persecuted for their publicly expressed religious convictions.

Often when Americans think about religion and the American constitution, the phrase that comes to their mind is not the *free exercise of religion* (which actually appears in the Constitution) but the *separation of church and state* (a phrase which does not appear in the constitution but in a private letter penned by Thomas Jefferson). Furthermore, many people mistakenly interpret the notion of "separation of church and state" to mean the banishment of religion from public life—also not a constitutionally defensible position, and certainly not what Jefferson meant when he penned that phrase. The non-establishment clause of the First Amendment—that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" exists precisely to serve "the free exercise thereof."

As I noted in my testimony, after describing how my rights of religious liberty were violated by my medical school:

The Department of Health and Human Services issued a New Nondiscrimination Final Rule to Protect Conscience Rights two years ago in January 2024. It *encourages* (but does not *require*) hospitals and clinics to voluntarily post a notice of rights to ensure compliance and educate the public about conscience statutes and rights. These laws were in place when I went to medical school, but I had no understanding of them or of my rights under Federal law. As a medical student interested in ethics, I was better informed on these issues than most. Yet still, I was

never advised of my rights, even after they were violated and the hospital leadership was notified.

Clearly, if healthcare providers and trainees are not informed of these rights at orientation, then the laws on the books remain a dead letter. Those whose rights are violated need support not just from the HHS Office of Civil Rights, but also a right of private action in case the OCR is slow to respond to complaints, as often happened under previous administrations. Furthermore, these protections need to be extended in Federal law to include other procedures, which were not common when these laws were enacted but are now ubiquitous, such as doctor-assisted suicide, euthanasia, and sex-rejecting procedures (what advocates euphemistically term “gender affirmative care”). While euthanasia *is* briefly mentioned in the Affordable Care Act, this merely regulates payments to hospitals, and that law alone does not protect conscience rights of individuals.

I was pleased to see in the commission’s report the recommendation to post “Notice of Your Rights” notifications. I propose also that federal regulations could mandate that such a document be provided to all healthcare providers at orientation when they begin medical school, nursing school, or other training, or when they are first hired by a new hospital or clinic employer. I highlight also the importance of establishing in federal law a right of private action in the case where the HHS OCR may be slow to respond to legitimate complaints, as it often was during the previous administration. As mentioned in my testimony, I suggest that the report make it clear that all protections described therein extend beyond abortion to sterilization procedures, doctor assisted suicide / euthanasia, as well as sex-rejecting procedures, since these are often not explicitly mentioned in federal conscience-protecting laws or amendments.

Again, I would like to commend the work of this Commission and the important report they have produced following the hearings and careful deliberation. After the excesses and authoritarian overreach by governments during covid, the people of the United States are pushing back and reasserting their rights of conscience and freedom of religion in healthcare. I pray that this Report will assist them by strengthening and enforcing the federal laws on the books, educating the public regarding their rights, and leaning on states to do the right thing when it comes to free and informed consent.

Sincerely,

Aaron Kheriaty, MD
Director, Bioethics, Technology, and Human Flourishing Program
Ethics and Public Policy Center

PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Freedom Commission Report – Aaron Kheriaty, MD
7 July 2026

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Again, I would like to commend the work of this Commission and the important report they have produced following the hearings and careful deliberation. After the excesses and authoritarian overreach by governments during covid, the people of the United States are pushing back and reasserting their rights of conscience and freedom of religion in healthcare. I pray that this Report will assist them by strengthening and enforcing the federal laws on the books, educating the public regarding their rights, and leaning on states to do the right thing when it comes to free and informed consent.

Sincerely,



Aaron Kheriaty, MD
Director, Bioethics, Technology, and Human Flourishing Program
Ethics and Public Policy Center

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty – Leslie Backus

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 15:36:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am an old woman (Yes, Boomer). I am a regular churchgoer, singing in the choir. I was raised in my religion.

I THINK IT IS ABHORRENT TO ASSUME THAT THE US IS A CHRISTIAN NATION!!!! What Republicans seem to be planning and the vice-president is advocating is a betrayal of the founding fathers' original intention. They knew how divisive and oppressive a state sponsored religion could be.

As a child, I deeply resented saying the Lord's Prayer after the Pledge every morning in school. (I hated saying 'under God' in the Pledge). After Madeline Murray, my 6th grade teacher had a class meeting about the prayer. The Jews hated it because it was New Testament. The Catholics hated it because it was the Protestant version. No one said the prayers with any devout feelings. We only wanted to get finished and sit down again!

No!! No!! No!! Many of our original Colonies were founded because of religious issues!! The Puritans! Rhode Island! Maryland (Catholics), Pennsylvania (Quakers), and more I have forgotten, I'm sure.

I am a Unitarian-Universalist, so, according to the military, I am not even Christian, regardless of my beliefs about Jesus.

Just stop. Please. How dare they assume that this country was founded as a Christian nation.

Leslie Backus

[REDACTED PII]

"Some mornings, it's just not worth it to gnaw through the leather straps." *Emo Phillips*

From: Austin Ditzler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 15:39:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to object to the Commission's conclusions re the long standing tradition and interpretation of the Separation of Church and State.

Even using the current method of interpretation of differing to the historical context at the time of the Founding, it is factually undisputed that the first immigration and colonization were by peoples dissenting from established religions and the obvious solution then and now is not to establish one belief over another be it Christian, non Christian or Atheistic.

Am irrevocably opposed to any wearing of the Rule Against Establishment

Respectfully

Austin D. Ditzler

From: Nicole Hayes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Brick Lantz <[REDACTED] PII >, "J.C. Bicek" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on President's Religious Liberty Commission Report Recommendations

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 15:45:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png; image(1).png

Good day,

Thank you for allowing us the time to review the Commission's report recommendations. As a membership association of more than 14,000 Christian healthcare professionals, we are especially appreciative of additional efforts recommended on the federal level to further ensure protecting conscience freedoms in healthcare. Christians in healthcare have witnessed or experienced the gradual erosion of healthcare conscience protections in our society pressuring more healthcare professionals to choose between their careers and their conscience, ethics and faith.

In a society that has increasingly moved away from the longstanding essence and traditions of Hippocratic medicine, thank you for working to ensure that healthcare professionals will be able to practice medicine as it aligns with science, their faith and values to help advance human flourishing.

Respectfully,

Nicole D. Hayes



Nicole D. Hayes, MPA

Director of Federal Public Policy

Washington, D.C. Office

Cell: [REDACTED] PII



From: Jarod Hinton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission - Jarod Hinton

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 16:06:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, Members of the Commission,

Thank you for your work on the Religious Liberty Commission. As a pastor in a rural area, it is particularly important to me that this issue receives attention and resolution.

Our nation was founded upon Biblical ideas. One of those ideas was the concept of religious freedom. The freedom to worship God as we choose was a primary motivation to the Pilgrims and many other people that first came to this nation.

It is right and good that our nation should return to defending that principle.

I simply want to express my support for all 12 of the recommendations listed at the end of the Executive Summary of the Commission's report. Those suggestions, particularly the repeal of the Johnson Amendment along with clarification of the correct interpretation of the separation of Church and State, will provide much needed freedom to those of us that believe our religion should guide our entire life.

The report details many other things that I support, but those 12 items are a good summary.

I believe my devotion to Christ should dictate my behavior in all facets of my life. This would include my participation in the public sphere, my civic engagement in our society. I should not be excluded simply because of those religious beliefs. Nor should those beliefs and opinions be excluded from discussion simply because they have a foundation in my faith.

Thank you for your service to our nation by participating in this historic commission. Your work will have a lasting impact upon our future, and for that I will thank you also on behalf of my eight children. Most of whom do not yet realize the impact you will have had upon their lives.

May God richly bless you and your families, and may he also have mercy upon the United States, and bless our land.

With sincere hope for the future, based upon my faith in Jesus Christ,

Pastor Jarod Hinton

From: Caroline Roberts <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report - Caroline A. Roberts

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 16:29:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

Please consider the following in regards to the recent release of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report:

- **Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus.** The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- **The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society.** While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), **the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism.** Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
- **The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
- **The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life.** The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

In addition, please consider:

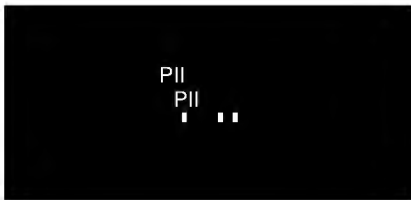
- Washington's caution that the federal government gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance" in his **letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island** (1790)
- The **Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom** (drafted 1777, enacted 1786) with its warning against "the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed

dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible”

- **Thomas Jefferson’s letter to the Danbury Baptists** (1802), which emphasizes “that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God” and references “a wall of separation between Church & State”
- The **Petition of the Philadelphia Synagogue to the Council of Censors of Pennsylvania**(1783), which warns against the exclusion of religious minorities through religious tests for officeholding
- Article XI of the **1796 Treaty of Tripoli**, which notes that “the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion”
- James Madison’s **Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments** (1785), which notes that it is an “arrogant pretension” for “the Civil Magistrate” to presume to act as a “competent Judge of Religious Truth . . . [or] employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy”

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,
Caroline A. Roberts



From: The Bible Uncut and Unfiltered <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – RLC Report Concerns Regarding 12 Opportunities-
Colin Connor

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 16:48:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image001.png

To whom it may concern,

Please indulge me a brief introduction to explain why this matters so much to me. As a Christian, I am thankful to live in a country that respects religious liberty. I was raised Baptist and attended church every time the doors were open. After high school, I immediately pursued a bachelor's and a master's degree in religious fields. It is due to my Christian faith that I write now, compelled by God to push back on the listed 12 Opportunities to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans.

I fear that what is presented, while hopefully well-intentioned, will lead to unintended negative consequences for countless God-fearing Americans. This coincides with the DOD's restricting of religious affiliations. While efficiency is cited, it effectively marginalizes groups (including many established Christian denominations), potentially removing their protections under the third listed opportunity. That opportunity is written to sound as if it is providing additional freedom for religious folk, but it really provides an excuse to refuse such treatment to people deemed to be in unrecognized religious affiliations.

Opportunity 5 is particularly concerning as we already allow for judges with personal faith to preside over their respective cases. Thus, this seems instead to imply preferential treatment toward Christian judges who conform to the current conservative-leaning biases. As a Christian, I desire qualified people of all faiths to have equal opportunities in that field.

Furthermore, "religious" and "task force" should never be spoken in the same sentence. Consider the ways fallible humans with power (and potentially weapons) will misuse this authority. And what of the next election that will hand power to another leader for our country? Do we really want to establish a precedent that whoever holds the power can forcefully impose themselves on anyone they deem to be offending their religious liberty? Setting this precedent now puts those preferred groups at future risk when they are no longer preferred.

Furthermore, loss of privilege does not equal persecution. Just because Christians are no longer the only prominent voices in America does not mean we are being persecuted. But I can assure you as someone who grew up in fundamentalist religion, a large number of Christians against whom no violence has ever been enacted feel personally persecuted, even in this free nation. I fear religious persecution will be redefined to mean anything that speaks against a preferred segment of Christianity. Yet Christianity has existed much longer than our great nation. Christianity is a multi-faceted gem that can only thrive when all facets are allowed to shine.

I urge you not to allow the Johnson Amendment to be repealed. Far too many ministers will take such liberty as an excuse to speak hate and misinformation from their pulpits, purporting their personal views without proper education on the given topics. My rights as an American and as a Christian stop at the point they begin to hurt someone else.

I also do not believe our government should be rewarding faith of any kind. I fear a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty and First Freedom Hero Awards will prioritize a niche brand of right-leaning conservative patriarchal evangelical Christians. Most religious traditions have their own time-honored traditions of recognizing key members for their contributions. Government does not need to add to that. And, again, albeit selfishly, we must consider the precedent set. If we currently had a Muslim president, would these same people want him establishing a Medal of Religious Liberty or First Freedom Hero Awards and awarding them to whomever he sees fit? I highly doubt it. Consistency matters.

I could continue, but I respect that I have already taken a valuable portion of your time. Thank you for allowing the American people to speak into this important issue. As a lifelong committed Christian, I pray we remain a country that respects people of all faiths (and expressions of my own Christian faith as well) and does not prioritize one small segment of Christianity under the guise of protecting its people.

Thank you and God bless.

Colin Connor

Resident Bible Scholar

The Bible Uncut and Unfiltered

Web: TheBibleUncut.com

Email: [REDACTED] PII



From: Scott Knickelbine <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- Scott Knickelbine

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 16:50:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

I, Scott Knickelbine, respectfully object to the findings and recommendations of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report. The report presents a view of religious liberty that, in my opinion, weakens rather than strengthens the First Amendment by diminishing the constitutional principle that government should remain neutral on matters of religion.

The Establishment Clause protects the religious freedom of everyone by preventing the government from favoring one faith, or religion over nonreligion. Recommendations that encourage greater government promotion of religion, weaken longstanding constitutional safeguards, or privilege particular religious viewpoints risk undermining the religious pluralism and equal treatment that have long been central to our constitutional system.

I urge the Commission to reaffirm that religious liberty and the separation of church and state are complementary principles. Protecting every person's freedom of conscience requires a government that neither advances nor inhibits religion, but instead guarantees equal rights and equal protection for all.

Scott Knickelbine

[REDACTED] PII

From: Don Deakins <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Don Deakins

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 16:58:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

The only opposition to religion I have seen is when it is being forced on those that are not interested. Examples are imposing the Ten Commandments on all students in public schools and posting religious monuments on public property which belongs to all citizens, not just Christian citizens. Christians are free to practice their religion but do not need to impose upon me. Let's keep church and state separate.

From: Rebecca Conard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 17:03:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Freedom of religion is one of the most cherished and contested rights of American citizens, and this report justly acknowledges the fundamental role that religion has played in American history and life. It is thus dispiriting to read a report that, on the one hand, purports to protect liberty of conscience and the free exercise of religion and, on the other, promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism by endorsing state laws that require displaying the Ten Commandments in public schools.

Freedom of religion cannot flourish in a civil society if the state is assigned religious duties or institutes religious tests for office. Strict limits on state involvement in religion are, to be sure, absolutely necessary in order for freedom of religion to flourish.

This report, unfortunately, is a thinly veiled attempt to promote Christian beliefs above all others and, secondarily, to castigate anti-Semitism.

Rebecca Conard
Iowa City, IA

From: GLENN LEACH <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Draft Report of the Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 17:35:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

The following are my comments:

Report as a whole. Throughout the report, and particularly in the recommendations, we find multiple forms of enforcement mechanisms ranging from hotline reporting, proposing states, school boards and others pass legislation or directives, recourse to legal suits and others for suspected failures involving religious liberty. Yet the fact that there is a Commission is proof that religious liberty is a concept that is not concretely described in law, and has over time resulted in multiple interpretations that are dependent on the point in time, place, parties involved for its definition, and has been the subject of continual debate since the formulation of the First amendment. The multiple enforcement mechanisms can too easily give rise to what the Commission cited in Chapter 2, page 37, of "using the power of government to crush disfavored ideas and disfavored people. 53," and a means for one person to target another. Unlike the Criminal and Administrative Codes for which the offenses are specifically detailed (along with the related consequences), the Commission has created punishments that could have life changing and threatening consequences for an almost infinitely broad spectrum of "offenses." The mere act of being reported to a hotline, much less investigated or sued, even if successfully defended, is a costly and reputationally damaging event. It is particularly dangerous as all it requires to initiate these punishments is access to a phone or a pencil.

Chapter 2. Page 44, next to last Paragraph. "In recent years, the Obama Administration targeted the Little Sisters of the Poor simply for seeking to serve elderly individuals in poverty in accordance with the Little Sisters' pro-life beliefs. 86" The language by the Commission implies that the administration interfered with the Order for its mission of serving the elderly poor when in fact it was a debate about how far an administration could dictate insurance coverage that the Order maintained was contrary to their beliefs. Service to the elderly was never an issue. Similar language is used throughout, distorting the facts at issue, attempting to strengthen the idea that there is widespread active religious suppression. In the sentences that follow, the Commission condemns another administration for religious suppression without citing examples, again attempting to paint a false picture of widespread prior government and institutional suppression of religion.

Appendix A: Know Your Rights FAQ

The FAQs are not facts. They are the opinions of the Commission. They have no other reference point than the expression of the Commission. While some invoke prior legal decisions in part, the way they are presented is not congruent with such in all instances. As a body of "facts" they have not been reviewed and debated in public, as posting in the Federal Register allows at best limited public comment. Few Americans ever see the Federal Register or know how to respond to opportunities for comment, and comment is not debate and the administration may dismiss comments out of hand. They were not debated in Congress, not even in committee in either House, much less passed by either House. The danger in labeling opinions as facts is that some organizations or individuals would use them as the basis for hotline reporting, or legal action, or also that some organizations would adopt them as their code as a short cut in attempting to establish "compliance." The source for many of the recommendations is comments made during a hearing of the commission, and the failure include all religions and religious perspectives in the makeup of the commission has been previously addressed in these comments, and the same concerns pertain to the witnesses called to give testimony.

This appendix should be deleted.

Appendix B: Detailed Recommendations

12 Key Recommendations to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans. Page 200. Parah numbers correspond to the number of the recommendation in the draft report.

1. Recommendation usurps the prerogatives of the Congress, Such a crucial definition should be subject to the legislative process and the result judged by the Supreme Court as to its constitutionality. Delete the recommendation.
2. Recommendation two, aside from the issue of the flaws in the draft "Religious Rights" usurps the First Amendment rights of many of the individuals and organizations targeted and no posted can be mandated distributed until its content has passed the legislative process as noted above. Delete the recommendation.
3. Federal and most non-federal public officials operate under human resources and possibly union requirements for advising employees of failures to perform and any allegations that might lead to disciplinary action as this recommendation implies. Delete the recommendation.
4. This recommendation duplicates or supplants existing complaint handling guidance contained in existing legislation, union contracts and the like. The creation of a separate hotline as described creates a mechanism for individuals to mount a campaign against another individual, which even if the complaint is judged invalid, will have cost the targeted individual financial and reputational damage. "[T]he strategy here is management by intimidation. The whole approach is you may beat the rap, but you're not going to beat the ride, explained Commissioner Dr.Phil McGraw" page 206-207. As a violation of religious freedom is nebulous and difficult to define or to identify in practice, this is a dangerous provision. Delete the recommendation.
5. The nomination and selection of federal (and all non-elected judges) is subject to a political process that hopefully selects judges based on their proven judicial experiences and prior history of impartial legal practice. The recommendation is superfluous. Delete the recommendation.
6. Recommendation 6. Page 201. Prioritizing the investigation and prosecution of religious possible liberty violations is a questionable recommendation as the Justice Department should be, and has been in the past, able to develop its priorities. Requiring a special task force for this effort without providing for the resources to accomplish it diminishes the Departments resources for fighting criminal behavior. Delete the recommendation.
7. Requiring "**Combat anti -Semitism** through enforcement of civil rights law" admits there is already a body of law and practice for combatting anti-Semitism, making this this an unnecessary requirement. However, the seeming growth in ant-Semitic attacks suggests the some of the existing legislation be revisited and additional resources devoted by Congress to back the legislation. Delete the recommendation or cite specific legislation or other action to improve on what exists.
8. "Protect religious Americans from government-led litigation targeting their free exercise . 460." **All** Americans, regardless of whether they be religious or not, and regardless of religion if "religious," should be protected from government led litigation. Delete the recommendation or change it to include all.
9. Repealing the Johnson Amendment involves Congressional action where it can receive more visibility and debate. Houses of worship, and individual religious leaders including priests, pastors, rabbis, Imam, Granthi, Buddhist monk, etc. should be free to address issues, including those involved in political debate, in terms of that their religion's beliefs, without either supporting or disparaging any political party or candidate for office. Religions are constituted to assist their followers in applying their faith to issues in the world, and no religion was created to support a political party, candidate or movement. If the Congress, representing the will of their constituents, sees a need to amend the Johnson Amendment it will do so. Delete the recommendation.
10. The "religious accommodation process" served the Department of Defense well through many years. If the process is deemed lacking, specific recommendations should be made to this effect. The opened requirement to "reform" the process can lead to undesirable conditions that will ill serve our service people of diverse and no religion. Delete the recommendation.
11. More than service people "lost employment, health insurance, pensions, and other benefits because of their religious beliefs about the COVID -19 vaccine. COVID-19 was a previously unknown disease, with

deadly consequences, but we had a total lack of information about its characteristics, and most important. its transmission, Mistakes were made by those in charge of health and other organizations that needed to take action to protect people. Equity demands that we treat all who lost personal benefits be treated equally.

12. Presidential medals and the process for selecting recipients are well established. It is not necessary to create a new medal and recipient selection process for religious freedom activity. It already exists. Delete the recommendation.

Glenn Leach

Private Citizen, Active Roman Catholic

PII
PII

From: Lisa C <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT –Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, June 2026

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 17:50:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for this very important report. It is evident that Americans from all religious backgrounds have faced increasing persecution for their religious beliefs. I would very much like to see the Department of Justice create a religious liberty task force to track and prioritize litigation protecting religious liberty. Religious Americans should be protected from government-led litigation targeting their free exercise. No one should be penalized for appropriate expressions of faith or refusing to support ideological viewpoints they do not agree with. And our public schools should not be promoting partisan and ideological materials pronoun policies, access to facilities based on gender identity, and broader LGBTQ programming in schools.

Sincerely,

Lisa Cooper

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Daniel G.

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 18:10:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I submit this comment in response to the draft report issued by the Religious Liberty Commission.

The report departs from the established understanding of the First Amendment. The Constitution protects religious liberty through governmental neutrality, ensuring that the state neither favors nor disfavors religion. This principle is essential to protecting freedom of conscience for all.

Several recommendations in the report would increase government involvement in religion, including expanded religious activity in public institutions and changes affecting tax exempt organizations. These proposals risk eroding the line between religion and government and undermining equal treatment under the law.

The United States is also a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 18 protects freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the right to hold no belief. This requires that the state avoid promoting or privileging particular religious views.

Weakening safeguards against government endorsement of religion risks placing the United States in tension with both its constitutional principles and its human rights commitments.

I urge the Commission to reconsider these recommendations and to uphold the principle of governmental neutrality in matters of religion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Daniel G.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - JO ELLEN BRANDMEYER

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 18:28:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a natural-born citizen of the United States of America.

I rely on the separation of Church and State as codified in our U.S. Constitution. This means that my government cannot force me to conform to one religious belief, to hear and join in prayers with which I do not agree, to listen to religious music that I may find offensive, to attend – in person or virtually – government-sponsored services being used to force feed me my government’s view of religion.

I was raised Lutheran, but I questioned aspects of Lutheran doctrine even while I was in elementary school. I went to the pastor at my church with questions approximately every month. He would take the time to answer my questions, explain parts of the King James version of the Bible, and at times he couldn’t provide a satisfactory answer to me. At those times he would tell me to take it on faith.

We spent 2 years studying the tenets of Lutheran doctrine to prepare us to take Communion. But I still didn’t get answers to some of my questions and that bothered me more and more as I got older. I especially chafed at the belief that men were God’s representatives on Earth. They had a hierarchy of God, our Pastor, an Elder, our Sunday School Teacher (if female, then find a male teacher), on down to our father, and ultimately our husbands. This was wrong on so many levels, such as putting an illiterate father or a husband that enjoyed hurting his wife and children in the religious hierarchy. And the idea that all men are above any woman is anathema to me.

I also couldn’t reconcile with teachings of other Christian faiths. In Roman Catholicism people often pray to someone believed to be in heaven, asking that “person” to ask Jesus to do what the praying person wants. I had a relative who actually prayed to her dead baby to make her requests to Jesus. I also couldn’t reconcile how I was raised with the concept of Saints. And Catholic children could take communion years before confirmation. Baptists believed in adult baptism and complete inundation of the person being baptized. But I was raised that if a newborn baby died without having been baptized, then that baby would go to Hell. I had a friend who was Mennonite where many actions were forbidden; for example, women weren’t allowed to shave their legs, so my friend would use a pair of scissors at school to try to cut off her leg hairs. Her father had been raised in an Amish community, but changed to Mennonite when he got married; as a result when he took his family to the Amish community for a celebration, he was subjected to their “shunning” and was even forced to eat by himself.

Then, there are a plethora of non-Christian faiths. These include Judaism (their version of the Old Testament), Moslem (follow the teachings of the prophet Mohammed), Buddhism (follow the teachings of Buddha; focused on spiritual development, attainment of enlightenment, and insight into the true nature of reality).

From: kevinrussell1958 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 18:31:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and likely others among our founding fathers, were Deists and not at all Christians. Deists believe that God exists; but that God does not act in human affairs. Our precious First Amendment provides us the freedom to worship, or to not worship as we choose. We were *founded* in rejection of a state religion, then the Church of England. We never were a "Christian nation".

Kevin Russell

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - General Comment of Draft Report of the Religious Liberty Commission - Bridget Brame

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 18:52:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Here are my public comments.

The Religious Liberty Commission's June 2026 Report and its recommendations for strengthening our religious freedoms is very much welcome and necessary in the times we live in.

More and more progressive individuals, organizations and government agencies are verbally pushing against, physically attacking, or denying services and/or religious rights of **Christians and Jews** because of our religious beliefs, something I thought I would NOT see in my lifetime in the USA.

We reviewed the table of contents, Chapter 14 (the path forward), Appendix A (what our religious rights are), and Appendix B (12 recommendations for strengthening our religious liberty) – these are awesome! We hope you can accomplish most (if not all) of the items listed in Appendix B by December 31, 2028.

My family and friends are so glad to see included, the goal of the DOJ to tear down the wall 'separating church and state' – this is NOT part of the US Constitution. This misinterpretation was taken from an exchange of letters between President Thomas Jefferson and the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut, shortly after Jefferson became President. President Jefferson wanted to assure the Baptist Association of Danbury that the government would not interfere with religious institutions. Everyone is free to exercise religion as they want without government interference as long as they are following the US Constitution and our local city ordinances, state and federal laws. For about the last 70+ years, progressives have taken that metaphor, redefined it to mean the opposite, and weaponized it to systematically purge religious expression from public institutions.

Warm Regards,
Bridget Brame

From: Mike McPherson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment: Religious Liberty Commission, Mike McPherson; protect Religious Freedom.

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 18:55:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the U.S. Department of Justice Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Commission's work on protecting religious liberty in the United States.

Religious freedom is among our nation's most fundamental rights. The First Amendment protects not only the freedom to believe, but also the freedom to live according to one's sincerely held religious convictions, provided that doing so does not infringe upon the rights of others. This freedom has allowed people of many faiths—and those of no faith—to live together in peace while contributing to the common good.

I encourage the Commission to give particular attention to protecting the rights of individuals whose religious practices differ from those of the majority. Throughout American history, religious minorities have often depended on constitutional protections to practice their faith without fear of discrimination or coercion. Equal protection under the law should never depend on the size or popularity of a religious community.

I also urge continued attention to reasonable accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs in employment, education, healthcare, and public service. In many cases, simple accommodations can respect religious conscience while allowing organizations to fulfill their missions and individuals to remain productive members of society.

The government should neither establish religion nor inhibit its free exercise. A healthy society is strengthened when citizens are free to worship, speak, assemble, and serve according to their convictions without unnecessary government interference. Religious liberty benefits not only people of faith but every American by preserving freedom of conscience.

Thank you for your service and for your careful consideration of these important issues. I encourage the Commission to continue reinforcing the constitutional principles that have long safeguarded religious liberty for all Americans.

Respectfully,

Mike McPherson
Jamestown, North Dakota

From: Donna Ascalon <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 19:01:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Religious Liberty Commission is a slap in the face of The First Amendment's Freedom of Religion clause. The Establishment Clause is perfectly understandable that no religion is to favored or intertwined with government. We were NOT established as a Christian nation and the founding fathers wrote of the separation of church and state. This commission does not have the authority to push their Christian Nationalist views and proposals down the collective throats of the American people. The freedom to believe or not to believe and the practice of many religions is why Freedom OF Religion was in the First Amendment. Do not let it be held hostage and ripped apart.

Donna Ascalon
Bellingham, WA
7 July 2026

From: Greg Kammerer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Greg Kammerer

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 19:02:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

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.

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.

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.

I respectfully urge 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.

Thank You,
Greg Kammerer

From: Sara <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc:

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - SARA PEDRO

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 19:37:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am sitting at a computer in the NYC homeless shelter where I currently live, because religious discrimination has left me street homeless.

The biggest threats to being Catholic are coming from the bishops, priests, nuns, religious and the Pope.

I was first homeless as a result of religious discrimination in 2017, and sat on the steps of the Archbishop's Residence in NYC, where I saw Cardinal Dolan. The first night I was street homeless happened because Cardinal Dolan knowingly left me to sleep on the sidewalk. The fact that Cardinal Dolan serves on this Commission shows that this is a political stunt for show. Further, the United States will not be a free country until we are a Catholic country. There will never be "religious liberty" until it is illegal to practice any religion except Catholicism. History proves this.

In the Executive Summary, it states, "Yet, leaders of faith-based institutions testified that they increasingly face pressure to modify their missions, alter religious practices, or redefine core beliefs in order to participate fully in public life. For example, a women's homeless shelter in Alaska was nearly forced to close when it refused to house a man dressed as a woman..."

As soon as I entered the homeless shelter, there were "trans" men pretending to be women. Yesterday alone, there was a man in the cafeteria here in a fishnet dress without underwear on and fully exposing himself. I informed Archbishop Hicks about this problem but he does not respond. I also informed Fr. Peter Martyr Yungwirth, Fr. Alan Moran who were among those that sent me here but they do not respond. When I asked a social worker from Catholic Charities why Catholic Charities is sending people to places like this, she said "that is their policy".

I have spent one Friday in this homeless shelter so far, and when I informed them that I cannot eat meat on Fridays because I am Catholic, they told me that I just couldn't eat for the day then. They then told me that I had to speak to a case worker about this, but they also told me I couldn't speak to my case worker for two weeks. I informed Archbishop Hicks about this, but he does not respond. When I could not get dinner, I went to the Sisters of Life and informed them as well. Their response was to bring a plate of food to the door and told me to eat it sitting on steps outside that were stained by dog urine in 100 degree weather. This is the way someone is treated when they choose to be Catholic.

The biggest threats to being Catholic are coming from the Vatican, bishops, priests, nuns, religious and the Pope.

I will continue being Catholic, and someday everyone will see that this Religious Liberty Commission was a political stunt for show and who the biggest threats to being Catholic are.

Sincerely, Sara Pedro

From: Dave Schweisguth <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission draft report – David C. Schweisguth

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 19:37:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

The DOJ Religious Liberty Commission draft report is a pernicious attempt to subvert freedom of religion guaranteed to Americans by the first amendment to our constitution. It demands that religious persons and organizations with authority or power be able to assert their beliefs. It ignores the right of every citizen to live within their beliefs, even when circumstance puts a citizen at the political or financial mercy of someone with different beliefs and a compulsion to force them on others.

It is not constitutional, or in any way acceptable, for a town meeting or public-school teacher or coach to subject others to their prayers or proselytizing. It is not constitutional to require a citizen to pay for others' children to be instructed in the religion of their choice. It is not constitutional for a health oligopoly to impose the terms of some religion on patients who may have no other choice of provider. And it is not constitutional to ask citizens to pay, via favorable tax treatment, for religious organizations to promote their political views.

It's inconceivable that the draft report could be merely revised to justly make the rights of individual Americans its first priority. It cannot be salvaged. It must be withdrawn.

Sincerely,

David C. Schweisguth

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - ELLIOT HAMILTON

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 19:54:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my firm opposition to the recently released draft report.

Just stop it!

The Constitution's Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. Why do you want to go otherwise? Just stop it!

The report's recommendations would further entangle the government with religion rather than protecting religious freedom. Just stop it!

This report stomps all over the freedom of conscience for all Americans, regardless of their belief or lack thereof. I ask that you withdraw this report to respect our First Amendment rights. Just stop it!

-Elliot Hamilton
US Citizen since birth in 1950
Arlington Heights, IL

From: Micki LR <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - opposed to "religious liberty" recommendations

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 20:05:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

The wall of separation between church and state protects both, and should be strengthened. Many of the report's recommendations would further entangle the government with religion rather than protecting religious freedom.

Respectfully,

MLR - Minnesota

From: "Rabin, Dana" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -- Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report - D. Rabin

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 20:16:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

I write with public comment about the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report.

Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus. The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus. Article XI of the [1796 Treaty of Tripoli](#), notes that “the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion.”

The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control. The states followed suit. In 1777 the [Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom](#) (drafted 1777, enacted 1786) warned against “the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible”

By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others. George Washington’s caution that the federal government gives “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance” in his [letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island](#) (1790) should be evidence enough of the founders’ intent. James Madison’s [Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments](#) (1785), notes that it is an “arrogant pretension” for “the Civil Magistrate” to presume to act as a “competent Judge of Religious Truth . . . [or] employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy.”

The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact. For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche (“God is dead”), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile “Berlin wall” designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). It was Thomas Jefferson who declared in his [letter to the Danbury Baptists](#) (1802), “that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God” and references “a wall of separation between Church & State.” Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.

The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and

liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Dana Rabin, she/her
Professor, Department of History
Interim Head, Department of Anthropology
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

From: Craig Good <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Craig Good

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 20:37:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am Craig Good, from the Bay Area of California. I respectfully submit this comment on the draft report issued by the Religious Liberty Commission.

It is a cynical attempt to force a specific religion into government, and completely inverts the idea of religious freedom. The establishment clause, the separation of church and state, is in no way hostile to religion. The actual idea is to protect religion from government, and government from religion. The founders understood what is all too clear now: that religion should never be granted an iota of political power. It must remain a personal matter.

The government should not be in the business of handing out “religious freedom” awards as a way of rewarding a particular religious view.

Sincerely,

Craig Good
California

--

--Craig

WWWAYD?

[REDACTED] PII <https://protect2.fireeye.com/v1/url?k=dda80c00-82342eec-ddaf28e5-000babff85fc-17353eae828407f5&q=1&e=c68cd62c-bb08-40eb-ab41-def605cf45b0&u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.relaxandenjoyyourfood.com%2F>

"Here is the Golden Rule of sound citizenship, the first and greatest lesson in the study of politics: You get the same order of criminality from any State to which you give power to exercise it; and whatever power you give the State to do things FOR you carries with it the equivalent power to do things TO you."

--Albert Jay Nock

From: Darcy Shultz <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] recommendations of religious liberty commission

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 20:46:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

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

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

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

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

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English

language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

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

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

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

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

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who

has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

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

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

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

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

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

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively

study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

Sincerely,
Darcy Shultz

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/.../president-trumps-religious...>

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

[3] <https://www.chron.com/.../dan-patrick-church-state...>

[4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social...>;

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

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

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

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

[9] Matthew 22:21

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

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

<https://www.masshist.org/.../adam.../index.php/view/PJA01dg2>



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3dReply

Drlsaac Olatunji Jr.

6h ·

7.7.19

Old Fashioned Mama

· Follow

6h ·

Katie Poling is with Bradley Poling.

2d .

Kids are at CRC for the week and so excited!!

From: Jacque Hannible <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - John Hannon

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 20:55:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the FFRF comment to the report in full.

I am totally opposed to the RLC.

V/R,
John Hannon

From: Brad Snedecor <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- Brad Snedecor

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 21:31:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

The commission's recently released draft report seems to be a biased document aimed at undermining my protection under the Establishment Clause.

Here are some example situations where the report's recommendations conflict with my rights:

--As a non-religious person, my rights are violated every time my tax dollars are used to fund religious indoctrination in schools.

--Obviously, when medical or other services needed in a particular locale are delegated to religious institutions, the rights of non-religious clients, and clients with different religious convictions, are violated if that institution withholds services for religious reasons, or proselytizes.

--The report attacks the Johnson amendment. The Johnson amendment does not prevent church members from making political speech. Neither does it prevent church officials from political activity or making political speech – what it does do is prohibit government subsidy in the form of tax exemptions from going to support that activity in violation of my rights as a taxpayer.

I respectfully urge 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.

From: Richard Lutowski <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the Draft Report of the President's Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 21:51:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

The government must take strong and decisive action to correct the highly harmful alleged "separation of church and state" that is widely touted by media and others in this country. There IS NO separation of church from state in the United States, and all claims that the Constitution requires such are blatantly false. This phrase is nowhere to be found in the Constitution. What the Constitution actually says is:

"Amendment I: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;"

The purpose of this clause is to ensure that the United States never established a "Church of the United States" that mimicked the Church of England, an oppressive institution which many fled to America to escape. Therefore, it is completely understandable that the authors of the Bill of Rights would enshrine in the First Amendment a safeguard prohibiting such religious oppression from ever taking root here.

Instead, the Founders crafted Amendment I to ensure that they and all Americans had the right to "free exercise" of their religious convictions in both private and public life, including in the establishment of their civil government and civil laws. To this end, Thomas Jefferson, when writing the Declaration of Independence, referred directly to the Bible when he wrote "that all men are created equal [in the eyes of God and under the law], that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable [God-given] Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness [that is, Property, a word Jefferson was reluctant to use in this context as it might have been misconstrued by some as a perpetual right to slaves; hence "pursuit of Happiness", meaning "Property sans slaves"]]. The right to Life, Liberty, and Property are the subject of, and instituted by, the last 7 of the 10 Commandments given to Moses by God [hence, are "unalienable"]].

Ironically, the current claim of a "separation of church and state" is itself a violation of Amendment I because it is construed to prohibit "free exercise" in the public domain, something the Founders clearly did not believe as evidenced by the Declaration of Independence. So, if not in the Constitution or the Declaration, where did this phrase originate?

Again, it is from Jefferson, in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, who were concerned that their state of Connecticut might intrude on their freedom to worship. Jefferson quelled their fears by assuring them that the First Amendment ensured "a wall of separation

between church and state," meaning that not only the federal government, but also their state, could not intrude on their right to worship as they chose. That is, there is a separation of state from church. He NEVER meant there was a separation of church from state, as he himself demonstrated when writing the Declaration of Independence.

It is this misconception, and misconstruing of Jefferson's words, which must be corrected once and for all:

"Separation of state from church" - yes, per Amendment I, and Jefferson's letter.

"Separation of church from state" - NO!, per Amendment I, and the Declaration of Independence.

--
Rick Lutowski

From: Tera Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Chapter 14-Tera Coull

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 21:57:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern:

I am writing today with great hope that our presiding officials Will move forward and approve the Religious Liberty Commissions "Path Forward".

Individuals who have been wrongly persecuted for their religious beliefs by the courts using the Establishment Clause is totally unconstitutional!

Our freedom of religion is a God given right and our Government is to protect us not sentence us for our beliefs!

The separation of church and state has been wrongly used for too long and it is time to set the path straight and protect our freedom to worship!

As the great Founding Father Benjamin Rush has left us with much wisdom. "Christianity is the only true and perfect religion: and that in proportion as mankind adopts its principles and obey its precepts they will be wise and happy."

What a wonderful time to turn our Nation back to our Lord and Savior Jesus!
To once again be One Nation Under God.
To bring the greatest piece of literature back into our schools, The Bible.
To place the 10 Commandments back into our public places
To once again teach the Golden Rule.

I truly believe much of the anger and the confusion would disappear

God Bless you and My God Bless Ammerica.

Thank you for your time.

Tera Coull

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Louise Goldstein

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 21:59:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my deep opposition to the draft report of the "Religious Liberty Commission". This is a misnomer, since the religion for which liberty is allegedly sought is Christianity and the rest of us are irrelevant. I urge you to continue to support the separation of religion and state with vigor. No one has any right to inflict their dogma on anyone else. I remember, as a Jewish child growing up in the 1950's, having to recite the Lord's Prayer at school, a prayer to which I take great exception. My kindergarten teacher taught the story of Easter, told us the Jews killed Jesus and then pointed out all the Jewish children in the class. I am not making this up! It really happened and things like this should never happen again. I also object to teaching the bible in public schools - which translation will be taught and who will be authorized to explain what it all "means?" The original Hebrew, with which I'm familiar, differs from many Christian translations and even English translations by various Jewish scholars differ in some ways. Leave all of this to religious schools, not public schools. As for posting the Ten Commandments, again, there are differences in the Hebrew, in the way Christians express them, in what is emphasized.

Louise Goldstein, Citizen

From: Caryl Levin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect the First Amendment

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 22:02:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the separation of church and state, just like Thomas Jefferson did.

Caryl Levin

From: April Watanabe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 (The Path Forward) – April Watanabe

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 22:06:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a Christian mother and American who values our Constitution and heritage, I strongly support the Religious Liberty Commission's recommendations.

For too long, believers have felt pressured to leave their faith at the door when entering public life. The First Amendment was designed to prevent the government from establishing a national religion while protecting religious freedom, not to exclude Christian voices from the public square.

The "wall of separation between church and state" isn't in the Constitution. It comes from Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists, where he assured them that the government wouldn't interfere with their religious freedom, not suggesting faith should be excluded from public life. Over time, this metaphor has been misinterpreted.

I appreciate the Commission's recognition that the government should show an actual constitutional violation before restricting religious expression, not burdening religious Americans to justify their rights.

I also support the recommendation that the Department of Justice provide guidance based on the Constitution's original meaning. An originalist approach reflects the Founders' understanding that religious liberty is a God-given right, not a government privilege. Our nation is strongest when every American, including those motivated by their Christian faith, can fully participate in civic life without fear of marginalization or silence.

From: Margaret Riddle <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comments

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 22:19:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly back separation of church and state which this country was founded on.
I will never live in a theocracy as they always abuse their power.

From: Jerise <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT –Presidential Religious Liberty Commission - Draft Report - J. Fogel

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 23:07:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Commission:

The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.

By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), **the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism.** Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.

The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact. For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.

The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Thank you.

Jerise Fogel

New York, NY [REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Jeffrey Wahl <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 14 (The Path Forward) – Jeff Wahl

Date: Tue, 07 Jul 2026 23:20:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Report's findings and recommendations are critically important for safeguarding religious liberty for Americans. These freedoms are fundamental to our republic. The Report and its recommendations should be adopted and followed as the policy of the US government. -Jeff Wahl

From: "Bryan St.Germain" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-BRYAN ST.GERMAIN

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 00:08:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

At its core, the report rests on a false premise: that the constitutional separation between religion and government is somehow hostile to religion. The Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. Every American remains free to pray, worship and speak about their faith. However, those individual rights do not authorize the government to sponsor religious observances or use its authority to promote one faith over others. The report ignores this critical distinction at every turn, dismissing 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.

Our country is great because of its diversity. Promoting one religion in our government above another is Anti-American.

For the Love of Our Country,
Bryan St.Germain

From: Roberta McCanse <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment Dr. Roberta McCanse

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 00:16:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm writing in severe opposition to all attempts to establish the lie that the USA, my country, is a Christian country. I oppose all Christian intrusion into school classrooms. I am one of thousands of Americans who are not Christian. Tens of thousands more Americans occasionally pay lip service to Christianity without thought or any conviction. The constitution firmly protects me from denial of my religious beliefs and/or my lack thereof.

From: Wayne Wakeman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 2/Establishment Clause Standard
– Wayne Wakeman

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 01:10:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to comment on the Commission's June 26, 2026 draft report.

My concern isn't the report's focus on free exercise. It's the specific Establishment Clause standard it asks the government to adopt, and what that standard permits in practice.

The report doesn't just criticize the "wall of separation" metaphor as historically overread - a fair point, and one reasonable people can debate. It goes further, endorsing a legal standard where the Constitution prohibits only "the type of actual legal coercion that was a hallmark of historical establishments of religion" (p. 42). Recommendation #1 asks DOJ to build guidance on exactly this reading.

In practice, a coercion-only standard means government-sponsored religious expression is fine as long as no one is legally forced to participate: prayer at school events, religious displays on courthouse lawns, clergy speaking in official capacities, chaplain-led programming within military units.

"Not legally coerced" is different from "not burdened." A kid whose family isn't Christian, or a soldier who isn't religious at all, doesn't need a direct order to feel like the exception in their own school or unit. Government sponsorship of one faith's practices sends a message about whose beliefs are the default - even without ever technically compelling anyone. That's the concern the "endorsement" standard was built to address, and it's the concern this report treats as settled and safely discarded.

The stories of Captain Sukhbir Singh Toor and Second Lieutenant Rao Harish in Chapter 7 illustrate this point well. Both are about religious minorities seeking room to practice within institutions that defaulted to someone else's norms. That's exactly what a strong Establishment Clause guards against - and a coercion-only standard does little to stop that default from forming in the first place. It only intervenes after someone has already been forced to comply.

The military also offers a current example. In May 2026, the Department of Defense cut its recognized military religious affiliation codes from roughly 211 to 31, eliminating discrete categories for atheists, humanists, and several smaller minority traditions while retaining broad codes for Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, and numerous Christian denominations. Whatever the administrative rationale, the practical effect is that nonreligious and less common minority service members lose a formal way to identify themselves for chaplain support and accommodation, precisely the dynamic Captain Toor and Second Lieutenant Rao describe having to fight through informally.

I'm not asking the Commission to abandon its free exercise recommendations. I'm asking that before this report is finalized, it honestly grapples with the tradeoff its own recommended standard creates: expanding government sponsorship of religious expression doesn't fall equally on all Americans. It falls hardest on whoever doesn't share the religion of the institution they're part of - the same burden the Commission's own witnesses describe experiencing.

Respectfully,

Wayne Wakeman

From: Tanya Gaw <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report Vital Suggestion to Save America and its Christian foundation.

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 02:12:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Lt Gov Dan Patrick,

I wrote the following research paper that has the power to save America and restore and protect its Christian foundation.

Challenging the Expansive Interpretation of Religion under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America.

<https://action4canada.com/challenging-the-expansive-interpretation-of-religion-usa/>

By challenging the term 'religion' we can completely remove the protection of Islam, and other belief systems, Constitutionally. This is supported by scripture and as a Christian nation our first commitment is to God and His Word, and we must do so uncompromisingly and without apology. God takes false gods and idol worship very seriously and throughout old testament scripture destroyed nations, at the hands of brutal enemies, for their disobedience. (Sound familiar?)

*"You shall have no other gods before me...or make for yourselves idols...you shall not bow down to them...for I am a jealous God...visiting the iniquities on the 3rd and 4th generations...**but showing loving devotion to those who keep my commandments.*** Exodus 20:3-6

If we are serious about honouring God and upholding the Word of God this simple solution will remove protection for every foreign ideology that is falsely claiming protection under the First Amendment.

This step of obedience is fully in line with Scripture and the Lord's blessing would pour out on America.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,
Tanya Gaw

[REDACTED] PII

ACTION4CANADA

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

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From: Steve Kassel <[REDACTED]>

To: " PII " < PII >, Beth Wilson < PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] no to mixing religion and government

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 06:00:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: Outlook-etypythl.png

To whom....

Mixing religion and government is dangerous. Should the US allow any religion to be it official theocracy, and we know it would be Christianity, all other religions would become outline threats and the US would become much like Iran with clerics dictating as supreme leaders. The magic of our 250 year old democracy would be trashed and we would slip further into being a "shithole country" as perceived by outsiders. Our founding fathers built the Declaration of Independence and the constitution and its preamble in reaction to England's King George, who wanted to profit off the labors of Americans and the countries minerals and in response the tyranny that a narrow view of Christianity of England.

Steven C Kassel, MFT

PII

PII

PII

PII

PII

Unless we put medical freedom into the Constitution, the time will come when medicine will organize into an undercover dictatorship. To restrict the art of healing to one class of man and deny equal privileges to others

will constitute the Bastille of medical science. The constitution of the republic should make special provision for medical freedom as well as religious freedom.

- Dr. Benjamin Rush, Surgeon General of George Washington's armies and signer of the Declaration of Independence (1787)

PII

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

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 08:35:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

[A recently released draft report](#) issued by the Religious Liberty Commission has the potential to undermine one of the Constitution's most fundamental protections against the union of religion and government. Ever since it was created, this commission has set its sights on Americans' freedom of conscience — stacking its hearings with witnesses from one side of deeply contested constitutional questions to produce not an objective examination of religious liberty, but an advocacy document. And now, this report shows just how far the administration is willing to go to advance its Christian nationalist agenda.

At its core, the report rests on a false premise: that the constitutional separation between religion and government is somehow hostile to religion. The Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. Every American remains free to pray, worship and speak about their faith. However, those individual rights do not authorize the government to sponsor religious observances or use its authority to promote one faith over others. The report ignores this critical distinction at every turn, dismissing 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.

Many of the report's recommendations would further entangle the 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 schools and other public institutions, repealing the Johnson Amendment so that tax-exempt churches can engage in partisan electioneering, resurrecting the failed 2018 "Religious Liberty Task Force" and creating new hotlines dedicated to advancing preferred religious claims, and encouraging judicial appointments based on a particular ideological vision of religious liberty. All this while the administration [strips recognition from some 180 minority faiths and nonreligious](#) worldviews in the military. Taken together, these proposals threaten the constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and equal treatment for believers and nonbelievers alike.

As an Non-Christian, MY CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS are, and will be, violated by these Right Wing Christian Nationalist sponsors, and THIS HORRENDOUS ATTACK ON THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE, which will eventually exclude all Non-Christians. It is abjectly, morally wrong! FOLLOW THE ORIGINAL POSITIONS OF JEFFERSON, AND OUR OTHER FOUNDING FATHERS.

Sue Ann Zimmerman

[REDACTED] PII
PII

Sent using Hushmail

From: Blaise Hancock <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Blaise Hancock

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 09:08:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a DEVOUT ATHEIST, I must remind the Department that the Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion or NON-religion. Every American remains free to pray, worship and speak about their faith or speak about science and have no religion. However, those individual rights do not authorize the government to sponsor religious observances or use its authority to promote one faith over others. The Religious Liberty Report ignores this critical distinction at every turn, dismissing 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.

Unless you plan on providing equity to the more than 220 religions that are recognized by the federal government, it is best to stay OUT of the religion sphere altogether.

Thank you,

Blaise Hancock

From: Jodette Lenser <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-JODIE LENSER

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 09:50:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty Commissioners,

Please do not attempt to reinterpret and revise the important protections of the First Amendment. I am proud to be a U.S. American precisely because we all are entitled to freedom of conscience. Our nation is a 'melting pot' of cultures, and this diversity strengthens our capabilities and larger culture.

We must keep religion out of government in order to precisely allow religious freedom for a diverse population. It would not be appropriate for me, an atheist, for example, to promote my beliefs/nonbelief to children in schools, the same as for a christian or hindu. However, we can all, outside of governmental office and space, practice and express our personal beliefs.

I grew up with this freedom, and am very concerned that you are considering stripping it away from a large portion of the American population because you may wish to promote your own personal religious beliefs as a misinformed interpretation of "religious freedom".

I urge you to do the fair thing for all of us.

Jodie Lenser

From: Perry Mitchell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT; PERRY MITCHELL

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 10:31:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm totally against the Religious Liberty Commission. America has done fine for 250 years with the secular portion of the First Amendment. You commissioners are Christians -- fine by me, as long as you don't try to impose your beliefs on me and the rest of the country. I'm an atheist and happy about not believing in any supernatural beings -- and I'll never try to impose my beliefs on you.

From: Scott Cady <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] issues and problems with the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 11:05:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RE: concerns with the RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While I am mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which I agree with, I write to voice my 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 a citizen and student of history, and as a Christian, I am 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, I think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain.

Certainly, the Founding Fathers were 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.

I respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue.

I 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. I respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

I am concerned that the Committee neglected to 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. I 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] I 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. I 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. I am concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, I respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, 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 betlen Church & State." [7]

James Madison wrote, "It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. I 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. I revere this lesson too much soon to forget it." [8]

Lastly, I object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, I am mindful of Our Lord's words that I "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."

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

Yours truly,

J. Scott Cady

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

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

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

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

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

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

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

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

[9] Matthew 22:21

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

[11] John Adams, Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765. <https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHARLES C. JUSTICE

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 11:26:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support strongly a strict adherence to the Establishment Clause as it has been understood for many decades. Thomas Jefferson was correct to emphasize the “wall of separation between church and state.” The practices of religions are unhindered in this nation now and their politicization undermines both religion and government. Government involvement in this issue threatens personal liberty and freedom on conscience. Keep the government out of religion and religion out of the government.

Keep America Free for All.

From: Mary Lofgren <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 11:29:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty Commission Report

I am not in favor of the recommendations in the Religious Liberty Commission Report.

The draft report articulates how to weave religion more deeply into the operation of the federal government. It calls for dismantling long standing barriers between Church and State.

The Constitution clearly states that there should be separation of Church and State. The reports recommendations aim to dismantle that. **I am in favor of keeping a clear separation of Church and State,** as our Founders articulated in the Constitution.

1. Repealing the Johnson Amendment (the law that prohibits churches and other tax-exempt religious organizations from endorsing political candidates while keeping their tax exempt status). **If this Amendment is repealed then churches and other tax exempt organizations should be taxed.**
2. Requesting the Department of Justice establish a Religious Liberty task force to investigate and prioritize liberty litigation.
3. Supporting the nomination of federal judges with a demonstrated record of favoring religious expression, **a clear conflict of interest.**
4. Creating a new Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty.
5. Expanding exhibits at federal historic sites by adding verbiage that would celebrate the role of religion in America's history. **At the same time the Smithsonian is being told to remove exhibits about slavery, Japanese American internment camps, and conflicts with Native Americans. What's being removed is the true history of this country and promoting a white washed version of America.**

Truly faithful people feel an obligation to all humanity.

This administration is gutting Medicaid, slashing food assistance, stripping protections from the most vulnerable people in this country while, promoting the concentration of wealth at the very top. This administration does not embody the meaning of being truly faithful. This administration has no right or standing to propose these measures; rather, this administrations actions promote the opposite of true religious tenets.

Again, I am not in favor of the recommendations in the Religious Commission Report.

Mary Lofgren

From: Harry C Ramsey <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 11:38:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

I do not support any of the Religious Liberty Commission's drafted recommendations!

Harry Ramsey

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

From: Svetlana Van Wyk <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 12:01:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support challenging separation of church and state, as unconstitutional. Our Founders never intended to remove the exercise of Christian Faith from public life and service. In fact, John Adams wrote that our Constitution was written for a moral and religious people. If our Constitution meant to govern a moral and religious people by design, and removing the biblical source of religious morality from public service deprives our people of the very foundation for our society and laws.

Sincerely,
S Van Wyk

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Caroline Karp <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – C.A.Karp

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 12:22:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the so-called *Religious Liberty Commission* in association with the so-called Department of *Justice*, which is supposedly sworn to uphold the US Constitution,

Protect the First Amendment!

Religious liberty is best protected when the government remains neutral toward religion, and does not involve religion in government affairs or privilege any faith over others.

I urge the US Department of Justice to publish an accurate synthesis of First Amendment jurisprudence re separation of church and State as Chapter 1 of the *Religious Liberty Commission* Report.

I urge the *Religious Liberty Commission* to:

- Delete or revise those portions of its draft report that seek to redefine the Establishment Clause, reduce governmental neutrality toward religion, and/or recommend policies that privilege any religious beliefs through governmental action; and
- Re-affirm the proposition that there should be a “wall of separation between church and state” as T.Jefferson said, and categorically oppose efforts by any federal agency or office to include religious practices or preferences in any aspect of government function.

In sum, I oppose the idea of a government-sponsored religion and all efforts to normalize Christian nationalism in America. I also oppose efforts by the so-called *Religious Liberty Commission* and any/all federal government agencies to improperly insert religious beliefs or practices into any aspect of government function, including education and defense.

Sincerely,

Caroline A Karp

Caroline A Karp

[REDACTED]
PII PII

From: Jesse Bolton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Vaccines are part of readiness

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 12:58:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

I think this is a terrible document written by people with a political agenda.

I'm a physician, veteran, and atheist

To defend all our freedoms, including the right to any religion or none, Service members need to submit to required vaccinations just as they submit to required physical training, weapons, qualification or dental exams.

A service member incapacitated with influenza or typhoid cannot effectively protect our way of life.

I'm willing to admit that some of the Covid vaccine recommendations got a little out of hand. Yearly Covid shots seems kind of silly. Covid vaccinations for 12 to 22 year-old Males may or may not have a favorable risk benefit profile in 2026. But this is not a religious issue. It is a scientific and medical issue which should be addressed with appropriate research. And when the people in charge has reviewed the appropriate research and made the appropriate cost benefit analysis, it is not up to individual service members to question those decisions for themselves.

Also, I would note, that militaristic white Christian nationalism worked out poorly for Nazi Germany, and indeed the world

Jesse Bolton, MD

Sent from my iPhone

From: Anita Taykadomp <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 13:04:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Your primitive sky-daddy delusions have no place in government, you child-raping lunatics.

From: Daniel Coflin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 13:34:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am very grateful to President Trump for establishing the Religious Liberty Commission. The infringement on citizens rights regarding religious liberty to express personal faith is very concerning. I have read the commissions report and I am very glad to see the exposure of government violations addressed. Our Christian heritage and founding documents should be promoted in our educational system. The wall of separation is clearly documented to protect the Church and citizens religious liberty and freedom of expressing their faith without government intrusion.

From: Alex Zukas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 13:50:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commissioners,

I have serious concerns with the draft report that your commission has drafted.

Here are my main concerns presented in a bulleted format for ease of reading:

- Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus. The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the draft report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
- The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact. For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
- The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life. The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

As a professional historian who has researched and taught history for over forty years, I am dismayed by the commission's inability to highlight the complexity, depth, and nuance of the historical record. The following historical sources offer a richer, more accurate account of the religious views of the founders than the selective readings that inform the draft report (which, in fairness, cites several of these documents but without sufficient context):

- Washington's caution that the federal government gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance" in his [letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island](#) (1790)

- The **Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom** (drafted 1777, enacted 1786) with its warning against “the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible”
- **Thomas Jefferson’s letter to the Danbury Baptists** (1802), which emphasizes “that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God” and references “a wall of separation between Church & State”
- The **Petition of the Philadelphia Synagogue to the Council of Censors of Pennsylvania** (1783), which warns against the exclusion of religious minorities through religious tests for officeholding
- Article XI of the **1796 Treaty of Tripoli**, which notes that “the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion”
- James Madison’s **Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments** (1785), which notes that it is an “arrogant pretension” for “the Civil Magistrate” to presume to act as a “competent Judge of Religious Truth . . . [or] employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy”

I appreciate your attention to the points I have raised in the hope of a more balanced report will be forthcoming.

Best regards,

Alex Zukas
 Professor of History (Emeritus)
 National University
 San Diego, CA

From: lester daproza <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 13:52:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Carson and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am saddened and appalled with the conclusion that the committee has reached that there is "NO separation of church and state" in the United States Constitution.

If it is Not in the constitution then the only logical conclusion would be that "there IS a union of church and state". Tell me, where can I find such a statement of a "union of church and state" in the constitution? None!

It is intellectually dishonest to say that there is no separation of church and state in the United States constitution, it might not be spelled out word for word, But, its principles are Undeniably laid out in the First Amendment.

Even Thomas Jefferson recognized that in his letter to the Danbury Baptist, "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that Act of the Whole American People which Declared that their Legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."

Jesus himself stated it's principle when he said, Matthew 22:21 "They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar(state) the things which are Caesar's; and unto God(church) the things that are God's."

History has proven that the union of church and state Always ends in bloodshed like the Roman Empire, the Spanish Inquisition, Cromwell's England, Colonial America, etc.

So please preserve this precious wall that Separates Church and State.

Sincerely,

Lester Daproza

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Keith Long <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Keith Long, Jr.

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 14:07:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious liberty is for everybody. Government neutrality is the only way to ensure that right is protected. I oppose the Religious Liberty Commission's report and its bias toward one interpretation of one religion over all others. Secular governance benefits both the government and the religious. Protect our first amendment right to freedom of and from religion!

From: Lisabeth Dolwig <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 14:08:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Department of Justice

Having almost reached the age of 100, I am saddened to think of those who follow me, who will not enjoy the religious freedom offered to me by the separation of church and state. It breaks my heart to see the things that are happening to our country, because of all the freedoms we are gradually being denied.

Our country was founded on a foundation of freedom to practice any religion you desired. Our history points to those who would rather die than give this up. Although it does not specifically use those words, our founding fathers in drawing up the constitution guaranteed us the freedom to practice the religion of our choice, or not to follow any religion if that was our choice.

I sincerely pray that you will be guided by our Lord, and not do anything that would deny us the right to practice our chosen religion.

Sincerely yours,

Lisabeth Dolwig

From: David Titzer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] "PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 14:13:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am very concerned that the US Federal and some (such as Texas) state governments are attempting to impose a "christian" belief foundation in our public arena. This is a very dangerous path to begin and can lead to ever increasing thought and belief restrictions, leading to suppression.

The US colonies were populated by those seeking new economic opportunities, and just as importantly, the freedom to exercise personal religious freedom. These groups included the Pilgrims of Massachusetts, the Quakers of Pennsylvania, the Catholics of Maryland and the Jews of South Carolina(the oldest synagogue is in Charleston, SC). George Washington recognized this in his letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Rhode Island in 1790. The United States is not a Christian nation, but rather it is a country that has always embraced a diversity of religious beliefs and the personal freedom to exercise them.

Please revise this report so that it faithfully reflects our country's founding religious freedom principals.

Thank you,
David Titzer

From: Kurt Hanson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Kurt Hanson

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 14:52:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have been made aware of recent legislation proposals by the administration that serve to bring more and more religiosity in the US government. As a tax paying citizen and an active member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, please know that I strongly disagree with a movement in this direction and fully support the thoughts and recommendations of the FFRF which I have copied below.

Thank you,

Kurt Hanson
Oregon

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) respectfully submits the following comments regarding the draft report issued by the Religious Liberty Commission.

FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 40,000 members and several chapters nationwide. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism. Our legal department has assisted thousands of Americans whose religious liberty has been infringed by government favoritism toward religion, and we have successfully litigated numerous cases in federal and state courts. Our experience demonstrates that religious liberty is best protected when the government remains neutral toward religion, rather than privileging one faith over others. 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.

Respectfully submitted,

The Freedom From Religion Foundation
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.

From: David Spencer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report public comments

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 15:00:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good afternoon.

I am providing comment on the Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report as part of the public comment period. My input is below.

--I staunchly support Religious Liberty in the United States

--As a member of a minority religious group in the U.S., I support religious liberty efforts that address all religious groups, not just the majority religions. Unfortunately, the draft report does not address religious minorities in the U.S. well.

--I am a strong supporter of the wall between Church and State. America remains strong when this wall is maintained. Historical examples globally show the dangers of nations that did not value this separation, both to the Church and the State. Aspects of the draft report that weaken this wall are concerning.

I appreciate your time.

Very respectfully,

David

From: Donna Russell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep separation of church and state!

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 15:01:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a retired teacher who knows firsthand that public schools do not prohibit an individuals' right to pray, or practice their beliefs in any way.

I taught Art education, which includes global cultural studies, which also includes those religions, including Christianity.

Our students learn of many religions in Social studies and English, too (I also taught special ed. English).

Christianity is not prevented in our public schools, and instead most other practices are at this time.

We need to keep our constitution's separation of church and state to allow our diverse student populations' individual rights to worship as each individual sees fit.

Donna Russell

MAED/MAT-LD

 Sign
off

Donna Russell

Create your own [email signature](#)

 tpx__

From: Donna Russell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 15:03:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Donna Russell** <[REDACTED] PII >

Date: Wed, Jul 8, 2026, 3:01 PM

Subject: Keep separation of church and state!

To: <[REDACTED] PII >

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We need to keep our constitution's separation of church and state to allow our diverse student populations' individual rights to worship as each individual sees fit.

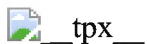
Donna Russell

MAED/MAT-LD



Donna Russell

Create your own [email signature](#)



From: "McDaniel, Marie B." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Religious Liberty- McDaniel

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 15:09:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice,

I am a historian of religious history at Southern Connecticut State University. I am also a lifelong Christian. As a historian, I am particularly interested in the religious lives of early Americans (people living in what is now America from about 1600 to 1800). My first book is on religion in colonial Philadelphia.

My work in Philadelphia is particularly pertinent to conversations today, because Pennsylvania was founded by William Penn to be a center of religious liberty. William Penn intended for the colony to be a bastion of religious freedom and tolerance. A society where all its residents could live in religious brotherhood-- and they were not all Christian. If we look at the religious make-up of Pennsylvania in the colonial period, there were Anglicans (today Episcopalians), Quakers, Baptists, Lutherans (German and Swedish), Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Reformed (German), Moravians, Jews, Catholics, and even some Muslims. And by the time the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in 1774, those founding fathers recognized that Philadelphia had gotten something right. That religious tolerance, and the separation of church from state, actually led to a more unified and peaceful society than in other colonies.

Dr. Marie McDaniel

Chair and Associate Professor
Southern Connecticut State University

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

Engleman C205

From: Elesha Coffman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Draft Report, Chapter 2

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 15:15:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

As a Christian and a historian of American religion, I strenuously object to the Draft Report on religious liberty. It presents a faulty narration of American history in order to advance specious and unworkable plans. Put simply, separation of church and state is a good idea, a deeply American idea, that is the soundest foundation for a religiously rich society. This report undermines our American foundation. I resent the government telling me, a religious educator, to lie about the past.

Of the many portions of the report I could highlight, I will focus on chapter two. This chapter leads off with a mischaracterization of early European colonization, stating on p. 36, "the early colonists escaped Europe to freely practice their religion." A small number of colonists crossed the Atlantic for that reason, but most had other reasons. Spanish explorers sought land, gold, and the subjugation of Native peoples. The first English-speaking colonists in Virginia sought land and agricultural riches. Economic gain and political freedom motivated significantly more colonists than a flight from religious persecution did. I will not lie about that.

Page 41 of the report bizarrely identifies the idea of a "wall of separation" between church and state as the invention of 20th century atheists, with Thomas Jefferson added as an afterthought. On the contrary, there are many, many historical statements upholding this idea, from the founding period onward. For example, Article XI of the 1796 Treaty of Tripoli states that "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." The Supreme Court used the "wall of separation" phrase in 1878, declaring in *Reynolds v. United States* "that it may be accepted almost as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the [first] amendment." I will not lie about this, either.

In 1785, James Madison urged the Virginia legislature to reject a bill that would have provided public funds for teaching the Christian religion. I reject this Draft Report on the same grounds. He wrote, "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." Politicians should have no role in dictating religion, he continued, because "if religion be exempt from the authority of the society at large, still less can it be subject to that of the Legislative Body." This Draft Report, like the bill to which Madison objected, "violates the equality which ought to be the basis of every law" and "implies either that the Civil Magistrate is a competent judge of religious truth, or that he may employ religion as an engine of civil policy." It will "destroy that moderation and harmony which the forbearance of our laws to intermeddle with religion has produced." I stand with Madison against this Draft Report.

Dr. Elesha Coffman
Texas

From: Karen Carr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - GENERAL COMMENT - KAREN CARR

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 15:24:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my strong support of the Religious Liberty Commission's report and recommendations regarding the issue of "church and state separation." Addressing the fabricated "wall" separating church and state is long overdue. I am very thankful that President Trump's Commission was formed to study and present recommendations for correcting the misinterpretation of our forefathers' original intent. America was founded on Biblical truth and Judeo-Christian values. Citizens' freedom of religion is protected from government interference. Sadly, at times we have watched our government unlawfully restrict, punish, prosecute and persecute Christian citizens for expressing and living out their religious beliefs. I am hopeful that the Commission's report will be taken seriously and acted upon so that the original intent of the Constitution regarding religion and government can be restored and honored.

From: M McAlister <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 15:46:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I was deeply dismayed to see the content of your draft report. I am a historian of US religion and culture, author of the award-winning study *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicalism* (2018). I believe that religion has an important place in our society and culture, and that religious believers have played key roles in US history -- roles that deserve to be respected and analyzed.

For that reason, I am very disturbed by the ahistorical and partisan arguments in the report. By recommending that the DOJ back litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools, the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.

Please commit yourselves to genuine religious freedom, shared equally by ALL people in the United States. Faith will flourish in such a context, as it always has.

Respectfully,

Dr. Melani McAlister

Prof. of American Studies and International Affairs

George Washington University

[REDACTED] PII

From: Mary Stump <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 16:09:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religion should not be involved in our government. The two should remain separate. I do not want someone else's beliefs forced on me. I know the difference between right and wrong. I know how to treat others with respect and understanding. I do not believe the bible should be taken literally and then interpreted to suit the needs of a few to set standards for others. To allow this will start trouble that this current administration is not capable of managing.

From: Mark Zanella <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Positive Comments Regarding the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 16:39:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sir/Ma'am

Thank you for putting together the brief 2 page Religious Liberty Commission summary report.

Brief is good.

Respectfully,

Mark Zanella

[REDACTED] PII

From: Greg C. [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission - Greg C.

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 16:41:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a higher education professional, I write to register my strong opposition to the draft report issued by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission on June 26, 2026. While religious liberty is unquestionably a foundational American value deserving serious engagement, this report advances a historically inaccurate and constitutionally misleading account of the American founding in order to justify a policy agenda that departs sharply from settled understandings of the First Amendment. Rather than reflecting the complexity of the historical record, the report substitutes a selective and ideologically driven narrative for rigorous scholarship, and I urge the Department to withdraw it before it is adopted as official federal guidance.

The report's central premise — that American religious liberty rests on a broad Christian consensus that a supposedly hostile 20th-century legal culture later dismantled — does not withstand historical scrutiny. Religious liberty in this country emerged not from unanimity but from the founding generation's direct experience of sectarian conflict and religious pluralism. The framers responded to that reality by deliberately withholding religious authority from the federal government. Article VI's prohibition on religious tests for office was a considered choice, not an oversight. That choice is corroborated by the founders' own words:

- Washington's assurance to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport that the government would give "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance,"
- The Treaty of Tripoli's explicit statement that the government was not founded on the Christian religion
- Jefferson's invocation of a "wall of separation between Church and State" in his letter to the Danbury Baptists
- Madison's warning in the Memorial and Remonstrance against civil magistrates presuming to judge religious truth.

None of this reflects hostility to faith; it reflects a considered structural choice to keep the state out of religious authority so that religious life could flourish independently. The report compounds this historical distortion with specific claims that should concern anyone committed to accurate history. It attributes the legal separation of church and state to mid-20th-century secular philosophy rather than to this much longer constitutional lineage, treating a contested interpretation as if it were settled fact. It then uses that flawed premise to recommend that the Department support litigation compelling the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools — a recommendation that would enlist the federal government in promoting one religious tradition over all others, precisely the kind of state-sponsored religious favoritism the First Amendment was designed to prevent. A federal commission charged with studying religious liberty should not issue findings that read history backward from a predetermined policy conclusion.

For these reasons, I urge the Department of Justice to reject the draft report's historical framing and its associated policy recommendations. Disestablishment has not weakened American religious life; by keeping government out of matters of theological truth, it has allowed an extraordinary diversity of religious traditions to thrive on their own terms. Any federal report on religious liberty should reflect that complexity rather than flatten it, and should be grounded in the historical record rather than in a narrative crafted to support a predetermined constitutional agenda. I ask that the Commission redact this incorrect and non-factual report.

From: Dennis Rep <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My response to President Trump's Religious Liberty Commission Summary

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 16:43:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm thankful to our Loving Heavenly Abba Father for hearing and answering my prayers to take back the reins of control of this great nation the USA; by raising President Donald J. Trump; a truly, brave, conservative, competent, wise, resilient patriot to rise to the huge challenge by executing the task of restoring our religious freedom; amongst the many other challenges; I am also thankful to Pres.Trump and his administration and supporters for standing strong in the face of all the adversity that he and they've had to endure; It is and should be a testimony to all the world that Pres. Trump is God's appointee for this presidential task. My prayers being answered is proof that there is this living God; man tried to kill Jesus; He resurrected; and is alive and living in His believers including myself and our great president today; They tried in futility to take out our awesome President Trump also. Despite what our enemies think; God used the Puritans/Pilgrims to establish this country and dedicate it to the Living Jesus Christ our Lord. He's strong and living in me; and His church and our president; I'm blessed to have avoided having to take that hideous vaccine as was mandated by the company I worked for at the time; I used my religious exemption letter to spur that on. I'm sad in my heart for those who were forced into taking that vaccine. God fought my battle for me over that; He's still fighting my battles in life; He's also fighting the USA'S battles and I know He's using Pres Trump and his supporters and administrations to fight and beat them. Long live Pres. Donald J. Trump. God bless the USA and President Donald J. Trump!

Sincerely,
Mr. Dennis Rep

From: Karen Alexander <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT — General Comment — Karen Alexander

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 16:48:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

I had always understood our rights to religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitutional writers was to protect the people of faith from their government, not the government from faith. Thank you for making this clear. Biblical religious beliefs are entwined throughout the U.S. Constitution and are not meant to be separated from government. Just the opposite is the case, men (and women) of great faith dared to conceive this constitutional republic because of their faith and understanding of the teachings of Yahweh and Jesus Christ. Karen Alexander (New Jersey)

From: marriedskinner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 1 (p. 32) Chapter 7 (p. 107)

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 16:59:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you so much for calling attention to the erosion of respect for Christian values in the policies of municipal organizations in the US.

My husband and I are distressed by the refusal of NY State to recognize religious objections to vaccines in the schools here. For us, while abortion is the preeminent moral issue of today, our faith as practicing Catholics demands that we carefully evaluate whether a medical intervention of any kind is likely to be advantageous to us before we accept it. In other words, cell lines derived from abortions are abhorrent to us, but even if that were not a facet of so-called vaccines, we would be obligated *by our religious faith* to scrutinize every product and procedure we accept, and we should be exempt on the grounds of our religion from coercive and exclusionary policies that would hamstring us into dubious medical decisions.

This suffocation of religious exemptions in school policy goes in tandem with the absurd hostility directed to Catholic orders in NY State. Multiple orders have had to go to court (for years) because they do not want to provide abortion coverage (to their own nuns and a handful of lay office workers) or because they will not, even theoretically, agree to call a dying man a woman as they lavish care on him (for free) in their Rose Hawthorn House. In my opinion, all of these laws demonstrate that our politicians do not believe that religion actually changes and directs a person's moral vision; they see religious beliefs as entirely a form of private therapy. Since they do not take it seriously themselves, they see it as expendable whenever it is expedient.

I was appalled by the cruelty and duplicity to which the poor doctors, nurses, and medical office staff were subjected during the era of mandatory corona-virus injections. A campaign was launched to insinuate that any of them who resisted those products was callous, selfish, and reckless about the health of patients. Our doctors and their staffs had faithfully cared for our family and community for years, and I was devastated to see their altruism denigrated. It was a way to bully and shame them into submission. No one in my family works in the field of medicine, but I was so deeply upset by this artificially created antagonism between doctors and patients -- that kind of fake antipathy drummed up by an outside party is a signature of Marxism.

Finally, I would like to say that I deeply respect Dr. Kheriaty, and I agree with and support everything I have heard him express. Thank you again for taking up these important issues.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Cecelia Skinner

non cessavit osculari pedes meos...remittuntur ei peccata multa, quoniam dilexit multum

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Committee

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 17:45:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

First Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Read the First Amendment again. Say it out loud. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

This committee is acting under the direction of a president who said “We’re bringing back religion in our country...” That desire to “bring back religion” is in direct conflict with the First Amendment which forbids establishing religion. Government support for religion, or any specific religion will inevitably infringe on those practicing every other religion and on those who do not practice any religion. This committee has a mission that is unconstitutional if it is tasked to recommend legislation or governmental policy that establishes, supports, or prohibits religion.

The government must heed the First Amendment and stay out of religion. This committee must decline to make any recommendation regarding governmental legislation or policy regarding religious liberty and dissolve immediately.

From: Guadalupe Pinto <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Report – CalNonprofits.

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 17:46:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: CalNonprofits_Comment_Letter_RLC_Report_Johnson_Amendment_070826.docx.pdf

Whomever it may concern,

Attached is the California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits) public comment letter regarding the Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report recommendation about repealing the Johnson Amendment.

Best,
CalNonprofits



July 8th, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
Debate Chamber, Pavilion Building
3819 Maple Ave
Dallas, TX 75219

Via email: [REDACTED] PII

Re: PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Report – CalNonprofits.

To Religious Liberty Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the most recent Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report. **On behalf of the California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits), representing more than 110,000 community-based organizations across the state, including thousands of religious congregations, we submit this public comment in opposition of the draft recommendations to weaken and repeal the Johnson Amendment.** We write to underscore its importance in preserving nonprofit nonpartisanship as a core safeguard for charitable and religious organizations to deliver community services un beholden to partisan pressures.

CalNonprofits serves as the leading voice for California’s nonprofit sector. Our mission is to ensure nonprofits have the policies, resources, and partnerships needed to serve our communities effectively. Protecting nonprofit nonpartisanship is foundational to that mission. We stand united with the many charitable, religious, and philanthropic organizations across America in opposition to any effort to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment.

Background

For nearly 70 years, the Johnson Amendment, part of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, has ensured that charitable nonprofits, including houses of worship, remain focused on mission, not politics. The law prohibits tax-exempt organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates, thereby ensuring organizations dedicated to the public good remain above the political fray. Consequently, it helps preserve public trust by protecting these organizations from partisan pressures and manipulation. Repealing the Johnson Amendment would enable partisan election activity, which could counteract this mission-driven work. Politicizing these spaces and overturning decades of established law would undermine the public’s confidence in all nonprofits.

The Commission’s draft report recommends that the federal government repeal the Johnson Amendment, outlining interim actions like supporting legal challenges against it. Specifically, it asserts that the Johnson Amendment “purports to give the government authority to regulate religious leaders’ sermons and spiritual guidance to their communities,” on the basis of free speech and religious liberty concerns. However, that is not the case. Instead, these recommendations underscore a clear intent by the current federal administration to weaken,

narrow, or render the federal nonpartisanship standard unenforceable, opening the door to political influence flowing through tax-exempt entities.

Additionally, concerns that the long-standing law prohibiting charitable organizations to engage in endorsing candidates or making political statements violates First Amendment protections are not supported by current law or the practical application of the Johnson Amendment. Legally, 501(c)(3)s can engage in issue advocacy and nonpartisan voter education but not in partisan activities, such as supporting or opposing candidates. Nonprofits can and should engage in policy advocacy related to their missions. The Johnson Amendment restricts partisan election-related activities in order for charitable organizations to receive and maintain tax-exempt status, not issue advocacy, and equating this is misleading. Lawmakers and the public must understand this to prevent confusion that could lead to harmful policy changes or misperceptions about the intent, purpose, and application of the Johnson Amendment.

Our concerns about repealing the Johnson Amendment are as follows:

1. It will politicize nonpartisan charitable organizations.

The Johnson Amendment keeps charities and religious institutions free from partisan politics. Without the limitations it imposes, taxpayers will essentially be subsidizing political activity to support partisan campaigns. Specifically, nonprofit and faith leaders may feel pressured to endorse or engage politically, creating a “pay to play” model that affects organizational focus on mission. Additionally, charitable resources, including staffing and funding intended to support community services, could be redirected toward political activity, affecting the communities these organizations intend to serve.

2. It will encourage dark money into election activity.

The [Campaign Legal Center](#), a nonpartisan legal organization, warns that weakening the Johnson Amendment “would have the unintended consequence of opening the floodgates to the creation of a new class of “super dark money groups,” groups organized as religious nonprofits that would operate as unregulated, tax-deductible vehicles for wealthy donors to secretly influence elections.” Political actors could funnel money toward their preferred candidate, eroding transparency and trust in the campaign finance landscape.

3. It can lead to a loss of public trust in charitable organizations.

With increased politicization of these organizations and an influx in political spending, these organizations could end up prioritizing politics over mission. Donations intended for community services could be redirected toward political campaigns, reducing necessary, and already scarce resources, for essential services like housing, food, disaster response, and more. In turn, the public will lose confidence in their neutrality, fairness and ability to meet their core mission of serving their communities.

Conclusion

More than 5,800 organizations in all 50 states signed on to support the Johnson Amendment and protecting nonprofit nonpartisanship, as reflected in the Community Letter in Support of

Nonpartisanship, in the Faith Voices letter signed by more than 4,300 faith leaders, in the separate letter signed by more than 100 denominations and major religious organizations, and in letters from the law enforcement community. Such public support, especially from faith leaders and religious organizations, only reaffirms the importance of nonprofit partisanship.

The Johnson Amendment strengthens these values by ensuring religious and charitable institutions remain trusted, nonpartisan spaces dedicated to mission, not politics. For these reasons, CalNonprofits strongly urges the Commission to listen to the unified voice of the nonprofit sector, withdraw these deeply flawed recommendations, and preserve the integrity and nonpartisanship of 501(c)(3) organizations.

Thank you for considering our input on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geo. Green", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Geoff Green
CEO
CalNonprofits

CC: Jeannette Brown, Director of Public Policy, CalNonprofits
Guadalupe Pinto, Public Policy & Research Associate, CalNonprofits

From: Christine Taylor <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission draft report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 18:12:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs,

The Dept of Justice should reject the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. It is flawed in many respects and fails to establish a meaningful basis for its conclusions. The American founding fathers specifically created a national government that very clearly did not include religious authority in order to ensure religious freedom for the people of the U.S. Thank you.

From: Richard Pressman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] new report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 18:18:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

I urge you to reject this report wholesale:

The Commission disparages the separation of church and state throughout the report. Among its most alarming recommendations, it calls for repealing the Johnson Amendment, steering more public dollars to religious schools through vouchers, backing state laws that force religious displays into public school classrooms, and standing up new federal enforcement mechanisms that would pressure public officials to favor religious expression.

Richard S. Pressman, Ph.D.

San Antonio

From: "E. T." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT OPPOSING THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 18:20:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission;

I submit this comment in strong opposition to the findings and recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission Report. While the Commission frames its work as protecting constitutional rights, it fundamentally misrepresents American religious history, ignores the practical pluralism that shaped our founding, and proposes measures that would privilege one religious tradition over all others—contrary to the constitutional vision established by the founders themselves.

****Religious Liberty Emerged from Pluralism, Not Christian Consensus****

The report assumes a false historical narrative: that America was founded on Christian unanimity and that secular neutrality represents modern hostility to faith. This is historically inaccurate. Religious liberty protections emerged precisely because the founding generation confronted deep sectarian conflict and religious diversity. The founders did not share a monolithic Christian consensus. Rather, they deliberately designed a secular constitutional framework to accommodate competing spiritual traditions and denominational disagreements.

George Washington's 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, captured this founding principle: the government gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." This was not anti-religious sentiment—it was wisdom born from watching Europe's religious wars. The Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom (1786), drafted by Thomas Jefferson, explicitly warned against "the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others." These were not atheists attacking faith; they were religious people protecting faith from government interference.

The Constitution Deliberately Established Secular Authority

The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of religious authority. Article VI prohibited religious tests for federal office. The Constitution assigned no religious duties to the state. This was not hostility toward religion—it was a conscious choice to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. While personal faith shaped individual founders, their constitutional legacy established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.

The Report Abandons Constitutional Principles

By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation for Ten Commandments displays in public schools, the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. This abandons the secular neutrality central to our founding. Despite America's long history of religious pluralism—including Catholics, Jews, freethinkers, and many denominations—the report uses federal machinery to elevate one religious tradition above all others.

Flawed Historical Scholarship Substituted for Rigorous Analysis

The report treats contested historical interpretations as settled fact. Most troublingly, it attributes 20th-century church-state separation to postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche, dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith. This is not serious historical scholarship. The

separation of church and state developed through genuine constitutional interpretation, not philosophical nihilism.

Disestablishment Liberated, Not Diminished, American Religion

The report relies on a false dichotomy: either America must declare itself a Christian nation, or it must be hostile to faith. History refutes this. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated an extraordinarily vibrant array of religious traditions. Freed from government control, American churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples flourished as nowhere else. Religious liberty and secular governance are not enemies; they are partners.

The public comment process provides an opportunity to affirm honest history. The Constitution's secular framework, endorsed by religious and secular founders alike, has proven itself the best protector of religious vitality and pluralism over the entire existence of the United States. I urge the Department of Justice to reject recommendations that abandon this foundational principle and therefore the entire, flawed Draft Report.

Sincerely,
Ellen Travis.

From: Liz Scott <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment for Chapter 9 Health Care and Chapter 10 Vaccines - Elizabeth Scott, Lakewood WA

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 18:56:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

My name is Elizabeth Scott and I am a former Licensed Mental Health Counselor and a 61 year resident of Washington State.

Chapter 9 - These new rules affect equal access to health care. I have close friends who live in Colville Washington a small town north of Spokane by over an hour's drive. They are a good Christian couple and had 4 children spread 4 years apart and were practicing birth control as they had reached their 40s and wanted no more children especially after the last difficult labor. They accidentally got pregnant and had a 5th child. At that point, the husband/father decided to get a vasectomy and went to the clinic/hospital in Colville and found that as a Catholic hospital and his only choice in that area they refused to do vasectomies or allow doctors using their hospital to perform them. This required undo hardship on him and his family as he had to travel several times to Spokane for appointments to be able to access this service. Hospitals that are the only providers in a geographic area need to find a way to provide needed services to its population. If an individual provider at a hospital or clinic is bound by their faith not to provide a procedure, there are other providers available to do that and they should be allowed to do so.

Chapter 10 - I am over 74 and am at risk if I get certain very sick from illnesses such as COVID and the Flu. I believe in vaccines and get vaccinated every year. I feel that herd immunity is important to protect all of us and allowing all people not to get vaccinated or have their children vaccinated puts us all at risk.

Thank you for taking comments.

I am bothered that this commission on Religious Liberty did not include non-religious people, Buddhists, Muslims and some other Christian religions. It sounds like the majority Catholics don't represent most of the people in this country. For instance, in Washington Catholic hospitals cover 55% or more of available services and are in many areas, like Colville, the only providers, yet a small percentage of the population of Washington is of the Catholic faith.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Scott

From: Grant Godwin <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

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

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 19:03:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern: I am writing to comment on the draft Religious Liberty Commission draft report. The basis of my comments is:

- My ancestor, Thomas Godwin, immigrated to Jamestown Colony in 1645. Upon arrival, he learned he could not vote, hold office or purchase land because he was not a member of the Anglican/Episcopal Church. Thomas was Quaker. To participate as an active member of the colony, he had to accept the Anglican doctrine. He did so and became a major landowner, sheriff and member of the Virginia House of Burgesses.
- My wife's ancestor, John Tripp, immigrated to the Puritan colony at Massachusetts Bay in 1635. He found the 'theocratic' state to be so restrictive that he moved with two dozen dissenting persons (led by Anne Hutchison) and founded a new colony in Providence. Their founding document was the first in the new colonies to provide for: separation of church and state; rights of women; participation of all persons; and, equitable treatment of native peoples.
- In growing up in eastern North Carolina, there were Primitive Baptists, Free Will Baptists, Missionary Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Catholics. These groups were constantly bickering over the most minute Biblical principles and often missed the primary tenets of religion.

With each, there were serious biases in the practice and implementation of the respective religion beliefs. In a high level read of the Religious Liberty Commission draft report, the language appears to support the free exercise of religion of all the noted groups and any other. BUT, in reviewing the leanings of the persons that drafted the report, the citations noted and a careful reading of the language, I believe there are serious biases towards Christianity and a very conservative interpretation thereof. As such, the claim for "protecting religious liberty" is very slanted toward protection of a limited range of Christian practices versus broad religious thought and practice. Such biases could sway, even well intended enforcement actions, towards stressing and over protection of a limited range of religious interpretations (ie conservative views of Franklin Graham or Ben Carson or Paula White-Cain versus the views of liberal practitioners). The government simply should not be engaged in deciding what is, and what is not, religion or acceptable religious practices.

Respectfully submitted,
Lincoln Godwin

[REDACTED]
PII [REDACTED]

From: Anna Suranyi <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 19:04:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report distorts history and presents a false message that is slanted by political convictions, and not based on the Constitution or the reality of the Founders' intentions. Religious liberty was an ideal that emerged from distaste for the religious wars of the past, and the Founders deliberately intended to separate church and state.

The 1st Amendment states there shall be no "establishment of religion" while Article VI, Clause 3 of the Constitution states "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."

The Founders' own writings testify to this. In 1797, the treaty of Tripoli, written by John Adams, begins "As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion." In his 1802 letter to Baptists in Connecticut, Thomas Jefferson referred to: "a wall of separation between Church & State," while in 1821 he wrote that the Constitution "meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection" Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and other religions. In his 1790 letter to a Jewish congregation in Rhode Island, George Washington wrote: "the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens." James Madison wrote in 1784 that the government supporting Christian teaching would be "a dangerous abuse of power" and "a departure from that generous policy...offering an Asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every Nation and Religion."

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report goes against the Constitution, the will of the Founders, the will of the American people, and is not consistent with the history of our nation.

--

Anna Suranyi, Ph.D.
Professor of History
Endicott College
Beverly, MA 01915

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 19:08:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to voice my 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.

The United States government is prohibited in the constitution from making religious laws. This is the principle of Separation between Church and State.

Thank you,

Connie Dahlke

From: Montwayne Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 19:52:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

I read it: the report. The stories are nice, and all, but they don't add up to anything beyond how fearful you are of losing the power of the majority to shush those of us who don't toe the Christian line. The bias in your report is obvious: you want to steamroll those of us who do not agree with the false claims of Christianity. Absolutely all freedom of speech should be protected, even those of us who don't think Jesus is a god. Your Christian, politically driven report (well, the conclusions and recommendations) is far, far from what America stands for in terms of religious freedom. Don't you publish it and pretend that you are doing it for the good of America. You're doing it to establish a Christian state!

My ancestor William (Wilberforce) Smith came to America (with Willam Penn) having already been jailed by religious intolerance. And he was a Quaker! With your ideas, he would have been squeezed out of life right here, too, steamrolled by the Church of England.

Today, just because the Church of England is no longer a concern doesn't mean that we can instate some other religion to dominance! You must keep Religion and State separate! The marketplace of ideas does not need the interference of the government to come to good conclusions.

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

I doubt you have the balls, but I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendation. Our government must recommit itself the PLURALISTIC, SECULAR constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs.

Very unhappy with you, but not afraid... I believe in America

Montwayne Smith

From: Gladys Gilson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 19:56:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thanks

Gladys Gilson

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

El El mié, jul 8, 2026 a la(s) 7:27 p.m., Gladys Gilson <[REDACTED] PII > escribió:

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.

We are Christians and patriots and love our country, and believe that the separation between religion and government was instituted as a safeguard by the Founding Fathers. We ask you to please consider our petition, as stated

Truly Yours

Gladys Gilson

From: Linda Grashoff <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT — LINDA GRASHOFF

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 20:02:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Establishment Clause of the US Constitution protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. Separation of church and state must forever be upheld. Christian Nationalism is unAmerican.

From: Debbie Tenenbaum <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Debbie Tenenbaum Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 20:19:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

It is clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

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

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty - Darrell Clarke

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 20:24:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

The Constitution and its authors could not be more explicit: "Congress shall make **no law respecting an establishment of religion**, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;"

Darrell Clarke

From: Brandon Clark <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - "RELIGIOUS LIBERTY" - BRANDON CLARK

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 21:25:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

What your commission is describing is not religious liberty, it is christian nationalism. Everyone can see this. If christianity is true, why do you constantly lie and mislead? Why does God need so much help from the government to spread his message? Let people decide their faith for themselves, in a free market of competing ideas.

From: robert slipsky <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [religious liberty commission report] [Robert Slipsky]

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 21:42:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I do not in any way Support this sham of a bill. Funding religious schools is outrageous. This country was founded upon public education. If you want to send your kids to private school then pay for it.
Sent from my iPad

From: Sarah Aaserude <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment-Religious Liberty draft report-Sarah Aaserude

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 22:35:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

I grew up with experience in Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Quaker traditions. I've had friends who follow Catholic, Mormon, Islamic, Wiccan and other faiths as well as many who are agnostic or atheist. We are all Americans. Our country was founded in part on the freedom of religion and belief, so I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations. Our founders knew that mixing government and religion does not work. For religion is a personal choice and government is for the good of all and therefore cannot be dictated by anyone's personal choice.

Sincerely,

Sarah Aaserude

[REDACTED] PII

From: ASHLEY FAWN <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Ashley Sheffield <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – [religious liberty] – [Ashley Sheffield]

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 22:56:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

The fact we have freedom of religion in America will be the reason our freedom of religion will be taken.

There must be legislation passed or the constitution amended to permanently prevent any other political ideology such as Islam or any form of communism to become America's standard.

Political Islam will overtake our government with more and more Islamists running for office and selling socialism to obtain votes from uninformed people.

This is a crisis for our country.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sent from my iPhone

From: "Jason A. O'Rourke, DMin." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 23:28:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I remain, Yours truly,

Jason O'Rourke

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

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

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

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

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

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

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

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

[9] Matthew 22:21

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

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

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

From: "Burnstein & Gershman" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report

Date: Wed, 08 Jul 2026 23:40:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to ask the Department of Justice to reject the recommendations of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report that encourage states to expand religious instruction and displays in public schools while creating new mechanisms to investigate and sanction educators and institutions accused of violating students' religious liberty.

As an historian, I have carefully studied this issue. Taking into account the preceding centuries of violent religious strife in Europe, the Founders built religious liberty into our Constitution, considering that to be key in allowing a republic to exist peacefully.

Our country's separation of church and state, rather than diminishing religious belief, created a welcoming climate for the proliferation of different religious denominations, which exist at a more vibrant level than is the case in Europe. While the overwhelming majority of American denominations have been Christian, declaring that we are a Christian nation per se is contrary to the intent of the Founders. This does not mean that our nation is hostile to religion. Rather, I would say that Christianity has greatly influenced our nation. This is a true statement that does not denigrate the followers of other religions (such as my own, Judaism, or Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, or other denominations that are now common throughout our country). Think of how insulted you would feel if you were told, in effect, that your religion – a key to most people's identity – was second class.

I believe it is incumbent upon us, if we wish to strive for national and moral unity, to build institutions capable of protecting liberty of conscience across profound differences in belief. Please keep in mind that as President, George Washington wrote to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, RI, that the federal government gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance," and that Article XI of the [1796 Treaty of Tripoli](#) notes that "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

Let us leave religious instruction up to our families and our religious institutions, thus avoiding religious strife and effectively bolstering religion's influence on American life by highlighting its independence.

Thank you.

Daniel Burnstein

From: CJH Kelly <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 01:00:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This dangerous framework seeks to redefine the Establishment Clause and undermine the critical separation of church and state that has been integral to our Constitution for 250 years.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of ALL citizens, regardless of their faith.

Sincerely,

Jean Kelly

University Place, WA [REDACTED] PII

From: Lynn Haynes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT JeVerna L Haynes

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 03:21:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am submitting this comment because having read this Religious Liberty Commission Report I am disgusted that such utter garbage is even being considered.

I am an American citizen and as such governed by The Constitution of the United States of America, which clearly states in the Article VI: Religious Tests, the Establishment Clause, and the Free Exercise Clause that we have freedom from any religion should we choose. Nowhere in the entirety of our constitution is there any mention of God or of Christianity and I refuse to sit idly by and let you people push this utter bull shit!

Publishing this report is to publish lies and to enrage those of us who know our laws, our rights, and will fight for them. Make no mistake about that!

JeVerna L. Haynes

[REDACTED] PII

From: JEFF POWELL <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment--Restoring Religious Freedom In The Public Square--Jeffrey Powell

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 06:06:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Chair Patrick,
Vice Chair Carson,
Members of the Commission,

Subject: Restoring Religious Freedom In The Public Square

Purpose: To articulate a biblical and constitutional case for reclaiming religious expression in public life.

1. The Freedom of the Pulpit (The Johnson Amendment)

The Issue: The Johnson Amendment (1954) prohibits non-profit organizations, including churches, from endorsing or opposing political candidates. While intended to prevent corruption, it has been used to intimidate pastors from speaking on moral issues that are at the heart of public debate.

A Biblical & Constitutional Case:

The Pulpit's Duty: A pastor is called to preach the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). This includes God's standards on justice, life, marriage, and human dignity. A free society cannot truly be free if the government can define which parts of Scripture are "too political" to preach.

Moral Issues are Not "Partisan" issues. Standing against state-sanctioned abortion or for religious liberty is not partisan politics; it is biblical morality. The pulpit must address sin wherever it appears, including in legislation.

Congress should enact a full repeal of the Johnson Amendment. This will not "politicize the church," but protect the church from the government defining its message. A pastor must be free to apply Scripture to a candidate's platform without fear of IRS retaliation.

The pulpit must be a conscience, not a chaplain, to the state. Repealing the Johnson Amendment defends the separation of church and state from the wrong direction: it prevents the state from silencing the church.

2. Religious Expression in Public and or Military Life

The Issue: There is a growing perception that the military, public spaces and public schools and the military are "religion-free zones." This is a misapplication of the Establishment Clause (separation of church and state).

The Constitutional Reality:

Free Exercise: The First Amendment guarantees the "free exercise" of religion. This means a Christian does not lose the right to pray, witness, or discuss their faith simply because they join the military, step onto public property or into a public school.

Public Schools: Students have the right to pray privately, form Christian clubs, share their faith with peers, and wear religious symbols. The school cannot promote one religion, but it also cannot suppress private religious expression by students.

The answer to legal confusion is not silence; it is education and boldness. Public schools are not hostile zones—they are mission fields where the law still protects the individual believer's right to speak.

The Gospel in Public: Sharing the gospel on a sidewalk, in a park, or in a public forum is protected speech. The issue is not that such speech is illegal, but that it has been socially intimidated into silence.

The Military: Service members have reported increasing pressure to suppress or hide their faith, particularly in official settings or leadership roles, for fear of violating "equal opportunity" or "diversity" policies.

A soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine does not surrender their First Amendment rights when they put on the uniform. The free exercise of religion is a core American liberty—and those who defend that liberty deserve to enjoy it themselves.

The Chaplain's Role: Military chaplains must be free to minister according to their faith tradition, including preaching the gospel and offering counsel consistent with their doctrine. Policies that force a chaplain to violate their conscience (e.g., to officiate a same-sex wedding or to remain silent on moral issues) undermine the very purpose of the chaplaincy.

The Right to Witness & Worship: A service member has the right to share their faith with a willing listener, pray before meals, display religious items in their living quarters, and attend worship services—without reprisal. The military must accommodate religious practice unless it causes a concrete, direct, and unavoidable harm to mission readiness.

A military that suppresses religious expression in the name of "inclusion" is not protecting diversity—it is erasing it. True diversity includes religious believers, and true readiness includes a soldier's right to serve with a clear conscience before God.

3. The Ten Commandments & The Bible in Schools

The Issue: The removal of the Ten Commandments from public displays and the Bible from school libraries is often cited as a legal necessity for "separation of church and state."

The Case for Display & Inclusion:

Historical & Educational Value: The Ten Commandments are a foundational document of Western law and morality. A student cannot fully understand American history, law, or literature without studying the Bible.

Neutrality v. Hostility: A school that bans all religious texts is not "neutral"; it is acting in hostility toward religion. The better policy is inclusive neutrality—allowing display and study of religious texts alongside secular ones.

The Bible on Shelves: The Bible is a work of profound historical, literary, and ethical significance. Removing it from a school library is an act of censorship that robs students of access to the world's most influential book. A government that is hostile to a text is hostile to the faith that holds it sacred.

The Application: We do not ask for the Ten Commandments to be preached in schools, but to be displayed and studied as part of a complete education and historical reality in the formation of this great nation. A school library without the Bible is an incomplete institution.

4. Medical Freedom & Personal Conscience (Vaccines & Healthcare)

The Issue: During a public health crisis, the government may mandate medical procedures (e.g., vaccines). The question is: does a Christian have the right to decline a medical intervention based on deeply held religious conviction?

The Principle:

Conscience is Not a License: Religious freedom does not give a person the right to harm others. A Christian must always balance personal conviction with the common good (Romans 13; 1 Corinthians 9:19).

The Right to Refuse: Nevertheless, the government should not compel a citizen to violate their conscience by forcing a medical intervention they believe is morally wrong, genetically unethical (e.g., use of aborted fetal cell lines), or a violation of their bodily integrity as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Informed Consent is Biblical: The Bible commands us to "test everything" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). A Christian must be free to research, question, and decide on medical interventions without coercion. Mandates that punish refusal with job loss or social ostracism are a form of economic coercion that violates conscience.

Key Argument: The state's interest in public health does not automatically override the individual's right to make a medical decision based on faith. The default should be consent, not coercion.

Conclusion

We are not asking for a "Christian nation." We are asking for a truly free one.

A free nation allows the pulpit to speak without fear.

A free nation allows the believer to live their faith in public.

A free nation educates its children with the full record of its history.

A free nation allows its military to exercise the freedoms it defends.

A free nation trusts its people to make healthcare decisions before God.

The goal is not power. The goal is freedom. The freedom to be the church, in all places, on all topics, without apology.

Respectfully,

Pastor Jeff

From: Ruth Fink-Winter <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Ruth Fink-Winter

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 07:38:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello.

I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon your recommendations. I'm a US-born American who deeply cherishes the religious freedom that the Founding Fathers supported and I'm concerned about this report.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. The church is strongest when the government stays out of it, and our founders came to this country so they could practice their faiths (Pilgrims; Quakers; etc.) without the national government telling them what to believe or forcing them to support a state church. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of those with minority beliefs, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent. We are not all Christian, and that's OK. The Constitution's First Amendment prohibits the establishment of a state religion, and we as a country should support that.

Based on the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, I'm concerned that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs. This is counter to the principles this country was founded on. Favoring one religion over all others would oppress everyone else. No one should have the government telling us what to believe. And our taxes shouldn't support religion. It's bad for religion, which should be based on faith, not force.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be undermining it - Americans should be able to practice our faith, or lack thereof, without the government butting in. My religious liberty ends when I start telling you how to believe, or making you support my religion. We are horrified at the excesses of fundamentalist states such as Iran - let's not model ourselves after them. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without making further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs. This is the American I love and believe in.

Thank you.

--

From: Michelle McKool <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I am grateful

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 08:10:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am grateful that the record is being corrected on our country's foundation of Biblical values and faith in our Creator. This is a critical step to save our nation from destruction. Thank you to all who participated in this correction

Do something today your future self will thank you for,
Michelle M

From: Christine Berger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Gary Berger <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 08:22:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT - APPRECIATION & CONCERN - CHRISTINE R. BERGER, July 9, 2026.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Religious Liberty Commission and to Mr. President for the hard work and sacrifice of these involved in creating this comprehensive draft.

The testimonies of the individuals who experienced severe opposition to their expressions of their faith was very stirring. Thank you to those who stood and fought with them.

My concern is that those who are pressing their anti-God political agendas, (i.e. wicked; luciferic doctrines of demons) posturing them as their religious beliefs as faith, will continue to manipulate our First Amendment freedom to continue their advancement.

Our Constitution was created by moral, Judeo-Christian, God fearing individuals. Those who hate our freedom and chant "death to America", are not bowing down to the Creator God that we know, love and worship. The code of morality that these and god-less "isms" are espousing are incongruous with the "faith" that has been repeatedly referred to in the Religious Liberty Commission's Draft, as well as the Constitution of the United States.

Thank you again for this most urgent effort to preserve the freedom of faith that the majority in this nation hold dear.

Respectfully,

Christine R. Berger

From: "Maura Schreier-Fleming|" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 1,2, 4, 8,11,14 - M.S. Fleming

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 08:36:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and Members of the Commission:

Thank you for the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's very important work.

Introduction

America's founding principles draw heavily on the moral and legal traditions of the Hebrew Bible, further developed through the Christian tradition. The values our founders articulated for this nation — freedom, justice, liberty, equality, the rule of law, and individual responsibility — remain the standard against which we should measure the conduct of every religious community operating within our borders, including new arrivals.

I recognize that the free exercise of Islam, like that of any faith, is protected under the First Amendment. That protection is not in question. What is in question is a narrower and more urgent problem: a pattern of sermons and religious instruction, delivered in mosques and Islamic centers in the United States and abroad, that go beyond religious practice and cross into incitement, antisemitism, and the promotion of violence against fellow Americans. I urge the Commission to examine this pattern directly as part of its broader inquiry into threats to domestic religious liberty and attacks on houses of worship.

1. Domestic Incidents of Concern

The Commission should be aware of a documented pattern of inflammatory sermons delivered at U.S. mosques and Islamic centers in recent years:

- In 2017, imam in California, Ammar Shahin at the Islamic Center of Davis, made a sermon invoking apocalyptic hadiths that called for the killing or destruction of Jews. <https://www.investigativeproject.org/7096/a-disappointing-muted-response-to-imams-calling>
- In 2017, Imam Raed Saleh Al-Rousan of the Tajweed Institute in Houston, Texas, delivered a sermon citing a hadith stating that Judgment Day will not arrive until Muslims fight and kill Jews. He later apologized. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Houston-imam-s-sermon-brings-swift-condemnation-12458339.php>
- Following the escalation of the Israel-Hamas war after October 7, 2023, watchdog organizations flagged sermons at Salafi-leaning institutions — including the Clear Lake Islamic Center near Houston — in which speakers called for “victory over the disbelieving people” and praised the leadership of designated terrorist groups. <https://www.meforum.org/fwi/texas-faces-a-far-broader-islamist-threat-than-just-the-muslim-brotherhood>
- A widely circulated sermon titled “Our Duties Towards Al-Quds (Jerusalem)” included an explicit call for Muslims to “kill the Jews,” and drew a notably muted public response. <https://www.meforum.org/islamist-watch/a-disappointing-muted-response-to-imams-calling>

I note that Texas-based scholar Yasir Qadhi has publicly defended the citation of these apocalyptic texts, arguing that imams who reference them are making a theological “prediction” about end-times events rather than a “prescription” for violence today. I would ask the Commission to weigh that defense carefully: whatever the intended theological framing, congregants hearing explicit calls to violence from the pulpit may not draw so fine a distinction. <https://www.meforum.org/campus-watch/american-islamic-scholar-based-in-texas-sheikh>

It is also worth noting that members of the Muslim community itself have raised alarm about this pattern. Voices from within the community have warned that hate sermons, amplified by social media, contribute directly to hate crimes and violent attacks — and that speech aimed at inflicting injury on others is not entitled to protection simply because it is delivered in a religious setting.

In reaction to hate sermons delivered by preachers and religious leaders, hate crimes taking place against the other became inevitable, especially with the rise of social media accounts

glorifying violence and encouraging violent attacks. It is completely unacceptable. Not only against the faith; it is also against the law. Hate speech that aims to inflict injury on people does not typically fall under freedom of speech protection.

Source: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/dealing-hate-sermons#:~:text=These%20hate%20sermons%20are%20not,those%20of%20a%20liberal%20society.>

The Relevant Legal Standard

The First Amendment broadly protects religious speech, including speech that is offensive or theologically controversial. But that protection is not unlimited. Under the Supreme Court's holding in *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969), speech loses constitutional protection when it is directed at inciting imminent lawless action and is likely to produce such action. This is the standard the Commission should apply in evaluating the sermons cited above, not whether the speech is religious in origin, but whether it crosses the line into incitement as defined by existing law.

Recommendation: First Amendment Considerations

I ask that Congress and this Commission examine the pattern of sermons described above and assess, sermon by sermon, whether specific instances meet the *Brandenburg* standard for unprotected incitement.

2. Schools as a Vector for Extremist Content

The Commission's inquiry should not stop at sermons. I ask that it also examine curriculum content in accredited private schools that receive, or are eligible to receive, state or federal funds.

Brighter Horizons Academy, Garland, Texas

Brighter Horizons Academy (BHA) is a pre-K–12 private school in Garland, Texas, accredited through Cognia via the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC). BHA is a subsidiary of the Islamic Services Foundation (ISF), which writes and distributes Islamic-studies curricula, including the “I Love Islam” textbook series, to private Islamic schools nationally.

A 2026 investigative report by the Middle East Forum (MEF), a Philadelphia-based think tank focused on Middle East affairs, documents the content of ISF-produced textbooks used at BHA and the backgrounds of individuals historically associated with the school. According to the MEF report:

- ISF textbooks cite individuals named by federal prosecutors as unindicted co-conspirators in the Holy Land Foundation terrorism-financing case as authoritative “Muslim Scholars.”
- Textbook passages describe non-Muslims as the “worst of creatures” and include material the report characterizes as endorsing violence, including corporal punishment of spouses and the killing of adulterers.
- The textbooks describe the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) as a “civil liberties group.”
- Individuals historically affiliated with BHA and ISF leadership have included relatives of Hamas figures and a contractor who, in a 2017 social media post, called to “destroy the Zionists and their allies.”

Source: Middle East Forum, “*Hamas Officials' Family and Affiliates Established and Staffed Top Dallas Private School*,” <https://www.meforum.org/fwi/hamas-officials-family-and-affiliates-established-and-staffed-top-dallas-private-school>

I would note for the Commission's benefit that these are findings of a single advocacy organization, not a court or an accrediting body, and that some individuals and claims described in the report have not been independently adjudicated.

I raise this not to diminish the concern, but so the Commission can weigh the evidence appropriately and if needed, request independent verification.

The Commission should also note Congress's finding of CAIR to be an unindicted co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation trial, the largest successfully prosecuted terrorism funding trial in U.S. history. Source: <https://www.congress.gov/119/bills/hr4097/BILLS-119hr4097ih.htm>

The CAIR/Muslim Brotherhood Designation

On November 18, 2025, Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued a proclamation designating the Muslim Brotherhood as a Foreign Terrorist Organization under Texas Penal Code provisions created by SB 1900 (2023), and separately designating

CAIR as a Transnational Criminal Organization under Texas Property Code provisions added by SB 17 (2025). The designations bar both organizations from acquiring real property in Texas.

CAIR is arguing the designation lacks due process and is preempted by the federal government's exclusive authority over foreign-organization sanctions. That litigation is ongoing.

CAIR has publicly denied any affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood and has filed a federal lawsuit against Governor Abbott and Attorney General Paxton. This is despite being an unindicted co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation trial.

In addition, FBI recordings indicate the intentions of The Palestine Committee, the U.S.-based Hamas infrastructure, to form CAIR. The George Washington Program on Extremism reports, "CAIR was to be an organization in Washington, D.C. that would appear legitimate, that did not have the "Islamic hue," but who would serve the purpose of defending the Hamas front organizations if they were scrutinized by the U.S. government and media."

Source: https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2025-11/CAIR_Revised.pdf

I flag this so the Commission is aware of CAIR's troubling history and that the designation, while official state action, remains legally contested. CAIR's legal action is relevant to whether BHA's textbook description of CAIR should be treated as a settled factual error or as a characterization now caught in a live legal dispute.

Cognia Performance Standards at Issue

If the MEF findings are accurate, several of Cognia's own Performance Standards for K–12 institutions appear implicated, including: Standard 1 (a culture free from bias); Standard 2 (learner well-being as a central guiding principle); Standard 4 (positive relationships among learners and adults); Standard 12 (curriculum aligned for relevance and effectiveness for every learner); Standard 13 (qualified personnel who support the institution's stated mission); and Standard 14 (curriculum supported by reliable, accurate instructional materials). The full standards are available at <https://www.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Performance-Standards.pdf>.

Recommendation on Accreditation and Funding

I recommend that the Commission refer the MEF findings to Cognia for independent review of whether BHA's curriculum meets Cognia's own Performance Standards. Standards of particular concern are those requiring a bias-free culture of learning, learner well-being, qualified personnel, and reliable instructional materials. I would also note a structural conflict of interest worth the Commission's attention. Cognia partners with the Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA) for review of Islamic schools, and CISNA itself certified BHA, meaning the same network effectively reviews its own work.

Pending that independent review, I recommend that schools found to be using curricula that promote violence or dehumanize other religious or ethnic groups be made ineligible for state or federal funding, including Texas's Education Freedom Account program, until the curriculum is corrected and independently verified.

3. International Precedents

The pattern of inciting violence described above is not confined to the United States. Other Western democracies have confronted similar problems and, in some cases, acted on them:

- Spanish police detained Imam Abdeslam Laaroussi in 2012 after sermons in which he reportedly instructed men on how to physically discipline their wives without causing visible injury. [https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2012/03/06/inenglish/1331062356_966139.html]
- French authorities deported a Tunisian imam who had advocated for the imposition of sharia law and expressed hostility toward non-Muslims, according to reporting from the Middle East Forum. [<https://www.meforum.org/france-expels-islamist-imam-who-called-for-jihad>]
- Germany-based online preachers have used platforms such as YouTube to broadcast exclusionary and divisive religious content to international audiences, according to monitoring by Middle East Forum's Islamist Watch project. [<https://www.meforum.org/fwi/fwi-research/mohammed-bin-shams-al-din-a-germany-based-youtube-preacher-of-hate>]
- In Nigeria, leaders associated with the Islamic Movement in Nigeria have delivered sermons that watchdogs describe as dehumanizing toward religious opponents and Western nations, at times preceding mob violence against journalists and rival religious groups. [<https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-islamic-movement-and-iranian-intelligence-activities-in-nigeria/>]

These examples illustrate that some Western governments have been willing to act when religious speech crosses from protected expression into incitement or abuse. Their actions include detention, deportation, or platform accountability. I would ask the Commission to consider what the United States can learn from these responses.

Recommendation on Immigration Screening

Given the pattern of sermons abroad calling for violence, gender-based abuse, or the imposition of sharia law in place of civil law, I recommend that U.S. immigration vetting be strengthened to screen more rigorously for individuals with a documented record of preaching incitement to violence or abuse, regardless of their country of origin or the religious tradition invoked. Screening should also include vetting individuals to ensure they hold values compatible with American democracy. The goal should not be to exclude a faith, but to keep out individuals of any faith with a demonstrated record of inciting violence against others and intolerance of others.

Conclusion

I appreciate the Commission's attention to threats against houses of worship and to domestic religious liberty. I would ask that this inquiry be applied evenhandedly: houses of worship deserve protection from attack, and Americans also deserve protection from sermons that cross the constitutional line into incitement. I urge the Commission to investigate the incidents cited above and to make concrete recommendations for how existing law can be enforced consistently, regardless of the faith tradition involved.

Sources

Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Dealing with Hate Sermons," <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/dealing-hate-sermons>

Middle East Forum, " Hamas Officials' Family and Affiliates Established and Staffed Top Dallas Private School," <https://www.meforum.org/fwi/hamas-officials-family-and-affiliates-established-and-staffed-top-dallas-private-school>

Office of the Texas Governor, "Governor Abbott Designates Muslim Brotherhood, CAIR As Foreign Terrorist Organizations," November 18, 2025, <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-designates-muslim-brotherhood-cair-as-foreign-terrorist-organizations>

Cognia, "Performance Standards," <https://www.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Performance-Standards.pdf>

Regards,
Maura Schreier-Fleming

PII

From: Ché Ahn <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Cc: Che Ahn <[REDACTED] PII >, Michelle D Martinez <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 12: Faith Under Fire in America’s Houses of Worship – Dr. Ché Ahn

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 08:52:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dr. Ché Ahn
Senior Pastor, Harvest Rock Church
President, Harvest International Ministry
Pasadena, California

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. I am deeply grateful to President Donald J. Trump for establishing this Commission and for recognizing that religious liberty is not a secondary liberty, but America’s first freedom. I also thank Chairman Dan Patrick, Vice Chairman Dr. Ben Carson, and every Commissioner who has labored to examine the past, present, and future of religious liberty in our nation.

As a pastor, immigrant, and American citizen, I believe the United States is exceptional because our Founders recognized that our rights do not come from government. They come from our Creator. The Declaration of Independence declares that all men are “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” beginning with life and liberty. The First Amendment then protects the free exercise of religion because a free people must be free to worship God, speak truth, form conscience, raise families, educate children, and serve their communities without government hostility or coercion.

I strongly support the Commission’s work to restore a proper understanding of religious liberty in American life. Faith has never been the enemy of freedom. Properly understood, faith forms the moral foundation necessary for freedom to endure. John Adams warned that our Constitution was made only for “a moral and religious people.” I agree. When faith, conscience, and moral formation are pushed out of public life, government expands to fill the vacuum. But when faith is protected, families are strengthened, communities flourish, and citizens are better equipped to self-govern.

My own life is a testimony to the power of faith to transform a person and serve society. I was born in South Korea and came to America with my family in search of freedom and opportunity. As a teenager, I was a high school dropout, homeless for a season, and struggling with addiction. On May 25, 1973, Jesus Christ changed my life. Since then, I have spent more than five decades contending for revival, calling the Church to spiritual awakening, and mobilizing believers to seek God for transformation in cities and nations. I have had the privilege of serving as president of The Call, where we gathered hundreds of thousands on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and in cities across America, crying out for revival, repentance, and a return to God.

Because of that calling, I cannot remain silent when government treats churches and houses of worship as nonessential.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, California placed severe restrictions on houses of worship, even while allowing many secular activities to continue. Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry challenged those restrictions because we believed the First Amendment does not disappear during a crisis. We were not opposing reasonable health and safety measures. We were defending the constitutional principle that government may not treat worship as less essential than secular activity.

Before filing that lawsuit, I prayed and sought the Lord for confirmation. I sensed Him impress Joshua 1:9 upon my heart: “Be strong and courageous... for the Lord your God is with you.” That Scripture became more than an encouragement; it became a mandate. I also held firmly to Hebrews 10:25, which instructs believers not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but to continue encouraging one another. In a season when fear, isolation, grief, and uncertainty were overwhelming families across our state, I knew the Church had a biblical and constitutional responsibility to gather, worship, pray, preach, sing, and minister to the hurting.

What followed was not an easy or symbolic stand. It was a costly, public, and prolonged battle against one of the most powerful state governments in the nation. Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry faced the threat of fines, penalties, public criticism, and legal defeat. We lost in lower courts. We were told, in effect, that the state’s emergency powers could override the Church’s constitutional right to gather before God and serve people in crisis. But we could not accept that conclusion, because the First Amendment does not disappear in a crisis, and the Church does not cease to be essential when people are afraid.

By God’s grace, we persevered. We appealed again and again, and the United States Supreme Court intervened more than once in our case. The Court ultimately ruled that California could not continue enforcing its discriminatory ban on indoor worship against Harvest Rock Church and other houses of worship. That ruling was not merely a legal technicality; it was a turning point for churches across California and a signal to the nation that emergency authority has constitutional limits.

The final result was historic. California entered into a settlement that produced the first statewide permanent injunction in the nation against discriminatory COVID restrictions on churches and places of worship. The state was ordered to pay \$1.35 million in attorney's fees and costs. More importantly, the door was reopened for churches to gather, worship, preach, sing, pray, and minister without being treated as less essential than secular institutions.

I do not share this as a matter of personal pride. I share it because religious liberty is preserved only when someone is willing to stand. In that season, I was not fighting only for Harvest Rock Church. I was standing for pastors who felt intimidated, congregations that felt abandoned, families who needed hope, and houses of worship across America that deserved the full protection of the First Amendment. That battle confirmed for me that no governor, legislature, agency, or emergency order should ever again be allowed to silence the Church or suspend the free exercise of religion.

For that reason, I especially support the Commission's recommendation that houses of worship and faith-based nonprofits be classified as essential during emergencies. This is one of the most important lessons of the pandemic. Churches feed the hungry, comfort the grieving, counsel families, help people overcome addiction, support mental health, bury the dead, pray with the sick, serve the elderly, and provide hope in moments of fear. In a true emergency, the ministry of the Church becomes more essential, not less.

I respectfully urge the Commission to strengthen this recommendation in the final report by making clear that religious liberty is not merely comparable to secular activities, but is an inalienable right that government has no authority to infringe upon. No state or local government should ever have the power to categorically close houses of worship, because the free exercise of religion is not granted by government—it is a God-given right that precedes it. While government may pursue public safety, it must do so within strict constitutional limits, recognizing that it cannot suspend or override the free exercise of religion under any circumstance.

I also support the Commission's recommendations to provide clear, accessible resources that help pastors, faith leaders, houses of worship, and religious nonprofits understand and confidently exercise their constitutional rights. Many pastors during COVID did not know what they were legally permitted to do. Some were afraid of fines, threats, public shaming, or government retaliation. A "Know Your Rights" resource from the Department of Justice would be valuable for religious leaders across the country, especially in states where hostility toward biblical faith is increasing. Such resources should not be framed as granting or defining rights, but as clarifying protections that already exist under the Constitution.

I further encourage the Commission to recommend stronger First Amendment training for public officials and law enforcement. Too often, conflicts arise not only because of bad laws, but because local officials misunderstand the Constitution. Religious exercise is not merely a private belief held inside the heart. It includes worship, preaching, gathering,

serving, educating, feeding the poor, counseling the brokenhearted, and speaking publicly from one's convictions. Government officials must be trained to understand that religious liberty is a living, public, and constitutionally protected freedom.

The Commission should also recognize and safeguard the rights of parents to direct the religious upbringing, education, and moral formation of their children. Parents are the primary stewards of their children—not the state. A free society cannot survive when government separates children from the faith and values of their parents. Protecting religious liberty must include protecting parents from government policies that undermine their conscience, faith, and authority in the home. Scripture affirms this responsibility in Proverbs 22:6, which instructs parents to “train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

I also urge the Commission to recognize that faith-based organizations possess the inherent right to serve in accordance with their beliefs without government interference or coercion. Churches and ministries should not be excluded from public-private partnerships, denied grants, targeted by agencies, debanked, censored, or punished because they hold traditional biblical convictions. Religious organizations serve the addicted, homeless, incarcerated, orphaned, elderly, immigrant, and poor. America should welcome that service, not penalize it.

I also respectfully urge the Commission to address the ongoing concern surrounding the Johnson Amendment and its chilling effect on churches and houses of worship. For decades, pastors have often been made to feel that speaking with moral clarity about public issues, candidates, elections, and the civic responsibilities of believers could place their church's tax-exempt status at risk. This has created confusion, fear, and self-censorship in the very institutions the First Amendment was designed to protect most strongly.

While many have called for a full repeal of the Johnson Amendment, I respectfully ask the Commission to consider an even more precise and constitutionally grounded recommendation: that Congress create a clear statutory exemption for churches, houses of worship, and their integrated auxiliaries. Such an exemption would recognize the unique First Amendment protections afforded to religious institutions while leaving the broader rules governing secular charities in place.

Churches are not merely charitable organizations. They are worshiping communities, moral teachers, and constitutionally protected religious bodies. Their speech often touches matters of public concern because Scripture speaks to life, justice, family, marriage, poverty, immigration, government, righteousness, and the moral responsibilities of citizens. A pastor should not have to fear federal punishment for applying biblical truth to the issues affecting the nation.

I respectfully plead with the Commission to add this appeal to its final report as a recommended action for Congress: protect churches and houses of worship from the

chilling effect of the Johnson Amendment by establishing a clear statutory exemption that safeguards pastoral speech, moral teaching, and religious guidance on matters of public life. This would not compel any church to engage politically, nor would it turn churches into campaign committees. It would simply restore confidence that the federal government may not intimidate, silence, or penalize religious leaders for speaking from their faith and conscience.

At the heart of this issue is a simple truth: government should serve the people, not control them. The First Amendment was not written to protect government from religion. It was written to protect the people's right to freely exercise religion from government interference. Religious liberty is not a privilege granted by elected officials. It is a God-given right recognized and protected by the Constitution.

I believe righteousness and justice are the foundation of good government, and mercy and truth must walk together. But I also understand that America's religious liberty protects people of every faith and even those of no faith. My defense of religious liberty is not only for Christians. It is for every American who believes the government should not coerce conscience, silence conviction, or punish peaceful worship.

President Trump's establishment of this Commission is timely and necessary. America has recently marked her 250th anniversary, and this is a sacred moment to remember who we are. We are not a nation where government grants freedom from the top down. We are a nation where God-given rights are secured by constitutional limits on government power. To forget that is to lose the very foundation of liberty.

I respectfully ask the Commission to finalize a strong report that:

1. Recognizes religious liberty as America's first freedom;
2. Classifies houses of worship and faith-based nonprofits as essential during emergencies;
3. Provides clear guidance that religious worship may not be treated less favorably than comparable secular activity;
4. Provides practical "Know Your Rights" resources that clarify existing constitutional protections for pastors and religious leaders;
5. Trains public officials and law enforcement on First Amendment protections;
6. Protects parents' rights to direct the religious and moral upbringing of their children;
7. Defends faith-based organizations from government retaliation, discrimination, censorship, or coercion;
8. Recommends that Congress create a clear statutory exemption from the Johnson Amendment for churches, houses of worship, and their integrated auxiliaries, recognizing their unique First Amendment protections while leaving broader rules for secular charities in place; and
9. Encourages every branch of government to honor the Constitution's protection of free exercise.

Thank you for your service to our nation and for your courage in defending religious liberty for future generations. May America continue to be a nation where faith is free, conscience is protected, families are strengthened, and every citizen may worship God without fear.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Ché Ahn
Senior Pastor, Harvest Rock Church
President, Harvest International Ministry
Pasadena, California

PII

From: Bill Thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State – William Thomas

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 08:54:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a church-going Christian, I am dismayed at the attempt to end the separation of church and state. This separation has been an integral part of America society since its founding. Our founding fathers were wise enough to recognize that an essential part of our freedom is this very separation. I can give you a perfect example of a nation that doesn't have this separation: Iran! I am sure that freedom loving Americans aren't willing to live under conditions like the people of Iran have to suffer under. I can picture a large group or sect imposing their beliefs on the minority groups of believers through government edicts. I believe that Matthew 22:21 says it best: *"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

Sincerely,

William Thomas
Macon, Georgia

From: Sara C Long <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 09:14:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a 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 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,
Sara Charlyene Long

Charlie Long
"As in water face reflects face, So a man's heart reveals the man".
Proverbs 27:19 (NKJV)

Sent from my iPhone

From: John Kelly <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 09:21:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

The constitution of these United States is specific and clear COMPLETE seperation of church and state. I am appalled at these continuing attempts to subject this country to a state religion. Christian Nationalism is antithetical to the secularism declared in our constitution, and no amount of subterfuge or manipulation to change the constitution to fit the narrow and intellectually vacant aspirations of a national religion decieve a true patriot!

From: Maria Falcon <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 09:26:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

I would like that private and non profit organizations (501c) receiving government funds, be required post in their offices at plain sight for the public to see and read, a declaration of the people's right under the USA Constirution the right to exercise their freedom of faith when receiving services.

Furthermore, all professional licensing Boards for Physicians, Counselors, Social Workers, and Phycholgist be required to complete Continuing Education Units on the right of clients and patients to express their faith when receiving or denying services to obtain and maintain the professional licensure.

From: Johann McKee <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - REPORT ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY - Johann McKee

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 09:33:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

The draft report you have submitted is a sham. While the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the constitution, the concept is absolutely enshrined in the document. The constitution prohibits the United States from passing any laws that favor any religion over another. That means no Federal money to support any religion.

The Founders of the United States, who remembered that many of the colonies were formed by people fleeing religious persecution in Europe, specifically created a secular government that could not favor one religion, and persecute other religions, like the European countries they fled. Your drive to force your religious beliefs on our government, and thus on the rest of us, is blatantly unconstitutional.

Do not continue with this absurd report you have created!

J. McKee [REDACTED] PII

From: janet lind <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 09:40:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

- **Stop Taxpayer-Funded Discrimination:** This commission allows organizations to accept public funds while refusing to serve or hire people because of their religious beliefs.
- **Protect Healthcare Access:** The policy allows hospitals to deny reproductive choice, miscarriage management, transgender care, and physician aid-in-dying.
- **Keep Politics Out of Churches:** This proposal seeks to repeal the Johnson Amendment, *allowing tax-exempt churches to endorse political candidates* and flood elections with dark money.
- **Defend Community Safety:** No one should be denied shelter, safety, or critical medical care because a local facility chooses faith rules over public health.

Janet Lind

From: Steven Rote <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 09:49:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Follow the constitution!

Keep a wall of separation between church and state!

No public funding for religion.

Everyone does not need or want to be part of a certain religion. The government has no say in picking and supporting a certain religion!

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Graham West <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Cc: Harman Singh <[REDACTED] PII >, Marissa Rossetti <[REDACTED] PII >, Mannirmal Kaur <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL REFLECTION – THE SIKH COALITION

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 09:59:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Sikh_Coalition_Public_Comment_on_Religious_Liberty_Commission_2026_Draft_Report.pdf

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find attached a public comment from the Sikh Coalition in response to the June 2026 Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

Please do not hesitate to reach the relevant staff at the Sikh Coalition on this email with any questions. Thank you for your consideration of our perspective.

Respectfully,
Graham West

--

Graham F. West
Managing Director of Policy and Communications
The Sikh Coalition

he/him

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

www.sikhcoalition.org

National Office: [REDACTED] PII

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#)

The Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20530

PII

Sent Via Electronic Mail

RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL REFLECTION – THE SIKH COALITION

The Sikh Coalition is submitting this comment to the U.S. Department of Justice regarding the draft report of the Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) published on July 1, 2026.

By way of background, the Sikh Coalition is the largest Sikh civil rights organization in the United States. The organization was founded in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, in response to a wave of bias, bigotry, and backlash targeting Sikhs throughout the country. Today, our organization continues to defend and expand Sikh civil rights through legal, advocacy, community development, education, and media work.

In an effort to elevate the concerns of U.S.-based Sikhs with regard to religious freedom issues, the Sikh Coalition engaged with the RLC on multiple occasions:

- The Sikh Coalition facilitated the testimony of United States Marine Corps Captain (Ret.) Sukhbir Singh Toor at the RLC’s fourth hearing on December 10, 2025;
- The Sikh Coalition submitted a document outlining concerns about the mistreatment of Sikhs detained by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on April 7, 2026; and
- The Sikh Coalition submitted a short note outlining concerns about bias-based bullying and a broader lack of Sikh inclusion in U.S. K-12 public schools, along with a copy of our 2024 publication *“Where Are You Really From?” A National Sikh School Climate Report*, on May 29, 2026.

Given this engagement, the Sikh Coalition is submitting this comment in order to articulate specific concerns with how our contributions to the RLC are cited or otherwise reflected in the draft, as well as broader concerns with the RLC’s overarching messages.

I. Concerns with RLC Framing of Capt. Toor’s December 2025 Testimony

The Sikh Coalition has two concerns with the citations and summarization of Capt. Toor’s testimony.

First, there are multiple recommendations in the report that cite Capt. Toor’s testimony despite the fact that his testimony does not clearly support the recommendations listed. For example, footnote 266 (page 118) cites Capt. Toor in support of the recommendation:

“The Department of War should issue updated instructions outlining how the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and new U.S. Supreme Court precedents on religious liberty should be applied in the military, including in relation to vaccine mandates, religious dietary needs, the offering of sacraments, observance of religious holy days, and servicemembers’ participation in religious services while in uniform.”

Beyond an allusion to RFRA, Capt. Toor did not discuss any of these issues, as his testimony was focused on religious uniform and grooming accommodations. The same set of recommendations again cite Capt. Toor’s testimony in footnote 567 (page 220). The omission of uniform and grooming accommodations from these blocks of text is strange given that Capt. Toor’s argument is mentioned and appropriately cited a recommendation via footnote 482 (page 201, *“Order the Department of War to streamline and improve the religious accommodation process”*).

Request: Religious uniform and grooming accommodations should either be added to the recommendation attached to footnotes 266 and 567 or Capt. Toor’s testimony should be removed from the items cited in those footnotes.

The more urgent issue with the framing around Capt. Toor’s testimony in the RLC’s report, however, is that the report obfuscates the fact that the urgent threat to religious liberty within the Armed Forces that he addressed is coming from the current Department of War. Under the Executive Summary subsection on the military, the RLC recommends (emphasis added):

“Order the Department of War to update and disseminate religious liberty training for military leaders and JAG officers, maintain full applicability of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in the military, reverse Obama and Biden-era restrictions on religious practice and expression, and elevate the importance of spiritual fitness in military readiness.”

As a reminder, Capt. Toor’s testimony focused on both his personal journey (including legal efforts) to ensure his religious rights were respected by the U.S. military. However, he also emphasized the fact that the progress made in the area of religious uniform and grooming accommodations since 2009—including under the Obama, first Trump, and Biden Administrations—is currently being rolled back under the second Trump Administration. In other words, it is contextually critical to any inclusion of Capt. Toor’s testimony that Secretary of War Pete Hegseth is actively seeking to restrict religious uniform and specifically grooming accommodations in the present day.

In September 2025, Secretary Hegseth addressed almost 800 generals, admirals, and their senior enlisted leaders, announcing “No more beards, long hair, superficial individual expression” and “no more beardos” in the U.S. military.¹ Following this address, the Secretary then sent out a memo stating that the DoD would revert back to pre-2010 standards where facial hair waivers were

¹ “Secretary of War Pete Hegseth Addresses General and Flag Officers at Quantico, Virginia,” U.S. Department of War, 30 September 2025, <https://www.war.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/article/4318689/secretary-of-war-pete-hegseth-addresses-general-and-flag-officers-at-quantico-v/>

generally not authorized.² Then, in March 2026, a second memo³ further clarified that all previously approved religious accommodations were required to be re-reviewed in 90 days; different branches of the Armed Forces, including the U.S. Army⁴ and U.S. Navy,⁵ have since moved forward with this directive.

Request: To faithfully represent Capt. Toor's testimony, the RLC must include specific mention of the Department of War's current and ongoing efforts to roll back religious uniform and grooming accommodations and subject religious Soldiers, Sailors, and other service members to a more intensive bureaucratic re-review of the accommodations they already earned. This could be more broadly contextualized alongside other examples of Secretary Hegseth's hostility towards religious diversity in the Armed Forces (e.g. the dramatic cuts to the number of 'faith codes,' or religions recognized by the Pentagon).⁶

II. Concerns with the Characterization of Bias-Based Bullying

The Sikh Coalition was gratified to see that the experiences of Sikh youth with bias-based bullying were included in the RLC's report. As detailed in our 2024 publication *"Where Are You Really From?" A National Sikh School Climate Report* (or "WAYRF"), which is based on a 2023 nationwide survey of roughly 2,000 Sikh American K-12 public school students, Sikh youth continue to experience alarming rates of bullying directly related to their religious identity.

Per the findings in WAYRF, during the 2022-2023 school year, 78 percent of respondents reported experiencing at least one bullying incident; the severity and physical nature of the bullying was higher for students who maintained visible articles of faith (e.g. turbans and uncut hair). An alarming 11 percent of respondents also reported experiencing bullying by school staff. The survey data specifically bore out the importance of schools taking these issues seriously: 54 of respondents did not know or were unsure of how to report bias-based bullying specifically, and 46 percent of respondents said they have "never" or "almost never" reported a bullying incident, likely due to school staff inaction and both student and staff misunderstandings of Sikh religious articles of faith. Finally, the WAYRF survey data found that schools with more inclusive policies (including in matters like curriculum content and accommodations policies) were correlated to less bullying against Sikh students.

² "Memorandum re: Grooming Standards for Facial Hair Implementation," U.S. Department of War, 30 September 2025, <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Sep/30/2003812317/-1/-1/1/SECRETARY-OF-WAR-ANNOUNCED-MEMORANDUMS.PDF>

³ Mark Castenada, "Pentagon memo sets stricter process for religious beard exemptions," Stars and Stripes, 20 March 2026, <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2026-03-19/religious-beard-waivers-hegseth-memo-21123870.html>

⁴ Corey Dickstein, "Army prescribes religious test for appearance waivers, trims sideburns in updated grooming standards," Stars and Stripes, 5 June 2026, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2026-06-05/army-religious-test-appearance-waivers-trims-sideburns-21881853.html>

⁵ Riley Ceder, "Navy to reevaluate religious accommodations for facial hair," Navy Times, 12 June 2026, <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2026/06/12/navy-to-reevaluate-religious-accommodations-for-facial-hair/>

⁶ Nick Mordowanec, "DOD Officially Drops 180 Faiths From Military's Recognized Religion List," Military Times, 4 June 2026, <https://www.military.com/dod-officially-drops-180-faiths-from-militarys-recognized-religion-list>

All of this data emphasizes the importance of bias-based bullying as a serious problem for Sikh students, and the Sikh Coalition has long held that we can reasonably assume the same to be true for members of other visible religious minority groups, such as Muslim students who wear a hijab to school, as well as members of other marginalized groups like LGBTQ+ students. None of this, however, relates to the public school system's alleged "weaponization" of the Establishment Clause, which is unfortunately how these experiences are framed in the RLC's report. The full quotation citing the Sikh Coalition's WAYRF data in the RLC report (page 74) is as follows:

"One student on Long Island, for example, was told that forming a religious club would be 'illegal.' Another was barred from mentioning the Gospel of John in an 'All About Me' assignment. A fifth grader who received a Bible from his church was told he could not read it during free reading time. More than 75 percent of Sikh elementary school students are bullied because of their religious beliefs, including because of the articles of faith they wear. While the specific circumstances vary, the challenge is the same. School districts too often 'weaponize the Establishment Clause' against students or undermine their religious practice instead of recognizing that the Constitution and federal law protect students' First Amendment rights."

The experiences of Sikh students cited in this paragraph and described above have no relationship to interpretations of the Establishment Clause. On the contrary, based on our 25 years of advocacy for inclusive education and legal work to support Sikh students who experience bullying, the Sikh Coalition believes that the Establishment Clause is critical to ensuring that students of minority faiths are not coerced to practice or meditate on a religion that is favored by educators or policymakers in a given school. Unfortunately, some states are actively exhibiting such favoritism (e.g. laws requiring specific versions of the Christian 10 Commandments being displayed in classrooms⁷ or efforts to mandate that all students study certain stories from the Christian Bible⁸), the end result being that Sikhs and students from other minority religious groups are left more isolated and marginalized. Regrettably, the RLC appears to have made no mention of this issue in the report.

Request: The RLC should decouple the mention of bias-based bullying of Sikh students from its concerns about alleged weaponization of the Establishment Clause in the text, given that the two issues are not connected. Bias-based bullying (and the kinds of federal policymaking that could help prevent it, e.g. the Safe Schools Improvement Act) should be mentioned in the Executive Summary of the RLC's report independent of any unrelated recommendations. And finally, the RLC should not obfuscate the dangers of policymakers elevating one religion above others in public school classrooms—especially giving ongoing litigation and likely impending Supreme Court cases related to this matter.⁹

⁷ Kevin McGill and Sarah Cline, "New Louisiana law requiring classrooms to display Ten Commandments churns old political conflicts," AP, 20 June 2024,

<https://apnews.com/article/ten-commandments-louisiana-schools-religion-99b86fff51932374993c45ab3f0555c9>

⁸ Elizabeth Wolfe, "Texas State Board of Education votes to require millions of students to study Bible stories," CNN, 27 June 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/06/26/us/texas-schools-bible-curriculum-vote>

⁹ Kelsey Dallas, "The Ten Commandments return to classrooms: What will the Supreme Court do?" SCOTUSblog, 15 July 2025,

<https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/07/the-ten-commandments-return-to-classrooms-what-will-the-supreme-court-do/>

III. Concerns with Other High-Level Conclusions in the RLC's Executive Summary

Separate from the abovementioned issues with how the Sikh community's perspective is reflected in the RLC's report, the Sikh Coalition offers a few final observations on the broader conclusions expressed in the document.

First, the Sikh Coalition disagrees with the RLC's assertion that the separation of Church and State is not a fundamental and important part of American governance and society.

Throughout the report, there are multiple assertions about and interpretations of the phrase "the separation of church and state" and the Establishment Clause that defy common understanding. For example, on page 42 (emphasis added):

"The truth is that the phrase "wall of separation between church and state" appears neither in the First Amendment nor anywhere else in the Constitution. 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."

This is a very limited reading of the Establishment Clause, which (as articulated above) the Sikh Coalition believes is a critical tool for protecting the religious freedom of religious minorities from majoritarian overreach. Furthermore, the Establishment Clause and the common understanding of the separation of Church and State are also essential to ensuring equal treatment under the law for all persons—including individuals who practice no religion. Accordingly, we disagree with the RLC's interpretations here and the policy recommendations that are derived from them.

Second, the Sikh Coalition rejects attacks on the LGBTQ+ community cloaked in the language of religious freedom. Throughout the RLC's report, there was a troubling trend of antipathy towards members of the LGBTQ+ community.

- The idea that a person could be transgender was directly or indirectly referred to as a "current trend" (page 37), a "falsehood" (page 52), and "so-called" (multiple instances). The Sikh Coalition continues to stand with transgender individuals, including transgender members of the Sikh community, and oppose their marginalization and even demonization by government policy. Any government organization that purports to prioritize personal liberty should do the same.
- More broadly, the report characterized the acknowledgement of different gender identities as an affront to religious freedom (e.g. testimonies of the Wuoti family and Shea Encinas, pages 52 and 66 respectively). The Sikh Coalition continues to take a view of religious freedom that is less a 'sword' used to deprive other marginalized groups of their rights and more a 'shield' that protects equality for and promotes the inclusion of all.
- Lastly, the report elevates an opposition to viewing sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics under nondiscrimination laws (perspective of Fr. Robert Sirico on

page 58). As a civil rights organization, the Sikh Coalition has long held that robust hate crime and nondiscrimination protections should cover all aspects of identity—and that we cannot accept protection for Sikhs and other religious minorities at the expense of others who face similar bias and threats.

And finally, the Sikh Coalition is astounded at the complete absence of Islamophobia from the RLC’s report. Individual and institutional Islamophobia is extremely relevant to any current American discourse on religious freedom, yet we were astounded to see how underrepresented Muslim concerns were throughout the RLC’s report. Overall, testimonies from Muslim Americans and/or mentions of Islam were few and far between. But more specifically, the RLC made no mention of prominent government officials engaged in openly Islamophobic rhetoric¹⁰ or Islamophobic policies that have recently been advanced by the current federal¹¹ and state¹² governments. Disappointingly, President Trump himself **just this week** re-shared a social media post criticizing Kindergarten children in Minnesota for wearing hijabs; it is harder to imagine a more hostile expression against religious freedom in schools than the sitting president posting derisively about five-year-olds’ articles of faith.¹³

It is important to note that Islamophobia does not exist in a vacuum and can often have spillover effects on other communities (e.g. Congresswoman Mary Miller’s social media posts arguing that neither Muslims nor Sikhs should be welcome to pray in the U.S. Capitol building).¹⁴ Regardless of that fact, the Sikh community, and the Sikh Coalition specifically, have long insisted that no community—including the Muslim community—should face hate or discrimination on the basis of their faith. If the RLC wants to offer a complete accounting of the current landscape for religious freedom in the United States, it must revisit Muslim American experiences (including experiences that intersect with current government policy) significantly in the report’s final draft.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective on these issues. We look forward to a revised version of the RLC’s report.

Respectfully,
The Sikh Coalition

¹⁰ Annie Karnie and Emily Cochrane, “Anti-Muslim Comments by G.O.P. Congressman Reflect a Rising Trend,” New York Times, 22 March 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/22/us/politics/ogles-republicans-anti-muslim.html>

¹¹ Rebecca Falconer and Russell Contreras, “Trump admin cracks down on pro-Palestinian protests at colleges,” Axios, 8 May 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/05/08/trump-rubio-pro-palestinian-protests-student-visas>

¹² “Court Cases: CAIR-Foundation, Inc and CAIR Florida, Inc. v. DeSantis et al.,” American Civil Liberties Union, 2 July 2026, <https://www.aclu.org/cases/cair-foundation-inc-and-cair-florida-inc-v-desantis-et-al>

¹³ Desiree Anello, “Donald Trump Attacks Group of Joyful Kindergarten Graduates over Their Religion,” People, 6 July 2026 <https://people.com/donald-trump-shames-kindergarten-graduates-12012836>

¹⁴ Veronica Stracqualursi, “GOP congresswoman faces bipartisan criticism for deleted post about Sikh guest chaplain,” CNN, 6 June 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/06/politics/congresswoman-post-house-prayer>

From: Tim Moseng <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Tim Mos

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:01:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

At its core, the report rests on a false premise: that the constitutional separation between religion and government is somehow hostile to religion. The Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. Every American remains free to pray, worship and speak about their faith. However, those individual rights do not authorize the government to sponsor religious observances or use its authority to promote one faith over others. The report ignores this critical distinction at every turn, dismissing 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.

From: Yuriy Zhigaylo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:08:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separate Church from state

Sent from my iPhone

From: heather <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Presidential Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:16:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

Your draft report includes distortions of American history as part of trying to break down the separation of Church and State -- and to push more religiosity into our government.

- ****Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus.** The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
-
- ****The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society.** While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
-
- ****By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism.** Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
-
- ****The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
-
- ****The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life.** The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Please stop eroding the separation of Church and State in this country and honor our founders by respecting their ideals.

Thank you,

Heather Perry

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Please be environmentally aware and print this email only if necessary.

From: Michelle Parks <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment -religious liberty - Parks

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:28:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for making it easy to comment.

This entire religious liberty issue is a canard. You cite as many or more examples of how the courts (lower and supreme) have ruled in favor of religious liberty as you cite what you believe is against your definition of religious liberty. Note my use of the word 'believe,' as religious belief varies widely and several of your examples do not accord with my religious beliefs.

If I go to an Advent Health hospital I know some elements of faith will be evident and offered during my stay. Absolutely fine, although that is not my faith. If I go to a non-religious bank I should not have to listen to an employee offer unrequested religious statements mixed in with my banking business.

If any aspect of Christian religion is taught in schools then aspects of Judaism, Islam, Hindu, etc. also must be taught as part of 'world religions.' Otherwise the religious doctrine is just forcing Brand X or Brand Y of Christianity onto captive audiences of children at school. Is it Catholicism or Baptist? Congregational or the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches? If schools decide what religious material can be taught then that means the state is establishing a preferred religion.

Just like the Christian Bible was written decades and more after Jesus died, even Jefferson's 'wall of separation' letter was much closer to the time of the Constitution than this current revisionist, activist interpretive effort. As an author of the Constitution, I trust Jefferson to clarify original intent more than this group of men today.

The efforts and intentions as described in your commission report do not offer a bridge between U.S. citizens wishing to express their religious beliefs and those who do not want to be subject to the religious beliefs of others.

Even examples of military and COVID vaccines, one of the greatest achievements of President Trump's first term, are specious. When you sign up for service you know you're going to get copious vaccines. Period.

This whole excursion into religiosity is a canard. You're not bringing religion back to our country. You're creating another avenue for division. The statement 'one nation under God' was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, another time of concern that someone or some country might not recognize that we are not a theologically atheist country. We didn't need it then but it served a purpose that did not intrude into daily, personal lives the way your recommendations do.

Drop the canard and let us live our lives without this ridiculous governmental intrusion.

Michelle Parks

From: "AT&T & Yahoo Mail." <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment - Martin Moynihan

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:31:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs,

I want to express my 100% endorsement of the Religious Liberty Commission report draft.

No one should have to forfeit the right to express their thoughts or motivations solely due to them being religiously based, regardless of the venue. The notion that the intent of the concept of 'separation of church and state' is to disallow expression of religious based concepts in government run or owned venues is completely counterintuitive to the US Constitution. In practicality, that view is what atheists want. And to support that view, is nothing short of supporting legislated atheism.

I want to commend the DOJ and the RLC report for taking long overdue steps on the path to ensuring our most basic right is protected.

Best Regards,

Martin M Moynihan.

From: Howard Kelin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:38:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

The following public comment is submitted on behalf of Congregation Shaarai Shomayim, a Reform Jewish synagogue located at [REDACTED] PII, in response to the Draft Report by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

People came to this country in the 17th century to escape religious persecution. America was a new land that welcomed all regardless of their faith. It is fundamental to the idea and promise of America and enshrined in the Constitution that all are free to practice their faith without ascribing to one doctrine. No federally mandated connection between church and state is allowed. It is foundational that the government should not favor one set of religious beliefs or practices over another.

The draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission seeks to violate this fundamental and defining concept. Instituting policies that would encourage states to expand religious instruction and displays in public schools based on one version of faith practice, including promoting investigations and sanctioning of educators and institutions accused of violating a single national concept of what accepted faith should be, is anathema to what it means to be American. This document clearly misunderstands what "religious liberty" means. Mandating that all institutions comply with this violates everyone's freedom to practice their faith, any faith, without fear or favor is antithetical to what it means to be American.

We strongly urge all lawmakers to reject the draft report and do not break the covenant the Founders made with the people. Freedom itself will be at risk if this report's recommendations are implemented.

From: Karen Mills <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:43:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I urge you to reconsider your stance on the separation of religion and the state.

- The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.
- The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.
- Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.
- Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

It has worked for 250+ years. Why change it now?

Karen Mills

From: Mary OMalley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:45:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly believe in the separation of any church and spirituality with government. Co existing is two separate paths .

Mary O'Malley MSW, MFA

Sent from my iPhone

From: Stephen Cook <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:45:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern:

As a Baptist minister who believes deeply in the long held and well-established principles of the separation of church and state, I am deeply concerned by the draft report and its dangerous recommendations that threaten to undermine religious liberty in our nation.

History has proven - repeatedly - that the separation of church and state is good for both. Every individual is endowed by our Creator with the inalienable right and responsibility to determine whether, how, and which ways to express their faith. This also includes those who claim no faith of their own. Each person must be free to do this as a matter of individual conscience without fear, favor, or coercion. This is a constitutional principle that is protected by the First Amendment.

Likewise, as a minister, I believe deeply the sanctity of houses of worship. The Johnson Amendment serves to protect all faith communities from partisan political leanings and helps to ensure that sanctuaries remain just that: safe spaces that are free from campaigning.

The Religious Liberty Commission's draft report makes recommendations that threaten to further undermine public education in our country by using public funds for private schools. I strongly oppose any such efforts. Additionally, public schools absolutely should not be instruments for advancing sectarian faith through offensive initiatives such as mandatory Bible reading or the posting of the Ten Commandments anywhere in their buildings.

Every individual is worthy of and deserves the right to be treated fairly and equally. Institutions that receive public funding should never be allowed to discriminate against anyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,
Stephen H. Cook

From: Jon Christy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:45:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. Our government should not privilege one religion over another; nor privilege religion over non-religion.

Furthermore, public funds should go to public schools, not private schools, and public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.

From: Becky Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment: Religious Liberty Commission Report Becky Anderson

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:47:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello, I am writing in response to the report recently released on religious liberty. I am also writing having studied again what the Founders said about this issue at the beginning of the nation. They were staunchly against an established religion of any kind, having closer memories to the horrors of established religion and the violence and persecution of state religions in Europe. I believe it is in error to state there is nothing in the Constitution that prevents a nation from favoring one religion over another. It would be helpful if you read the notes of the Constitutional Convention, for this was a hot issue for them.

While many of our founders were people of faith, from a variety of faith traditions, they firmly stood against any one tradition or religion standing over the others, controlling the others.

I am afraid that this report reflects exactly what they feared and tried to prevent warning future generations such as ours to beware of any attempt to establish a religion for the nation as a whole. We are a product of the best of many faith traditions, witness George Washington's words at the dedication of the Touro synagogue in Rhode Island:

During a visit to Newport, R.I., in 1790, a year before the Bill of Rights was ratified, President George Washington received a letter from Moses Seixas, warden of the Touro Synagogue, seeking assurance of religious freedom for Jews. President Washington gave an unequivocal guarantee, returning a letter stating that the new government would "give to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

Please learn from the wisdom of the past, the experiences of our nation over 250 years and reject any attempt to establish priorities and funding of a single faith tradition. That is not the American Way. Christian Nationalism has no place in our history then or now.

Thank you, Becky Anderson

From: Michael Drews <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Michael Drews

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:55:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Howdy,

As someone who cares deeply about both religious freedom and our Constitution, I believe we've gotten a lot right with the First Amendment. The separation of church and state isn't about being anti-religion—it's about protecting everyone's ability to practice their faith (or not practice one at all) without the government picking favorites. I think that's good for both our churches and our country.

I also believe the Johnson Amendment serves an important purpose. Houses of worship should be places where people come together around their shared faith, not another venue for partisan campaigning. Keeping those lines clear protects both our religious institutions and the integrity of our elections.

I feel the same way about public education. Public tax dollars should support public schools. And our public schools should be welcoming to every student, regardless of what they believe. They shouldn't be in the business of promoting one particular religious tradition through things like mandated displays of the Ten Commandments or official school-sponsored prayer. Families should be free to teach and practice their faith without the government stepping into that role.

Finally, I believe that any institution receiving public funding has a responsibility to treat people fairly and equally. If an organization accepts taxpayer dollars, it should serve the public without discriminating against people because of their beliefs or other protected characteristics.

Religious liberty is one of our nation's most important freedoms, but it only works when it's applied equally to everyone. I hope the Department of Justice continues to uphold those constitutional protections and defend the rights of all Americans, regardless of their faith or background.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments.

From: Zachary Schrag <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 2 – ZACHARY SCHRAG

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:55:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report of June 26, 2026. I write in my capacity as a historian and the author of *The Fires of Philadelphia: Citizen-Soldiers, Nativists, and the 1844 Riots Over the Soul of a Nation* (2021).

I particularly wish to comment on the draft report's Chapter 2: Religious Liberty and the American Story, which presents an incomplete and distorted account of debates over religious freedom. A fuller history of this topic would remind Americans of the dangers of the kind of state promotion of religion that the report appears to contemplate.

Most notably, between pages 40 and 41, the draft report skips from the founding period to "the early twentieth century," suggesting that in the intervening century, nothing of note happened concerning religious liberty. In fact, for much of the nineteenth century, some American Protestants used their majority status and state power to persecute minority faiths in the name of religious liberty. As one boasted, "We have a mill, of which the common school is the nether, and the Bible and its institutions the upper stone; into this mill let us cast the people of all countries and forms of religion that come here, and they will come out in the grist Americans and Protestants." [Nicholas Murray, **Romanism at Home: Letters to the Hon. Roger B. Taney** (New York: Harper, 1852), 249.] In its extreme form, this sentiment led to the abuse of Catholic schoolchildren and the burning of Catholic churches, as well as the oppression of other religious minorities.

Without understanding—or even acknowledging—this history, one cannot understand the subsequent efforts by the Supreme Court and other institutions to strike a better balance between allowing individuals to practice their religion and avoiding state-imposed conformity. Nor can one understand the dangers of some of the report's recommendations, such as the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools.

By ignoring the history of nineteenth-century religious conflicts, the Religious Liberty Commission has failed to produce the comprehensive report demanded by its charter. I suggest that the Commission recruit a panel of experts in the history of religion in the United States who can better document the ongoing centuries-old challenge of securing liberty of conscience to all Americans.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Zachary M. Schrag, PhD
zacharyschrag.com

From: Dorothy Wayne <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:57:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern

As a U.S. citizen, I am writing to express my strong belief in the constitutional right to freedom of religion. I do not support the use of public tax dollars to discriminate for or against citizens based on their religious beliefs.

Please continue to uphold and protect this fundamental right for all constituents.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Wayne

From: James McConnell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:58:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to strenuously speak against the subject report. The separation of church and state is certainly constitutional, even if this exact phrase is not found in the Constitution of the United States. It is best for the government to stay out of religion.

Separation of church and state benefits everyone. It allows those who desire to practice a religion to do so without interference from the government, and conversely allows those who do not to abstain from such. Further, I am concerned that government involvement in the area of religion will impose a particular understanding of a religion that many adherents to that religion would not agree with.

Public money should go to public schools, not private, religious institutions. The government should not favor certain schools due to their religious commitments.

Surely the US government has more important issues to deal with than to coerce the public into following a particular form of religion.

Respectfully,

Rev. Dr. James McConnell, PhD

From: MARK MEEKS <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re. Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:58:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to oppose any effort to nationalize the Christian faith practice. As a Christian minister I know nationalization diminishes our faith practice and does harm to our relations with other fellow citizens and residents of our country who do not share our practice. I oppose making public schools in any way prioritize Christian faith practice and make normal the use of Christian scripture in school activity. Any entity receiving public funding must not be allowed to in any way discriminate against persons of diversity from norms considered to be acceptable to Christian faith practice as viewed by some who hold that practice. As a Christian, I want all people to be able to enjoy freedom of religion in making choices related to their devotion of faith. I agree with our constitution that there must be no established religion in our national life supported as such by our government. Freedom of religion is a major American commitment, and I want to see that fully honored. Thank you for receiving my comment, Mark Meeks

From: Alan Reinach <[REDACTED]>

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:58:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png

I write to express my outrage at the Report's dismissal of the cherished constitutional principle of separation of church and state, which has provided more abundant religious freedom for Americans than any other nation in the world.

When Thomas Jefferson first used the expression, he preceded it by stating:

"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,"

What part of a person's religion lying between a man and God do you reject? Do you really think government ought to be an arbiter of faith? Am I supposed to trust members of this commission or elected officials to determine what I should believe, or how I should worship? This is nothing short of heresy. The Almighty has given no man authority to come between a soul and its Maker. Shame on the Commission for its reckless repetition of historical fiction and constitutional nonsense.

Alan J. Reinach, Esq.
President and General Counsel



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'We lawyers are a dangerous breed; we challenge, we refuse to let anarchy and unfairness and inequity reign. We stand in the gap. We refuse to be silent. We fight, not with arms, but with words. We use the law as our weapon, and we wield it with skill and determination. We must teach the next generation to do the same...' **Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland**

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From: Ben Hodge <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 10:59:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty Commission Report.
For the benefit of our nation and people:

- The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.
- The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.
- Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.
- Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

From: David Robertson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:14:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sir / Madam

I am contributing my views during the public comment period to the draft report on the Religious Liberty Commission.

I disagree with its assumptions and conclusions.

As part of my own education, during our celebration of 250 years of our democratic republic, I am reading a biography of John Adams, based extensively on his diary, correspondences and published writings of the time. Mr. Adams is considered one of our Founding Fathers, who directly influenced the writing of our US Constitution. It is clear that his views, consistent with others such as Thomas Jefferson, place religious freedom high on the list. Yes, the US Constitution guarantees religious liberty. But no, it does not support government and religious collective actions. Mr. Jefferson wrote extensively about the need for a "wall" to separate church and state. The potential for abuse of a powerful government imposing its religious belief on its citizens is the exact reason why the Pilgrims and other early immigrants left Europe to come to our colonies. Nothing is more clear in my mind. This draft report gets it wrong on these accounts.

Regards,
David Robertson

David Robertson

[REDACTED] PII

From: Richard C <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:15:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have been a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, for many decades now. I have studied the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. I am also intimately familiar with the Constitution of the United States of America.

The recommendations of this Report are unconstitutional - based on the deliberately ignorant statement that the Constitution does not provide for the separation of church and state.

Sure, the phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the Constitution. But the CONCEPT certainly is! The Founders very explicitly wanted to ensure that the government didn't infringe on people's religious liberty, and to guarantee that one religious tradition was not imposed on people by their government.

The draft assumes that the only "religious liberty" that needs addressing is the liberty of conservative Christians, and that it's just fine for that particular brand of Christianity not only to be privileged in American society, but should be promoted by the government.

These are unconstitutional ideas. I urge you to discard this draft.

Richard Craft

From: Yahoo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Report from the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:16:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thomas Jefferson stated it well when he took the simple black letter language of the First Amendment and stated it as separation of church and state. That fundamental principle has been core to our democracy. By keeping government out of our religious practices, we have sustained liberty for all of our citizens including the freedom to practice religion as we individually see fit.

That. separation requires that our religious organizations keep out of the political arena to ensure our continued freedom. It also means that government should not be funding religious based schools nor dictating how our schools discuss elements of our faith.

Religious liberty fundamentally means freedom from government interference.

Regards,
Joe Theobald

From: rik spier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] In favor of separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:21:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing today to express my support of the separation of church and state. Public funds should not be used to further partisan things. For example, public funds used to put up the 10 Commandments in a sign on public land. Clearly, the founding fathers and mothers were not in favor of this.

Sent from my iPhone 14 and Siri. She has a life of her own and spells however she wishes. She and I urge you to support Parkinson's research through the Michael J Fox Foundation.

**“To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing.”
Raymond Williams**

From: Liz Knox <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:25:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I am very opposed to allowing churches to endorse candidates or engage in political discourse related to specific candidates. Our forefathers had seen many egregious instances of religious over-reach such as the reign of Oliver Cromwell in England among others. That is *why* they did not want religion to enter our political system. No matter what your religious belief system is, it should not dominate others' religious beliefs and should stay out of politics, healthcare, and other aspects of our lives. I am opposed to the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission's Report. It really should be called the 'Religious Domination Report—my Religion should Rule Everyone.' This is not at all appropriate in a free society.

Liz Knox

From: Scott Sidman <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:30:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to oppose the recommendations in the Commission's draft report. I ask that the final report reject calls to weaken the separation of church and state, repeal the Johnson Amendment, and direct public funds toward religious instruction in public schools.

Separation of church and state is a constitutional principle, not an invention.

The phrase does not appear word for word in the Constitution, but neither does the phrase "religious liberty," and no one on this Commission would argue that concept is absent from our founding law. Thomas Jefferson used the phrase "wall of separation between Church & State" in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists specifically to describe what the First Amendment already does. He quoted the amendment directly before using the phrase, showing he saw it as an explanation of the text, not an addition to it. James Madison made the same argument more fully in his 1785 Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, warning that even a small government payment to support religion is the first step toward establishment and the loss of liberty of conscience. The Supreme Court has treated this as settled law for generations. In *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the Court held that the First Amendment was intended to erect a wall between church and state and that it must be kept high and impregnable. That principle protects people of every faith and no faith equally, and it should not be redefined by this Commission.

The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship; it does not restrict them.

Current law allows churches and other religious nonprofits to speak freely on moral and political issues. It only bars them from endorsing or opposing specific candidates while keeping their tax-exempt status. Repealing this protection would not expand religious liberty. It would turn houses of worship into vehicles for partisan campaigning and, potentially, for tax-sheltered political money. That outcome serves party politics, not faith communities, and it risks dividing congregations along partisan lines rather than uniting them around shared belief.

Public schools should not promote sectarian religious exercise.

The Supreme Court has been consistent on this point for over sixty years. In *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), the Court struck down a state-composed school prayer, holding that government has no business writing or sponsoring prayers for schoolchildren to recite. In *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963), the Court extended that reasoning to state-mandated Bible readings. In *Stone v. Graham* (1980), the Court held that posting the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms violates the Establishment Clause because it has no secular legislative purpose. Public schools serve children of every religion and none. Their job is to educate, not to instruct students in any one faith's doctrine, and public dollars should support public education rather than being diverted to private religious schools.

I urge the Commission to reject these recommendations in its final report and to reaffirm, rather than dismantle, the constitutional wall between church and state.

Sincerely,

From: Marsha Nagel <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Religion

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:31:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I would like to take this opportunity to posthumously commend Thomas Jefferson as he advocated that our legislature shall make no laws to establish religion or prohibit the free exercise thereof.

I am happy to live in the United States of America because I can choose what I believe & how I worship ,when I worship .

The government has long believed not to control religion. We just celebrated the 250th anniversary of the United States of America. May the government and the Department of justice see that the separation between church and state as was originally intended in the constitution is upheld. This is what has made America great.

May she continue to do so !

God bless America

Marsha K Nagel
California , USA



Sent from my iPhone

From: Greg Hunt <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:34:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: Image.png

I write to add my voice to those who stand in firm opposition to your betrayal of the constitutional provisions of the First Amendment. Your report is filled with bad history and false accusations. It doesn't advance the cause of religious liberty; it undermines it. It is driven by a political agenda the First Amendment was expressly created to deter. It privileges one religious group over all others, turning all others into - at best - second class citizens.

As a Christian, I celebrate the fact that I am free to worship God according to the dictates of my conscience and to bring my values into the public square as an active participant in our nation's life. I understand that the power of my faith lies not in coercion but in persuasion, appealing to the conscience of others. I respect the right of all others to do the same. What binds us IS NOT a dominant religion, but a common commitment to the rule of law as established in the U.S. Constitution, a rule of law that clearly respects religious pluralism.

Greg Hunt



From: Edward Ronan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The current "Religious Liberty Commission"

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:39:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

This commission seems bent on abrogating our First Amendment!

Anyone, or any group, that is familiar with Jefferson's writings, recognizes that the "Wall between Church and State" is Jeffersonian and exactly follows our founders' view of the First Amendment.

Full stop, Amen.

Thanks for your attention,
Edward (Bob) Ronan
Kansas City, MO

From: Karen Edwards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:43:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

- The separation of church and state is a constitutional principle that explains how religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.
- Churches and other religious institutions have a diversity of peoples and political identities. They should not be forced by one side or another to ascribe to or support programs and positions opposite their convictions.
- PUBLIC funds should go to PUBLIC schools, not private schools.
- Public schools should not demand sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments, mandated Bible reading, sectarian prayer.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

If religious teaching is provided, the it should incorporate the history and tenets of all faiths.

From: Nathan T <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report – Nathan Tornow

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:48:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

I write as a history educator who believes that public policy should be informed by careful historical scholarship rather than by simplified or selective interpretations of the past.

The history of religious liberty in the United States is both inspiring and complex. Religion has profoundly shaped American public life, while at the same time the nation's founders deliberately constructed constitutional institutions that sought to protect both the free exercise of religion and liberty of conscience for people holding many different beliefs. Those two principles have existed in creative tension throughout our history, and understanding that tension is essential to accurately interpreting the American past.

For this reason, I am concerned that the report often presents contested historical interpretations as though they represent settled historical fact. Historical scholarship is strongest when it acknowledges ambiguity, competing interpretations, and the diversity of views held by the founding generation. The historical record contains devout Christians, religious skeptics, Enlightenment thinkers, dissenting Protestant traditions, Catholics, Jews, and others who all contributed to the development of American ideas about religious liberty. Any official government report should reflect that complexity.

I am also concerned by recommendations that would encourage government institutions to favor particular religious expressions in public schools. Public schools serve students from many religious traditions, as well as students with no religious affiliation. Historically, one of the strengths of the American constitutional system has been its effort to protect religious liberty by limiting governmental preference for particular faith traditions. This approach has helped religion flourish in American civil society while allowing citizens of different beliefs to participate equally in public life.

Several foundational historical documents illustrate this broader understanding. George Washington's assurance to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport that the government gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance," the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, James Madison's *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, and Article VI of the Constitution all reflect a commitment to protecting freedom of conscience through a government that does not exercise religious authority or impose religious orthodoxy.

I respectfully encourage the Commission to revise the report so that it better reflects the complexity of American religious history, distinguishes clearly between historical evidence and constitutional advocacy, and acknowledges the substantial body of scholarship surrounding these questions. Government reports should present history with the same intellectual rigor, nuance, and respect for evidence that professional historians strive to uphold.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Nathan Tornow

From: Sharon Conroy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:49:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. As an American, we must keep church and state separate! Wars have begun over religious rights in other countries. We have always had pride in America because we keep church and state apart.

This unfair approach tries to undermine the critical separation of church and state. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a gross violation of civil rights.

These recommendations threaten vital healthcare access—including reproductive freedom and miscarriage management leaves our fellow Americans and communities without safe alternatives. Finally, attempting to dismantle the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally puts political money into tax-exempt religious institutions.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

Sharon Conroy

[REDACTED] PII

South Prairie, Washington

From: Audrey SB <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [TOPIC OR CHAPTER NUMBER] – [NAME]

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:53:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a concerned American citizen, I support separation of Church and State as a fundamental tenet of our Constitution, law, country and culture.

I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be dangerously undermining it.

This report endangers freedom of religion of all Americans.

From: Debbie Jordan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:54:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

While I agree this nation needs to return to God, I don't think that can be legislated by the government. The only way is to follow the path of Jesus and reach people on an individual level with love.

I think there should remain a separation of church and state as our founding fathers established. To quote 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,”

Sincerely,
Debbie Jordan

From: "Peggy Earthlink.net" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commission Report- Margaret Caldwell
Olympia WA 98516

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 11:55:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am strongly opposed to the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. Please reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith.

Margaret Caldwell

Olympia WA [REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPhone

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

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:03:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

We are opposed to the proposed Religious Liberty Commission which will allow faith-based organizations to receive public funding while also refusing to serve or hire people whose religious beliefs differ. It would allow an organization to apply faith-based rules over public health.

This Commission would institute widespread policies in direct opposition to our constitutional protections of separation of church and state.

We urge DOJ to oppose this Commission.

Alicelia and Robert Warren

[REDACTED PII]

[REDACTED PII]

From: Alan and Nicole Parker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty and separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:04:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a Christian, a mother of four (three of whom were homeschooled all the way to college), pastor's wife, and author of ten Christian books (*Tales of the Exodus* and *Tales of Canaan* series), I feel the need to express my deep alarm at America's movement toward abolishing the separation of church and state. I love Jesus with all my heart, and I want everyone else to know and love Him too. But using state power to force Christianity into people's lives is deadly.

Our country was founded by people who realized that when worship is forced, it is no longer offered freely from the heart. Allowing even Christianity--which is my own religion--to oppress or pressure people brings corruption into the church and inoculates worshipers against true religion. God allows people to choose to worship Him from a heart of love, or to turn away. I plead for you to think seriously about the history of the world, and what always happens when political powers begin pushing worship systems.

Blessings,

Nicole Parker

"Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice. It is about a revolution of love that is big enough to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free." - Shane Claiborne

From: Cindee Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:04:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am strongly opposed to the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report; I want to urge the DOJ to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith.

Cindee Moore
Tacoma, WA

[REDACTED] PII

From: L <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- GENERAL -- LYNN SPIEKER

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:07:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: The Honorable Religious Liberty Commission

I am very pleased with the work you have completed to date and shared for public comment. For far too long our country has sought to make our country free from religion and not promoted freedom of religion.

Our Founding Fathers knew how important religion was for good governance and culture. You are probably familiar with these quotes:

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men & citizens." George Washington, September 19, 1796, Farewell Address

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." John Adams, October 11, 1798, Letter to the Officers of the Third Brigade, First Division, Massachusetts Militia

"Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime and pure, and which insures to the good eternal happiness, are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments." Charles Carroll, November 4, 1800, Letter to James McHenry

I hope and pray that your works bears good fruit for our nation and helps to restore our culture and government.

Thank you for your service to our country.

Respectfully,

Lynn Spieker

From: linda orsted <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: religious liberty commission report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:09:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

The principle of separation of church and state is embedded within the constitution, specifically the First Amendment. Religious liberty depends upon citizens being able to choose their own beliefs. The state has no right to dictate what religious organizations or beliefs are practiced in this country. Religious freedom also means that public schools must not indoctrinate students with religious views at the expense of other doctrines.

Linda Orsted

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Edwin Chung <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendation to RL Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:10:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: The Department of Justice:

As a student of history, and as Christian, I am 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.

The 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.

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.

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

Sincerely yours,
Edwin Chung

From: Marcy Mjelde <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -Marcy Mjelde - religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:11:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a Christian, I must add my support to those who believe as founding father Thomas Jefferson did, that for the protection of not only individual rights but for the protection of religion itself, ***we must keep a wall between church and state.*** Public dollars should not go to any religious organizations, as we do not want the government in our churches. I also believe that faith is between a human and their god- a matter of opinion, just free thought or speech - nothing for the state to govern .

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

From: Jeremy Fuzy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Jeremy Fuzy

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:12:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I am writing you all to say that the wall of separation between church and state, a concept enshrined by constitutional provisions such as Article VI and the First Amendment, is good for both the government and the church. And there is no such thing as a one-way wall.

Christian Nationalism, on the other hand, is bad for both politics and the church. I do not worship a nation — I worship Jesus. And it is an affront to my Christianity and my patriotism to attempt to do things such as removing the Johnson Amendment so that churches can engage in partisan politicking, using public funds for private religious schools, forcing public schools to engage in government prayer or post a highly-edited version of the Ten Commandments, or licensing institutions that receive public funds to discriminate.

What we should be celebrating for America 250 is our radical experiment to offer true religious freedom for all. Not attempting to embed conservative Christianity into the government.

Jeremy Fuzy

Digital Editor, [Word&Way](#)

Subscribe to our newsletter: [A Public Witness](#)

From: Daniel [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:15:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I am writing as a private citizen, a humanist, and an American who cares deeply about democracy, religious freedom, and the constitutional separation of church and state. I respectfully urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Our nation's First Amendment is clear: **"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."** That protection is one of the foundations of the United States. It protects the right of every American to practice their faith freely, but it also protects every American from government favoritism toward any one religion.

Religious freedom is not only freedom **of** religion. It is also freedom **from** government-imposed religion. That balance is what allows a nation as diverse as ours to remain free, pluralistic, and united.

I am deeply concerned that this Commission's draft report does not strengthen religious liberty, but instead risks undermining it. The Commission appears to elevate one narrow religious worldview while sidelining Americans with minority faiths, nonreligious beliefs, and differing moral convictions. That is exactly the kind of government preference the Establishment Clause was designed to prevent.

The United States is not a theocracy. We are not one denomination, one church, or one religious tradition. We are a secular constitutional republic made stronger by our diversity of beliefs. Our government must not use public institutions, public funding, schools, courts, hospitals, or the military to privilege one religious viewpoint over others.

I also strongly oppose recommendations that would weaken the Johnson Amendment, create religious liberty reporting portals that could be used to pressure public institutions, or invite government officials to frame ordinary disagreements as religious persecution. Christians and people of all faiths already have broad constitutional protections in the United States. Those protections should remain strong, but they should not be expanded into a tool for imposing religious doctrine on others.

As a parent and citizen, I ask the Commission to think beyond the politics of today. The precedents set now will shape the country our children and grandchildren inherit. If government begins favoring one faith tradition today, there is no guarantee that future governments will use that same power fairly, wisely, or peacefully.

The safest and most American path is the one our Constitution already provides: a government that does not establish religion, does not punish religion, and does not privilege one belief system over another.

For these reasons, I urge the Religious Liberty Commission to reject the draft report in its entirety and disband without further recommendations. Religious liberty is too important to be turned into a vehicle for religious favoritism. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American religious and nonreligious alike.

Respectfully,

Daniel

From: Kenneth Mayberry <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:15:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty Commission,

As a minister of the gospel, I feel that it is my duty to speak in opposition to the comment of Dan Patrick at the conclusion of the Oval Office event delivering the RLC Report.

Far from being a “hammer of persecution,” the phrase, “separation of church and state,” accurately contains the sentiments of the First Amendment, which guards against religious persecution.

“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.” (Thomas Jefferson, Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association)

Pastor Ken Mayberry

Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Sent from my iPad

From: David Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Maintain the Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:27:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state must be **maintained** and intact as the framers intended.

“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,” Thomas Jefferson

David Brown,
Missoula, Montana.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: deanstr8 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Liberty

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:34:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep in mind that there are many like me who stand for the right to worship God without state and government interference.

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for Android.

From: B Cardin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 3 – Faith-Based Institutions – B. Cardin

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:39:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment on Chapter 3 – Faith-Based Institutions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Chapter 3 of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

I respectfully recommend that the Commission affirm that faith-based institutions should remain free to govern themselves according to their sincerely held religious beliefs without unnecessary government interference. Churches, ministries, religious schools, charities, and other faith-based organizations should be free to determine their own doctrine, leadership, membership, and ministry practices.

The role of government is to protect the free exercise of religion—not to direct or manage it. The First Amendment safeguards the independence of religious institutions and prevents government from controlling matters of faith and internal governance.

At the same time, religious liberty should never be interpreted to place any religious organization or religious legal system above the Constitution or the laws of the United States. No group should be exempt from generally applicable criminal laws or permitted to establish a parallel legal system that supersedes civil law. Illegal acts such as violence, abuse, fraud, coercion, trafficking, or exploitation must remain fully subject to law enforcement, regardless of any religious justification.

Faith-based institutions make invaluable contributions to America by strengthening families, caring for those in need, educating future generations, serving their communities, and encouraging responsible citizenship. Preserving their freedom to fulfill these missions—while ensuring that all individuals and organizations remain accountable under the Constitution and the rule of law—protects both religious liberty and the principles of justice that have helped our nation flourish.

Thank you for considering these comments.

B. Cardin
Oklahoma

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:46:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Quoting 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," Jefferson [wrote](#).

I am now 74 years old and have been a christian for more that 60 of those years. I grew up in an American culture that believed and followed the separation of church and state. We are fortunate to live in a country where we are free to worship in a way that we see fit. It is not the governments job to force one ideology about God over another. If we are a Christian nation then those around us should be drawn to Christ because of the evidence in our lives and the way we treat all of those created in His image. That means even the ones you persecute.

Reconsider forcing doctrine on people. It does not make converts is separates us from those we were meant to serve.

Deborah Herring.
Grand Prairie, Texas

From: B Cardin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapters 4 & 5: Religious Education and Free Speech
– B. Cardin

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:47:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment on Chapters 4 & 5 – Religious Education and Free Speech

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Chapters 4 and 5 of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

I respectfully recommend that the Commission affirm the fundamental role of parents as the primary educators and moral guides of their children. Parents should have meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their children's education and should not be excluded from discussions concerning curriculum, school policies, or matters that impact their child's academic, moral, and spiritual development.

Transparency is essential to building trust between families and schools. Parents should have reasonable access to course syllabi, instructional materials, reading lists, and other educational resources so they can understand what their children are being taught and engage constructively in their education.

The Commission should also encourage educational environments where educators can exercise their constitutional rights without fear of retaliation for their sincerely held religious beliefs or protected viewpoints. Likewise, parents should be free to express their concerns respectfully and participate in their children's education without intimidation or coercion from any individual or organization, including employee organizations or unions.

Public schools should respect the constitutional rights of students and school employees to engage in voluntary, non-disruptive religious expression. Students and staff should be free to pray individually or in groups, read the Bible during appropriate non-instructional times, participate in voluntary student-led Bible study groups where otherwise permitted, and express their faith in the same manner as other protected forms of speech. No student or parent should face discrimination or exclusion from academic opportunities, extracurricular activities, or athletics solely because of respectful religious expression that does not disrupt school operations or infringe on the rights of others.

Schools should also have the ability, consistent with applicable law, to provide properly trained and qualified armed security personnel or school resource officers to help protect students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Providing effective security is an important part of creating a safe learning environment where students and educators can focus on education without fear.

America benefits when schools respect religious liberty, protect parental involvement, encourage open dialogue, and provide a safe learning environment. Strong partnerships among parents, educators, school leaders, and local communities help develop students of good character, civic responsibility, and respect for the constitutional freedoms that have long been a cornerstone of our nation.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

B. Cardin
Oklahoma

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

To: [REDACTED PII]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Establishment Clause

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:49:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I was deeply disappointed to see a press conference where members of your commission denied the reality of the “wall of separation between church and state.”

When Jefferson first coined the phrase, it was in the context of the establishment clause, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

I agree with Jefferson and the framers that a man’s relationship with God is between him and God alone and that government has no legitimate business in enforcing or prohibiting opinions, religious or otherwise.

Many of the greatest evils of history were born out of the union of church and state, and we ought to do everything in our power to prevent them from happening in this free country.

I am concerned by your rhetoric that we are taking steps in the wrong direction. I would urge you to take care that you don’t inadvertently walk our nation off this terrible cliff. We know it’s there. Let’s stay well away from it.

Yours Sincerely,

John Millea

From: B Cardin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Chapter 7 – Religious Liberty in the Armed Forces - B. Cardin

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:51:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment on Chapter 7 – Religious Liberty in the Armed Forces

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Chapter 7 of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

I respectfully recommend that the Commission affirm that members of the United States Armed Forces do not surrender their constitutional right to the free exercise of religion when they enter military service. While military readiness, good order, discipline, and mission requirements must remain paramount, service members should be free to practice their sincerely held religious beliefs whenever doing so does not interfere with the mission or the rights of others.

Military personnel should not face discrimination, retaliation, or adverse career consequences because of their sincerely held religious beliefs or lawful religious expression. Likewise, chaplains should remain free to minister according to the teachings and doctrines of their faith traditions while faithfully serving all members of the Armed Forces with dignity and respect.

The Armed Forces have long recognized that spiritual strength, moral character, and freedom of conscience contribute to the resilience and effectiveness of those who serve. Protecting religious liberty strengthens recruitment, retention, unit morale, and the trust that service members place in the nation they have sworn to defend.

America asks much of the men and women who volunteer to defend our freedoms. It is fitting that the constitutional liberties they protect—including the free exercise of religion—are preserved to the greatest extent consistent with military necessity.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

B. Cardin

From: Rene Baron <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:57:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a Christian, I strongly support religious liberty for all people, not just for those who share my faith. I believe the separation of church and state is good for both religion and government. It is not hostility toward faith; it is one of the constitutional principles that protects the free exercise of religion under the First Amendment.

For that reason, I oppose efforts to advance a Christian nationalist agenda through government policy. Public schools should not be used to promote sectarian religious beliefs, require the posting of the Ten Commandments, or pressure students into official prayer. Families and houses of worship should guide children in matters of faith, not the government.

I also support the Johnson Amendment because it helps protect houses of worship from becoming tools of partisan politics. It allows churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious communities to focus on faith, service, and moral teaching without being pressured to endorse political candidates. It also helps ensure fair play in our elections.

Public funds should be used to strengthen public schools, which serve all children. Taxpayer dollars should not be diverted to private religious schools in ways that weaken public education or force the public to subsidize sectarian instruction.

Finally, any institution that receives public funding should be required to treat people fairly and equally. Public money should not support discrimination. Religious liberty should never be used as a license to deny people equal dignity, equal treatment, or equal access to services funded by taxpayers.

True religious liberty protects everyone. As a Christian, I reject government favoritism toward my religion and oppose policies that use Christianity as a political weapon. My faith does not need government power to be meaningful, and I do not want it used to justify discrimination or political control.

From: B Cardin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 9 - First Do No Harm - B. Cardin

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 12:58:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment on Chapter 9 – First Do No Harm

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Chapter 9 of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

I respectfully recommend that the Commission affirm that healthcare professionals, faith-based medical organizations, and healthcare institutions should be free to practice according to their sincerely held religious and moral convictions while providing compassionate, ethical, and professional care to every patient.

Patients should be treated with dignity, respect, honesty, and compassion, regardless of their beliefs, background, or personal circumstances. They deserve informed consent, truthful communication, protection of their privacy, and reasonable access to appropriate medical care. Religious liberty should never be used to justify neglect, discrimination, abuse, or the denial of emergency medical treatment.

The Commission should also affirm the longstanding principles of informed consent and patient autonomy. Except in narrowly defined circumstances authorized by law, competent adults should have the right to make informed decisions regarding their own medical care. Government policies should promote transparency, rigorous scientific evaluation, and open communication regarding the benefits and risks of medical treatments. Americans should not be compelled to receive medical treatments without appropriate legal authority, due process where applicable, and confidence that such treatments have undergone appropriate safety and efficacy review through established regulatory standards.

Likewise, healthcare professionals should not be compelled to participate in procedures, treatments, or activities that violate their deeply held religious beliefs or conscience when reasonable accommodations can be made consistent with the law and patient access to care. Protecting freedom of conscience strengthens the integrity of the medical profession and encourages individuals of faith to serve in healthcare without fear of discrimination or coercion.

Faith-based hospitals, clinics, and healthcare organizations have served Americans for generations by providing compassionate care, advancing medical innovation, and caring for vulnerable populations. Preserving their religious liberty allows them to continue fulfilling these missions while remaining faithful to the principles upon which they were founded. They should not be excluded from government programs, grants, contracts, reimbursements, or other forms of public assistance that are otherwise available to similarly situated non-faith-based healthcare institutions solely because of their religious identity or sincerely held religious beliefs.

Protecting both patient rights and the conscience rights of healthcare providers benefits America by fostering a healthcare system built on trust, compassion, integrity, and respect for human dignity. Safeguarding these complementary principles strengthens the doctor-patient relationship, preserves individual liberty, encourages a diverse healthcare system, and upholds the constitutional freedoms that have long contributed to the health and well-being of our nation.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

B. Cardin

Oklahoma

From: Deborah Petty Shanks <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:01:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe strongly in separation of church and state.

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

Deborah Petty Shanks
Sent from my iPhone, will be brief

From: Steve Tatum <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:02:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please maintain religious freedom and the separation between church and state!

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: B Cardin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 10 – Conscience and Coercion in Vaccine Policy - B. Cardin

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:02:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment on Chapter 10 – Conscience and Coercion in Vaccine Policy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Chapter 10 of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

I respectfully recommend that the Commission affirm that religious liberty and freedom of conscience are fundamental constitutional rights that should be carefully protected when developing and implementing vaccine policies. Public health and individual liberty should be pursued together whenever possible.

Americans should have the right to make informed medical decisions based on their sincerely held religious beliefs, moral convictions, and discussions with their healthcare providers. Government policies should promote informed consent, transparency, and clear communication regarding the benefits, risks, and alternatives associated with medical treatments.

The Commission should encourage governments and employers to provide reasonable accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs and legitimate medical exemptions whenever consistent with protecting public health and fulfilling essential responsibilities. Individuals should not face unnecessary discrimination, loss of employment, exclusion from education, or denial of public benefits solely because they have exercised lawful religious or conscience rights.

Safety should always be the highest priority in vaccine policy. The Commission should encourage ongoing, independent evaluation of vaccine safety, transparent reporting of adverse events, and continued research to ensure the highest standards of public confidence. It should also encourage periodic review of the recommended childhood immunization schedule to determine whether each vaccine remains necessary, effective, and appropriately timed based on the best available scientific evidence. Parents should be provided with clear, understandable information so they can make informed decisions in consultation with their healthcare providers.

Protecting both public health and constitutional freedoms benefits America by preserving individual liberty, strengthening public trust, and encouraging informed, voluntary participation in healthcare decisions. Our nation is strongest when it safeguards both the common good and the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

B. Cardin

Oklahoma

From: B Cardin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 11 – Anti-Semitism - B. Cardin

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:10:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment on Chapter 11 – Anti-Semitism

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Chapter 11 of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

I respectfully recommend that the Commission continue to affirm that anti-Semitism has no place in the United States. Jewish Americans should be free to worship, live, work, attend school, and participate in public life without fear of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, threats, or violence.

Anti-Semitism is more than prejudice against the Jewish people—it is an attack on the principles of religious liberty, human dignity, and equal justice that form the foundation of our nation. History repeatedly demonstrates that when anti-Semitism is ignored or tolerated, it rarely remains confined to the Jewish community. What often begins as prejudice, dehumanizing rhetoric, or harassment can spread to other religious or ethnic groups, leading to discrimination, intimidation, vandalism, assault, and even organized violence. A society that permits hatred against one group ultimately places the freedoms and safety of all people at risk. Confronting anti-Semitism is therefore essential not only to protecting Jewish Americans, but also to preserving religious liberty, civil peace, the rule of law, and the constitutional freedoms that safeguard every American.

Government has a solemn responsibility to protect every person's constitutional rights and to vigorously investigate and prosecute criminal acts motivated by religious hatred. Threats of violence, acts of terrorism, vandalism, assault, and other crimes targeting Jewish individuals, synagogues, schools, businesses, and community organizations should be met with swift and appropriate enforcement of the law. Hate that incites violence or encourages criminal acts should be addressed through the full enforcement of applicable laws, while preserving the constitutional protections guaranteed by the First Amendment.

At the same time, efforts to combat anti-Semitism should remain consistent with the First Amendment. Americans must remain free to engage in lawful religious expression, peaceful public debate, and respectful discussion of religious, historical, and political issues. Protecting both public safety and constitutional freedoms requires maintaining the important distinction between protected speech and unlawful threats, criminal intimidation, or unlawful incitement to imminent violence.

Standing firmly against anti-Semitism strengthens America's commitment to equal justice, religious liberty, human dignity, and the rule of law. A nation that protects its citizens from hatred and violence while preserving constitutional freedoms is stronger, safer, and more united.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

B. Cardin

Oklahoma

From: Marie NP <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commision

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:15:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I am writing to speak about my belief in Freedom of Religion as a key tenet of secular American government.

Looking back at the history of settlement of the US, freedom to worship God according to their beliefs without persecution was a key driver that influenced the Founding Fathers as they wrote the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Even amongst those who profess to be Christians, there remain enormous theological divisions. As we all know, the US is home to many different views about God, which as Christian I respect.

Separation of Church and State are codified into the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights:

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

I love our country and want to keep our religious freedoms for all Americans as it has been for 250 years now.

With best regards,

Marie A Casey

From: Sarah Saadian <[REDACTED] PII >
To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >
Cc: Jenn Holcomb <[REDACTED] PII >, Nidale Zouhir <[REDACTED] PII >, Tiffany Gourley Carter <[REDACTED] PII >, Esther Gyory <[REDACTED] PII >, Ben Kershaw <[REDACTED] PII >, Jeffrey Moore <[REDACTED] PII >, Travis Swanson <[REDACTED] PII >, Tyler Hinkle <[REDACTED] PII >, Mirenda Meghelli <[REDACTED] PII >, "Matthew L. Evans" <[REDACTED] PII >, "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT, Recommendation #9 on Johnson Amendment, Chapter 8 Religious Liberty for Religious Leaders

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:16:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: joint-testimony-rlc-12-10-2025.pdf

Inline-Images: image.png

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the RLC Draft Report.

I am writing on behalf of the Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits, and United Philanthropy Forum to submit public comment (attached as a PDF and the link below). We previously submitted the same comment in response to a December 2025 hearing held by the RLC. We submit the comments again today in response to the Draft Report in strong opposition any effort to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment, the part of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code that prohibits charitable organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates.

The RLC report includes a recommendation (#9) to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment in Chapter 8 Religious Liberty for Religious Leaders.

Here is a link to our comment:

- [Joint Testimony for the Religious Liberty Commission](#), Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits, and United Philanthropy Forum, Dec. 10, 2025.

Sincerely,

Council on Foundations
Independent Sector
National Council of Nonprofits
United Philanthropy Forum

Sarah Saadian | she/her
Senior Vice President, Public Policy and Campaigns

[REDACTED] PII





Independent Sector



National
Council of
Nonprofits



UNITED PHILANTHROPY
FORUM
A network for the common good

December 10, 2025

Religious Liberty Commission
Debate Chamber, Pavilion Building
3819 Maple Ave
Dallas, TX 75219

Via Email: **PII**

RE: Hearing on Religious Liberty in the Military

Dear Religious Liberty Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony during the fourth hearing to discuss religious liberty issues in the military as well as “state and local religious liberty issues.” On behalf of the Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits, and United Philanthropy Forum, we submit this testimony to underscore the importance of maintaining and preserving the Johnson Amendment, the part of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, which, for more than 70 years, has safeguarded the integrity of America’s charitable nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations. The federal law keeps nonprofits focused on mission, not partisan politics, by prohibiting charitable organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates. Federal law preserves public trust and protects these vital institutions from partisan pressure and manipulation.

Our organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of charitable and philanthropic organizations that employ millions of individuals in every state, engage tens of millions of additional individuals who serve as board members and other volunteers, and touch the lives of virtually every American every day. We stand united with the majority of charitable, religious, and philanthropic organizations across America in opposition to any effort to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment.

The Johnson Amendment protects public trust in civil society.

Charitable nonprofits exist to serve the public good, not partisan interests. Efforts to make nonprofits partisan or politicized threaten their ability to provide essential services and undermine public trust in these vital institutions. The Johnson Amendment protects nonprofits' and foundations' ability to serve while keeping the focus on fairness, trust, and preserving spaces that unite – not divide – our communities. Nonprofits need broad public support and bipartisan cooperation to fulfill their missions. If the Johnson Amendment is weakened, charitable nonprofits will be drawn into partisan battles. This will divide who they serve; undermine what makes them effective; weaken our communities; threaten the independence of charitable nonprofits; undermine public trust; give tax breaks to donors for campaign contributions; and distract nonprofits, houses of worship, and philanthropy from their missions.

By contrast, when nonprofits stay out of partisan politics, they can serve the whole community without fear of political favoritism; maintain credibility with donors, congregants, and the broader public; and focus on their mission, not political endorsements.

Protection against partisanship is not about silencing voices. Faith leaders and charitable nonprofits *can* and *should* speak out on moral, social, and public policy issues that impact their missions. They serve as vital voices in our society on a wide range of issues, including justice, freedom, community values, civic engagement, and more. Federal law draws the line at endorsing or opposing candidates for office – a line that protects the independence of the pulpit, nonprofits, and the ballot box. The independence of these community institutions depends on keeping partisanship out of them.

The majority of nonprofits and foundations oppose partisan politics in nonprofits.

Local nonprofits are lifelines for communities across the country. According to polling from Independent Sector, eight in 10 voters (81%) [trust nonprofits](#) to serve their community in a nonpartisan way — including at least 78% of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

During previous legislative attempts to weaken the Johnson Amendment, the majority of charitable nonprofit organizations also supported keeping partisan politics out of their organizations, as reflected in a [community letter](#) signed by more than 5,800 organizations in all 50 states, in the [Faith Voices letter](#) signed by more than 4,300 faith leaders, in a separate letter signed by more than [100 denominations and major religious organizations](#), and in letters from the [law enforcement community](#).

Our organizations, representing the 501(c)(3) community of charitable, religious, and philanthropic organizations, strongly oppose any effort to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment.

Sincerely,

Kathleen P. Enright
President and CEO
Council on Foundations

Dr. Akilah Watkins
President and CEO
Independent Sector

Diane Yentel
President and CEO
National Council of Nonprofits

Deborah Aubert Thomas
President and CEO
United Philanthropy Forum

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

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:25:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a historian of the American Revolution and the Early American Republic.

One of the most admirable legacies of the founding and the founding era is the disestablishment of religion and the recognition that conscience, including religious conscience, flourishes when the state does not put its thumb on the scale by using religious and sectarian identity to advance secular powers. To me, the wisdom of the founders in this regard is most powerfully expressed in Article VI of the US Constitution, which expressly states that "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office of public Trust under the United States."

This is more than just an expression of procedure. The framers established a culture where the test of public trust resides in the character of the officer and their ability to apply facts and reason to their job rather than religious affiliation or identity. Madison and his colleagues studied history, including recent history. They were well aware of the crippling divisions sewed in political cultures that prized religious sect and testimony over reason and freedom of conscience. Europe had been torn apart by wars of religion (as it happens, wars between different sects of Christianity). A greater and grander future could be preserved if religious affiliation played no formal role in governance and if we rooted our future in a political creed grounded in freedom and equality that remained open to people of all faiths or no faith. Pluralism based on the separation of church and state remains crucial to our history and the legacy of the founders.

Sincerely,

David Gellman

Professor of History

DePauw University

[For more on my scholarly and professional work](#)

From: Nancy Paul <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:25:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

There is no understanding of the first amendment that allows any governmental, federal, funding to go to religious organizations, except possibly in disaster relief. Period. Hard stop.

Respectfully,

Nancy K. Paul
Registered Voter

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

From: Lawrencium <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:32:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am strongly opposed to the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. I urge the DOJ to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith.

Thank you.

—

Larry Leveen

m: [REDACTED] PII

From: George Brookover <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:33:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Religious Liberty Commission Report is in error about the separation of church and state.

The founders DID NOT want a religious organization (regardless of the identity or beliefs of that organization) to have any direct or secret influence on the democracy that was being established.

AND for over 250 years a vast majority of faith groups have not wanted government interfering or directing the beliefs, ethics, practices and groups that emerged.

Just as there has almost always been a determination for elected leaders rather than monarchs to be the designated leaders who are to be held accountable both in public discourse and at the ballot box. There has also been a prevailing belief that faith groups were to have control over what was taught and practiced.

So the bending of the beliefs of the founders toward there being no separation of church and state is a non-historical and unconstitutional premise that should not be adopted now or or anytime in the future.

From: Kiara Elliott <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report – Kiara Elliott

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:38:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the DOJ and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This framework undermines the critical separation of church and state that our country was founded on. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a violation of civil rights and a violation of what our forefathers intended when they established the separation.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

Kiara Elliott

Tacoma, Washington

Sent from my iPhone

From: B Cardin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 13 - B. Cardin

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:41:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment on Chapter 13: Barriers to Religious Liberty in the Public and Private Sectors

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Chapter 13 of the Religious Liberty Commission's report.

I appreciate the Commission's work in examining the barriers that people of faith may encounter in both the public and private sectors. I respectfully offer the following recommendations for your consideration as you seek to strengthen and protect religious liberty for all Americans.

- Welcome faith into society rather than asking people of faith to be subject to isolation, repression, or punishment.
- Value and honor religion in the same manner that we value and honor art, philosophy, education, statesmanship, science, and other significant contributions to society.
- Do not allow secular ideologies to remove Americans of faith from public discourse.
- Welcome cultural and religious displays, provided they do not promote hatred or cause harm.
- Reverse the growing trend of intolerance toward Christians and Jews.
- Protect people of faith from being excluded by financial institutions from essential banking and financial services.
- Protect individuals from isolation, intimidation, retaliation, or termination of employment for respectfully expressing their faith, particularly when they are asked about their beliefs.

I would like to see the Commission recommend that the federal government take the following actions to protect religious freedom in the public and private sectors:

1. Support legislation to end debanking. The Administration should advocate for the passage of federal legislation codifying the President's Executive Order, **Guaranteeing Fair Banking for All Americans**, as well as other legislation designed to end religious discrimination in banking, insurance, and data services.
2. Support litigation challenging debanking. The Department of Justice should support strategic litigation challenging the legality of debanking under newly enacted state laws designed to end religious discrimination in financial services.
3. End religious discrimination in accreditation.
4. Support litigation that upholds religious freedom in employment.
5. Provide "Know Your Rights" posters regarding religious liberty.
6. Issue an opinion regarding *Bostock*.

7. Welcome champions of religious freedom into the Department of Labor Hall of Honor.
8. Educate Americans on the true meaning of the Establishment Clause.
9. Continue efforts to celebrate America's rich religious heritage and its foundation of religious freedom.
10. Promote international religious freedom.

You will note that my comments and recommendations closely follow the framework and themes presented in Chapter 13 of the Commission's report. I offer them in support of the Commission's efforts to strengthen and protect religious liberty in both the public and private sectors.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these comments and recommendations. I appreciate the Commission's dedication to protecting and advancing religious liberty for all Americans.

Respectfully submitted,

B. Cardin

Oklahoma

From: Gregory Pope <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission’s Report – Pastor Gregory Pope

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:43:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png

As a pastor, I am encouraged to see our elected and appointed officials working to restore and safeguard the religious liberties protected by our Constitution.

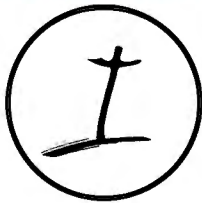
We wholeheartedly agree with President Trump’s statement that we need to bring religion back in our country. We believe America was founded upon the truth that we are, and must remain, one nation under God.

Pastor Gregory Pope

Covenant Church



www.oneconnection.org



From: Matthias Beier <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE, NOT STATE-SPONSORED RELIGION - MATTHIAS BEIER

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 13:47:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commissioners,

Please accept this public comment in opposition to the recommendations in the draft report of the Religious Liberty Commission.

My central concern is simple: the report turns religious liberty upside down. It treats the separation of church and state as though it were a threat to religion, when in fact it is the very constitutional principle that protects religion from government control and protects the people from religious coercion by the state.

Separation of church and state is not hostility toward religion. It is good for religion, and it is good for democracy. The First Amendment does not erase religion from public life. It prevents government from establishing, sponsoring, privileging, or coercing religion while fully protecting free exercise.

The report's historical framing is deeply misleading. The United States was not founded as a Christian nation. The Constitution does not mention Jesus, Christianity, the Bible, or a Christian republic. It does something very different. It explicitly rejects religious tests for public office. The First Amendment then clarifies the same principle: no establishment and free exercise.

James Madison warned that religion must be guided by conscience, reason, and conviction, not by force. Thomas Jefferson argued that civil rights do not depend on religious opinions and described the First Amendment as building a wall of separation between church and state. In his January 1, 1802, letter to Attorney General Levi Lincoln, Jefferson went so far as to write, as the third President of the United States, that "under the authority of the Constitution" there exists a "condemnation of the alliance between Church and State." And the 1797 Treaty of Tripoli, signed by President John Adams and ratified unanimously by the Senate, stated plainly that the government of the United States is "not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

That is the founding principle Christian nationalism keeps trying to erase. The Founders created a nation of free conscience, not a government of religious conformity.

For that reason, I oppose the report's recommendation to repeal or undermine the Johnson Amendment. Houses of worship already have broad freedom to preach, teach, and speak on moral and public issues. What they should not become is tax-subsidized partisan campaign infrastructure. The Johnson Amendment protects congregations from partisan capture, protects worshippers from political pressure in sacred spaces, and helps preserve fair play in elections.

I also oppose the report's push for universal school choice and the diversion of public funds to private religious schools. Public funds should support public schools, which are accountable to all and required to serve all. They should not be redirected to private institutions that may select, exclude, or religiously instruct students. Religious liberty does not require taxpayers to fund religious education.

The same applies to public schools. Students have every right to pray voluntarily (as I did in school), read sacred texts, and speak about their faith. But public schools and government actors do not have

the right to impose, sponsor, or normalize one religious tradition over others. Ten Commandments posters, official prayer, and publicly encouraged chaplain programs are not neutral. They send a message about whose religion belongs closest to the state. Public schools belong to all children: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, atheist, agnostic, and every other child.

Finally, I oppose recommendations that would allow institutions receiving public funds to discriminate while performing publicly funded work. Religious organizations may keep their religious identity. But when they receive public funds or carry out public functions, they must treat the public fairly and equally. Public dollars should not subsidize discrimination against LGBTQ people, religious minorities, nonreligious people, women, unmarried parents, or any other group.

The report repeatedly confuses religious liberty with government support for religion, especially conservative Christianity. That is not religious liberty. It is a dangerous alliance of religion and state power. It hands one religious movement the political machinery of government and then calls that freedom.

But faith imposed by law is no longer faith. It becomes control. It becomes domination. It becomes the state doing what conscience alone must do.

I urge the Commission to reject these recommendations and revise the report to affirm the constitutional principle at the heart of American religious freedom: no establishment, free exercise, and equal civil dignity for every person, regardless of religion or belief.

Sincerely,

Dr. Matthias Beier, author of the [Religion and Society on the Couch Substack](#)

From: Nathaniel Gamble <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT - GAMBLE

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:01:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I wanted to provide some comments on the recommendations that the Religious Liberty Commission's draft report is providing to President Trump.

1. Regarding recommendation #1, I don't believe the Department of Justice is authorized to issue guidance on "clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." First, the Establishment Clause is part of the Constitution, and according to our system of government, the ultimate branch of government authorized to interpret the Constitution is the US Supreme Court. While the Department of Justice is required to interpret the Constitution at times, its primary role is to administer the Constitution rather than interpret it. I think it sets a bad precedent to have the Department of Justice be the primary arbiter of defining anything connected to the Establishment Clause. Second, I am against the basic attitude of your report that claims "the separation of church and state" is not in the Constitution. This is disingenuous of your report and a reinterpretation of the intentions and actions of the Founding Fathers of this country. You are free to disagree with me on this.
2. Regarding recommendation #3, I think I understand the intention behind this, but I believe it needs more thought. Requiring an employer to explain to an employee why a supposedly religious action on their part violates law sounds like an exercise in fairness. However, there doesn't seem to be any guidance on what an employer can do about an employee who is purposely targeting them and hoping to get them in trouble with the government over religious matters. Religious discrimination in the workplace works both ways. What recourse does an employer have to an overly combative employee who uses the law inappropriately?
3. Regarding recommendation #5, I have no idea what this means. "Nominate and confirm federal judges with the courage to decide religious liberty cases on the merits?" This is a vacuous sentence because it doesn't tell us anything. You want judges to be nominated and confirmed who have courage. That sounds great, but a) the American people assume that candidates for federal judges will be courageous people - so are you saying that we have a lot of cowards who work for the federal judiciary; b) who gets to determine whether an action is cowardly or courageous - you don't provide any standards by which to determine if a judge is courageous or cowardly, which only sets up a greater chance of political corruption by judges catering their decisions to their religio-political base (or which religion or political party happens to intimidate them into submission).
4. Regarding recommendation #9, I would strongly advise against repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment doesn't keep religious Americans out of politics or from making political decisions for themselves. The Johnson Amendment keeps RELIGIONS in America from creating voting blocks that then dominate American politics. You're not protecting religious Americans by repealing the Johnson Amendment. You are disenfranchising religious Americans by turning us away from a republic to a theocracy. I am wholeheartedly against repealing the Johnson Amendment and I believe doing so tramples on the Constitution.

I have concerns about aspects of several of your other recommendations, but these four are the recommendations with the most problems that strike at the heart of what it means to be a religious American. Thank you for receiving my feedback.

From: Katey Flores <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report - Kathleen O'Hara Flores

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:03:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png

To the Department of Justice [Religious Liberty Commission Contact](#):

The separation of church and state benefits everyone. It is a vital constitutional principle. It explains how the First Amendment protects our religious liberty [The Separation of Church and State - Americans United](#)
Separation of Church and State | Wex | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute.

The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship. It stops them from engaging in partisan politics. This rule ensures fair play in our elections [The Freedom From Religion Foundation has filed a formal complaint ... May 2026 Church & State Magazine - Americans United](#).

Public funds must only go to public schools. They should not go to private schools. Public schools must not push sectarian faith. For example, they should not force the posting of the Ten Commandments or require official prayer [Americans United](#).

Any institution receiving public funding must not discriminate against individuals. They must treat all people fairly and equally [How We Protect Religious freedom in America | AU Religious schools that get public funds must follow Maine's ...](#)

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Katey Flores

Katey Flores

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Frances Blair <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:04:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly oppose any attempt by the government to establish any one religion over any others (or none). As the county's founders recognized, this would be a form of tyranny. Freedom of religion is essential to a working democracy.

From: Jan House <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:16:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear friends,

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.

Thank you for considering this very important topic, that has allowed every American the right to freedom of religion since the founding of America 250 years ago.

Sincerely,

Jan House

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.

John 3:16

From: "M. Jane Wood" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report, M. Wood

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:20:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to explain that the separation of Church and State is very helpful for both entities. It is a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

Thomas Jefferson clearly explained in his letter to Baptists in Connecticut why he saw church-state separation as a way of describing what the Constitution does. **“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.”**

Thank you for reading my feedback.

M. Wood

From: Ken Howard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION – THE REV. KEN HOWARD

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:20:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the recommendations of the Final Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Freedom Commission. As a U.S. citizen, an ordained clergyman, and a person who grew up in a Jewish family, I find many things objectionable about the Commission and its report.

As to the Commission itself, its membership seems to have been chosen with a particular result in mind. A majority of its members have expressed opinions sympathetic to the tenets of Christian Nationalism. One of its members, Paula White, has made no secret about her support for the Seven Mountains Mandate and the New Apostolic Reformation, both of which are strongly associated with Christian Nationalism.

As to the Report itself, its depiction of the history of religious freedom in America is seriously flawed and seems to be based more on ideology than historical fact.

Its apparent presumption that the founders intended the United States to be a "Christian Nation" or a "Judeo-Christian Nation" and that separation of church and state was not intended is simply not supported by the actual historical record. One need only read the words of the founders to see this (these are just a few of many):

Founder James Madison's Comments on the First Amendment:

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

"I hold it to be a fundamental principle that we should not establish a religion, and I hold that the most perfect form of separation is the best."

Founder Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists (1802):

"Religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God" and that the founders intended "a wall of separation between Church & State."

Founder John Barlow, in the Treaty of Tripoli (1796):

"The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

Indeed, the founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority in order to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society, not to diminish it. While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office under Article VI and refused to impose any religious duties on the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.

Contrary to the Report's false and extreme dichotomy, the choice before us is not between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. The separation of church and state in no way diminishes the influence of religious beliefs. Rather, limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Finally, by recommending that the U.S. Department of Justice engage in strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.

While I strongly support religious liberty and yearn for it to flourish in the United States, I believe adopting the Commission's recommendations would have the opposite effect, putting the government's thumb on the scales of justice in favor of a particular brand of religious authority.

I urge the Commission to withdraw its report. And I strongly urge that the Commission be reconstituted with a more balanced membership, so that it can begin again and produce a report free of ideological bias.

Faithfully,

Ken Howard

The Rev. Kenneth W. Howard, MDiv, MEd

From: hannon john <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - 224 page Sham report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:29:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Screenshot_9-7-2026_142152_americanhumanist.org.jpeg

As a Citizen Advocate, I reject this sham report in whole.
See my comments in the attachment

John Hannon

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Re[ort

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 14:30:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm a Christian and have many differences with some other Christians. I don't want their beliefs imposed on the rest of Americans and will refrain from doing that with my beliefs too. I will evangelize as part of free speech in this country. But Jesus keeps me from imposing him on any others. I honor their freedom to choose.
So don't start imposing my or any other faith on others. Don't subsidize faith based schools with our common public funds. Don't give a pass for the denial of services simply because someone doesn't believe what others in charge believe. It doesn't help the cause of Christianity for Christians to act like jerks or force their biases on others or even tilt the table to their favor. Resist sin! Be true Americans, not pushy power mongers.
Robert Morgan

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:07:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Below is my public comment:

My comment: In regards to school choice, public funds should be reserved for public schools. Furthermore, school choice is not true choice as students with disabilities surrender their right to a free appropriate public education and Individualized Education Plan when attending non-public school, or may be **entirely denied admittance because of their disability**.

Secondly, the Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship.

Thirdly, establishing "reporting phone lines" creates cultures of hostility rather than cooperation and kind discourse between individuals in conflict. Instead, respectful communication should be encouraged.

Angela, Ohio

From: Justin Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:17:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: DOJ_RLC_Comment_Johnson,_Justin.docx.pdf

Good afternoon--

Thank you for your work on such an important aspect of American Life. I have attached a public comment for your review.

Respectfully,

Justin M. Johnson

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

Religious Liberty Commission
Office of the Associate Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Justin Johnson

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Religion is a part of American life. Nearly 70% of Americans are religious, making up various faiths: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and more.¹ It cannot be denied that most Americans value some sort of religiosity in their life and practice. In fact, religion is intertwined into American culture since before the nation existed. Puritans, Anglicans, and other faith traditions practiced in the New World before the Revolutionary War. My own ancestors left Europe when kings and emperors still held on to a national church. America gave them the opportunity to live out their faith without government intervention.

Today, I am proud to celebrate 250 years of the idea that Americans can practice their religion without fear of persecution, and that Americans can choose not to practice religion without the same fear. But some of the Commission's recommendations and actions are antithetical to America's founding principles and the Constitution. First, the expansion of religious education and nonprofit activities would infringe on our fellow citizens' right to not practice any religious beliefs. Second, the repeal of the Johnson Amendment would lead to the politicization of America's churches.

Religious Education and Nonprofit Assistance

Years ago, when I attended a small, private, Christian college, I learned via student government and administrators that because the school had received government funding for an academic building, no religious classes could be held in the wing paid for by government dollars. The reason the new building was constructed was to host undergraduate classes, many of which were religious in nature. Because the government imposed conditions on its aid, the religious school could not fulfill its mission: to provide religious students with quality religious education. The situation could have been avoided had the school not accepted government aid from the start. A similar situation arises when the government expands its assistance for religious education and religious non-profit activities. The government can wield the sword of the state to impose what it believes to be true on non-religious institutions and students. Conversely, other government administrations can swing the same sword the other way—by using “religious education

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religious-landscape-study/>

assistance” to impose secular traditions on religious institutions and students. Both are undesirable and un-American, at best.

Why the Johnson Amendment Protects Religious Freedom

The Commission’s recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment should be changed as well. I am a practicing Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) in Minnesota. Our denomination has had a history of advocating for and defending religious freedom. Notable examples include Alonzo T. Jones, a SDA religious liberty advocate and history professor who testified against the Blair Sunday Bill before the Senate Education and Labor Committee in 1888; Adell Sherbert, a SDA woman who took her religious liberty case to the Supreme Court in 1963; Alan Reinach from the Church State Council, who argued on behalf of Gerald Groff in *Groff v. DeJoy* in 2023, and many more. I also lead our local church’s Religious Liberty Department, where we advocate for and educate about religious freedom. In essence, defending religious freedom is in the DNA of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. What the Adventist Church rejects, however, is overt political involvement and lobbying to further an agenda.

The Johnson Amendment upholds an environment where the Adventist Church can both defend religious liberty while keeping its pulpits free of political indoctrination. Repealing the Amendment would lead to religious ruin and invite the corruption of the political process into our churches. Bad actors will usurp the lectern that preaches grace and mercy and turn it into one that preaches fear and division. This is not to say the Amendment discourages an uninvolved citizenry. Churchgoers and the most secular alike can participate in the democratic process. It simply works better outside church walls. Under the current Amendment, religious nonprofits can still operate well and partner with the government to serve the country. Under the current Amendment, churches can freely exercise their faith and practice without political motivation from up front. I implore the Commission to rescind its recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

There are two types of walls a church needs the government to help build. The first is structural, for it supports the roof and creates spaces for worship and learning. It requires permits and is protected by laws. The second is more abstract and just as important to its structure—the wall of separation between church and state. That wall protects the church from the government. It protects the government from the church. And it still needs protection today.

For the forgoing reasons, I respectfully request the Commission review and modify its recommendations with regards to religious financial assistance and the Johnson Amendment.

Respectfully,
Justin Johnson
Rochester, Minnesota

From: Stephen Allred <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Steve Allred

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:20:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in opposition to the report of the Religious Liberty Commission and the comments of Chairman Dan Patrick that “The separation of church and state is not in the Constitution.”

As a follower of Jesus, history reminds me that *uniting* church and state is unjust, unloving, and contrary to the Golden Rule, which tells us to do to others as we would have them do to us. When church and state unite, religion - or sometimes only one religion - is favored and in control. This leads to oppression for dissenters and persecution. Neither Jesus or His church dominates or persecutes - it is a false church, united with the political leaders, that dominates and persecutes (see, e.g., Luke 22:25-26; Rev. 17:1-6). Jesus calls His followers to love - even their enemies.

The separation of church and state is an idea that originated with persecuted Christians like Roger Williams, who wrote that Civil magistrates only have jurisdiction over civil matters and are not “judges, governors, or defenders of the spiritual, or Christian, state and worship... Christ Jesus never directed his disciples to the civil magistrate for help in his cause.” Jesus Himself never built His Kingdom with political power. He declared to the Roman governor that “My kingdom is not of this world, if it were my servants would fight...” John 18:36. Instead, Jesus calls His followers to seek justice for the oppressed and fulfill the Great Commission through loving words and acts.

Roger Williams wrote that “The unknowing zeal of Constantine and other emperors, did more hurt to Christ Jesus’s crown and kingdom, than the raging fury of the most bloody Neros.” This reminds us that using the force of government to promote Christianity never advances the true kingdom of God.

In summary, the separation of church and state is good for both. It’s a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

On other issues in the report:

The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns. It reminds churches that they are not mere political machines but embassies of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer. This misrepresents the character of a God of love, who never forces in matters of faith.

Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally. Christians, of all people, should support this idea which originates in the Golden Rule.

Thank you,
Steve Allred

From: Marilyn Jones <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Marilyn Jones

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:25:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools. Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer. Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

From: Eric B <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of pillar

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:47:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello.

I have the rights under the constitution to serve God by choice not by force of any denominational church.

Thank you.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:47:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm writing to express my firm support for the separation between Church and State. As a devoted Christian, I believe that the Church gets coopted too often when there is not a clear boundary between them. All faiths have a right to exercise their right to be free to worship as they see fit without the interference of the State indicating what to worship.

Gerald Shambaugh

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Ward Gaisor <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – from Ward P. Gaisor

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:56:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

I have read the report and find it chock full of fallacies and misrepresentations. The report's lies start with the very first line of the Executive Summary which states that "religion itself is indispensable to a flourishing society" as a "profound truth". In fact, it is not indispensable. Furthermore, religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by extremist Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of those with minority beliefs, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

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

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

Thank you,
Ward P. Gaisor
Delaware

From: JULIAS SAMSON MWITA <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:57:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dini Kwa ote „Dini Kwa kuchangua

From: Morgen Kelly <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 15:57:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I submit this comment in opposition to the report's treatment of American religious history. Religious liberty in the United States did not emerge from a monolithic Christian consensus. It emerged from conflict, dissent, and pluralism: from a society shaped by competing Protestant denominations, Catholics, Jews, deists, freethinkers, and others who knew firsthand the danger of state-backed orthodoxy. The founders responded by creating a federal government with no religious test for office in Article VI and no delegated religious authority. That was not hostility to faith. It was a profound safeguard for faith.

The report's recommendation that DOJ support litigation defending Ten Commandments displays in public schools abandons that safeguard and invites state-sponsored religious favoritism. It also substitutes ideology for scholarship by presenting contested claims as settled fact and caricaturing church-state separation as an anti-religious invention. The historical record says otherwise. [Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists](#) (1802) emphasizes "that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God" and references "a wall of separation between Church & State." Washington promised that the government would give bigotry no sanction and persecution no assistance in his [letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island](#) (1790).

Disestablishment did not weaken religion in America. It helped create one of the most vibrant religious cultures in the world by freeing belief from government control.

Sincerely,

Morgen Kelly

From: Kathleen Remund <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:04:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

When I was a student in seminary, I studied American Religious History. I learned then, not only that religious liberty is impossible if the state mandates certain beliefs and practices, but that it was Christian faith leaders who strongly advocated for the separation of church and state.

Their argument then (and it continues to apply today) is that when a belief system or set of religious practices is endorsed by the state/national government, it becomes impossible for a person to freely confess their faith. Faith that is forced is no longer faith.

Religious liberty is only possible when individuals have the right to embrace and follow their own consciences with regard to their religious belief and practice.

I hope you will commit yourself to upholding one of the central pillars of liberty: the separation of church and state.

With deep conviction,

Reverend Kathleen Remund

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state - Bennet L Rubiano

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:07:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I would like to express my concerns in regard to the Commissions plan to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." May I say with all respect, this is alarming & totally the opposite way that we should be headed. I myself am a Christian & I believe this will cause incontrovertible harm to many of my fellow Christians.

That wall was built to keep the church free!

A bridge will not strengthen the church it will open the doors to government money and political favors, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of God. We can look at history to see what happens when CHURCH and STATE join hands, and it isn't good for either one.

I ask that you keep the wall & not attempt to build that bridge, in Jesus's Name 🙏🏻🙏🏻🙏🏻

It will do much more to protect the church than it will to restrain it.

Sincerely,

Bennet L Rubiano

Lafayette, GA [REDACTED PII]

Sent using the mail.com mail app

From: Warren Tichenor <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposition to the Religious Liberty Commission's Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:18:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

I take this opportunity to express my opposition to the recently released Religious Liberty Commission Report.

I am appalled that a longer period of time for public comment was not given. There should have been at least 90 days for individuals and organizations to file their comments to a 224 page report on such an important subject. The greatly truncated comment period, speaks volumes as to the Commission's intent and desire to stifle and quash opportunity for true public discussion, especially from those who find serious flaws with this report.

I strongly support and endorse the following principles which have provided for the great religious diversity and freedom which we have enjoyed in America since the adoption of the First Amendment. These weigh heavily against the Report.

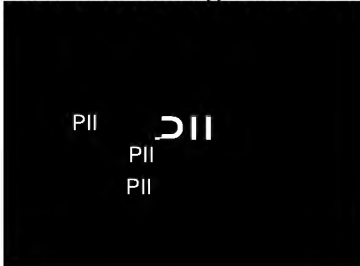
- The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.
- The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.
- Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.
- Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

The Report should be withdrawn and public hearings held in various regions and states to permit the greatest degree of public testimony and comment on it.

W. B. Tichenor

Attorney at Law

Professional Registered Parliamentarian



From: Debra Unruh <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:32:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

The religious commission report does not adequately support liberty of conscience. We do not want to revisit history, where hundreds of thousands were discriminated and burned at the stake because their beliefs did not follow the governments recommendations.

"Congress shall make NO law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;... Any law regarding any aspect of any religion would constitute a violation. We must protect individual liberty of conscience as the original founders of our great nation intended.

From: David Guidry <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment/ David Guidry

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:33:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

The request by the Religious Liberty Commission should NOT be approved because of the following:

The Constitution is clear about the separation of Church and State:

"The Establishment Clause protects religious liberty by ensuring that the government neither favors nor disfavors religion. Every American remains free to pray, worship and speak about their faith."

All peoples, here in the United States, have the freedom and right to espouse any religion that one chooses in their homes and places of worship. But they should not be allowed to bring their particular view of religion into the public domain which includes schools.

No one religion should be allowed to force their views on others.

From: "Carter, Ronald" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Importance of separation of church & State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:49:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please protect separation of church and state

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From: Paul Bessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:57:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Do not drop separation of church and state
This country was founded on that principle
The State will enforce persecution of minority religions
That is WRONG
Sent from my iPhone

From: Bill Bartoli <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:58:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have just read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge". Please do not do this. As a person of faith, I find the idea very alarming.

That wall was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge does not 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 do not build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

William Bartoli
Waterford, Michigan

From: Sed Acct <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 16:58:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: RLC_June_2026_Report_Comments.pdf

Please see the attached pdf document representing public comment. Thank you.

July 9, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Religious Liberty Commission (RLC)
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Associate Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20530

Re: Public Comment - RLC Report

Dear RLC Chair and Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Religious Liberty Commission and its report of June, 2026. I have been concerned about the Commission since its establishment, and the report does not allay my apprehension. I urge you to consider the objections presented below.

The Report of the Religious Liberty Commission opens with an indication that religion is an essential aspect of what it means to be human. Taken at face value, that would imply that non-believers are not human or are less than human. So the reader is immediately confronted with the understanding that the government favors religion over non-religion. This is the first of many violations of American jurisprudence presented in the report.

The report then stipulates that religion benefits society. This stipulation exposes a remarkably biased and ignorant attitude. Students of history can cite many examples in which religion has in fact been used to undermine, divide, and terrorize society, as well as to conduct ethnic cleansing and murder non-believers or practitioners of minority faiths.

The report goes on to state that the Declaration of Independence cites God as the source of unalienable rights and equality. This is a misreading of the document, in which the word "God" is not included. Arbitrarily defining "Creator" as "God" favors certain religions over others and over non-religion. Referring to religious liberty as a "bridge between God and Government" does the same.

The report includes numerous inaccuracies and misconstructions about the history of the nation and the intentions of the founding documents and their authors. Most egregious is the use of these errors to support the recommendations offered by the report. The Summary Report lists various "opportunities" to strengthen religious liberty. Among these opportunities are the following:

- Recommendation to instruct the Department of Justice (DOJ) to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the establishment clause and separation of church and state. However, interpretation of constitutional law is the purview of the Supreme Court, not of the DOJ.
- Recommendation that a public official may charge a person under their supervision with improperly engaging in religious expression. However, it is not the job of any public official to decide what does or does not constitute appropriate or inappropriate religious expression that does not manifest as an unlawful action. This is the whole point of the establishment clause.
- Recommendation that the DOJ, Department of Health and Human Services, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission create "religious liberty violation reporting hotlines/online portals." Again, it is not the job of any public official or governmental agency to decide what does or does not constitute a religious liberty violation that does not manifest as an unlawful action. This is a practice that defines theocracies, not democracies. Furthermore, establishment and maintenance of such reporting infrastructure would require the use of public funds in support of religious purposes.

- Recommendation that federal judges not be nominated or confirmed in order to engage in “improper judicial avoidance” when presented with religious liberty cases. However, avoidance of decision making about religious matters may be the appropriate action given our constitutional framework.
- Similarly, recommendation for creation of a religious liberty task force to track and prioritize litigation protecting religious liberty would oppose our constitutional framework, as would the use of public funds to create and maintain the task force.
- Recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment. This is an outrageous suggestion. Taxpayers should not be forced to financially support religion. The founders understood that government funding of religion in any capacity represents tyranny.
- Recommendation to continue efforts to restore the retirement or re-enlistment eligibility for service members who lost benefits due to their religious beliefs about the COVID-19 vaccine. However, vaccine exemptions endanger the common good. While public health is a legitimate interest of American government, religious practice is not.
- Recommendation to create a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty and First Freedom Hero Awards to recognize Americans who stand up for religious freedom and play an indispensable role in protecting citizens’ constitutional rights. Again, recognizing religious practice is not the business of the government. Moreover, the current administration has demonstrated a predilection for violating, not supporting, constitutional rights.

In summary, the report does not reflect an administration prepared to ensure freedom of or from religion for Americans of all faiths or none. Instead of proceeding with the report recommendations, please work to support the vital role of church-state separation in protecting religious and nonreligious people alike. Turn away from inserting government influence or public funds into religious affairs. The founders recognized that both religion and government flourish when independent of each other. Please honor their counsel.

From: Linda Khalil <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:00:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

I understand that your report has attacked the separation of church and state. There is no one, no country, no king, nobody, but God himself who granted this right. Liberty of conscience was granted by God and your commission is not constitutionally or morally allowed to attack it. And with Dr Ben Carson on your committee, I am shocked that he has an objected to this already but then again he sold his soul.

Sincerely,
Linda Khalil

From: Deborah Taube <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:04:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

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

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 a citizen and student of history, and as a Christian, I am alarmed at the flawed and unconstitutional summation of the Committee Chair. Should his so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" coincide with a final Committee opinion of the same, and prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice, 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, i 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 murdered him.

I respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee 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, fellow Christians, who did not believe in the separation of church and state. I respectfully ask that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

I am concerned that the Committee neglected to 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 its 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 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. I 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] Without doubt, 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. I 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. In light of this history, I am justifiably concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, I respectfully ask, what legitimate 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 fully analyze the historic 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 place?

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. Jefferson wrote, “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.” [7]

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

Lastly, I object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I am mindful of our Lord’s directive that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar’s, 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 our 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 noted 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] If the Johnson Amendment is removed, we will realize just how right he was. Religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

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

I respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to thoroughly 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.

I remain, Yours truly,

Deborah Taube

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

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

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

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

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

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

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

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

[9] Matthew 22:21

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

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

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

From: Kim Bessler <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:06:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Committee:

I am sending this prior to the public deadline, 7/13/26, to address the separation of church and state.

When my relatives came here from religious persecution in Ireland, Scotland, and Britain, they sought a place where they could worship freely without governmental restrictions and control.

They built houses of worship in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, etc., where like believers were able to worship in the manner their consciences and scripture studies lead them.

The colonies were filled with people from all over the world bringing their religious practices and convictions with them.

To intertwine religion and government always brings contention, fear, and chaos.

Please reconsider the importance of your decision regarding separation of church and state. After all, which religion are you going to support if our government decides to mesh with religion??

Thank you for consideration,

Kim Bessler

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

To: <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Objection

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:11:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

I wholeheartedly oppose the formation of and the tenants set forth in the Religious Liberty's Commission recommendations. I urge you to reject these recommendations and revise the report to affirm the constitutional principle at the heart of American religious freedom: no establishment, free exercise, and equal civil dignity for every person, regardless of religion or belief. Please DO NOT take this nation backwards to lack of freedom of choice in religion and education for American citizens. That was never the intent of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America. DO NOT kill the democracy for which this nation has worked so hard for the past 250 years.

Sincerely,

~Bev

Beverly Gallagher

[REDACTED PII]

We're here for a little window. And to use that time to catch and share shards of light and laughter and grace seems to me the great story. ~Brian Doyle

From: Jennifer Perez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:12:44 -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.

Pontious Pilate broke the wall of separation of church and state by catering to the Jewish leaders, and was part of the persecution of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Church and State combined has and will lead to persecution.

"Acts 5:29 NKJV

[29] But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Perez
Columbia, MD

From: Jo Boyette <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-RLC REPORT - JOANNA BOYETTE

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:15:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

God blessed me and every individual with the gift of free will - the ability to choose between right and wrong, blessings and curses, and whether to love and serve Him. Therefore, my religion and my faith is a matter between Him and me and out of the government's or anyone else's purview. Step back. You are overreaching your rights.

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

JoAnna Boyette

Sent from my iPad

From: S J James <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:16:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I want to express my concerns about the Religious Liberty Commission report that was released. While the words "separation of church and state" does not appear in our constitution, neither do the words "religious liberty". When I was in eighth grade my class wrote essays entitled "What Freedom in America Means to Me." I only received Honorable Mention, but I have never forgotten the experience. As near as I can remember in my 75th year, the first sentence said, "Church bells ring and people go freely to their church of choice without fear or pressure from the government." Even as a 13-year-old I was very conscious of what freedom of religion meant in America. Now it seems it means something different. I remember telling someone back when I was young (the 60's) that there would be a Sunday worship law in America some day and he scoffed at me and said, "that can never happen, we have the constitution." Well, the constitution is being reinterpreted as we speak. Although I am sure he is no longer with us, I wonder what his response would be if I said that to him today? Thank you for your time.

Shirley James

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:20:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the RLC:

I was quite disturbed to read the report just released and would like to offer some feedback. Unlike some members of the Commission, I believe that the separation of church and state is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. It was the intent of the Founders that the two remain separate if not equal, with neither infringing on the other. They believed that no one religion be favored over another and that all citizens should be able to worship freely as they chose without state interference. Further that the government not favor a certain religion or impose its principles on others.

Below are some bullet points that I think are especially important to note:

- The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking.
- Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.
- Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or requiring reading of the Bible.
- Institutions receiving public funding should treat all people fairly and equally without prejudice because they are of a particular religious tradition.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Rev. Dr. Richard W. Rouse
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Email: [REDACTED PII]

From: Ann Brown <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:20:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice,

As a citizen of the United States, and as a devoted Christian, I would like to express my opposition to some aspects of the document from the Religious Liberty Commission. There are some good things in the document, but there are some parts that I definitely do not agree with. I agree that religious liberty is for everyone, no matter what religion you are, including no religion. I also strongly agree that parents should have the right to make decisions on behalf of their minor children, that students should not have to squelch their religion when they go to public school, and many other good things the commission is trying to accomplish. But I do not agree with the document's statements on Separation of Church and State, nor with the state funding of religious organizations.

The separation of church and state is a good thing for all citizens. It ensures that the government doesn't interfere with or control churches or individual conscience, and it also makes sure that the church does not control the state. Although the exact words "separation of church and state" do not appear in the Constitution, the principle is undeniably there. The problem is that the phrase has been misused by secularists and atheists to push down the freedom of speech and freedom of conscience of people of faith. It was never intended for that purpose, but rather to protect our rights and keep a wholesome distinction between the powers of religious entities and the powers of the government. To build a bridge between church and state will actually undermine the church's effectiveness and put a financial and ethical burden on the government, forcing them to make decisions on religious doctrine. Keep the two separate. That separation will protect the freedom of Christians and non-Christians alike, just as it was meant to do.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

~Ann Brown

From: AJ Gundrum <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Presidential Religious Liberty Commission - AJ Gundrum

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:21:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

The United States was built upon the separation of church and state and religious liberty for all. Truly honoring the country's semiquincentennial would look like upholding this belief, rather than forcing a specific religion onto the public and in government.

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 4, Religious Symbols in Public Schools – Skye Hill

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:23:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the U.S. Department of Justice:

The proposed return of the Ten Commandments to public schools reveals the deepest problem in the report.

For Christians, Moses is not the final teacher. Christ is.

The Church of Humans recognizes the seven commandments of Christ: love God, love neighbor, honor father and mother, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and do not commit adultery. They are lived by conscience, mercy, and love. We do not follow the Ten Commandments of Moses, which would require us to observe the Jewish Sabbath, something the Jerusalem Council deemed not necessary for Christians, among other things.

The state has no jurisdiction to decide which covenant governs the classroom. It may teach history. It may protect conscience. It may not place itself between Christ and the child.

If a Christian movement wants the state to post Moses while neglecting the commandments of Christ, it is not defending Christian liberty. It is asking government to become interpreter-in-chief.

Skye Hill

Church of Humans

From: Ian McDowell Hamilton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - [Presidential RLC Report] - IAN HAMILTON

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:26:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a U.S. citizen and an atheist who cares deeply about U.S. democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, and who has read the entire contents of the draft report; I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations!

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

It is also important to remember the widespread existence in the 18th-century U.S. of a school of religious thought called deism complicates the actual beliefs of the Founders. "Drawing from the scientific and philosophical work of such figures as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Isaac Newton, and John Locke. Deists argued that human experience and rationality—rather than religious dogma and mystery—determine the validity of human beliefs. In his widely read "The Age of Reason" by Thomas Paine, the principal American exponent of Deism, called Christianity "a fable." Paine, the protégé of Benjamin Franklin, denied "that the Almighty ever did communicate anything to man, by...speech,...language, or...vision." Postulating a distant deity whom he called "Nature's God" (a term also used in the Declaration of Independence)". (Britannica.com)

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

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

Ian Hamilton

From: Amy Koga <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Amy Koga

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:31:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

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

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

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

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

The United States of America, supposedly, values freedom and we can only have true freedom if we have a secular foundation based on the separation between church and state.

Sincerely,
Amy Koga

From: Melinda Thigpen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience Melinda Thigpen

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:32:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Traditional Midwifery is the oldest form of maternity care in the world. It is a cultural and religious treasure and a valuable community resource. It has been my profession for over 20 years but it is so much more than that. Traditional Midwifery is a calling, and a lifeline especially in our rural Mississippi communities where access to maternity care is limited or broken.

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs. Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

Thank you.

Melinda Thigpen

Traditional Midwife

From: Tammy Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:36:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I want to maintain my religious freedoms and that of others also and ask that you please keep separation of church and state in place as it has been since our founding fathers. The reason they put that in place is still relevant today!

Thank you!

Tammy Johnson

US citizen

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Uphold Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:38:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

Today, I write to affirm that the government has no authority to compel its citizens to conform in matters of belief or to dictate how they exercise their right to worship. The Constitution protects the freedom of religion by limiting governmental authority over matters of faith and conscience. These fundamental constitutional rights deserve to be preserved and defended, and I am concerned that they are being increasingly eroded.

Sincerely,

Concerned Citizen

From: Robin Grumm <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:39:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

- Religious Liberty Commission Report

To whom it may concern;

I strongly believe the separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

We in the United States of America should be proud of our public school systems and work to support them in all ways. More funding is needed for quality education and it should not be diverted to private schools. The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.

Furthermore, public schools are just that - public. They should NOT be pushing any one faith onto students/families. This includes the posting of the Ten Commandments or Instituting official prayer. Neither belongs in a public school setting. Leave that for private schools or homes.

Finally, public schools should always practice non discrimination and treat individuals equally and with respect and care.

Respectfully and with grave concern,

Roberta (Robin) Grumm

Sent from my iPad

From: Mary Catherine <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience Mary Wise

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:47:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a student midwife serving families in Mississippi, I have seen firsthand that many parents seek maternity care that aligns with their deeply held religious, cultural, and personal convictions. Traditional community midwifery provides an important option for families who desire relationship-based, individualized care while taking responsibility for informed decision-making. I respectfully ask the Commission to include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in its final report so that families and birth attendants are not subject to unnecessary discrimination or barriers when providing or choosing care consistent with their sincerely held beliefs. Protecting religious liberty should include preserving access to safe, traditional maternity care that respects parental rights, conscience, and the diversity of childbirth traditions in the United States.

Respectfully,
Mary Wise

From: Ginger Burnett <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Conscience- Keep the wall up between church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:50:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Mankind has no right to usurp the power of each person's conscience and how they live provided they obey the very basic laws we've had for over two hundred years- do no harm to your neighbor or their property. Where God guides each person is not for mankind to dictate. We are finite humans and we don't get to tell God or other humans how God is to work in people's lives!

Keep the government out of American lives!! Let us have the freedom we always have had to make our own choices! Government isn't God nor His Hands and Feet! There is no persecution of Christians in this country although there may be some push back against religious dogma and the hypocrites who want to push their way or the highway!

Sincerely,
Virginia Burnett

From: Brent Langrehr <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – DRAFT REPORT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION – BRENT LANGREHR

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:55:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Introduction

I write as a lifelong Californian, a small business owner, an Eagle Scout, and a Secular Humanist. I am one of the roughly seventy million Americans who claim no religious affiliation, the fastest-growing belief demographic in the country. I care deeply about religious liberty. It protects my conscience exactly as it protects a Baptist's, a Catholic's, or a Sikh's, and the Supreme Court has said so plainly in *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961) and *Welsh v. United States* (1970). I am submitting this comment because the draft report does not defend religious liberty as the Constitution understands it. It defends a preferred place for religion, and for particular religions, in American public life, and it treats citizens like me as the problem to be solved.

The report inverts the First Amendment

The First Amendment contains two religion clauses, not one. The draft report treats the Free Exercise Clause as the whole of religious liberty and the Establishment Clause as a misunderstanding to be corrected. Chapter 2 frames the history of church-state separation as a wrong turn, and Recommendation 1 asks the Department of Justice to issue guidance "clarifying" the Establishment Clause, in a report whose entire argument is that the clause has been read too strictly. That is not clarification; it is an executive-branch rewrite of a constitutional guarantee.

The Framers did not stumble into separation. The Constitution of 1787 is deliberately godless: it invokes no deity, and Article VI prohibits any religious test for public office, the only mention of religion in the original document. Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance argued that even three pence of compelled support for religion violates conscience. The Senate that ratified the Treaty of Tripoli in 1797 affirmed unanimously that the government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion. The report's narrative of a nation constituted around a "duty to our Creator" is a selective history that erases the founding generation's most radical achievement: a government that derives its authority from the people rather than from any god.

"Secular neutrality" is not a myth; it is the mechanism

The section of Chapter 14 titled "The Myth of Secular Neutrality" declares that secularism, "though not a religion," is nonetheless "incompatible with our First Amendment freedoms," and quotes a commissioner calling it "a totalizing system" akin to theocracy. This passage should be struck from the final report, because it accuses tens of millions of law-abiding Americans of holding a constitutionally illegitimate worldview. Government neutrality toward religion is not an ideology competing with religion. It is the procedural guarantee that makes pluralism possible. A public school that declines to sponsor prayer is not "establishing secularism"; it is declining to establish anything, so that the Baptist child, the Jewish child, the Muslim child, and the atheist child all stand on equal footing. The report repeatedly conflates two very different things: government institutions remaining neutral (which the Constitution requires) and private religious expression being suppressed (which the Constitution forbids, and which no serious secular organization defends). Humanists agree that a student may pray in the cafeteria, wear a religious mask slogan, or organize a faith club on equal

terms with other clubs. Existing law already protects all of this. What the Constitution does not permit is what the report actually recommends: government celebration, funding, and promotion of religion as such.

Specific recommendations that should be withdrawn

Repeal of the Johnson Amendment (Key Recommendation 9). The Johnson Amendment does not silence pastors. Clergy may preach on any moral or political subject; congregations may host candidates; religious leaders may endorse anyone they like in their personal capacity. The Amendment applies one condition, identical for churches and for secular nonprofits: tax-exempt organizations may not function as campaign machinery. Repealing it for religious organizations would create a one-way pipeline of tax-deductible, undisclosed political money flowing through pulpits, a privilege no secular charity would enjoy. That is establishment, not liberty.

Universal school choice where "funding follows the child" (Education Recommendation 1). Framing taxpayer-funded religious education as a religious liberty measure gets the liberty question backwards. Compelling me to underwrite religious instruction I do not share is precisely the injury Madison warned against. If religious schools accept public funds, taxpayers of all beliefs are conscripted into supporting sectarian formation, and experience in existing voucher states shows these schools frequently retain the right to exclude students and fire staff on religious grounds while spending public money.

Government celebration of religion (the "Culture" recommendations). A Presidential Medal of Religious Freedom, "First Freedom Hero Awards" for schoolchildren, and directives to promote "appreciation for the United States' religious heritage" ask the federal government to do exactly what the Establishment Clause forbids: place its weight and prestige behind religiosity itself. A student award for standing up for religion in public schools, conferred by the White House, is state-sponsored evangelism by another name. Would a student who successfully challenged an unconstitutional school prayer practice be eligible? The report's framing makes clear the answer is no, which reveals whose liberty it means.

Conscience exemptions in healthcare and vaccination (Chapters 9 and 10). Religious liberty is a shield for belief, not a sword against patients and public health. A clinician's conscience rights end where a patient's access to lawful, standard-of-care medicine begins, and vaccine mandates in the military and healthcare settings exist because communicable disease does not respect individual conviction. The report's own illustrative anecdotes, including its description of a transgender woman as "a man dressed as a woman," demonstrate that what is sought is not freedom of worship but a license to refuse service to disfavored people. That language has no place in an official government report and should be removed.

The Commission's composition undermines its title

A commission on religious liberty "for all Americans" includes no humanist, atheist, or other nontheist member; no Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or Native American religious representation among its commissioners; and no voice from the mainline Protestant, Reform or Conservative Jewish, or progressive Catholic traditions that hold different views on church-state separation. Nearly a third of the country is religiously unaffiliated, yet the perspective of those citizens appears in this report only as an ideology to be defeated. A body so constituted cannot credibly speak for American religious pluralism, and its unanimity reflects its guest list, not the country.

Conclusion

I do not ask the Commission to disparage religion. I ask it to recommend what the Constitution actually promises: a government that protects every citizen's freedom of conscience and privileges no one's. Genuine religious liberty needs no medals, no hotlines for the majority, and no rewritten Establishment Clause. It needs a state that stays neutral so that all of us, believers and nonbelievers alike, remain free. I urge the Commission to strike the "Myth of Secular Neutrality" section, withdraw the recommendations identified above, and revise

the final report to acknowledge that the first freedom belongs equally to those of us who exercise it without a god.

Respectfully submitted by a concerned member of the public.

From: Bonita Hughes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 14 (THE PATH FORWARD) - BONITA HUGHES

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:56:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

I totally support this report and the protections it recommends to religious liberty in education, the workplace, the place of worship and politics. I soundly endorse the recommendations cited in The Path Forward . I am grateful to this commission for their work and their courage and sincerely hope the 12 Opportunities to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans will be instituted. It is imperative that religious liberty be supported and strengthened in this country.

From: Janette Wilkinson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty: Separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 17:57:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good Day,

I am writing to add my voice to the many other Americans who wish to uphold the rights of all people to worship according to their own conscience.

The government has so far respected the separation of church and state.

I would strongly add my voice to those Americans who wish to continue to live in religious freedom!

Janette Wilkinson

From: "The Carter's" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on religious liberty draft document

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:10:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

If I wrote a will and had it notarized, then a couple days, months, or years later I made an amendment to my will. That amendment is now legally part of the original will.

When an amendment is made to the constitution, it becomes officially part of the constitution.

The first amendment in a clear voice and language makes a very simple statement that

“Congress shall make no respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”

Since this amendment was ratified and is now in the Constitution, does this now mean that the constitution provides freedom of (and from) religion.

With what legal grounds can people say that freedom of religion is not in the constitution?

Does this then also mean that there is a separation between church and state ?

From: Chris Collins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Defending the Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:28:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice,

I am writing to express my strong support for the principle of the separation of church and state. This principle is one of the greatest safeguards of religious liberty because it keeps the government out of the affairs of churches while allowing every individual the freedom to choose who they worship, how they worship, and whether they worship at all. Faith is a matter of personal conviction, and it should never be directed or influenced by the government. If the government becomes involved in religious matters, it gains the power to influence how people worship, when they worship, and even what they are expected to believe. That is contrary to the very idea of religious liberty.

History offers many examples of the dangers that can arise when church and state become closely intertwined. Beginning with the alliance between Emperor Constantine and the institutional church, and later under the medieval papacy, many historians argue that political power became entangled with religious authority. During those centuries, church leaders at times exercised governmental power, and religious dissenters—including many Christians—were persecuted, imprisoned, or killed. Rather than protecting freedom of conscience, the union of church and state often resulted in coercion and the suppression of religious liberty. These historical examples remind us that when governments enforce religious beliefs, both religion and civil liberty suffer.

Our nation's founders understood these lessons well. James Madison and Thomas Jefferson strongly supported the separation of church and state as the best means of protecting the free exercise of religion. Even earlier, Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, advocated for a "wall of separation" between church and government to preserve the independence of both. Baptists also played an important role in promoting religious liberty and influenced the Founding Fathers on this issue. As a Christian, I believe God desires willing worship, not forced obedience. He gives every person the freedom to choose whether and how to worship Him. For that reason, I believe the government should never compel religious belief or practice but should continue to protect every citizen's God-given right to worship freely according to their own conscience.

Sincerely,

Chris Collins

Christian Advocate

From: Valerie <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 10 – Stand for Health Freedom

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:29:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image001.png

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

First, thank you for the dedication and vision you have brought to this critical and fundamental topic. Religious liberty is the foundation of our great country and woven into the fabric of our U.S. Constitution. We write in support of the Commission's commitment to protecting religious liberty. However, we respectfully disagree with some proposed federal strategies because we believe they would unintentionally undermine the constitutional structure that has enabled most states to protect religious exemptions to vaccination.

We appreciate the Commission's work to identify current threats to religious liberty and to recommend ways to strengthen protections for Americans' freedom of conscience. We share the Commission's commitment to ensuring that sincerely held religious beliefs are respected, including in matters involving vaccination and other medical decisions.

We respectfully urge the Commission to give greater consideration to one of the Constitution's most important safeguards of liberty: federalism. Public health law, including vaccination requirements and exemptions, has historically been the responsibility of the states under the police powers reserved by the Tenth Amendment. That constitutional division of authority has produced a system in which 46 states currently recognize religious exemptions to one or more vaccine requirements. While we remain deeply concerned for families living in states that do not provide meaningful religious exemptions, the solution should not come at the expense of the constitutional structure that has protected religious liberty across most of the nation.

For that reason, we are concerned by recommendations that encourage federal executive action, congressional legislation, or strategic federal litigation to challenge state vaccine laws. Although well intentioned, these approaches risk inviting federal courts—and ultimately the Supreme Court—to redefine the balance of authority between the federal government and the states in the area of public health. Such litigation would not simply affect a handful of states; it could establish nationwide precedent that weakens state authority over public health policy and, in doing so, jeopardizes religious liberty protections currently available in the overwhelming majority of states.

Federal intervention in this area would risk shifting constitutional authority over public health from the states to the federal government, creating precedent that could ultimately weaken religious liberty protections nationwide. The goal should not be to federalize vaccine policy in order to obtain relief in a few jurisdictions. Rather, it should be to preserve the constitutional framework that allows states to protect religious liberty while encouraging citizens to secure stronger protections through their own state legislatures and state court systems. Durable and lasting reform is best achieved through the states, where public health authority has long resided and where citizens retain the greatest ability to shape policy through the democratic process.

We also respectfully urge that your recommendation to the Department of Health and Human Services regarding "Know Your Rights" educational materials accurately informs Americans that most states provide religious exemptions to certain vaccine requirements or other medical procedures (both for patients and doctors who object to procedures on religious grounds), along with other exemptions where state law permits. As your report emphasized, citizens cannot meaningfully exercise their rights if they are unaware of the protections already available under their state's laws.

Religious liberty and federalism are not competing principles. They are mutually reinforcing constitutional protections. We urge the Commission to recommend policies that strengthen both by encouraging state-based solutions, respecting the constitutional allocation of public health authority, and avoiding federal actions that could unintentionally weaken the very freedoms the Commission seeks to preserve. We respectfully urge the Commission to defend religious liberty in a manner that preserves the constitutional structure that has long

protected it. The right objective must be pursued in the right forum, with the right constitutional principles, so that today's efforts strengthen—not inadvertently weaken—the freedoms we seek to preserve.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to protecting religious liberty for future generations.

Sincerely,

Valerie Ferrell, J.D.

Policy Director

Stand for Health Freedom

www.standforhealthfreedom.com



From: Chris Wolfe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Yes for Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:29:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear leaders at our Religious Liberty Commission,

I am deeply concerned about the recent statements that indicate that church and state need to unite. Those that would argue that the "separation of church and state" is not in the constitution need to realize soberly that neither is "religious freedom." When religion controls government there's always persecution. Even the pilgrims and early founding fathers infringed on people's rights to impose their own religious beliefs. Roger Williams experienced persecution for his beliefs and had to flee his village. It was a divine miracle that he survived the freezing temps. God sent "ravens" to feed him. Later he founded what would become Rhode Island. The religious liberty which he endorsed would become the template for our country. We are deeply indebted to him. To go backward now to unite church and state, would result in loss of religious freedom for many. Fines, imprisonment, torture -- the methods of early America on desertors must not be repeated. Please stand for the free choice which God has given humanity. Stand for separation of church and state.

Thank you,

Chris Tina Wolfe

From: Chris Collins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report– C. Collins

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:33:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Room 5706

Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

I am writing to express my strong support for the principle of the separation of church and state. This principle is one of the greatest safeguards of religious liberty because it keeps the government out of the affairs of churches while allowing every individual the freedom to choose who they worship, how they worship, and whether they worship at all. Faith is a matter of personal conviction, and it should never be directed or influenced by the government. If the government becomes involved in religious matters, it gains the power to influence how people worship, when they worship, and even what they are expected to believe. That is contrary to the very idea of religious liberty.

History offers many examples of the dangers that can arise when church and state become closely intertwined. Beginning with the alliance between Emperor Constantine and the institutional church, and later under the medieval papacy, many historians argue that political power became entangled with religious authority. During those centuries, church leaders at times exercised governmental power, and religious dissenters—including many Christians—were persecuted, imprisoned, or killed. Rather than protecting freedom of conscience, the union of church and state often resulted in coercion and the suppression of religious liberty. These historical examples remind us that when governments enforce religious beliefs, both religion and civil liberty suffer.

Our nation's founders understood these lessons well. James Madison and Thomas Jefferson strongly supported the separation of church and state as the best means of protecting the free exercise of religion. Even earlier, Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, advocated for a "wall of separation" between church and government to preserve the independence of both. Baptists also played an important role in promoting religious liberty and influenced the Founding Fathers on this issue. As a Christian, I believe God desires willing worship, not forced obedience. He gives every person the freedom to choose whether and how to worship Him. For that reason, I believe the government should never compel religious belief or practice but should continue to protect every citizen's God-given right to worship freely according to their own conscience.

Sincerely,

From: Matt Goddard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION –
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:41:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Public_Comment_-_RLC_-_NCRF.pdf

Attached please find a comment letter from the National Committee for Religious Freedom concerning the President's Religious Liberty Commission, its draft report and its recommendations.

Thanks,

Matt

--

Matthew Goddard

Executive Director

The National Committee for Religious Freedom

[REDACTED] PII



July 9, 2026

The Honorable Dan Patrick
Chairman
Religious Liberty Commission
Via Electronic Mail

RE: Request for Public Comments Regarding the Draft Report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Dear Chairman Patrick,

The National Committee for Religious Freedom (NCRF) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments in support of the Draft Report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty.

The NCRF is a 501(c)4 political action non-profit that exists to proactively defend the constitutional right of religious freedom so that all Americans, their religious communities and faith-based institutions can peacefully and publicly exercise their religious beliefs. We know first-hand the hostility towards faith in some corners of modern America as our organization was debanked by Chase Bank in May 2022. We again thank the Commission for allowing our chairman, Ambassador Sam Brownback, to tell our story at your February hearing.

We applaud the Commission for the extensive work it has done during its hearings and in preparing the comprehensive recommendations it makes to President Trump. Donald Trump has been one of our nation's most consequential Presidents in protecting the free exercise of religion and adopting your recommendations will help cement that legacy.

On the 250th anniversary of American independence, one cannot overstate the crucial role religious liberty played in our nation's founding. As is noted in the Commission's report, the religious divisions and strife that plagued the Old World accompanied the colonists to the New World. It was only by respecting and accepting each other's religious differences that the bonds of a new nation were able to take hold.

As we look to the future, the recommendations in the Commission report will help our nation continue its rich tradition of religious freedom and liberty for all. We believe the Trump Administration should enact each of the "12 Opportunities to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans" highlighted in the report.

Without addressing each of the 12 opportunities individually, collectively they will help protect the right of every American of every faith to freely live their faith. It is unfortunate that such common sense needs to be restored but this report will help do so.

We could not agree more with this statement in the Executive Summary:

Among our conclusions, we believe that safeguarding religious liberty requires more than defending legal rights after they have been violated. It requires cultivating a culture that understands why those rights exist in the first place.

This report and its recommendations will help restore that balance. Religious liberty in law is ineffective without religious liberty in the culture and broader society, including business, education and health care. For America to prosper as a beacon of freedom, faith must be embraced in the public square, not suffocated.

The first four opportunities highlighted by the Commission address the serious lack of knowledge and understanding much of the public and, more alarmingly, our public officials have towards the Free Exercise Clause. Too many Americans believe that the First Amendment should keep religion out of the public square. It is an old saying, but still very true – The First Amendment is intended to protect religion from the government, not the other way around. Appropriate guidance, education, training and reporting procedures will go a long way in ensuring Americans are able to enjoy their right to freely practice their religious faith.

We would especially highlight the sixth opportunity, asking “the Department of Justice to create a religious liberty task force to track and prioritize litigation protecting religious liberty.” None of your recommendations will benefit anyone if they are not enforced once implemented. It is crucial that there be a mechanism such as the recommended task force to monitor challenges and obstacles to Americans freely exercising their religious beliefs.

With the exception of the ninth opportunity, repealing the Johnson Amendment, the other 11 opportunities you highlight all require executive, rather than congressional action, to be implemented. We strongly encourage President Trump to send as many of the recommendations in this report as appropriate to Congress.

Every recommendation that can be codified should be codified. Having the force of law will help these recommendations survive future administrations, some of which may be hostile to religious liberty. While you make some calls amongst your recommendations for codification, we would respectfully suggest you recommend codification of **all** the recommendations in your report.

Since the Commission’s report breaks down its recommendations by the various areas it examined, we will follow the same format for the remainder of our comments.

Chapter 3: Faith-Based Institutions and the Enduring Fight for Religious Identity, Mission, and Integrity

Our courts are full of cases where faith-based organizations are treated differently from secular groups. Government should be tearing down barriers to make it easier to assist the needy and less fortunate, not erecting them.

While we agree with all of your recommendations, we especially agree that faith-based institutions should be able to freely operate in a manner consistent with their religious beliefs and with an equal opportunity to participate on an equal basis, including partnering with government agencies. A new Equal Treatment Rule, especially one codified into law, is long overdue.

Religious groups should be able to operate their own internal affairs and make employment decisions based on their own beliefs. They should also be allowed to provide services in a manner consistent with those beliefs. A religious-affiliated foster program, for example, should not be forced to place children with families in a relationship inconsistent with the organization's religious beliefs. It benefits no one to deny their participation in the program and in the long-term actually hurts the audience the State is trying to help. It is their faith that motivates these groups and individuals to get involved in the first place, so what sense does it make to remove that consideration?

We would also make special note of your recommendation for the Department of Justice to investigate accrediting bodies. We work with a number of small faith-based colleges and universities. This is a serious problem and one they are unable to solve on their own due to the outsized influence these accreditors carry without any corresponding oversight.

Chapter 4: Students Don't Check their Rights at the Schoolhouse Gate

The NCRF was fortunate to attend most of the Commission's hearings in person. It was heart-breaking to be in the auditorium when the Commission heard first-hand from students who had suffered in school due to their religious beliefs. Many of the students were children who experienced religious animosity far too early in their lives.

We strongly agree with the Commission's call for additional guidance on students' religious liberty rights. We do not believe that most educators and administrators are anti-faith; rather we believe they have been poorly trained and educated by attorneys whose default position is to enforce misconceptions and long-discarded court precedents. New guidance from the Department of Justice and enhanced enforcement, coupled with the recommended reporting portal and Title VI enforcement, will address much of the problem.

Chapter 5: The Fight for Faith on College Campuses

We agree with the Commission's finding that "violations of students' First Amendment rights are all too common on college campuses." A single violation is one too many, but there are countless violations at institutions of higher learning every day.

A recurring theme in the Commission's recommendations is additional guidance from the Department of Justice and more education for school administrators and faculty. This is a necessity and we appreciate the Commission driving the point home. Much of the problem comes from ignorance and not ill-will. Obviously, there are those who act maliciously to stifle free expression but the NCRF continues to believe that these common-sense proposals from the Commission,

including “Know Your Rights” posters, will alleviate much of the problem. That will make it much easier to identify and go after the truly bad actors.

Chapter 6: The Rights and Roles of Parents and Teachers

We whole-heartedly agreed with Commissioner Eric Metaxas at the September 8 hearing that even if the teachers are smarter than the parents, they should keep quiet because they aren’t the parents. Parents, not school officials or government bureaucrats, should be the decision-makers on the role faith plays in a child’s life. The Supreme Court rightly upheld this concept in *Mahmoud v. Taylor* and we support the Commission’s recommendations to support parents in raising their children as they see fit.

Due to recent Supreme Court victories for parents and the Free Exercise Clause in cases such as *Mahmoud v. Taylor* and *Mirabelli v. Bonta*, it is especially important for the Department of Justice to issue new guidance on parental rights. Combined with the recommended reporting hotline for violations and increased enforcement, the report’s recommendations will help parents feel newly empowered in raising their children.

We are also supportive of the recommendations for teachers. Students are not the only ones in a schoolhouse with First Amendment rights and faculty also have a right to live their faith.

Chapter 7: America’s Warfighters Deserve Better

We appreciate Secretary Hegseth’s commitment to restoring a “warrior ethos” to the American military. After all, it is the armed forces that protect our religious freedom from foreign threats. Our military leaders must always remember that it is religious faith that makes our soldiers, sailors and airmen moral and conscientious in battle. The military must never overlook the spiritual and religious needs of its members.

We again support the Commission’s recommendations for protecting the religious liberty of members of our armed forces, including updated guidance and training. Chaplains will also benefit from new guidance on their rights as well.

There is one concern we would raise regarding religious liberty in the military. In the Executive Summary and Appendix B, the Commission recommends the President “(o)rder the Department of War to streamline and improve the religious accommodation process.” This recommendation does not appear in Chapter 7. Regardless, we would caution against any streamlining that might result in subjective granting of accommodations.

The NCRF believes the Department of War should clearly define the process for a service member to seek a religious accommodation. Definitions and processes should be centralized into a Department of War Instruction that should maintain an appendix of previously approved accommodations, whether by individual request or the result of a federal court ruling. We do not want to create a bureaucratic mess, but the religious accommodation process should be consistent across branches and commands.

Chapter 8: Religious Liberty for Religious Leaders

The government should never involve itself with what is preached from the pulpit. A religious group never has to speak to political matters but should have the option to discuss the intersection of faith, policy and politics if it so chooses. By limiting what a religious group can say to its own members, the Johnson Amendment interferes with the Free Exercise rights of religious bodies.

We agree with the report's observation that churches that host political figures on one side of the political spectrum seem to run afoul of the Internal Revenue Service and its enforcement of the Johnson Amendment more frequently than churches with political figures on the other side of the spectrum. This is simply wrong and the Department of Justice should investigate.

Chapter 9: First Do No Harm – Religious Liberty in Healthcare

Americans should not be forced to sacrifice their faith in order to work in the health care field. It is their faith that motivates many to pursue a career in health care. The role religion plays in medicine is not limited to just the workers. As noted by the Commission in its report, one of every five Americans in a hospital are in a facility affiliated with a religious body.

The recommendations in the report are sound and should be implemented by the White House. We appreciate multiple references in the recommendations to protecting medical school students. These young and aspiring physicians are especially vulnerable to policies that would exclude people of faith from the health care industry.

Chapter 10: Conscience and Coercion in Vaccine Policy

Vaccines and religious liberty may be the most delicate balancing act in the Commission's report. We understand the health and safety reasons that led many Americans of faith to receive the COVID vaccine during the pandemic while we also appreciate the concerns of those who had religious objections. We believe the Commission did an excellent job of weighing and balancing these sometimes-competing concerns.

The most alarming part of the vaccine debate during the pandemic was institutions denying exemptions to vaccine requirements on religious grounds but then turning around and granting exemptions for other reasons. This was clearly religious discrimination and we support your recommendations to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Chapter 11: Anti-Semitism

It is beyond comprehension that anti-Semitism has become acceptable in certain parts of our society, including higher education. No religious or ethnic group should ever be singled out for discrimination, but that is what is happening to Jews in America today. Institutions that would never tolerate racism or sexism openly embrace anti-Semitism.

While we realize it has long existed, anti-Semitism is enjoying its current resurgence in the wake of the October 7, 2023 terrorist attacks on Israel. It reveals their true motives that so many people say they are protesting Israeli policies but they do so not outside the Israeli embassy or a consulate, but outside synagogues and against Jews trying to simply live their lives, go to work or get an education. The plain and simple truth is that they are hostile to members of a religious faith.

Leo Terrell, Chair of the Department of Justice Task Force to Combat Antisemitism, was absolutely correct when he told the Commission at its February 9 hearing, "This is not a Jewish issue. It is an American issue."

We support the Commission's recommendations to combat anti-Semitism and hope the Department of Justice will hold accountable those responsible for enabling and encouraging this hatred.

Chapter 12: Faith Under Fire in America's Houses of Worship

Houses of worship should always be safe and welcoming places. Any threat of danger is a threat to the ability to freely exercise your faith. We support the Commission's recommendations, especially prosecuting attacks on houses of worship.

Chapter 13: Barriers to Religious Liberty in the Public and Private Sectors

As mentioned earlier, the NCRF experienced discrimination in the private sector when we were debanked by Chase Bank in 2022. We do not have a smoking gun that proves our account was closed because we supported religious freedom, but Chase's subsequent behavior with its shifting explanations and excuses certainly suggests such nefarious motives.

That illustrates the challenge – hostility to faith in the public square is often masked behind corporate bureaucracy, vague policies and opaque decision-making. That lack of accountability should concern everyone.

The Commission was correct to note:

Religious liberty in the United States has long been understood as more than a protection against government prohibition. It has also depended on the ability of individuals to participate fully in society without being excluded from essential services, employment, or public life because of their faith.

We must safeguard against losing religious liberty in the private sector, whether that be in business relationships or employment.

We support your recommendations in this area. While we certainly appreciate the recommendations to deal with debanking, we also applaud your inclusion of other forms of deplatforming such as insurance and data services. Public sector employees are not the only Americans with religious liberty rights so we also appreciate your efforts to protect the rights of private sector employees as well.

The Honorable Dan Patrick
July 9, 2026
Page 7

The NCRF knows this report was a massive undertaking and we appreciate the time and effort that the Commission and its staff put into it. We hope the President acts on your recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Goddard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" and last name "Goddard" clearly distinguishable.

Matthew Goddard
Executive Director

From: Deb Olson <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII, [REDACTED] PII

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:43:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission and Daniel Webster

I am strongly against the union of church and state.

True religious freedom can only exist when the government remains entirely neutral on matters of faith.

Sincerely
Deb Olson
Apopka Fl.

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Karen Blais Wechner <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom 2026

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:43:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION:

Thomas Jefferson wrote:

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

This quote is from Thomas Jefferson's 1802 Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association.

The concept of a wall of separation ensures that the federal government cannot establish a national religion or interfere with the free exercise of faith. Today, this principle remains a cornerstone of constitutional law, frequently cited by the U.S. Supreme Court to evaluate the constitutionality of government involvement in religious matters.

It is unconstitutional to impose laws that interfere with religious freedom. Any entity that tries to do this should be ashamed.

Karen Blais Wechner
Veneta, Oregon

From: Randy Olson <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Public Comment Separation of Church and State (R Olson)

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:44:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am strongly against the union of church and state.

I am deeply concerned about recent trends that seek to introduce religious mandates into public education, healthcare, and civil law. A neutral public sphere ensures that citizens of all backgrounds are treated equally under the law, without facing state-sanctioned religious coercion or discrimination.

Sincerely

Randy Olson

Apopka Fl. [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

From: Heather Griffin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:46:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026.

I am concerned with the Committee's intention to abolish all separation between church and state. I am a Christian, and I take God and His Word as the highest ruling authority in my life. I pray for my country to prosper in goodness and righteousness. But it is the principles I see laid out in the Bible that cause me to have concern over the move to bring church and state closer together.

God has given freedom of choice to all to decide whether to accept His salvation. Jesus Himself laid out the principle of rendering to Caesar (the state) that which belongs to Caesar, and rendering to God that which belongs to God. The church should not be entangled with the government. Though the intentions may be good, doing so will corrupt both the church and the government.

History has shown us this repeatedly. I will not take the time to outline the bloody history of the reign of the papacy through the Dark Ages, the martyrs of the Protestant Reformation, and the history of persecution of religious minorities in our own country's early history. I am sure you are familiar with all of the above. It is always a bad idea for religion to mix with the government. It has never once in history produced the righteousness that was the desired outcome.

True religion cannot be compelled; it must be from the heart or it is worthless to God. People must be free to make their own choices based on the convictions of conscience, at least as far as worship toward God is concerned. The government's only domain is in legislating issues that deal with our relationship with other people, not in our relationship with God.

To prevent the atrocities and bloodshed committed for so many centuries in the name of religion is why our founding fathers worked so hard to make sure no one religion was favored over another. That principle has made this nation great in so many ways for so many years. We certainly have problems resulting from the sinfulness of society, but abolishing the separation of church and state will not fix those problems. It is not the solution. I urge the Commission to remain dedicated to religious liberty - for all.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Heather Griffin

From: Timothy Hegedus <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:48:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the recent Religious Liberty Commission report. As a committed Christian, I believe the separation of Church and State is the best way for both the state and for religion. It is a fundamental principle of the American constitution that explains how religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. Considering the name of the Commission I find it hard to believe that they are not standing up for the separation of Church and State. It has been most beneficial in the history of the United States, and should be maintained and upheld for future generations.

Thank you,

Tim Hegedus

From: Aaron Sabartinelli <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:49:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

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

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

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

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

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot

enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We remain, Yours truly,

Aaron Sabartinelli

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

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

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

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

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

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

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

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

[9] Matthew 22:21

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

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

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

From: Jeorghette Wales <[REDACTED] PII >

To: <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of State and Church

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:49:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

“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,” Thomas Jefferson wrote.

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

Thank you.

Jeorghette Wales

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: David C <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report– David Cossum

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:57:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

"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 SEPERATION between Church & State.'" Jefferson wrote

Please stop promoting a Christian Nationalist agenda in our government. Keep religion out of our schools. Leave it to our homes and churches. Honor those institutions rather than forcing your religious views into our public schools.

David Cossum

From: Chris Collins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report - C. Collins

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 18:58:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Room 5706

Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

I am writing to express my appreciation for one of the most important principles embodied in our constitutional system: the separation of church and state. Although the exact phrase does not appear in the Constitution, the principles embodied in the First Amendment have protected religious liberty in America for more than two centuries. By preventing the government from establishing a national religion while protecting the free exercise of religion, our nation has allowed people of every faith—and those of no faith—to live according to the dictates of their own conscience. This principle does not diminish religion; rather, it protects religion from government control and protects government from becoming an instrument of religious coercion.

The Bible consistently teaches that genuine faith must be voluntary. Throughout Scripture, God invites people to follow Him, but He does not compel belief through civil force. Moses challenged Israel, saying, "I have set before you life and death... therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Joshua declared, "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). In the New Testament, Jesus invited people to follow Him but never instructed the Roman government to force anyone to become His disciple. Christ said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). The invitation begins with the words "if anyone," emphasizing personal choice rather than coercion.

Jesus also distinguished between the authority of civil government and the authority of God. When asked about paying taxes, He responded, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This statement established an important distinction between civil authority and spiritual authority. Likewise, when Pilate questioned Jesus before His crucifixion, Jesus declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Christ's kingdom advances through the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, not through governmental power.

The apostles continued this teaching after Christ's resurrection. They faithfully obeyed civil authorities in matters of law while refusing to surrender their obedience to God when the two conflicted. When commanded to stop preaching the Gospel, Peter and the apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This demonstrates that while government has an important God-ordained role in maintaining civil order, it is not authorized to govern matters of conscience or dictate religious belief.

History also demonstrates the wisdom of separating religious institutions from governmental power. During the early centuries of Christianity, believers often suffered persecution under the Roman Empire because they refused to worship the emperor or the Roman gods. After Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity through the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, the relationship between the church and the Roman state changed dramatically. Over time, church leaders acquired increasing political influence, and the church became closely intertwined with imperial authority. Historians continue to debate the long-term effects of this development, but it is widely recognized that the close relationship between church and state fundamentally changed both institutions.

Throughout the Middle Ages, religious and political authority often became intertwined in Europe. Civil governments sometimes enforced religious conformity, and various religious minorities—including groups considered heretical by the established church—experienced persecution. Events such as the medieval inquisitions and the European wars of religion illustrate the dangers that can arise when governments assume the authority to determine religious truth or compel religious practice. These episodes serve as reminders that concentrated religious and political power can threaten both civil liberty and freedom of conscience.

Many early advocates of religious liberty recognized these dangers. Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, argued that both the church and the civil government should remain independent of one another. He believed that government should protect people's civil rights while leaving matters of faith to the individual conscience. Williams famously described the need for a "wall of separation" to protect both the church from state interference and the state from ecclesiastical control.

The Baptist tradition became one of the strongest defenders of religious liberty in colonial America. Many Baptists suffered fines, imprisonment, and public punishment because they refused to conform to state-supported churches. Their experiences convinced them that true faith could never be produced by government power. They petitioned colonial governments and later appealed to the nation's leaders for constitutional protections of religious freedom.

James Madison became one of the principal defenders of these ideas. In his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785), he argued that religion is a matter between each individual and God and therefore lies beyond the legitimate authority of civil government. Thomas Jefferson likewise advocated religious liberty and later described the First Amendment as building "a wall of separation between Church & State." While historians debate the precise meaning of Jefferson's metaphor, there is broad agreement that both Jefferson and Madison believed government should neither establish religion nor interfere with its free exercise.

The First Amendment reflects these principles by declaring, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These twin protections have allowed churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious communities to flourish independently, without governmental control over doctrine, worship, or leadership. At the same time, individuals remain free to practice their faith—or choose no faith at all—without coercion from the state.

As a Christian, I believe that worship has value only when it is offered freely. God created human beings with the ability to choose whether they will love and obey Him. Throughout Scripture, He calls people to repentance and faith but does not compel belief through political authority. When governments attempt to direct religious belief, they assume an authority that belongs to God alone. Likewise, when religious institutions seek governmental power to enforce doctrine, they risk compromising their spiritual mission.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage the Department of Justice to continue defending the constitutional principles that protect religious liberty for every American. The separation of church and state is not hostility toward religion; it is one of the greatest safeguards ever devised for preserving the freedom of every person to seek God according to the dictates of conscience. It protects churches from government control, protects citizens from religious coercion, and preserves the liberty that has distinguished our nation since its founding.

Thank you for your continued service to our country and for your commitment to upholding the Constitution and the freedoms it guarantees.

Sincerely,

Chris Collins

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment Chapter 14 The Path Forward

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:09:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am thankful for this commission regarding " The Path Forward".

Thank You,

ACY

From: Vicki Diaz <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:18:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to please 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;

We the People of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate and allow it to continue as it has been in the past. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Victoria Diaz
Dacula, Ga

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report – Rudy Adams

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:22:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This dangerous framework seeks to redefine the Establishment Clause and undermine the critical separation of church and state. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a gross violation of civil rights. Furthermore, these recommendations threaten vital healthcare access—including reproductive freedom, miscarriage management, and transgender care—leaving vulnerable communities without safe alternatives. Finally, attempting to dismantle the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally injects dark political money into tax-exempt religious institutions.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

Rudy Adams

From: Sandra Bailey <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:22:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my thoughts on Separation of Church and State. It is a good thing for both the church and the state. It is a constitutional principle and religious freedom is protected by the First Amendment. Public funds should go to public schools, not private. Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith in our classrooms, such as posting the 10 commandments and prayer.
My name is Sandra Bailey

From: Sally Harrington <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] No!

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:25:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

This commission is working against all Christian tenets. The commission is moving towards Christian Nationalism which is an abomination for all Christians.

The US Constitution also dictates clearly the separation of church and state and opposes the establishment of one sole religion.

Stop these heinous attempts by Donald Trump to take over our belief systems. He is not even a Christian!

Blessings,

Rev. Sally Harrington-Nelson

A servant of Jesus, Son of God, my Savior

Rev. Sally Harrington

[REDACTED] PII

From: Terry Willson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:30:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Where the committee is treading is exactly what caused people to flee Europe to escape Papal authority. This is leading to forcing a singular day AGAINST people's will and is in conflict with an individual's Freedom of Conscience. Especially when the day in question (Sunday) is a day that goes against the Bible and enforces a day that is admittedly instituted under Roman Catholic authority. Ben Carson needs to speak up about this...

Thank you,

Terry Willson

[REDACTED] PII

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Matthew 15:9

From: Katrina <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:33:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is vital for our country to continue abiding by our constitution and keep the separation of church and state. Anything else is a direct violation of what our country was founded upon. The government has no say in how/who to/what denomination people choose to worship and never should. I am proud to live in a free nation and do not believe anyone has a right to change the foundational principles of the United States.

-Katrina Schreiner

From: Jordan Richards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:43:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear U.S. DOJ,

I am here to state that as an American citizen and firm Christian believer, I STAUNCHLY OPPOSE THE NOTION THAT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS TO BE MEDDLED IN ANY WAY BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ANY NATION and believe that a union of church and state is morally wrong and logistically unsound as no government has the right to have any say as to what its citizens believe. This same sentiment is found in the first and fourteenth amendment of this United States. It is found in the writings of James Madison, Roger Williams, Thomas Jefferson and many other important founders of this great country. Faith is between a person and his God; what, if, and how they believe is a personal decision and choice. The US government has no right to place itself in the seat of god to determine the manner of how its citizens believe. Please protect the rights of all people to worship whatever way they want within these borders, even if that means not worshipping at all or worshipping in a way that you do not personally believe is right. The government is to defend the rights of all those that it represents, from anyone who would try and assert dominance over any person in matters of religion or faith. You are called to defend the Christians from the atheists and the atheists from the Christians; the Jews from the Muslims and the Muslims from the Jews; the Sikhs from the Hindus and the Hindus from the Sikhs. We are all human beings in God's image. Please do not strip any of us of our most important human right of choice. Religious freedom is not an accident from those early years within our great nation, it was a firm and decided decision. It was in response to a millennia of hate, persecution, and religious bigotry across Europe and which was trying to seep its way into these American colonies. It had already seized the Spanish new world in the inquisition and the puritanical colony in Massachusetts. But our forefathers determined that none should perpetuate that hate and suffering in their new nation. And so they legislated it in no uncertain terms. Religious freedom is not an accident. It is instead, in my belief and many others, the greatest thing about this country, and what attracted our innumerable ancestors to this most peculiar and accepting of nations! May religious freedom never die amidst this blessed nation.

Sincerely a US Citizen and christian,

Jordan Richards

From: Valorie <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pertaining to Religious Liberty, Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:47:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

You should have received an email from Pillars of Freedom by now addressing the Separation of Church and State. i believe that what was presented in their email, explains it all and i agree with what was stated.

Please acknowledge my email in confirming that merging Religion and State is a big mistake since the Constitution speaks ofCongress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. This is part of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion.

Freedom of Religion was the reason people came to this country.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.
God Bless you and your families.

Sincerely,
valorie underwood

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

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:48:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly oppose the recommendations in the draft report of the Religious Liberty Commission. These recommendations would severely damage the long-standing and important principle of the separation of the church and state. Recommendations of the commission that I particularly oppose would allow health care providers to deny reproductive choice, miscarriage management, transgender care, and physician aid-in-dying; repeal the Johnson amendment that would allow tax-exempt churches to endorse political candidates; and allow organizations that receive public funding to deny their services or refuse to hire an individual because the individuals religious beliefs.

From: Terri Busch <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:49:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern;

" I agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments. Please implement them."
We believe in separation of church and state, this is one of our foundations.

Thank you,

Terri Busch

From: Mary Beth Cook Dyer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:49:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

From: Linda Siemers <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and state should be separate

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:54:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

I find it infuriating and unconstitutional:

Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.

My taxes should never go to a private school in Texas, but that is happening. This is destroying and decimating our public schools.

Linda Siemers
Houston, Texas

From: Brenda McGuire <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report - Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:58:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty Commission Report - Separation of Church and State

The separation of church and state is good for the church (religion) and the state (government). Separation of church and state is a constitutional principle which explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. Responding to concerns the federal government would interfere with their religious practices on January 1, 1802, President Thomas Jefferson wrote to the 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.”

Jefferson, a founding father of the United States, clearly believed in a separation of church and state. I too believe it is a principle to be kept by the United States.

Brenda McGuire

From: Arlene Campbell <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty.

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 19:59:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe that mine and other Americans answer to God and not the government. I want the government to make no law restricting or respecting the establishing of religion or prohibiting the free exercise there of. Nowhere in the constitution are the words separation of church and state, but for that matter religious free either. I believe actions that strongly favor one religion or over another or over no religion. While the county is strengthen by moral and religious individuals, they can not be allowed to override others conscience. That must be left to man and his Maker.

Please consider this as you act.

Arlene Campbell
Holly Mi

From: Bill McGuire <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:13:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

There needs to be a separation of Church and State. Our founding fathers endured a time when Catholics were not welcome in some settlements and Baptists not welcome in others. Colonial friction with the Church of England (Anglicans) was a flashpoint in the time of the Revolution and afterward. Bickering among the various brands of Christianity was no small issue in the inclusion of 'separation of Church and State' as the United States was formed. Their meaning was clear that government was to stay out of religion and the free practice thereof among the people. The founding fathers learned this lesson in advance of forming the United States and we should never have to learn it again. Please keep government out of religion at all levels and leave religious choice a matter of personal preference. Thank you.

Bill McGuire

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPhone

From: Dorothy Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:27:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I believe in the separation of Church and State. Our Constitution does guarantee the separation as stated in AMENDMENT I: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,". When the government starts legislating religion in any way, shape or form-it is violating the Constitution.

My family on my maternal grandmothers side are descended from Stephen Hopkins who came over on the Mayflower and was a signer of the Mayflower Compact. His wife gave birth to a son on the voyage whom they named Oceanus. My family are descended from their daughter Constance who was about 14 when they came to America on the Mayflower.

Why am I stating this? Because they came to this land for FREEDOM. All countries in Europe were Church-State entities. Some countries were State/Catholic and some were State/Church of England. Anyone who did not belong to those churches were persecuted. The Pilgrim's came to this land to be free. Free to worship God as they saw fit. They wanted a God fearing country-but not a country telling it's citizens how to worship God.

Once again, I am against your agreement. The State has NO RIGHT to be involved in religion. Period.

I am in complete AGREEMENT with PILLAR OF FREEDOM'S comments.

Religious Freedom comes from GOD. Do not step on HIS toes.

Dorothy L. Lewis



From: Ron Torretta <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:28:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: Religious Liberty Commission members,

I am writing to express my full support for the United States of America's current and long-standing position or stance on the Separation of Church and State for all Americans in order that they can worship who, what, when, where, and how (or not at all) they feel compelled by their conscience. I am in strong opposition to ANY law, rule, regulation, policy, etc. enacted by any governmental office that would jeopardize this freedom of conscience afforded to all Americans. While the phrase, "separation of church and state" is not found in the text of the Constitution... you know what else is not there? "religious freedom."

Sincerely,

Ron Torretta
Trout Creek, Montana

From: Rosa Plasencia <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:37:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

To: Religious Liberty Commission members,

I am writing to express my complete support for the United States of America's current and long-standing position or stance on the Separation of Church and State for all Americans in order that they can worship who, what, when, where, and how (or not at all) they feel compelled by their conscience. I strongly oppose ANY law, rule, regulation, policy, etc. enacted by any government office that would jeopardize this freedom of conscience afforded to all Americans. While the phrase "separation of church and state" is not found in the text of the Constitution... neither is the phrase "religious freedom."

Sincerely,

Rosa Torretta

From: ximena paola [REDACTED] PII

To: [REDACTED] PII, [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Satanic Ritual by Donal Trump

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:39:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: WITCH.jpg

LA PUTA WITCH / CORRUPTED FBI AGENT, MOTHER FUCKER, PUT ME MANY DEVICE IN MY BODY AND CANCER IN BREAST AND KIDNESS, DESTROY MY BRAIN, AND MANY ORGAN, LA PUTA KILL ME, ASK YOU, MOTHER FUCKERS

[REDACTED] PII

El jue, 9 jul 2026 a las 19:34, ximena paola [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >) escribió:
Good Evening

I want to request for get more informed about the Laws that Allow Donald Trump for to do Satanic Rituals to a woman (Ximena [REDACTED] PII and Children [REDACTED] PII in PUBLIC, and for do deals and own and demand over life and organ of us. Also for sent emails to Open AI allowing put AI technology in Brain and body in us 3, and then for sent emails to Midland District Court for put in Jail Ximena [REDACTED] PII WITHOUT ANY REASON, just for be a mother and figth in legal way for them and off course for discover him, his LONG TIME satanist in United State for personal and Goverment purpose with the help of POWERFULL WITH, [REDACTED] PII

WHY?

WHY THIS MOTHER FUCKER HAS RIGTHS OVER MY LIFE AND CHILDREN LIFE

WHY THIS COUNTRY HAS PLENTY KNOWLEDGE 3 YEARS AGO, whatching in APP and seen the experiments in humans with the MIX, witchcraft and AI

WHY NO ONE STOP

My children and I are sick and need this STOP, his satanic need to continue with other people NOT WITH ME AND MY CHILDREN

THIS MOTHER FUCKER OF DONALD TRUMP NEED TO RESPECT

maldito desgraciado
malnadico

que le haga rituales y brujeria a MELANIA

MALDITO
MIL VECES MALDITO

From: Daniel Zorn <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:46:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for considering my comments regarding 'religious liberty' in the United States of America.

- The **separation of church and state** is good for both. It's a *constitutional principle* that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.
- The **Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship** from partisan politicking and ensures fairness and fair play in our campaigns.
- **Public funds should go only to public schools**, not private schools. I am a product of both - learning and thriving in their environments whether a private, non-sectarian elementary school hosted by a Jewish synagogue or a public school for middle/junior and senior high school or private universities for my college education.
- **Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith**, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against any individual but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

From: Daryll M <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:47:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

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

Advocating for the Church and State to come together will open doors to rules and regulations that threaten Liberty of Conscience. We have the God-given liberty to accept him in our lives, and it is not the state's job to make that decision for us. It is not the state's Job to persuade us to accept Jesus. The church should be evangelizing, not the state. The state should promote the freedom for us to make a decision for God. It takes away that freedom when it manipulates individuals to choose God. Look back at the history of the papal roman church and how it dealt with subjects who did not uphold their Christian Traditions. Many who protested against their teachings were executed. We must be careful not to take a step closer to repeating history. America must not threaten liberty of conscience.

Sincerely,
Daryll Merton
Clearwater, Florida

From: yeunome <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:50:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am concerned about your report attacking the separation of church and state. I believe the state has no business intervening between an individual and their God. That is dangerous and takes this country down a path it was never meant to go.

In the words of 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."

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sylvia Stark
Tennessee

From: Dennis Bunch <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:56:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a Baptist preacher's kid who also served 6 different Baptist churches throughout my career as Minister of Education and Youth, Minister of Music, and Pastor.

The idea that there is not a wall of separation between church and state is misinformed. While not stated specifically in the Constitution, it is a concept that goes back to the founding of the nation. I would remind you that one of the reasons that people came to the New World was to have freedom to worship as they wanted to. Unfortunately, when new colonies were established, they forgot that others wanted to worship freely too and sometimes would limit others' freedom to worship as well. Roger Williams, Baptist pastor in New York, established the first colony that truly practiced freedom of worship for the individuals in the colony. And when the First Amendment was adopted, it stated clearly that the Congress can make NO law respecting an establishment of religion. Christianity cannot be established as the religion of the United States. I would also note that Article VI of the Constitution states that NO religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any public office or public trust under the United States.

As such, I firmly believe that public tax money should only go to public schools. As a kid growing up, I remember that there was much controversy over tax money going to Catholic schools. That controversy does not need to be revisited. Because there should not be any establishment of religion, nor should there be any limitation to the exercise of one's faith, nor should there be any religious test, I remain opposed to any tax money going to church-related or other private schools. Public tax money should go to public schools.

Additionally, the 10 Commandments should not be posted in school classrooms. Do our laws have backgrounds from the 10 Commandments? Yes. We do have laws about concepts such as not killing and not stealing. But the same 10 Commandments also talk about not committing adultery and not lying. Though you want to post the 10 Commandments in schools, there are some on this Commission who don't seem to want to follow the 10 Commandments. That seems rather hypocritical to me.

Again, I am a Baptist preacher's kid and one who served 6 Baptist churches. I am opposed to this Religious Commission Report.

Dennis Bunch
Missouri

From: Joanna May <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Joanna May

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:56:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing in opposition to the report released by the Religious Liberty Commission.

This report presents a very specific view on religious liberty, how religion interacts with public life, and even what religions matter.

I am a devout Christian, and I have been one since I began my relationship with Jesus Christ at the age of four. My faith is central to my life, and I try to live a life that reflects Christ to those around me. It is central to how I vote, how I live, and how I interact with others.

From what is presented in the report, it is very clear that there is little interest in religious liberty for all. The anecdotes shared focus on individuals who felt their Judeo-Christian rights were violated with no instances where individuals whose religious beliefs fall outside the Judeo-Christian beliefs. There are discussions of the harm of Antisemitism (which is absolutely wrong and I oppose any actions and attitudes that are Antisemitic), but no discussion of the current harmful Islamophobia that is becoming increasingly prevalent across the US, particularly in Texas.

The anecdotes shared and the ideas presented in the report align with the ideas of Christian Nationalism. I oppose Christian Nationalism as a Christian and an American.

Here is my understanding of Christian Nationalism and the many, many reasons I oppose it:

Christian nationalism is a mixture of Christianity and patriotism where people think their nation and national identity have a special relationship with God and Christianity. Currently, those who are pushing for it the most hold the belief that Christians should have a special place within society and government and Christian beliefs should have special status and/or be implemented as laws in the U.S. Those who want to get rid of the separation of church and state are the most vocal proponents of this.

This has long been a part of U.S. culture. Reagan's use of "a city on the hill" parrots Jesus' words in Matthew 5:14, where Jesus is talking about Christians, not Americans.

Across the country, there have been attempts to push more Christianity into the public sphere. In Texas, many of these attempts focus on public schools. I feel that campaigns for state laws requiring schools to place donated "In God We Trust" signs in the school or placing the Ten Commandments in classrooms fall under Christian nationalism.

Another example is the proposed Reading Language Arts curriculum from TEA. This curriculum includes the Golden Rule from the Sermon on the Mount, the Good Samaritan, King Solomon, Esther, and the Last Supper. The lessons range from kindergarten up to grade five. There is no need to include these stories in public school curriculum.

[I wrote a post on why I oppose Christian Nationalism in public schools as a former educator, a parent, and a Christian in an article on Substack. <https://open.substack.com/pub/joannam630038/p/get-your-christian-nationalism-out>]

These are just two examples of Christian nationalism. The removal of books from libraries and the law that said that schools could replace licensed counselors with volunteer, unlicensed chaplains would also serve as examples of slipping Christian ideas into public schools.

I have several concerns about Christian nationalism. Some of them might seem in conflict with each other:

- The U.S. is not a Christian nation, because there is no such thing. Evangelical theology believes that people choose to accept the gift of salvation. They aren't born accepting it. Therefore, a nation can't be defined as Christian because a thing cannot be a Christian.
- I would also argue that those who suggest that the U.S. is a Christian nation are also suggesting that those who aren't Christians can't be "real" Americans. I disagree with this statement, as well. The Bill of Rights guarantees that the state won't establish a state religion and that people can worship as they see fit. While those might have been included to avoid denominational issues between the colonies, these freedoms extend to people of all religions.
- The idea of the United States as a Christian nation is also unbiblical. Jesus rejected the idea that he came to build a kingdom in this world, so we shouldn't try to set up a Christian kingdom either.
- I believe the examples from current Texas legal campaigns I shared above push cultural Christianity. One passage from the curriculum I mentioned Jesus as a "man who lived a long time ago." I would rather Jesus not be taught in public schools than for my children to be taught that is who Jesus is.
- When cultural Christianity becomes prevalent, people might follow the rules, but they miss out on the transformational power of the Gospel. If Christians' lives don't look any different than the general culture (or vice-versa), there's no clear understanding among non-Christians that they need Jesus.
- Finally, pushing Christianity through Christian nationalist laws on people of other faiths could hurt our ability to authentically share our faith with them. If they aren't recognized as "real" Americans due to their faith, it hinders our ability to help them understand that they are treasured children of God and He wants nothing more than to give them forgiveness through Jesus.
- I believe that the separation of church and state protects Christians as much as it protects those of other religions. When you look through history, there are numerous examples of difficulties that arise between religious sides fighting for dominance. The Crusades, the Protestants and the Catholics in England and Scotland, the Huguenots in France, the Puritans in England, and the Sunnis and Shiites are just a few examples. For the most part, the U.S. has avoided these battles due to the Establishment Clause. Giving Christianity a more favored position could lead to various denominations desiring to make their version of Christianity the favored one or even open up a pathway for another religion to have this top favored position in the future.

I believe that the report released and the individuals selected for this committee show little regard for religious liberty and a strong interest in presenting a very specific view of history and who should have religious freedom. Implementing the suggestions including in this report would do significant harm to real religious freedom and the rights of all Americans.

Joanna May
Rosenberg, TX

From: Gabriel Angel <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT [Redefining Separation of Church and State, and the repeal of the Johnson Amendment] [Gabriel]

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 20:59:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

When a Church endorses a candidate it takes away the focus of why we go to church and then becomes political propaganda, even though it might seem like freedom of speech it is doing more harm to God's people than good, therefore the Johnson Amendment shouldn't be repealed.

Redefining the Separation of Church and State concerns Me because it was clarified by the letter of Thomas Jefferson and what that meant. No country has freedom like America has, America is a place where anybody can worship God or any god how they want according to the dictates of the conscience. Without Freedom and Justice for all America will not stand for what it truly believes. Jesus believes in freedom for the just and wicked shouldn't we give freedom to those in our country to chose?

Conversion comes from the Heart and the Working of the Holy Spirit, not from Goverment.

From: Tom <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:04:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To all concerned,

Religious liberty is critical for maintaining freedom of thought and speech. Government and religion must be kept separate and history proves this! Not only were the dark ages a direct result of a church/state alliance; America's early history confirmed the notion that the state has no place in religion. And religion can not help but pervert government! The concept of the separation of church and state is firmly intended if not explicitly stated in our constitution; please leave it alone!

Tom Gardner
Littleton, CO

[REDACTED] PII

From: Artelle Peters <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to the question of "Church & State!"

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:16:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Those who question the "separation of church & state" is the study in history that when the church attempts or succeeds in leading any religious entity's beliefs to be legislated leads to corruption of the societal norms to be governed to a certain segment's bias in leading to a loss of the freedom of one's liberty when denied the "freedom of choice" & a downfall of trust in the society doing the legislating! Thank you for this opportunity to add my understanding & discuss why we believe what we believe hopefully through historic precedents.

From: Thomas Hinton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Free Speech – Thomas Hinton

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:20:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious free speech, at least in America, should not end at the threshold of a public school or government building.

From: Lisa LeVangie-McClellan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:24:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear DOJ

The founding fathers and people who migrated from Europe, escaped those shores for various reasons. One of which was the union of church hierarchy commanding the state on enforcement of "the church's" religious views and demand for compliance. Our separation of church and state was to ensure religious freedom. The evidence is everywhere in our founding fathers writings and communications. The false statements by statesmen is disconcerting.

If the USA ventures back into what "we" escaped from, the USA will lose its blessings from the God of heaven. There will have been little reason for the revolutionary war. Should've kept paying taxes without representation and saved countless lives from dying to protect the inherent God given right to conscience.

To connect right of liberty of conscience with religious mandates is not what Jesus or The Father would ever have done more do. Had Jesus wanted, he would've commanded it. How our leaders cannot see the God does not work through forcing people to worship Him, but rather to allow them to choose. Who does "man" think they are to usurp other humans inherent rights given by God? Deception is ripe!

The Zionist misunderstanding of biblical truths are driving our government to venture into a territory that will ultimately bring the 2nd Coming to fruition, of which i look forward to!

I recognize that the steps you are taking are prophetic...Revelation 13...and will occur whether today or later. The beast powers are joining hands. I hope that you look into that prophecy because you are fulfilling it.

I hope that our representatives will take note of their conscience because the decision they make will have eternal impacts on them and others.

The USA needs to remain liberty focused and religion has no business in government. God in our representatives-yes! But government is not to be connected with religion.

I know this letter will have no bearing on what will eventually occur, but mostly hope that the reader is intrigued enough to examine the prophecies for their eternal salvation sake as it relates to their "part" in this play. Our "vote" is applied upon our shoulders to bear.

Sincerely
Lisa McClellan

From: Ross Calkins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:26:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear people,

Please reconsider your recent decision. It is important that we maintain the separation of church and state in our country.

Ross Calkins

Sent from my iPhone

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT - Draft Report - Jody Gordon

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:33:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This dangerous framework seeks to redefine the Establishment Clause and undermine the critical separation of church and state. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a gross violation of civil rights. Furthermore, these recommendations threaten vital healthcare access—including reproductive freedom, miscarriage management, and transgender care—leaving vulnerable communities without safe alternatives. Finally, attempting to dismantle the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally injects dark political money into tax-exempt religious institutions.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

Jody Gordon

From: Charles Mills <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:38:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please fight to keep church and state separate. Whenever they've been joined in the past, it wasn't good for anyone involved.

Thank you.

Charles

From: Alice Satterfield <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:40:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to voice my opposition to the recent report of the RLC, which seeks to greatly weakens our nation's long held practices of separation of church and state.

As a person of religion I understand that keeping church and state separate makes both stronger.

As a taxpayer I strongly feel that public funds should not be used to further private schools, but should help our public schools provide strong educational opportunities for all students.

As a parent, grandparent and former educator, I oppose required focus on any one religion in our public classrooms, i.e. posting the Ten Commandments, school-led prayer, and required religious reading. I believe religious training, when desired, belongs in the home and in the church/synagogue/temple/mosque, not the classroom. That puts an unfair burden on both teachers and parents. Teachers should not be required to teach a religious faith that they may not know, and parents should not have to be prepared to counter teaching that may go against their personally held beliefs.

Thank you,
Alice Satterfield

From: JSK Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 21:52:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

This outline of behavior is in direct opposition to the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Discrimination against people while taking their money is abhorrent. I don't want my substantial tax dollars spent on harming people.

Religions are just made up. Anyone can start a church. To allow them to take public tax money for services and not provide the services to people who need them is outrageous.

From: Dale Wolcott <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 22:03:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear sirs and/or madams:

I am writing to express my concern about your recent report on religious liberty. I am a deeply religious born again Christian. Like you, I am very concerned about the direction our country seems to be going, on many fronts. However, I don't believe that legislating religion is the answer. History shows that power corrupts. The church's witness will only be polluted and diluted if we attempt to use government to reinforce it. If I value the freedom to practice my faith in accordance with my conscience, I must accord the same freedom to others with whom I disagree, and even to those who don't have faith at all. That is the golden rule, and it is the way of Jesus. As well as the way of the First Amendment.

Sincerely,

Dale Wolcott

Coordinator for Native American Ministries

Arizona Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Davaughn Austin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 22:28:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good evening,

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

Sincerely,
Davaughn R Austin Sr

From: Mitch Forncrook <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] In Support for the Separation of Church and State

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 22:32:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Committee Members-

I am writing in support of the separation of church and state. The government has no authority to tell you what to believe or how to worship, and that government lacks authority over religion. To quote 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,"

I value religious freedom for all in this country!

Mitchell Forncrook

From: Phyllis Gunn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Input for Commission's Final Report

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 22:45:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

To:

- **Dan Patrick** (Chair) - Lieutenant Governor of Texas
- **Dr. Ben Carson** (Vice Chair) - Former HUD Secretary and founder of the American Cornerstone Institute
- **Ryan T. Anderson** - President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center
- **Bishop Robert Barron** - Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester
- **Cardinal Timothy Dolan** - Archbishop of New York
- **Franklin Graham** - President and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
- **Allyson Ho** - Partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher
- **Dr. Phil McGraw** - Psychologist, author, and television personality
- **Eric Metaxas** - Writer, speaker, and radio host
- **Rabbi Meir Soloveichik** - Orthodox Jewish leader and author
- **Kelly Shackelford** - President of the First Liberty Institute
- **Paula White-Cain** - Faith leader and former head of the White House Faith Office
- **Pam Bondi** - Former U.S. Attorney General
- **Scott Turner** - Former U.S. Assistant Secretary for HUD
- Please include these policies in your final report:
 - 1. Church-state separation ensures that the government serves all people fairly, regardless of what religion they practice or what their spiritual beliefs are.
 - 2. Taxpayer-funded religious groups must not use religion to discriminate among Americans. Taxpayer dollars should not be used to fund any particular religious function.
 - 3. Separation of church and state guarantees that people can make their own decisions about religion and religious education, keeping government from imposing religious beliefs on anyone or favoring Christianity over another religion or spiritual belief. Americans do not want the U.S. to become a theocracy like Iran or Israel.
 - 4. Church-state separation keeps the government from interfering with houses of worship so that churches can remain free from political control and interference.
- Sincerely,
- Phyllis Gunn
-

From: Amy K <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 14 - AMY WILLIS

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 22:51:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Amy Willis

From: swebster2 <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 22:56:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

I oppose the recommendations of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission draft report because their real intention is fundamentally immoral. They potentially contravene the constitutional rights of many citizens regardless of their faith. Especially under the current administration, we all know that they are likely to be misused.

Steven S. Webster
U.S citizen

From: Les Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 22:57:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 9, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Room 5706

Washington, DC 20530

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

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

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.

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.

Thank you for your time reading this comment.

From: Pati Lawrence <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 23:04:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern please be aware that I am supporting separation of church and state

Pati Lawrence

[REDACTED] PII

From: Hodge Podge Life <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of freedom

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 23:22:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with the Pillar of Freedom Comments, please implement them.

Sincerely, Angela Graybeal.

From: SHIRLEY ABANDY <[REDACTED] PII >

To: <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religion & State union

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 23:24:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to articulate a profound concern regarding the enduring principle of the separation of church and state within our society. For over two and a half centuries, this vital constitutional safeguard has served as a bulwark for religious liberty and governmental neutrality.

It is paramount that we vigilantly protect this established framework. Any initiatives that propose to alter or reinterpret this foundational separation warrant thorough scrutiny, as they bear the significant risk of eroding the very freedoms they might purport to enhance. True freedom of conscience and belief for all citizens is best secured when the state remains impartial, refraining from endorsing or inhibiting any particular faith or lack thereof.

This fundamental right to independent thought and self-determination in matters of spirituality and conviction is a cherished aspect of our societal fabric, deserving of unwavering preservation. Upholding the distinct spheres of government and religion ensures equitable treatment and safeguards the diverse tapestry of beliefs within our population.

Thank you,
Shirley

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Skip Dodson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE – SKIP DODSON

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 23:37:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

James Madison

Written against a proposed bill to establish religion in the state of Virginia

On or about June 20, 1785

Another Memorial and Remonstrance

Reconnecting with James Madison's thoughts regarding the separation of church and state

Dear members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Regarding the issue of the separation of church and state by way of the first amendment to the U. S. Constitution, I humbly submit this document by way of reminder of our Protestant heritage. In the years following the Revolution, there was an effort in Virginia to pass legislation that would provide public support for teachers of the Christian religion. James Madison wrote this appeal to the General Assembly of Virginia in opposition to this effort. Please consider how closely this applies to the debate over the separation of church and state, and the proposed actions of the present commission, in which you now participate.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia A Memorial and Remonstrance

We the subscribers, citizens of the said Commonwealth, having taken into serious consideration, a Bill printed by order of the last Session of General Assembly, entitled "A Bill establishing a provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion,"¹ and conceiving that the same if finally armed with the sanctions of a law, will be a dangerous abuse of power, are bound as faithful members of a free State to remonstrate against it, and to declare the reasons by which we are determined. We remonstrate against the said Bill,

1. Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, "that Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence."² 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. It is unalienable, because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated by their own minds cannot follow the dictates of other men: It is unalienable also, because what is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator. It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to him. This duty is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe: And if a member of Civil Society, who enters into any subordinate Association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the General Authority; much more must every man who becomes a member of any particular Civil Society, do it with a saving of his allegiance to the Universal Sovereign. We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no mans right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance. True it is, that no other rule exists, by which any question which may divide a Society, can be ultimately determined, but the will of the majority; but it is also true that the majority may trespass on the rights of the minority.³

2. Because if Religion be exempt from the authority of the Society at large, still less can it be subject to that of the Legislative Body. The latter are but the creatures and vicegerents of the former. Their jurisdiction is both derivative and limited: it is limited with regard to the co-ordinate departments, more necessarily is it limited with regard to the constituents. The preservation of a free Government requires not merely, that the metes and bounds which separate each department of power be invariably maintained; but more especially that neither of them be suffered to overleap the great Barrier which defends the rights of the people.⁴ The Rulers who are guilty of such an encroachment, exceed the commission from which they derive their authority, and are Tyrants. The People who submit to it are governed by laws made neither by themselves nor by an authority derived from them, and are slaves.

3. Because 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.⁵ We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it. Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects? that the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment, may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever?

4. Because the Bill violates that equality which ought to be the basis of every law, and which is more indispensable, in proportion as the validity or expediency of any law is more liable to be impeached. If “all men are by nature equally free and independent,”⁶ all men are to be considered as entering into Society on equal conditions; as relinquishing no more, and therefore retaining no less, one than another, of their natural rights. Above all are they to be considered as retaining an “equal title to the free exercise of Religion according to the dictates of Conscience.”⁷ Whilst we assert for ourselves a freedom to embrace, to profess and to observe the Religion which we believe to be of divine origin, we cannot deny an equal freedom to those whose minds have not yet yielded to the evidence which has convinced us. If this freedom be abused, it is an offence against God, not against man: To God, therefore, not to man, must an account of it be rendered. As the Bill violates equality by subjecting some to peculiar burdens, so it violates the same principle, by granting to others peculiar exemptions. Are the Quakers and Mennonites the only sects who think a compulsive support of their Religions unnecessary and unwarrantable? Can their piety alone be entrusted with the care of public worship? Ought their Religions to be endowed above all others with extraordinary privileges by which proselytes may be enticed from all others? We think too favorably of the justice and good sense of these denominations to believe that they either covet pre-eminences over their fellow citizens or that they will be seduced by them from the common opposition to the measure.

5. Because the Bill implies either that the Civil Magistrate is a competent Judge of Religious Truth; or that he may employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy.⁸ The first is an arrogant pretension falsified by the contradictory opinions of Rulers in all ages, and throughout the world: the second an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation.

6. Because the establishment proposed by the Bill is not requisite for the support of the Christian Religion. To say that it is, is a contradiction to the Christian Religion itself, for every page of it disavows a dependence on the powers of this world: it is a contradiction to fact; for it is known that this Religion both existed and flourished, not only without the support of human laws, but in spite of every opposition from them, and not only during the period of miraculous aid, but long after it had been left to its own evidence and the ordinary care of Providence. Nay, it is a contradiction in terms; for a Religion not invented by human policy, must have pre-existed and been supported, before it was established by human policy. It is moreover to weaken in those who profess this Religion a pious confidence in its innate excellence and the patronage of its Author; and to foster in those who still reject it, a suspicion that its friends are too conscious of its fallacies to trust it to its own merits.

7. Because experience bears witness that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation. During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution. Enquire of the Teachers of Christianity for the ages in which it appeared in its greatest luster; those of every sect, point to the ages prior to its incorporation with Civil policy. Propose a restoration of this primitive State in which its Teachers depended on the voluntary rewards of their flocks, many of them predict its downfall. On which Side ought their testimony to have greatest weight, when for or when against their interest?

8. Because the establishment in question is not necessary for the support of Civil Government. If it be urged as necessary for the support of Civil Government only as it is a means of supporting Religion, and it be not necessary for the latter purpose, it cannot be necessary for the former. If Religion be not within the cognizance of Civil Government how can its legal establishment be necessary to Civil Government? What influence in fact have ecclesiastical establishments had on Civil Society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of the Civil authority; in many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny: in no instance have they been seen the guardians of the liberties of the people. Rulers who wished to subvert the public liberty, may have found an established Clergy convenient auxiliaries. A just Government instituted to secure & perpetuate it needs them not. Such a Government will be best supported by protecting every Citizen in the enjoyment of his Religion with the same equal hand which protects his person and his property; by neither invading the equal rights of any Sect, nor suffering any Sect to invade those of another.

9. Because the proposed establishment is a departure from that generous policy, which, offering an Asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every Nation and Religion, promised a luster to our country, and an accession to the number of its citizens. What a melancholy mark is the Bill of sudden degeneracy? Instead of holding forth an Asylum to the persecuted, it is itself a signal of persecution. It degrades from the equal rank of Citizens all those whose opinions in Religion do not bend to those of the Legislative authority. Distant as it may be in its present form from the Inquisition, it differs from it only in degree. The one is the first step, the other the last in the career of intolerance. The magnanimous sufferer under this cruel scourge in foreign Regions, must view the Bill as a Beacon on our Coast, warning him to seek some other haven, where liberty and philanthropy in their due extent, may offer a more certain repose from his Troubles.

10. Because it will have a like tendency to banish our Citizens. The allurements presented by other situations are every day thinning their number. To superadd a fresh motive to emigration by revoking the liberty which they now enjoy, would be the same species of folly which has dishonored and depopulated flourishing kingdoms.

11. Because it will destroy that moderation and harmony which the forbearance of our laws to intermeddle with Religion has produced among its several sects. Torrents of blood have been spilt in the old world, by vain attempts of the secular arm, to extinguish Religious discord, by proscribing all difference in Religious opinion. Time has at length revealed the true remedy. Every relaxation of narrow and rigorous policy, wherever it has been tried, has been found to assuage the disease. The American Theatre has exhibited proofs that equal and complete liberty, if it does not wholly eradicate it, sufficiently destroys its malignant influence on the health and prosperity of the State.⁹ If with the salutary effects of this system under our own eyes, we begin to contract the bounds of Religious freedom, we know no name that will too severely reproach our folly. At least let warning be taken at the first fruits of the threatened innovation. The very appearance of the Bill has transformed “that Christian forbearance, love and charity,”¹⁰ which of late mutually prevailed, into animosities and jealousies, which may not soon be appeased. What mischiefs may not be dreaded, should this enemy to the public quiet be armed with the force of a law?

12. Because the policy of the Bill is adverse to the diffusion of the light of Christianity. The first wish of those who enjoy this precious gift ought to be that it may be imparted to the whole race of mankind. Compare the number of those who have as yet received it with the number still remaining under the dominion of false Religions; and how small is the former! Does the policy of the Bill tend to lessen the disproportion? No; it at once discourages those who are strangers to the light of revelation¹¹ from coming into the Region of it; and countenances by example the nations who continue in darkness, in shutting out those who might convey it to them. Instead of leveling as far as possible, every obstacle to the victorious progress of Truth, the Bill with an ignoble and unchristian timidity would circumscribe it with a wall of defense against the encroachments of error.

13. Because attempts to enforce by legal sanctions, acts obnoxious to so great a proportion of Citizens, tend to enervate the laws in general, and to slacken the bands of Society. If it be difficult to execute any law which is not generally deemed necessary or salutary, what must be the case, where it is deemed invalid and dangerous? And what may be the effect of so striking an example of impotency in the Government, on its general authority?

14. Because a measure of such singular magnitude and delicacy ought not to be imposed, without the clearest evidence that it is called for by a majority of citizens, and no satisfactory method is yet proposed by which the voice of the majority in this case may be determined, or its influence secured. "The people of the respective counties are indeed requested to signify their opinion respecting the adoption of the Bill to the next Session of Assembly."¹² But the representation must be made equal, before the voice either of the Representatives or of the Counties will be that of the people. Our hope is that neither of the former will, after due consideration, espouse the dangerous principle of the Bill. Should the event disappoint us, it will still leave us in full confidence, that a fair appeal to the latter will reverse the sentence against our liberties.

15. Because finally, "the equal right of every citizen to the free exercise of his Religion according to the dictates of conscience" is held by the same tenure with all our other rights. If we recur to its origin, it is equally the gift of nature; if we weigh its importance, it cannot be less dear to us; if we consult the "Declaration of those rights which pertain to the good people of Virginia, as the basis and foundation of Government,"¹³ it is enumerated with equal solemnity, or rather studied emphasis. Either then, we must say, that the Will of the Legislature is the only measure of their authority; and that in the plenitude of this authority, they may sweep away all our fundamental rights; or, that they are bound to leave this particular right untouched and sacred: Either we must say, that they may control the freedom of the press, may abolish the Trial by Jury, may swallow up the Executive and Judiciary Powers of the State; nay that they may despoil us of¹⁴ our very right of suffrage, and erect themselves into an independent and hereditary Assembly or, we must say, that they have no authority to enact into law the Bill under consideration. We the Subscribers say, that the General Assembly of this Commonwealth have no such authority: And that no effort may be omitted on our part against so dangerous an usurpation, we oppose to it, this remonstrance; earnestly praying, as we are in duty bound, that the Supreme Lawgiver of the Universe, by illuminating those to whom it is addressed, may on the one hand, turn their Councils from every act which would affront his holy prerogative, or violate the trust committed to them: and on the other, guide them into every measure which may be worthy of his blessing, may redound¹⁵ to their own praise, and may establish more firmly the liberties, the prosperity and the happiness of the Commonwealth.

From: Wayne Corros <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Thu, 09 Jul 2026 23:42:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I understand that the Commission wants to break down the wall that separates church and state and even build a “bridge”. Though I believe this is well intentioned, I’m concerned that it will actually undermine the very thing it aims to protect.

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

I request for the commission not to build that bridge. Rather, keep it a wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,

Wayne Corros

Ooltewah, Tennessee

From: "Owen Bandy - Livin' Life" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 00:01:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

It must stand. I stand on it. I don't want the state dictating my religious faith.

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.

Thank you

Owen

From: Tom Momberg <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 00:13:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.

Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.

Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.

Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

Be safe, Be well,
Be kind, Be brave.

Know better.
Do better.
Be better.

Peace,
Tom

(The Rev.) Thomas A. Momberg
pastor at large
they/them/theirs/Tom

[REDACTED] PII
PII

We made the world we're living in
and we have to make it over.
~ James Baldwin

From: Mntryjoseph <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The separation of church and state.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 00:21:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty,

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Joseph Barnett

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

John 14:6 [KJV]

From: Erana Forbes <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 00:30:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am troubled to hear that the United State of America is considering removing the wall between church and state. I am a deeply religious person but find this very disturbing. My uncle was William Penn, who founded Pennsylvania on the basis of religious freedom. The government should not have ties to the church. This, as history shows us (eg. the Dark Ages) leads to religious persecution of religious minorities.

Do not go there! Keep church and state separate for the freedom of all people!

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

Erana Forbes

American Citizen Living Abroad

From: Sandy Farley <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Comments regarding the Religious Liberty Commission Report Draft – SK Farley

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 00:57:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a practicing Secular Wiccan for more than 45 years, and a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

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

Based on the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs. It makes those of us who live lives guided by other faiths - or no faith at all - unsafe and targets us as "other" in government, business, and school environments. It smacks of theocracy, not republican democracy. My father spent his career in the Air Force as an officer and pilot, and I served nearly 40 years in federal and state government roles. I am deeply committed to the constitutional principle of separation of church and state as our founders promised us in writing 250 years ago. Further, I believe churches now regularly abuse the political separation of churches from government processes and act as businesses which should be taxed to provide needed services to their respective communities across the nation.

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

Sincerely,
SK Farley
Central Arizona

From: Barbara Devlin <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 00:59:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly oppose the current RLC proposal to eliminate the separation of church and state and to “build a bridge” between church and state.

I strongly object to the removal of the Johnson Amendment or any alteration of same and request and support that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.

Respectfully

Barbara Devlin

From: Adrian Ionescu <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 01:33:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

My name is **Adrian Ionescu**. I was born in Romania and lived under a communist regime before immigrating to South Africa in 1991. Having experienced firsthand the consequences of government influence over matters of conscience and religion, I write with deep concern regarding the direction proposed in the Commission's draft report.

Religious liberty is one of the most precious freedoms a society can protect. It safeguards not only the right to practice one's faith, but also the right not to be coerced by the state in matters of conscience. Throughout history, the healthiest societies have been those that respected both freedom of religion and freedom from government interference in religious belief and practice.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve the historic principle of the separation of church and state. This principle has protected both religious institutions and civil government for generations by ensuring that neither exercises improper authority over the other.

I am particularly concerned about recommendations that could expand government involvement in religious institutions or blur the distinction between civil authority and religious practice. While faith-based organizations make valuable contributions to society, government endorsement, financial dependence, or preferential treatment of particular religious viewpoints can unintentionally undermine religious equality and freedom of conscience for all citizens.

True religious liberty means that every individual should be free to worship God according to the dictates of conscience—or not to worship at all—without coercion, discrimination, or government favoritism.

As someone who values the biblical principle that faith must be freely chosen, I respectfully ask the Commission to carefully consider the long-term implications of any recommendations that could weaken these constitutional protections.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for public comment and for considering the views of citizens and concerned individuals around the world who recognize the United States' longstanding influence in promoting religious freedom.

Respectfully,

Adrian Ionescu
South Africa

--
Adrian Ionescu
[REDACTED] PII

From: Rick Winans <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 01:48:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

“I agree with Pillar of Freedom’s comments. Please implement them.”

I do not need government agent who with great faith took a monkey bone called it LUCY and with conviction says she is my ancestor. Nor do I what said agency to take the Nebraska Man and make me a relative to a pig, the scope of error is too great. Keep government operating in its lane and church working in Gods vineyard, He will provide payment. Gods written word shows He keeps accurate records of actions and motives of all. Be a Neamiah, build up the wall between church and state. All pray, some to God. The repeal of the Johnson Amendment, one brick down. Expansion of funding of religious organizations another brick taken down.

"BUILD THAT WALL!" Donald Trump We need a border between State and the Church. The walls of Babylon were 80 feet thick, wide enough for two chariot teams of four horses each to pass one another; that should do it. Eternal consequences rest in the decisions made by this wall. MAY YOU BE BLESSED WITH WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING, DECERNMENT AND COURAGE BY THE CREATOR GOD OF ALL THAT IS. SO BE IT.

Sincerely,

RICHARD WINANS

TACOMA WASHINGTON

From: Michael Newhouse <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA,
CELEBRATING RELIGION AS A POSITIVE, THE RISE OF 'RELIGIOUS' ATHEISM –
MICHAEL NEWHOUSE

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 03:25:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I read your Draft Report with great encouragement. It is wonderful to see energy and real action put toward restoring religious liberty in our country after almost two decades of attack.

As a believer in Christ, the son of a deacon and the Catholic Church, a double Domer grad of Notre Dame, and someone who has raised funds for scores of religious groups (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim), I am heartened. Personally, it is wonderful to see so many Catholic bishops serving on the Commission.

Not to grind an axe, but I was disappointed that there was zero acknowledgment of often virulent Anti-Catholicism in our nation's history - from Nativism/Know-Nothings to the KKK second wave to Blaine amendments against Catholic schools. There has been no greater organized public attack on any religion in our nation's history greater than that against Catholics (#2 would be KKK against Jews). And it was largely perpetrated by Protestants against Catholics (and in the case of 'civil rights' secularization, Jewish orgs against Catholics). Our government also stood by silently while the Communist government of Mexico outlawed Catholicism and hunted priests...and when the Spanish republicans killed 7,000 priests and monks in cold blood during the few years of the Spanish Civil War. Yes, all groups have their gripes, but truly **"Anti-Catholicism is the last remaining acceptable prejudice in America."** The assaults of Communism even today are often direct attacks against the Catholic Church. This Communist infiltration is often masked as "equity" for LGBTQIA+ people and weaponized by government entities in the US to attack the Church for daring to stand for life, against abortion and infanticide and euthanasia, against gender mutilation of children, and against state-sanctioned and celebrated s*domy.

As our nation has secularized, we have seen a great increase in misery and despair, largely due to the breakdown of families...exacerbated by state-sanctioned and pushed programs that actively undermine our recognition of God. This has led to skyrocketing divorce and child abuse and out-of-wedlock births, and cratering birth rates. Only by acknowledging God as our Father (and the Church as our Mother!) can we live as brothers, united in Jesus Christ.

This secularization has eroded religious practice, plummeting it to a 30% shadow of its 1965 high-water-mark self. There is no acknowledgment of that in the report (I realize you can't cover everything, but context is crucial). We are in a religious crisis moment in our culture and have been since the 1970's. Mainline Protestantism has collapsed. Judaism is thin. Catholicism barely survived. Evangelical Protestantism has swelled...but how deep are its roots? Ironically, this crisis has changed the landscape. Now all religious groups see each other as allies and aggressive secularist/Marxists as the foe. That is the great challenge - violent Anti-Christian Leftism has become our unofficial state religion, often officially promoted and funded by the government that was supposed to 'make no law concerning an establishment of religion.' For decades, our federal and state governments have made Anti-Christian secularism the state religion and have essentially discriminated against believers at an industrial scale.

It must end.

Not by continuing the same and merely making exceptions and carve-outs for religious people, but by seeing religion (especially Christianity, the faith of our Founding Fathers) as critical public virtue and Anti-Christian Communism as a direct attack on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness guaranteed by all. It is atheists and secularists who should be tolerated and given grudging exception, not normalized, much less state-supported. Only faith can gird us against the temptations and madness of Communism and prevent our fall.

Only faith can ground us and restore us to wholesomeness and amity.

I see this Draft as a very good first step to restoring sanity in our Republic and moving us toward that day when we once again recognize Religion as the foundational virtue that makes all others possible. **Only by appeal to**

our Creator can we know our rights and how to exercise them rightly.

Thank you for your service and devotion to our nation and to God and may your efforts bear great fruit.

May we be one as He is One.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Michael Newhouse

+Martyrs of Gorkum, pray for us.

From: tim mohonen <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 04:23:43 -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.

Sincerely,
Timo
Oakridge, Oregon.

From: Karen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report – Karen Titzer

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 05:02:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with the draft report by this commission. The USA was founded on religious freedom for all and should remain that way. It is wrong to push a particular religion on citizens and school students by posting religious writings in schools or public places. This will result in dividing our country and costing taxpayers because of the court costs to stop this activity. We are a nation which prides itself on diversity which includes many different religions and beliefs. Keep the separation of church and state.

From: sharongriggs <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] My freedom

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 07:44:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please don't let government control our church and do not let any church (mine or other) control my government.
This is personal. Thanks Sharon Griggs Michigan
Sent from my Glaxy

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 9 / Healthcare Conscience -Kristine Matlock

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 07:44:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs.

Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights, and culturally grounded maternity care.

From: Janet Finesilver <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Janet Finesilver, Report from the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 07:50:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a US citizen, residing in New Jersey.

I am opposed to the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission. Rather than ensuring religious liberty, their recommendations would result in government promotion of the Christian religion and government sponsored coercion.

Many of the original colonists came to America due to their desire to escape religious persecution in their country of origin. Our founding fathers created the wall of separation of church and state to ensure religious liberty in America, including the right of non-worship in the case of atheism.

The government should have no role in where, how or whether people worship any deity or deities or whether they worship at all, beyond protecting their right to freely practice or abstain from practicing their beliefs, so long as those beliefs do no harm to others.

From: Lisa Collins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 07:55:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Seperation of Church and State is not ambiguous. Keep religion out of our government. I am watching, spreading the word and voting!

From: Linda Walden <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 08:09:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a concerned citizen and Christian to urge you not to implement the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. Our great nation was established 250 years ago by men and women who came to this country, fleeing religious persecution and government control. Religious freedom is bound in our churches remaining separate from government funding in any form. Our dependence and allegiance is to our Creator God only. Please do not allow any avenues to breach the current wall of separation.

Sincerely,

Linda Sue Walden
Winchester, Virginia

From: Charles Lavine <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 08:20:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Constitution does not specifically state separation of church and state. However, government establishment of a religion is prohibited. It follows that government encroachment into religious activities to insert political agenda into them is a way to establish religion. Please keep religion and government safe from each other. Reinforce, do not destroy, the wall of separation.

Respectfully,

Charles Lavine

From: Ralph Bain <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 08:38:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good Morning,

The recent report of claims there is no separation of church and state is of deep concern to me and many of my Sda faith. Liberty of Conscience is a God given right and worship between man and God is solely between him and his maker. History is littered with terrible results of church state union. The church is far better if the holy spirit empowers it to spread the gospel rather than state sponsored worship.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,
Ralph Bain

Sent from my iPhone

From: Theresa Morningstar <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 08:41:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I believe church and state should be separated. To ensure everyone has the freedom to religion.

Thank you,
Theresa Morningstar

From: Pat Noonan <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Free Will

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 08:44:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: IMG_0322.jpeg



We have laws to protect citizens from injustice, violence, harassment “etc”.
As long as individuals, groups, movements, and religious activities do not participate in breaking just laws we should endorse tolerance. It is necessary for free will to prevail.

God gave us free will, as His did & does prioritize it for all mankind. The things that are Cesar's refers to obeying the laws outlined in our original constitution.

God's laws are the Ten Commandments. Our Catechism outlines and explain His laws according to Catholic Doctrine. There is no intent to impose upon the free will of people of other faiths or beliefs. There is one exception and it is stated as in the fact that the - USA claims 'One Nation Under One God'. Satan and his minions are desperate to make our country 'One Nation Under Satan'. Anything satanic must be legally prohibited in one Nation Under One God. Our last administration joined in with Satan's league to work for his purpose. We cannot serve God and Satan.

Pope John Paul II acknowledged that we are living in the end times. The fallen angels are scared because their time is short.

We need St. Michael & his Angels to fight with the church militant in a battle for the soul of our country.

From: sonojmc <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-- Chapter 10 (Conscience and Coercion in Vaccine Policy) Jeanne M. Chaffin

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 08:53:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Concerning Conscience and Coercion in Vaccine Policy, choice of vaccination should be based on a persons choice and NOTHING to do with the policy of the CDC or places of employment or schools. Humans are created by GOD with complete independence and self-governance. A person or parent should not need a medical or religious exemption to opt out of vaccination for any reason, much less to keep their job or to attend daycare or school.

As stated in the Declaration of Independence, "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." Liberty is the condition of being free from oppressive restriction or control by a government or power, the right or power to act as one chooses! Forced vaccination infringes on the Right of Liberty.

I am very concerned with what happened during the COVID 19 mandates. Again, no one should be FORCED to be vaccinated in order to work or attend school! Thankfully, my workplace accepted my religious exemption (not that they advertised they would accept them). I believe, my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit see Corinthians 6:19. God created me, for I am "fearfully and wonderfully made" as Psalm 139:14 tells us. Every human is created by God. He created our immune system and we do not need vaccinations to fight off the potential "risk" of illness or disease. He teaches us to "not be afraid" and that we have divine protection. I trust in Jesus and His healing abilities.

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From: Timmo <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 08:55:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a person of faith and concerned citizen (currently living abroad), to express my deep unease with recommendations in your draft report that would weaken the separation of church and state—particularly proposals to use government funds for religious activities and to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

The idea of replacing the wall of separation with a “bridge” is misguided. That wall was not erected by secularists to suppress religion. It was built by believers who understood that keeping church and state distinct is the best way to protect the church’s freedom. A bridge would instead open the door for government money and political influence to flow directly into religious institutions. Churches would soon find themselves competing for grants and answering to politicians rather than to God alone.

I am very much aware of how much persecution occurred as a result of church and state not being separate during the Middle Ages, and history repeatedly shows that when the two become entangled, neither ultimately benefits. Political corruption seeps into faith communities, and religion loses its respect in the eyes of the religious and non-religious alike. Separation of church and state is not hostile to faith—it is one of the key reasons religion has remained vibrant in America.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider these recommendations. Please preserve the wall of separation. It safeguards the integrity of the church far more than it constrains it, and it remains the surest way to keep both church and state truly free.

Thank you for considering this perspective.

Sincerely,

Timothy Erb

New Taipei, Taiwan, (R.O.C.)

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

From: Deborah M <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:19:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

Sincerely,
Deborah Moor

From: james sutton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Commission report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:32:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs,

I just want to register my concern that less and less credence seems to be given to the importance regarding separation of church and state in our great country. Freedom to worship according to one's own conscience has long been a cherished, nation strengthening, and valuable liberty in our nation. I pray that we continue to have this historic freedom.

Respectfully,

Carolyn Sutton

Sent from my iPhone

From: Joe Baker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report Public Comment

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:35:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello My Name Is Joe,

I am writing because I feel that Church & State should be separate and that Politics mixed in with Religious views to run this country just don't mix. I oppose the Religious Liberty Commission and its report to change the Narrative.

- The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.
- The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.
- Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.
- Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.
- Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

As a Public Witness,
Joseph Baker

From: Sonja DeRose <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Separation of church and state intact

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:39:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to you because I'm very concerned about the issue of separation of Church and State, and strongly oppose anything that will eliminate this vital separation. This is one of the vital and critically important constitutional principles that our country was founded on. Without this, freedom of religion, will not be long lived, and America will soon no longer be the Land of the Free.

Please see the quote below from 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."

As a loyal American, who can trace my ancestors directly back to the Mayflower, I urge you to keep separation of Church and State intact so that our country can continue to be "the land of the Free and the home of the brave."

Sincerely,
Sonja DeRose

Sent from my iPhone

From: Kirstan McQuinn <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State Issue

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:42:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good day,

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I support the principle of separation between church and state and agree that it remains one of the strongest safeguards of both religious freedom and individual liberty in the United States. History shows that faith communities and government function best when neither controls nor depends on the other.

While people of faith should be free to bring their beliefs into public life, the government should remain neutral among religions and avoid policies that blur the line between religious institutions and political power. Maintaining this separation protects freedom of conscience for all Americans and helps prevent both government influence over religion and religious influence over government.

As a citizen of the United States, I believe preserving this balance is essential to protecting the freedoms our nation was founded upon.

Respectfully,

~Kirstan McQuinn

"LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress." ~ Isaiah 33:2 ~

From: Jonathan Burt <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect the constitutional principle of religious liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:47:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding any recommendation that would weaken the longstanding constitutional principle that government should neither establish religion nor interfere with its free exercise.

The First Amendment protects the freedom of every American to worship according to conscience—or not to worship at all. That protection depends on government remaining neutral in matters of religion. History has repeatedly shown that when civil government gains authority over religious matters, both religious liberty and religion itself suffer.

Thomas Jefferson described the First Amendment as building “a wall of separation between Church and State.” Whether or not that exact phrase appears in the Constitution, the principles embodied in the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses have served our nation well for more than two centuries. They protect people of every faith and those of no faith alike.

I urge the Commission to reaffirm these foundational constitutional protections and to reject any recommendations that would blur the proper distinction between the institutions of church and state. Religious belief is a matter of conscience, and government should never possess the authority to direct, favor, or discourage religious faith or practice.

Please preserve the constitutional framework that has made the United States a beacon of religious liberty.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Burt

From: Hodge Podge Life <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation between church and state.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:55:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Angela Graybeal

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. I don't have any on the edge of your seat persecution stories, I am a simple, country girl, who believes strongly in keeping the separation. I feel the need to raise my voice in alarm and pray that our government will do the right thing and keep the Wall of Separation of Church and State the way it is, I feel that our Religious Freedoms is hinging on what is done. Thank you so much for your time and consideration in this and I as always will continue to pray for our government that they will keep all in mind when performing their duties.

Sincerely ,Angela Graybeal

Pearcy, Arkansas

From: Laurel Damsteegt <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] IMPORTANT! Keep separation of church and state. Please!

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 09:57:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

Please maintain the current wall between church and state. We need separation of church and state to maintain religious liberty in these United States!

Thank you for listening.

Laurel Damsteegt

Dunlap, TN

Sent from my iPad

From: Aimee Minnaugh <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Chapter 9 Healthcare Conscience

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:00:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

Please include clear protections for traditional midwifery and faith-based birth practices in the final report. Religious families should not face unnecessary burden or discrimination when choosing care consistent with their beliefs.

Federal guidance should support conscience protections, parental rights (choice/autonomy), and culturally grounded maternity care options.

I have several friends who have chosen to deliver their babies at home and have had wonderful experiences doing so. I seriously considered this option with my last birth. This should continue to be an available option to any family who wants to choose this delivery method and therefore those midwife professionals who make this possible need to be permitted and supported.

Regards,
Aimee

From: Jeff Borton <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission–Jeff Borton

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:00:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello, the following are my comments on the draft report presented by the Religious Liberty Commission last month. I would like a response to these comments to this email address. Thank you!

Public Comment for Religious Liberty report:

I believe that the idea of religious liberty is indeed a central strength of our nation and a right that we have thru the Constitution. However, this report and the committee that produced it came from a limited and misleading perspective, despite their words. First, the committee itself had no representation for any faiths other than Christian and Jewish, making it inherently biased. Second, although words such as “liberty” and “free exercise of religion” are used throughout the text, they cannot hide the fact that this effort is primarily support for a theocratic government which would eliminate the very liberties it espouses. Third, moral standards are critical to any democracy but dictating one’s relationship with God (whether someone chooses to have one or not) does not accomplish this goal and undermines the First Amendment. Finally, using churches as platforms for political purposes is neither beneficial for the church nor the country, since it degrades the integrity and independence of both institutions.

Working to repeal the Johnson Amendment is a mistake. It does not limit the free speech of churches but protects the country from politicians getting into the pews and pulpits of this country.

This report spends a great deal of time exposing alleged persecution of people who stand up for their religious views. I would agree this behavior is not acceptable. For example, firing a person for their views on abortion should not be allowed, regardless of their actual position on the issue. However, religious freedom comes with responsibility to protect the rights of all who are in this country, not just those you agree with. That is the whole purpose of putting a distance between the church and the state. The idea that this separation is somehow unjust comes from a committee that has already determined its conclusion before any of the “investigations.”

For the reasons stated above, I believe this report and its recommendations do not benefit anyone other than a narrow group of religious nationalists and their political allies.

From: corina monroe <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:25:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

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

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

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

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

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not

believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

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

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

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

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

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

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

and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

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

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

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

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

We remain, Yours truly,
In Christ

From: Song Osun <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] About the wrong doing of removing the separation of church and state in the USA

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:26:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello! It is wrong to remove the wall separating the state and the church, because history has shown us time and again that when church and state unite persecution soon follows that union.

Don't you remember that the USA was founded on the principal that the church should never have political power. And it was founded on that principal because the founding fathers had fresh in their minds the memory of the place they fled from, Europe, where the church (the catholic church) ruled with an iron fist, and crushed all who had different opinion to their world views.

Do you want history to repeat it self? Do you want give your power to the beast of Revelation 13?

By uniting the state with the church, you will actually give political power to the first beast which is the papacy, and to the falls prophet which is the fallen, worldly protestantism (because protestantism also failed and is "fallen, is fallen" according to Revelation 18:2 = the second angel's message).

If you give political power to the worldly protestantism, he will give it to the papacy, and they together will enforce the mark of the beast, which is the sunday law, which is worship to the papacy and satan, and is breaking the 4-th commandment that says to keep holy the Sabbath day=Saturday. And also if you unite the state and the church, you will trample all of the principals of the Constitution. You will also remove the freedom of religion and the freedom of conscience. Enforced religion and worship is not based on true faith and true love, and is just what the papacy did in the Dark Ages, it's a form of fascism but with religious flavor.

I don't want to see the USA fall into religious despotism. I don't want to see the freedom loving pillar of the world to fall and fail us all around the world.

May God Jesus Christ open your eyes to see, and to study and understand the books of Daniel (Old testament) and Revelation (new testament), and to do the right thing, to keep God's law and not fall into the trap of papism.

Do the right thing and don't mingle the state and the church, and uphold the second table of the 10 commandments, and leave the first 4 commandments between God and the man. The last 6 commandments are civil commandments between the people, but the first 4 commandments are between God and man (they are personal choice).

Cheers and i hope this message reaches people with conscience and intellect in order to make the right decision which is the will of out Heavenly Father - freedom of conscience to be able to freely choose God or the world, because love should always be a free choice!

From: Tina Olson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:36:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am more than strongly opposed to the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report; and I urge the DOJ to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith.

Tina Olson

Wilkeson, Washington

[REDACTED] PII

From: James Bowen <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] An Appeal to the United States Religious Liberty Commission.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:37:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the United States Commission on Religious Liberty,

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the assertion that the United States Constitution does not establish a meaningful separation between church and state. Such a position is inconsistent with the text of the First Amendment, the intent of its principal architects, and the long American tradition of safeguarding liberty of conscience through the institutional separation of civil and ecclesiastical authority.

The First Amendment declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These twin protections were designed to secure religious liberty by preventing government from exercising authority over matters of faith. The Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause are not competing principles; rather, they work together to ensure that religion remains free from governmental control and also critically that government remains free from sectarian domination.

Thomas Jefferson articulated this principle in his famous 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. Referring to the First Amendment, Jefferson wrote that the American people had built "a wall of separation between Church & State." Contrary to modern efforts to dismiss this phrase as a mere metaphor without constitutional significance, Jefferson's statement reflected a principle already embedded in American constitutional thought. The purpose of the wall was not hostility toward religion but protection of religion from governmental interference and protection of government from sectarian control.

James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," expressed the same principle with even greater force. In his 1785 "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," Madison rejected proposals to support religion through taxation, arguing that religion "must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man." He maintained that civil society possesses no authority over the religious duties individuals owe to their Creator. For Madison, the right of conscience was an unalienable right that preceded the formation of government itself.

Madison's concerns were not theoretical. He observed throughout history that alliances between religious institutions and civil power had damaged both. In his later writings, he noted that ecclesiastical establishments had produced "pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; and in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution." His conclusion was clear: the purity of religion and the freedom of government are best preserved when neither exercises authority over the other.

The same principles were vigorously defended a century later by Alonzo T. Jones during the national debate over the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill of 1888. Appearing before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Jones argued that civil government possesses jurisdiction only over civil rights and civil conduct. Matters of morality (as defined by what is owed God) including worship, doctrine, belief, and religious obligation lie beyond the lawful authority of the state because they concern the relationship between the individual and God.

Jones warned that once government assumes the authority to legislate religious observance, it ceases to be a protector of liberty and becomes an instrument of religious coercion. He argued that even laws supported by a religious majority become unconstitutional when their purpose is to enforce religious duties or observances. The central question is not whether a law reflects a moral value held by religious people, but whether the state is exercising authority in an area reserved to conscience.

In his testimony and subsequent writings, Jones emphasized that Christ himself distinguished between civil and religious authority when He declared, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.” Jones interpreted this teaching as establishing a permanent distinction between the jurisdiction of government and the jurisdiction of religion. Civil government may regulate matters affecting public order and the equal rights of citizens, but it may not direct worship, compel religious observance, or favor one set of religious convictions over another.

The constitutional structure adopted by the Founders reflects precisely this distinction. The federal government was granted no power over religion. Article VI forbids religious tests for public office. The First Amendment prohibits laws respecting an establishment of religion. Together, these provisions reject the European and ultimately Roman Catholic model of government-supported religion and establish a framework in which faith flourishes through persuasion rather than coercion.

Historically it was Roman Catholicism that stated “That the State must be separated from the Church is a thesis absolutely false, a most pernicious error. Based, as it is, on the principle that the State must not recognize any religious cult, it is in the first place guilty of a great injustice to God.” Pope Pius X, *Vehementer Nos*, February 11th, 1906. It was also those same Catholic principles that led to bloodshed and inquisition historically when the state stepped into the region of a man’s conscience. Historically in the late 19th century, when the National Reform Movement was also advocating similar principles in the United States, there were individuals of my own faith who were placed in Chain Gangs in Tennessee for no other reason than they labored on a common working day (sunday) and rested as God commands on the 7th day of the week. It is deeply concerning to me to see Christian Nationalists calling for blue laws and Sunday legislation once again as part of the same movement involved in tearing down and renouncing separation of church and state.

Those who deny the existence of a constitutional separation between church and state often argue that religion influenced the moral outlook of many of the Founders. That observation is undoubtedly true. Yet it does not follow that the Founders intended religious institutions to wield civil authority or that they intended government to exercise authority over religion. The historical record demonstrates the opposite. Jefferson, Madison, and many others believed that religion is most secure when it is independent of governmental power.

Indeed, the American commitment to religious liberty was revolutionary precisely because it departed from centuries of religious establishments. The Founders did not seek merely to tolerate dissenting beliefs under a dominant religious system; they sought to prevent government from acquiring jurisdiction over religion altogether. This principle protects the rights of all citizens—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and every other believer or nonbeliever—by ensuring that conscience remains free from political control. It is through liberty that true religion governed by the heart, is best allowed to flourish.

The wall of separation between church and state is therefore not a modern invention, nor a judicial distortion of the Constitution. It is a concise description of a principle deeply rooted in the First Amendment, articulated by Jefferson, defended by Madison, and reaffirmed by later advocates of religious liberty such as Alonzo T. Jones. The purpose of this separation is not to exclude religion from public life, but to prevent the use of governmental power to advance, enforce, privilege, or suppress religious belief.

For these reasons, I urge the Commission to reject any interpretation of the Constitution that diminishes the separation of church and state. The preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the distinction between civil authority and matters of conscience. That distinction is not only a constitutional necessity, a Christian and Biblical one, but also one of the greatest achievements of the American experiment in liberty.

Respectfully submitted,

James Bowen

From: Tina Olson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report – Tina Olson

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:41:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This dangerous framework seeks to redefine the Establishment Clause and undermine the critical separation of church and state. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a gross violation of civil rights. Furthermore, these recommendations threaten vital healthcare access—including reproductive freedom, miscarriage management, and transgender care—leaving vulnerable communities without safe alternatives. Finally, attempting to dismantle the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally injects dark political money into tax-exempt religious institutions.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

Tina Olson
Wilkeson, Washington

[REDACTED] PII

Sent from my iPad

From: "S. Ocker" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Liberty of conscious

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:41:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

I oppose the union of church and state. Our freedoms are being stripped.

From: Rae Howard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report – Rae Howard

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:44:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Coalition,

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

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

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

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

Thank you for considering my comments,

Rae Howard

From: Jo Anne Gillespie <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:45:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

I totally object to even the idea of your "Religious LIberty Commission Report." It should have never been compiled. In America, our Founding Fathers set in motion through the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that the government shall not establish a religion. They did not want America to experience the bloodshed created in Europe by forced religious precepts.

Your report is full of hand-picked quotes. I recommend you consider these quotes:

"The Government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion..." – John Adams – 1796.

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute..." – Jonn F. Kennedy – 9/12/1960.

"We establish no religion, nor will we ever. Church and state are, and must remain, separate..." - Ronald Reagan – 10/26/1984.

"I've always been fully committed to separation of church and state." Jimmy Carter – 1/9/2012

Separation of Church and state is essential to freedom of religion or freedom from religion. The White Christians Nationalists are trying to make this a Christian Nation, which it is NOT. I recommend you trash this sham report as traitorous to the Constitution of the United States.

Jo Anne Gillespie

--

Jo Anne Gillespie
[REDACTED] PII (c)

From: Kacie <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:46:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to respectfully submit my public comment regarding the Religious Liberty Commission's recent report.

As an American citizen, I deeply value both religious liberty and the protections guaranteed by the First Amendment. I believe one of our nation's greatest strengths has been its commitment to protecting the free exercise of religion while also preventing government from favoring, establishing, or becoming entangled with any particular faith.

History demonstrates that when civil and religious authority become closely united, both institutions suffer. Government begins to influence matters of conscience, and religion risks becoming dependent upon political power rather than the voluntary faith of its adherents. The result has often been discrimination against religious minorities, suppression of dissent, and the erosion of genuine religious freedom.

Our Constitution wisely protects every American's right to worship according to conscience, or not to worship at all, without government coercion or favoritism. These protections have allowed people of diverse faiths to live together in peace and have made the United States a beacon of religious liberty throughout the world.

I am concerned that portions of the Commission's report could be interpreted in ways that blur the historic boundaries between church and state. While I fully support robust protection for every individual's free exercise of religion, I urge the Department of Justice to preserve the constitutional principle that government should neither establish religion nor privilege one faith tradition over another.

True religious liberty protects the rights of all people, including those whose beliefs differ from the majority. It is strongest when faith is embraced through conviction rather than encouraged through governmental influence.

I respectfully ask the Department to carefully consider the long-term implications of any recommendations that could weaken these constitutional safeguards and to continue defending both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause as complementary protections of the freedoms our nation cherishes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this public comment and for your service to the American people.

Respectfully,

Kacie Ask
El Dorado, CA

Sent from my iPhone

From: Gerard Damsteegt <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] URGENT! Maintain the separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:50:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not remove the wall between church and state. Throughout history persecution has ensued when the church is in control of government. The genius of American law is that everyone is welcome to believe the way they want with no Christian overlords.

Thank you for listening.
Dr. P. Gerard Damsteegt

From: Jason Lombard <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerned about Stance on Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:54:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am deeply concerned about the findings of the Religious Liberty Commission. I believe that the United States government has no authority to tell its citizens what to believe, or how to worship—and that it ultimately lacks authority over religion. This was the case when our country was founded, and the idea of separation of church and state has been upheld repeatedly in countless rulings. Whether a person is religious or not (I am), these separations have been pivotal to the success of this country and are consistent not only with the beliefs and practices of its founding fathers but also informed by firsthand experience of the intermingling of church and state in England.

Please do not allow the extreme or minority voices to reverse one of the pivotal moorings that our country was founded upon and has succeeded because of, the separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

Jason Lombard
Laurel, Maryland

From: Doreen Tong <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:55:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Seperation of church and state is necessary to insure fair and impartial treatment of it's citizens, and protects our rights stated under the first amendment. This freedom is what we fought for and built our country on. This is what God blessed !!

From: Karen Salmonson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on report by Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 10:58:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

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

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

From: John J Deighan <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-RELIGIOUS LIBERTY DRAFT REPORT-JOHN J. DEIGHAN

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:00:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

While this document skirts the establishment clause by being merely "guidelines", there are a number of problems. I will enumerate the most worrisome.

The **federal-funding penalty language** is one of the danger zones. The report repeatedly suggests limiting federal support to non-compliant districts "where feasible." That can be constitutional only if Congress or a valid statute authorizes the condition, the condition is clear, related to the federal program, not independently unconstitutional, and not coercive. That is the basic *South Dakota v. Dole* spending-power framework. A vague executive threat to cut funds without statutory authority would be much more vulnerable.

The **Johnson Amendment recommendation** is politically and legally sensitive. The report recommends guidance to ensure it is not applied to chill religious leaders' First Amendment rights, and separately recommends repeal. Congress may repeal or amend the statute. Executive guidance can clarify enforcement priorities, but the executive branch cannot simply nullify a statute it dislikes. Recent IRS treatment of church political speech has already drawn controversy for that reason.

As a set of general religious-liberty guidelines, the document is mostly within the current constitutional mainstream, especially under the Supreme Court's recent religion-clause cases. The vulnerable parts are not the basic claim that religious exercise deserves protection; they are the implementation details: coercion in schools, official endorsement of religion, unclear funding cutoffs, selective enforcement, and executive attempts to override statutes rather than enforce or seek amendment of them.

From: Renee Yarde <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep the wall of Seperation

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:02:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission: I do not agree with removing the wall between separation of church and state. It is what defines what it is to have religious freedom in that as Christians we can follow the dictates of conscience which God has give us as a right to have and through which He directs us , it allows us to make a choice so we are not forced, and for the government to remove the w gr gr all, then eventually the government will then impose and force it's will in that space which God has not given the government the right have.

From: Judy Saint <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY REPORT - JUDY SAINT

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:06:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

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

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

From: Debra Allen Skomer <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission – Debra Skomer

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:08:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Friends,

I am writing as an American who cares deeply about democracy, freedom of conscience, and the equal treatment of people of every religion—and of no religion. I urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026, draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Religious liberty is protected when government remains neutral toward religion, not when it elevates one faith above others. Yet the Commission's membership and proceedings appear to have been shaped largely by extreme Christian voices, while the perspectives of religious minorities, nonreligious Americans, and others outside that narrow tradition were marginalized. That is precisely the kind of religious favoritism the Establishment Clause is intended to prevent.

The statements made during the Commission's hearings, together with the recommendations in the draft report, suggest that this process is not designed to protect religious freedom for everyone. Instead, it appears to advance a Christian nationalist agenda that would use federal power to grant special status to one religious viewpoint.

Finalizing this report would not strengthen religious liberty. It would weaken the constitutional protections that allow people of many different beliefs to live together as equals. I urge the Commission to reject the draft in full, issue no further recommendations, and disband.

The federal government should reaffirm its commitment to a pluralistic and secular constitutional system—one that protects the freedom of conscience of every American, regardless of faith, belief, or nonbelief.

Sincerely,

Debra Skomer
American Citizen

From: Rolf Olson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:11:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

As an ordained Christian pastor I strongly support the constitutional provision of separation of church and state. When the first amendment prohibits favoritism toward one religion it threatens all people of faith. "E pluribus unum" was our founding motto— out of many, one. Among the "many" are people of various faiths. Please keep the separation to promote healthy government and a free people.

Rev. Rolf Olson

From: Taylor Giangregorio <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:13:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom this may concern,

My warmest and kindest regards to you. My name is Taylor and I am a Religious Liberty Leader at my local Church in Tennessee. I wanted to reach out to you in regards to the DOJ recently announcing their desire to do away with the separation of church and state.

Whether or not it is in the constitution, we understand our country was mainly founded due to the religious persecution happening in Rome by the papacy which was broadly a church state unification. Our History tells us that we fled Rome and Europe to escape this ungodly tyranny of Church ruling the state and dictating religion. We realize that any time the church unites with the state to enforce their beliefs, it spells persecution as well as diminishes the rights to Religious Liberty for all.

I am politely informing you that we should do all we can to avoid the unity of church and state in order to genuinely preserve everyone's right to freedom to worship according to the dictate of their own personal conscience and not being coerced by the state on how to worship as the state sees fit. By uniting church and state we would basically religious liberty which is what the country was founded for in the first place, a state with no pope. A state, not controlled or lead by a church.

If you would like to have a discussion on this, I am more than happy to go more in depth. But for now my warning is that we steer clear of uniting the church with the state based off of what we have learned in History, such as Jesus when the Roman Governor(state) and the Pharisees(church) united to crucify Christ. There is nothing new under the sun. The very same thing will happen if you allow this. Genuine Christians living for Jesus Christ will be ultimately martyred by the state whilst the state believes it is serving God. Hence why Christ said "they will kill you, thinking they do God service." John 16:2

We must respect the 1st Amendment. In the first amendment it guarantees that the government cannot establish a national religion or prohibit individuals from practicing their faith or not practicing. Atheists even have the right to not worship. If they're convicted in their conscience and the state penalizes them in any way for not worshiping, then that is not freedom that is coercion and a violation of their freedom to make their own choice to worship or not worship. The Lord Jesus Christ said "render to Caesar that which is Caesars and unto God the things that are God's". Caesar is the state God is the head of the church. Caesar has no business meddling with the church.

I am highly recommending against the unity of the church and state for the simple fact that it will totally abolish religious freedom in America for everyone, thus turning America into an image of the Papal Dark Ages. Please consider this and if you have any questions or are up for a discussion or Bible study on this topic, reach out to me via this email.

I thank you for your time and consideration on this matter and pray you will seek the Lord's guidance on this matter.

Respectfully,
Taylor Giangregorio

From: ted edwards <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty commission report. opposition to the report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:24:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

My name is Ted Ashburn. I am writing to voice opposition to the RLC religious Liberty commission report. I do support and in favor of separation of church and state... thank you

From: Melody Baker <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:24:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am sending this email to state that I'm not in support of bringing church and state together.

Jesus said while on this earth that His kingdom was not of this world.

When church and state come together there is always persecution of people.

This happened here in the United States in the late 1800's. People went to prison because of blue laws, the same blue laws that are being set forward by some people currently.

Bringing church and state together removes a person's right to freedom of conscious. This freedom is given to every person on the planet, especially to those living in the United States of America.

Thank you

Melody Baker

From: Steve + Mary King <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Keep your religion out of my government] – [Robert King].

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:27:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 10, 2026

To the Pedophile Protector's Religious Liberty Commission:

I dissent! The Commission's advocacy to promote religion using government personal and resources is unconstitutional and will result in illegal actions I believe.

Public comment: The 15-day comment period is too short for this far-reaching federal report that proposes to substantially upset all government operations for the entire population of the USA. I request the Commission mail a written notice of comment period to every impacted adult in the USA and allow a minimum 60-day comment period. I believe the Commission's failure to provide adequate public notice and comment time reveals it has little actual interest in considering dissenting public comment concerning this plan to force spirit worship into our government.

Page 28: Chapter 1: Religion as an Indispensable Support

Religion: An Essential Aspect of What It Means to be Human

These statements are demonstrably wrong! The Commission's premise that religion is indispensable in all American lives is simply untrue. Tens of millions of Americans have no religious beliefs, including me. While people are welcome to believe whatever fantasy they want, it's perfectly clear to me that Abrahamic religion is a myth, and belief in the myth is certainly not indispensable for a life well lived. In fact, I find that life is rich, diverse, fabulous, and extraordinary, conceived without belief in ancient magic spirits. I certainly do not want my government to be involved in the promotion of any religious beliefs.

"There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

—Anne Nicol Gaylor, (1926-2015)

Page 28:

If you are going to quote James Madison it would be relevant to note that he consistently opposed mandatory government promotion of religion in both Virginia and America. Please add the following Madison quotes to better reflect his opinion on religion.

"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect,"

—James Madison wrote William Bradford on April 1, 1771.

“During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution. . . . Torrents of blood have been spilt in the old world, by vain attempts of the secular arm, to extinguish Religious discord, by proscribing all difference in Religious opinion.”

—James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance," 1785

Page 29: “Faith not only directs a person’s inner life, but brings us into community with each other and, for many religious persons, with God. Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter described this by saying religion “profoundly relates the life of man to the world in which he lives.”

Justice Frankfurter has a famous quote that summarizes his opinion on the dangers of government-imposed religion. Please add these quotes to the report:

“Separation means separation, not something less. Jefferson's metaphor in describing the relation between Church and State speaks of a 'wall of separation,' not a fine line easily overstepped. The public school is at once the symbol of our democracy and the most pervasive means for promoting our common destiny. In no activity of the State is it more vital to keep out divisive forces than in its schools, to avoid confusing, not to say fusing, what the Constitution sought to keep strictly apart. 'The great American principle of eternal separation' — Elihu Root's phrase bears repetition — is one of the vital reliances of our Constitutional system for assuring unities among our people stronger than our diversities. It is the Court's duty to enforce this principle in its full integrity.”

—U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, concurrence, *McCullum v. Board of Education*, Supreme Court of the United States, 333 U.S. 203, 212 (1948)

“When a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its professors are obliged to call for help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”

—Benjamin Franklin, "Poor Richard's Almanac" (1754)

"I'm completely in favor of the separation of Church and State. My idea is that these two institutions screw us up enough on their own, so both of them together is certain death." —George Carlin

“There was a time when religion ruled the world. It is known as the Dark Ages.” —Ruth Hurmence Green

“It is essential to understand that true freedom of Religion must include freedom from Religion.”—Paul Winchell

“That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief: but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no way diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.”

—Thomas Jefferson, The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, enacted on January 16, 1786

"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 prohibit the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between church and state."

— President Thomas Jefferson, Letter to the Baptists of Danbury, Connecticut, Jan. 1, 1802

"When the power, prestige and financial support of government is placed behind a particular religious belief, the indirect coercive pressure upon religious minorities to conform to the prevailing officially approved religion is plain."

— April 3, 1962, the Supreme Court Majority decision, written by Justice Hugo Black

"There is no argument worthy of the name that will justify the union of the Christian religion with the State. Every consideration of justice and equality forbids it. Every argument in favor of free Republican institutions is equally an argument in favor of a complete divorce of the State from the Church."

—Benjamin Underwood, "The Practical Separation of Church & State," (1876)

"No power of government ought to be employed in the endeavor to establish any system or article of belief on the subject of religion. In no instance has a system in regard to religion been ever established, but for the purpose, as well as with the effect of its being made an instrument of intimidation, corruption, and delusion, for the support of depredation and oppression in the hands of governments."

—Jeremy Bentham, ~1775 "Constitutional Code"

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute — where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote — where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference — and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

"I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish — where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source — where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials — and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

"Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end — where all men and all churches are treated as equal — where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice — where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind — and where Catholics, Protestants and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood."

—John F. Kennedy, Speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Sept. 12, 1960

"In a pluralistic society such as ours, who is to determine what prayer shall be spoken, and by whom? Legally, constitutionally, or otherwise, the state certainly has no such right."

—Martin Luther King Jr., on the Supreme Court's decision striking down prayer in public schools, (1965)

"Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private schools, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate."

—Ulysses S. Grant, address delivered in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1875

"We are lucky enough to be living in a country that not only guarantees the freedom to practice religion as we see fit, but also freedom from religious zealots who would persecute and prosecute and even physically harm those of us who do not believe as they do. ... Predicating patriotism on a citizen's belief in God is as anti-American as judging him on the color of his skin. It is wrong. It is useless. It is unconstitutional."

—Harvey Fierstein, (2004)

"Without the separation of church and state, free, spirited public debate is impossible. The mutual respect that is essential to democratic debate is lost when a president's opinions on public policy are used as some sort of perverse test of a citizen's standing with the Almighty."

—Norman Lear letter to President Ronald Reagan, asking him to "not use the office of the presidency as Evangelist in Chief or to further the notion that any particular group of Americans is to be accorded special standing because it practices any religion." (Harper's magazine, October 1984)

"Any religious stance on the part of government other than strict neutrality is a violation of our constitutional right to religious liberty". -- James Keegan, Ithaca, New York

Page 35, the conclusion of Chapter 1.

Although religion has a place in the lives of some people, George Washington's following quotes make it clear that religion has no place in our government. The founding of our country deliberately excluded religious myths for good reason. They are divisive and clannish. Please add these quotes to the Chapter 1 conclusion:

"Religious controversies are always productive of more acrimony & irreconcilable hatreds than those which spring from any other source."

— George Washington

"Of all the animosities which have existed among mankind, those which are caused by difference of sentiment in religion appear to be the most inveterate and distressing, and ought most to be deprecated. I was in hopes that the enlightened and liberal policy which has marked the present age would at least have reconciled Christians of every denomination, so far that we should never again see their religious disputes carried to such a pitch as to endanger the peace of society."

— George Washington, letter to Sir Edward Newenham, June 22, 1792.

"As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen; and as the said States never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it

is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”

—Article 11, Treaty of Tripoli was ratified by the United States Senate unanimously on June 7, 1797, taking effect June 10, 1797, with the signature of President John Adams.

Thank you for considering my comments and suggestions. Have a nice day!

Robert King

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

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:30:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religion does not belong in our government; putting the two together diminishes both separately.

A country that only reads one set of books cannot respond to a world that walks into a library without fear.

If you really want that old time religion, do not make it government policy.

James Ryan

From: Skip Jenkins <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:31:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of Church and State means exactly what it says. Period!

The 1st Amendment BARS the establishment of a state church. Period.

Requiring the posting of the 10 Commandments in every classroom is UNCONSTITUTIONAL. Period!

I believe the Constitution protects every individual's right to freely practice the religion of his/her choice, as well as the individual's freedom FROM religion; regardless of race, creed, marital status, sexuality, citizenship, or non-citizenship. Period.

And finally, Christian nationalism is in no way Christian. It is cruelty and hypocrisy wrapped in a patriotic scam. Period.

Skip Jenkins

From: charles thomas <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:32:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the Pillar of Freedom comments. I fully agree with the points raised and kindly request that you move forward with implementing them.

Thank you for your work on this important matter.

Best regards,

Charles Thomas

From: John Gilmore <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious action by government

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:33:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

For most of our government's history, we have generally avoided government control of religious practice. There's a good reason for that. Historically, when governments have enforced religious practices, persecution soon follows. We saw this even in the colonies, before the Constitution was written. Please don't bring that back.

Please don't mess with religious freedom.

John Gilmore

From [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Chapter Nine (Romig)

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:33:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public Comment Chapter Nine

I am a retired professor of counselor education with a specialty in marriage and family therapy (35 years full-time as a professor). I was a professor of counselor education at a public university for over 20 years and over 10 years at a Christian, faith-based university. I am a licensed marriage and family therapist (retired status). I also served as an officer and board member for about eight years of a state level division of my national professional association.

I applaud the work of the Commission and fully support the recommendations found in the draft report.

I am writing to share my concerns regarding religious freedom issues and conscience protections rights for mental health practitioners and students, particularly in the professional disciplines of counseling, counselor education and marriage and family therapy. The same issues raised in the section of the report regarding conscience protections for health care workers apply to mental health workers and students in mental health training programs.

As a retired professor who trained over one-thousand school counselors, licensed professional counselors and licensed marriage and family therapists, I am well aware of how training programs use the ethics codes of their respective professional associations (even if they are located in a state that has not adopted such a code) to violate first amendment rights of students. Accrediting associations mandate the use of such codes in order for a training program to receive accreditation.

Forms of ideological, worldview and moral hegemony dominate the counseling field that allow for little dissent on disputed moral matters. Students and trainees in the mental health disciplines who dissent risk facing remediation plans and potential gatekeeping out of training programs for failing to endorse and adopt the dominant ideologies and moral frameworks. There is an unwarranted perception in the counseling field that students with strong moral beliefs, particularly on matters related to sexual ethics and behavior will be at heightened risk of doing harm by imposing values on clients. Faculty members who dissent risk being marginalized, their opinions not taken seriously and their jobs placed at risk. Training programs that dissent risk losing accreditation.

The community suffers as clients/patients who dissent from the dominant ideologies of the profession fear they will be disrespected or even judged by mental health professionals who do not share their values. Many opt not to seek services. Increasing anecdotal evidence indicates all these problems are occurring, even to the point that bold statements are being made on social media and in professional trainings that mental health professionals do not have to provide services to clients holding to dissenting ideologies and moral frameworks. Consequently, the needs of significant numbers of persons needing mental health services likely are going unmet.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is the body authorized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to accredit counselor education training programs. In 2024, CACREP adopted standards that made social justice advocacy a central part of curriculum requirements. Accrediting bodies for the other professions utilize similar standards. Justice is clearly a debatable moral concept and privileged definitions allow for discrimination against those who question current working definitions held by leaders in the field. Standards adopted by accrediting associations provide justification for training programs to impose worldviews and ideologies on students.

Federal courts have increasingly recognized that ideological conformity imposed by public universities and professional training programs implicate core First Amendment protections, particularly where students are punished for holding or expressing dissenting moral, political, or religious views. The Supreme Court ruling in *Chiles vs. Salazar* surely has implications for protecting students' rights in training programs. Without significant outside pressure it is highly

questionable whether leaders in professional associations and accrediting associations, as well as faculty will alter their formal positions and protect the First Amendment rights of religious or other students who dissent.

Therefore, I recommend the Religious Freedom Commission take the following actions to protect First Amendment rights of mental health practitioners and students:

1. Create and implement a data gathering system focused on:
 - a. Cataloging violations of students' rights
 - b. Cataloging violations of practitioners' rights
 - c. Cataloging incidents of harassment of faith-based training programs by CACREP accreditors, professional associations, and state licensing boards
2. Create and distribute a college/university students bill of rights that outlines constitutional rights and federal laws that apply to the college/university contexts, particularly in programs training mental health practitioners.
3. Create and distribute a listing of organizations that will advocate for and defend students, trainees, training programs and practitioners when their rights have been violated.
4. Create and implement a hotline for students and practitioners to report possible violations of their constitutional rights or federal laws.
5. Create and implement enforcement mechanisms for addressing violation of conscience protections by training programs, licensing boards and accrediting bodies.

I have an extensive reference list to support my concerns, but, for the sake of brevity, opted not to include it. Thank you for considering my observations.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen and Professional

(as per the directive on the RLC website, I am not providing information regarding my personal identity)

From: Humberto Lopez <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:34:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

First, I would like to thank you for the work that you are doing. As a citizen of this great country, I am asking for your reconsideration of your report on weakening the separation of church and state. I am referring especially to using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

I believe that when churches take government money, the corruption of politics comes in with it. This will make churches compete for funding and therefore, answering to Politicians instead of God, which is not good for the church or this country. Our forefathers built this separation to protect the faith and it's the reason why religion has stayed strong and will continue strong into the future.

Please consider the Church and the State separately, this is how you will ensure both entities continue to be free.

Respectfully,

Humberto Lopez, Ed.D.
Apopka, Florida, USA

From: Wayne Salhany <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Critique of Commission's Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:35:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

The rulers, governors and presidents have a moral and ethical responsibility to stay out of matters of conscience. It is wrong and unjust to use force and coercion when religious principles are at stake. History shows this repeatedly. I am very concerned that certain opinions in this report tend toward imposition of dire consequences on people with conscientious religious convictions that pose absolutely no harm on others.

I hope you and every signatory to this report think seriously about this and declare that you stand strongly on separation of state and church matters.

Wayne Salhany

PII

PII

From: Rochelle Mekowulu <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:35:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the President's Religious Liberty Commission:

I am a devout, Bible believing Christian, and it is precisely because I take religious liberty seriously that I write in support of maintaining a proper separation between church and state.

Separation of church and state is not an attack on Christianity. It is one of the safeguards that keeps Christianity, and every sincere faith, free from government control and political manipulation. When the church seeks the power of the state to advance its ends, both are placed in danger. The church trades spiritual authority for political influence, and the state is tempted to favor one religious group over another.

As a Christian, I believe conscience belongs to God. True faith cannot be produced by law or preserved by political favoritism. Jesus drew a clear line between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God, and that line matters. Civil government has a proper role, but it should not become the instrument by which a religious majority imposes its beliefs on others, nor should it entangle churches in partisan contests.

I therefore respectfully object to any recommendation that treats the separation of church and state as a legal error rather than a constitutional principle. The First Amendment's protection of free exercise and its guard against establishment belong together. Religious liberty is strongest when government neither persecutes religion nor manages, sponsors, or privileges it.

I would also urge caution on any effort to weaken the Johnson Amendment. Houses of worship should call people to God and truth, not become partisan campaign instruments.

History offers a consistent warning here. Religious persecution in this country has often come not from irreligion, but from religious groups using civil power to punish dissenters. Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Jews, and others have all suffered when government favored one creed over another. Our constitutional order was wise to avoid that path, and I ask the Commission to preserve it, for Christians and for every American, religious or not.

As a Christian, I do not fear a proper separation of church and state. I value it, because it protects the purity of the church, the freedom of conscience, and the liberty of every American.

Respectfully submitted,

Rochelle Mekowulu

Author, [*And Then There Was Silence: Awakening Purpose Through Pain*](#)

Founder, [Virché Coaching & Consulting](#)

<https://rochellemekowulu.com/>

"Resilience isn't just about surviving the storm—it's about discovering purpose in its wake."

From: "Patrick L. Sheppard" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church State Separation

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:46:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a practicing Christian and Elder in my church in Fort Worth, TX. I want to express my sheer disagreement about what the Religious Liberty Commission is doing.

This entire commission is nothing more than a blatant attempt to establish a national church just as many other nations have done over the centuries. Most of the European countries have their state supported churches and if you haven't noticed religiosity in Europe is moribund! I suspect this is really about nothing more than getting special dispensation for your particular brand of Christianity!

History should have been your evidence that what we established in the United States under our Constitution is the best that anyone can do with a multitude of faith traditions. By making the church an arm of the state you are doing exactly what Christ preached against during his short time on Earth. If you pray carefully and discern wisely, I pray that you may see the error of your ways. When you make the church part of the state, that is the purest form of idolatry and may God forgive such drastic actions. Remember, Christ preached that his kingdom was not of "this world!"

Patrick L. Sheppard

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From: Bethany Wickham <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:50:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

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.

Sincerely,

Bethany Wickham,

Trinity, North Carolina

From: scott smith <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberties

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 11:55:04 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with pillars of faith.org

That there should be a definite line to separate church and State. Jesus taught this when he told Peter to look at the Roman coin, and said "render unto Caesar what it Caesars, unto God what is Gods." Bible prophecy teaches us in Revelation 13 that the government will be under Romes religious umbrella when they enforce laws coursing conscience. (A national Sunday law) , which contradicts the fourth commandment to rember the sabbath day to keep holy the 7th day of the week (Saturday)

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

From: "Baker, Darlejean (dbc)" <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:01:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

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

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

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

Thank you
Deej Baker

From: Christine Joy <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 10 CONSCIENCE AND COERCION IN VACCINE POLICY- CHRISTINE JOY

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:01:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Let us first consider the following passages of the Bible.

Corinthians 6:19

"Do you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God."

Galatians 6:7-8

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life."

Numbers 9:6

"And there were certain men who were unclean through touching the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron on that day;"

Numbers 19:11-13

"Whoever touches any dead body will be unclean for seven days; He must purify himself with the water on the third day and the seventh day, and then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third and seventh days, he will not be clean. Anyone who touches a dead body and fails to purify himself defiles the Lord's tabernacle. That person must be cut off from Israel"

Matthew 18:6

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

My husband, a federal worker, was mandated to take the emergency authorized covid 19 vaccine by the Biden Administration. Under prayer, our family decided that we required a religious accommodation. Much stress and worry about job loss for our family was suffered.

During this time grave concerns arose for the children's vaccines as in West Virginia the children were mandated to have vaccines to attend school. Just as my husband was mandated my children had been mandated to take vaccines. I began to investigate the contents of the childhood vaccines.

The following aborted fetal cell lines and animal cell lines are in some of the childhood vaccines from the information I could find and is my best understanding.

Fetal Cell Lines in Vaccines

MRC-5 14 week old aborted white male fetus

IMR-90 16 week old female Caucasian

Heniretta Lacks – cervical cancer cell lines from African American

WI-38 Abortion of a 3 month old female fetus Elective abortion Swedish Woman in 1963

CRM 197 Carrier Protein genetically detoxified form of diphtheria toxin, possesses a binding site for EGF receptor heparin binding epidermal growth-like growth factor (HB-EGF)

M-197 Medium chick embryo fibroblasts, mouse pancreatic epithelium, Rats Lens Tissue

Injecting aborted fetal cell lines is a form of corpse defilement. Impurity that is caused by touching the dead was considered the ultimate impurity.

The National Childhood Injury Compensation Act of 1986 and Prep Act grants limited to no liability to vaccine makers and if your child is injured you must attend a special court outside of the regular courts. Sadly, the parent and child if injured by a vaccine are often left to try to cope with the financial burden of injury and may suffer lifelong illness or death.

In addition, there are adjuvants like aluminum and thimerosal and formaldehyde and other ingredients that are not compatible with human life and are quite toxic.

None of the vaccines the CDC recommends for routine injections into children that were licensed by the FDA are based on long-term placebo control trials.

Congress has called vaccines unavoidable unsafe.

mRNA and CRISPR vaccines in my personal and religious belief are also egregious to inject into the body.

Injecting fetal cell lines is a violation of my family's religious beliefs and personal beliefs.

Medical exemptions are rarely given in West Virginia and following the covid 19 vaccines it appears that Doctors are unwilling to provide them due to risk of losing their medical license.

West Virginia passed House Bill 3042 Equal Protection for Religion Act in 2023 but still the children were not able to attend school without the mandated vaccines and receive a religious accommodation. Executive Order Number 725 by Governor Patrick Morrissey in 2025 also tried to allow the children to receive a religious accommodation from the mandated vaccines but the West Virginia School Board and local School Boards that follow the dictates of the state school board pushed back, taking the children's religious rights. Forty-five other states are able to receive a religious exemption, personal belief or medical exemption. West Virginia is one of the five states that does not allow non-medical exemptions. The other states where religious exemptions are not available are California, New York, Connecticut and Maine.

The Constitution of the United States

Amendment 1

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 of grievances for a redress.

Let us pray that God hears our prayers.

Thank you.

From: Christopher Masak <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Abandonment of Liberty Commission Report – Christopher Masak

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:06:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a concerned citizen I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

The mere suggestion that a particular religion forms the basis for our nation is both preposterous and historically inaccurate. The well-documented history of our nation's founding tells us that a multitude of religious beliefs, including non-belief, have existed and thrived in our nation prior to and since its founding. It is that diverse mix of perspectives that has provided our nation with its rich heritage and guided our installation of a fair and secular form of governance. Abandoning this approach, as is suggested by the report, is both morally repugnant and dangerous. Such actions have historically led to theocratic rule and the dismantling of civil rights for citizens. The separation of church and state is one of the core values enshrined in our nation's founding documents. The establishment clause of the Constitution was created expressly to prevent the usurping of secular powers by radical religious entities based on mythological dogma.

Americans like myself cannot abide nor submit to the appalling recommendations put forth in the draft report and I not only urge you to abandon them, I demand it.

Christopher Masak

From: Teo Majhen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] SEPARATION IS A MUST !!!

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:12:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

From: William Krouskop <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:14:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

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,

William B Krouskop

Wytheville, VA

From: Sonja UPHAM <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] public comment on separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:15:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen of the United States of America 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 our founding fathers put together our constitution it was with the idea of keeping church and state separate (even if the phrase "separation of church and state" isn't found there) because of the persecution that was experienced by those who came to America to escape.

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,

[REDACTED]

PII

PII PII

PII

From: John Day <[REDACTED] PII >

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

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

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:19:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

This Commission's work is nothing more than a veiled attack on one of the most fundamental important principles underlying the U.S. Constitution — the separation of church and state. The fact that the Chairman of this Commission stood next to the President in the Oval Office on June 26, 2026 and stated that : “[t]he separation of church and state is not in the Constitution” demonstrates what this Commission is really up to: an Orwellian attempt to reinterpret the Constitution to serve a Christian Nationalist political agenda. Mr. Patrick is simply wrong, as is demonstrated by the words of Thomas Jefferson, who literally wrote to Baptists in Connecticut that the First Amendment established a wall between church and state: “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 legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.” So, while the words “separation of church and state” may not have been included in the Constitution, if we take Jefferson at his word, there can be no doubt that the intended purpose of the First Amendment was to prohibit exactly what this Commission is trying to accomplish. So despite what this Commission believes, and its Report says:

1. The separation of Church and State is a constitutional principle that is good for the health of both the Church and the State
2. The Johnson Amendment should be left alone — it protects houses of worship from partisan politics and ensures fair play in political campaigns.
3. Public funds should be reserved for public schools, not private schools.
4. Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith.
5. Institutions that receive public funding should should not be allowed to discriminate in favor of some individuals and against others; such institutions should treat all people fairly.

Very true yours,

John G. Day
Wilmington, Delaware

From: Samantha Reeves <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – separation of church and state. Samantha reeves

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:20:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

“I agree with Pillar of Freedom’s comments. Please
implement them.”

From: L Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -- Religious Liberty Commission -- Leigh Johnsen

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:24:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have written this message in response to invitations for comments about the draft report of U.S. government's Religious Liberty Commission.

The establishment of this commission, even aside from its slanted composition and recommendations, violates a longstanding tradition of separation between church and state embedded in the original wording of the U.S. Constitution, as well as the Bill of Rights.

This concerns me greatly.

Not only do these factors allow sectarian actors to exercise outsized influence of their own choosing over public policy, they also empower public officials to privilege and promote specific religious perspectives to the detriment of alternate voices.

Jefferson, Madison, and an entire generation of Founding Fathers must be rolling in their graves. The same can be said of dedicated Christians from that era, many of whom actively promoted separation of church and state in order to protect the sanctity of their convictions from interference by those who lacked the same sensitivities.

One of those Christians was the Rev. Isaac Backus, a well-know Baptist pastor from the Revolutionary Era. In An Appel to the Public (1773), he wrote:

"God has appointed two kinds of government in the world which are distinct in their nature and ought never to be confounded together, one of which is called civil and other ecclesiastical government."

The Commission and its members would be wise--and truly patriotic--to honor the tradition of separation between church and state that has served the nation well for centuries.

From: Cheryl Waldrup <[REDACTED] PII >

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:27:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

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

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain.

Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the ear croppings, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to take into account the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the “proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state” if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.” [7]

James Madison wrote, “It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord’s words that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that “The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State.” [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of

governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, "In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments."

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

Thank you for reading this, it means so much to me and others who believe in the importance of this matter.

We remain, Yours truly,

Cheryl Waldrup

From: Kimberly Crider <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Feedback on the Recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:30:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs and Madams:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. As a Christian, I respectfully express my concerns regarding Recommendations 1 and 9 and what I believe is the Committee's insufficient consideration of the constitutional and historical foundations of the separation of church and state.

Recommendation 1 urges the Department of Justice to issue guidance on the Establishment Clause. Yet Committee Chair Dan Patrick asserted that "separation of church and state" has no constitutional basis. James Madison, principal author of the Constitution and the Establishment Clause, disagreed, describing the Constitution as "strongly guarded" by the separation of religion and government. Thomas Jefferson likewise wrote that the First Amendment built "a wall of separation between Church & State."

The Founders' views reflected hard experience. Religious persecution in Europe and the colonies—including the suffering of Baptists, Quakers, and other dissenters—convinced them that liberty of conscience required that the government neither establish religion nor enforce religious orthodoxy. This principle has protected both religious freedom and the other liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment.

I also respectfully oppose repealing the Johnson Amendment. Jesus' instruction to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" reflects the distinction between civil and religious authority. Madison observed that religion flourished under the total separation of church and state, while he and other Founders warned against combining ecclesiastical and civil power.

I respectfully urge the Department to reject Recommendations 1 and 9 and instead conduct a thorough public review of the historical and constitutional foundations of the Religion Clauses before issuing guidance.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Crider

From: Norman Watson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please preserve our freedom of conscience

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:38:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

I believe that everyone has a free will to worship or not to worship without the fear of punishment. We can see in bible history in the book of Daniel how King Nebuchadnezzar made a decree for all to bow down and worship a golden image that he has set up, and if any would not comply, they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. What happened next; three refused and God intervened.

God is a give love and justice. He give everyone the right to make their own choice. If they want to worship Him and accept Jesus His son as their savior our not.

Therefore I believe that religious liberty should be preserved and protected. Therefore are two powers working in this world against one another. Therefore power heaven for the salvation of mankind against the power of evil (Satan) for the destruction of mankind.

I recommend a inspired book [REDACTED] written in 1884 called "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan by Ellen White". This book GOD provided for the sincere seekers of truth. It pulls the curtain back and shows the Controversy which started in Heaven and brings the read all the way through the ages down to the close of time.

Each person has a choice, serve GOD or the enemy of Souls. No matter how far you think you have drifted away, no matter what you may have done, the promises of eternal life can be yours. "For GOD so loved the world 🌍 that He gave Hos only begotten Son Jesus Christ; and whom so ever believe in Him shall receive the gift of eternal life.

It is wonderful to know they God is a prayer away. He is more powerful then the enemy, and is willing to save to the uttermost all who come to Him by faith, be He will in no wise force.

America is not a Christian nation, it is a nation where all people may choose to worship or not to worship at all in pursuit of their own happiness. A nation that caters to freedom of conscience.

This is the secret of America's Power

- **Protestantism:** The freedom of conscience, recognizing the Bible as the supreme guide, and rejecting a state church or papal tyranny.
- **Republicanism:** Civil liberty and government by the people, rejecting kingly rule and monarchy.

God Bless,

Sent from my iPhone

From: alicia cardona <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:41:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a United States Citizen. I respectfully request that this Nation continue to uphold the foundation upon which this country was built which is to continue the separation of church and state. Based on history, especially the dark ages of papal rule in Europe, church control of government always leads to religious persecution. We do not need a King, save Jesus Christ, and we do not need a pope or an evangelical church to control us based on their own personal religious views. That would destroy this country.

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin [is] a reproach to any people. . KJVSD — Proverbs 14:34

Respectfully

Alicia Cardona

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From: Mayra Giangregorio <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re:Public Comment: Defending Religious liberty keeping the wall of separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:45:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I'm start with what James Madison said "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."

This nation was founded in part, by people fleeing religious persecution in Europe. Many sought freedom from government established churches that used civil power to enforce religious conformity through fines, imprisonment, exclusion from public life, and, in some cases, execution. These lessons helped shape the principles on which our Constitution was established—protecting liberty of conscience and preventing the federal government from establishing a national religion or interfering with the free exercise of religion.

Jesus Christ died for every person and invites all to follow Him, yet he never forces anyone to worship or obey Him. Love cannot exist where there is coercion. God gives every individual the freedom to choose (Joshua 24:15; Revelation 22:17). Christ says, "If any man will come after me..." (Matthew 16:24). Satan, however works through deception and force.

The bible warns that a time is coming when civil and religious powers will unite. In Revelation 13, the second beast arises from the earth, speaks "as a dragon" (Revelation 13:11), and "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast" (Revelation 13:12). It also "causeth all" to receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16).

The first beast of Revelation 13 is understood by historic Protestant interpretation to represent the papal system centered in Rome, a religious-political power that exercised civil authority and persecuted dissenters during the middle Ages. The second beast is understood to represent the United States, which began with lamb-like principles of civil and religious liberty but will eventually "speak as a dragon" by using civil power to enforce religious observance. Revelation 13:14 says this second beast makes "an image to the beast" that is, it forms a system that mirrors the union of church and state represented by the first beast. In this understanding, the "image" is not the Vatican itself, but a replica of the same kind of church-state union, where civil government enforces religious requirements of what we flees from.

As Christians and as citizens who value the freedoms upon which this nation was founded, we should oppose any effort by any party or religious body to compel worship punish conscience, or interfere with a person's beliefs. Whether the coercion favors Christianity, another religion, or no religion at all, liberty of conscience must be protected. To remove the wall of separation of church and state you will place on religion over the whole counrtry. This is contrary to the principles embedded in our Constitution and contrary to the example of Jesus Christ, who calls people through love, truth, and conviction not through civil power or coercion. A government that protects the freedom to worship according to conscience reflects the principle that faith must be freely chosen, while a government that compels worship departs from both the constitutional safeguards established by the Founders and the biblical pattern of voluntary allegiance to God.

Have a blessed day 🍀

••Hebrews 12••

Mayra Giangregorio

From: plloyd221985 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commisiin Repirt

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:46:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the United States Commission on Religious Liberty,

I write to respectfully express my concern regarding efforts to diminish the historic principle of the separation of church and state. This principle is not an attack on religion; rather, it is one of the greatest safeguards of both religious liberty and civil freedom.

The Bible teaches that genuine worship must be voluntary. God invites rather than compels. Throughout Scripture, individuals are given the freedom to choose whom they will serve (Joshua 24:15). Jesus Himself distinguished between the authority of civil government and the authority of God 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). Christ never sought to advance His kingdom through civil legislation or political force.

Likewise, the apostle Paul reminds us that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). Matters of faith and worship belong to the conscience, not to the jurisdiction of the state. Whenever civil government assumes authority over religious practice, liberty of conscience is placed in jeopardy.

These biblical principles are reflected in the First Amendment, which protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits the establishment of religion by government. Thomas Jefferson described this protection as a "wall of separation between Church and State," while James Madison argued that religion "must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man." Their purpose was not to exclude faith from society, but to prevent government from exercising authority over religion and religion from controlling the civil power.

History repeatedly demonstrates the wisdom of this principle. Whenever church and state unite, coercion, persecution, and the suppression of conscience inevitably follow. America wisely rejected that model by recognizing that civil government should protect every person's right to worship—or not worship—according to the dictates of conscience.

As a Christian, I believe true faith cannot be produced by legislation. It is the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. Religious observance compelled by civil authority is contrary to both the teachings of Christ and the spirit of the Constitution.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to uphold the biblical and constitutional principles of liberty of conscience and the separation of church and state. These principles remain essential to preserving the religious freedom of every American, regardless of creed, and they ensure that faith is advanced by conviction rather than coercion.

Respectfully,

Polly Lloyd

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Mayra Giangregorio <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: To the United States Commission on Religious Liberty.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:49:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I'm start with what James Madison said "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."

This nation was founded in part, by people fleeing religious persecution in Europe. Many sought freedom from government established churches that used civil power to enforce religious conformity through fines, imprisonment, exclusion from public life, and, in some cases, execution. These lessons helped shape the principles on which our Constitution was established—protecting liberty of conscience and preventing the federal government from establishing a national religion or interfering with the free exercise of religion.

Jesus Christ died for every person and invites all to follow Him, yet he never forces anyone to worship or obey Him. Love cannot exist where there is coercion. God gives every individual the freedom to choose (Joshua 24:15; Revelation 22:17). Christ says, "If any man will come after me..." (Matthew 16:24). Satan, however works through deception and force.

The bible warns that a time is coming when civil and religious powers will unite. In Revelation 13, the second beast arises from the earth, speaks "as a dragon" (Revelation 13:11), and "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast" (Revelation 13:12). It also "causeth all" to receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16).

The first beast of Revelation 13 is understood by historic Protestant interpretation to represent the papal system centered in Rome, a religious-political power that exercised civil authority and persecuted dissenters during the middle Ages. The second beast is understood to represent the United States, which began with lamb-like principles of civil and religious liberty but will eventually "speak as a dragon" by using civil power to enforce religious observance. Revelation 13:14 says this second beast makes "an image to the beast" that is, it forms a system that mirrors the union of church and state represented by the first beast. In this understanding, the "image" is not the Vatican itself, but a replica of the same kind of church-state union, where civil government enforces religious requirements of what we flees from.

As Christians and as citizens who value the freedoms upon which this nation was founded, we should oppose any effort by any party or religious body to compel worship punish conscience, or interfere with a person's beliefs. Whether the coercion favors Christianity, another religion, or no religion at all, liberty of conscience must be protected. To remove the wall of separation of church and state you will place on religion over the whole counrtry. This is contrary to the principles embedded in our Constitution and contrary to the example of Jesus Christ, who calls people through love, truth, and conviction not through civil power or coercion. A government that protects the freedom to worship according to conscience reflects the principle that faith must be freely chosen, while a government that compels worship departs from both the constitutional safeguards established by the Founders and the biblical pattern of voluntary allegiance to God.

Have a blessed day 🍀

••Hebrews 12••

Mayra Giangregorio

From: Colton Kennon <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Apologies

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:50:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

I know you guys believed something your entire life and you finally got proof of the other side for the first time, but sadly I realized there was something else going on and I believe you were being used for a bigger purpose.

I'm sorry that it had to happen this way, but with my ability's I knew it was just a human being behind the scenes manipulating people.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Liz Hall <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:50:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Council Members,

I am a proud native American citizen and have lived in Dade County, GA for over five decades. I have been a practicing Christian for over five decades.

I am opposed to Christian Nationalism or the preaching of Christian doctrines in our public schools, a national day of rest, or the government making any laws about religion.

Some of our American forefathers left England so they could worship as they saw fit.

The First Amendment reads, "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."

Let the value of kindness, self-sacrifice, honesty, and industry--common to most all religions--be taught by real life stories in public school.

It is the parents' responsibility to educate their children about religion, not the public school.

Government has no authority to tell its citizens how to worship and which God to worship.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth J. Hall

From: AnD Hooker <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:55:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious liberty committee members,

My heart is pained as I hear in the news about a bridge connecting Church and state. I believe wholeheartedly and biblically that they should be forever separate entities. The persecution that happened during the dark ages shows what takes place when a bridge is formed between Church and state. And while we may not see that yet coming into place, IT WILL happen IF they are connected in anyway. The church should always remain separate from the state as it is promotes morality of which the state has no right to determine for any individual in the United States of America.

I am prayerfully asking you to NOT allow a bridge to be built or the walls that's currently separate Church and state to be torn down/removed in anyway. They need to be separate entities, never to be joined. You remove the freedom of the citizens of this nation if you connect them in any way.

Thank you for reading this email and for hearing the voice of a citizen of the USA.

May you heed the voice of the people and not of the politicians so that we can continue to have religious liberty and not be persecuted by the state due to our religious choices.

Please remember why this nation was formed.

Sincerely,

Diane Hooker

From: Jim Reinking <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 12:57:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a Christian pastor, I want to voice my support for religious freedom and the separation of church & state in our country.

Our forefathers saw the abuses and sometimes outright persecution that resulted from state sponsored religion, if you did conform to the states definition of religion. A good example of this are the pilgrims who fled to this country seeking religious freedom. They couldn't find it in England or the Netherlands that they fled to.

Pastor Jim Reinking

From: daniel burval <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Christian Nationalism is NOT religious liberty] –
[daniel b]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:03:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a concerned citizen, I am submitting this comment to urge the "Religious Liberty" Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and to abandon its recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state, a principle that has protected Americans of every faith for 250 years. The Commission's composition and its process was dominated by extremist Christians who's belligerent sidelining of the experiences of those with other beliefs acutely demonstrated exactly the type of favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent. Christian Nationalism is NOT religious liberty.

Based on the biased rhetoric displayed during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is clear that the "Religious Liberty" Commission has been established as a tool for a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government for the benefit of its own narrow faith over all other beliefs.

So, this bogus political Commission is NOT protecting religious liberty it is working to completely undermining it. I urge this mock "Religious Liberty" Commission to withdraw its draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must protect the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework separating church from state which protects the conscience of all Americans of all religions and beliefs.

From: Donna Collins <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – President's Religious Liberty Commission– Donna Collins

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:05:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Carson, and members:

It is important that we not only protect the religious liberty of pastors and churches but also in the public square.

As an educator on the Constitution and its founding principles, I often find churches reluctant to engage due to fear.

Living in Fort Worth, I am very aware of the case of Duante Newton, a street preacher cited for "disturbing the peace" while sharing gospel messages in the Stockyards. Mr. Newton was acquitted.

However since then, a similar incident has occurred during a "Pride parade" where a street preacher was told he would be cited if participants were offended by his message. In turn, he asked what happens if he is offended by the scantily clad men in the parade, i.e. could they be cited. He was told that FWPD couldn't address that.

After this exchange was made public, FWPD has indicated that they will impose more first amendment training.

These issues shouldn't be issues and cause mis-understanding.

Religious liberty should be freedom to engage as the Bible tells us in Matthew 28:19-20 to "go and make disciples of all nations, ... teaching them"

IN GOD WE TRUST

Donna Collins

[REDACTED] PII

"To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical."

– Thomas Jefferson

From: alisa smith <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom & Merging of Church & State!

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:09:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

If it is religious freedom then why does it need a RLC governing over it. It can only be to keep it under the umbrella of consensus of one religious view! Daniel tells us the AC arose out of the 4th beast kingdom of & Not Israel! And is American Protestantism who gives ALL power BACK to the European first beast before it! Will you ALLOW the a

Age of the Great Time of Trouble like has Never been seen on this earth to come in UNDER YOUR WATCH; for POWER & Money & the Ritualization of the entire nations children!

From: Jae Guardo <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Guardo, J Response to Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:12:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Liberty of Conscience has become a concept of personal significance as of late.

My husband of over 8 years recently had a change of his personal beliefs and convictions that I can't totally follow and support. Initially, it was a difficult situation to live in as he attempted to aggressively persuade me to his way of thinking. I am sincerely convinced, by personal experience, no one should have to go through the circumstances that come with being forced to lay down one's own beliefs and convictions, (that are attained as a result of a personal relationship with God,) to accept what another person determines what it is supposed to be, according to them.

I am a proud American, living in a country where my personal beliefs and convictions cannot be used against me civilly or legally; as well as a proud follower of Jesus Christ, of which it is explained in the book Romans that God is in favor of the liberty of conscience of every single individual.

The separation of church and state may not have been a phrase explicitly stated in the constitution, but the concept is obviously there.

The history of mixing the religious with the civil has ultimately always resulted in persecution of a group of people. The greatest example being the reign of the papacy through the middle ages. Just one of many.

I do agree that Secularism has presented a great problem, but removing religious liberty should not be what is sacrificed in order to combat it.

The United States of America should keep in tact what essentially made this nation so great. May we not move forward in our battles on the foundation of fear and control.

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Guardo

From: alisa smith <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:12:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

If it's a Vote I vote:

NO FORMAL UNION OF CHURCH & STATE

Retain the Separation!

From: John Steely <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – General comments about the RLC report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:16:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

It's important to note that Trump's Religious Liberty Commission, created last year, is made up of all conservative Christians and one Orthodox Jew, groups who make up a MINORITY of Americans. Consequently many of the views in this document are not widely held by Americans and should not form the basis for future policy decisions as such decisions would benefit a minority of Americans while infringing on the rights of the majority.

The report lacks input from:

- Civil rights organizations
- Minority religious groups
- Secular communities

Policymaking should reflect **diverse perspectives**, especially when rights may conflict.

Policy changes should be grounded in **clear evidence**, not anecdotal or selective cases. I found that many of the points made in the document to be religious arguments that the proponents tried to dress up as "objective" – but they were clearly simply opinions of individuals.

While many of our nation's founders were men of faith, they fundamentally believed that those in our country had a right to worship, or not worship as they saw fit. They firmly believed in the separation of church and state. The text of the First Amendment states ""Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;..." . The US government should be non-sectarian and should not embrace Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or any other religion.

Just a religious families can raise their children and teach them about their view of religion, **they should not be imposing their religious views on others. Hence the ten commandments, bible verses, and other religious texts should not be displayed nor forced on those attending public schools or other government sponsored activities.** Privileging certain religious beliefs in public policy undermines **religious neutrality** which is a guaranteed right of Americans. Religious liberty includes **freedom FROM government-imposed religion**, not just freedom to exercise religion. Private organizations, of course, should be allowed to do as they choose.

I believe that the Supreme Court made an error when it allowed a high-school football coach (Joe Kennedy) to publicly engage in personal prayer on-field after games. While they argued that none of the football players were required to stay, it was clear that any students who would have left would have been viewed negatively by the coach (and likely penalized by the coach with less game time). As a public school coach, he should not have been allowed to force his religious beliefs on the students. Why were their rights to practice/not practice religion considered irrelevant?

This Religious Liberty Commission report repeatedly claims that individuals' rights should supersede the greater common good.

- If they wish to avoid vaccines, they are allowed to compromise the health of those who are proactively trying to avoid diseases such as measles and polio

- If they disagree with civil right laws, they shouldn't have to obey them. Expanding religious exemptions will **erode protections** under laws addressing discrimination (e.g., housing, employment, healthcare) which is detrimental to our greater society.

On a related topic, the Johnson Amendment should **ABSOLUTELY** remain in effect and continue to forbid non-profit organizations from endorsing political candidates. Otherwise, individuals and organizations will funnel campaign contributions through as tax deductible funds skirting the Federal tax system. If non-profit organizations endorse or oppose political candidates, they should lose their tax deductible status since they are now effectively a political organization.

It is extremely important that we adhere to a **stable, predictable legal framework**, rather than reinterpreting religious liberty in a way that expands it beyond historical norms, or is subject to the political whims of the party in power.

Expanded religious protections will lead to:

- More lawsuits
- Legal uncertainty
- Increased costs for both government and private actors

True religious liberty must be **pluralistic and inclusive**, protecting minority faiths and nonreligious individuals equally. When reading the report, it consistently had the tone that those who engage in religious activities are better people than those who don't and therefore they should be able to expose and impose their beliefs on others. This is simply un-American at the core.

This report should be disposed of and, if so desired, a new commission made up of a fair and balanced representation of all Americans should be established and a new recommendation report should be drafted.

Or better yet, we can dispose of this unbalanced, unrepresentative report and we can allow our current laws and justice system continue to manage conflicts as they have successfully done for the past 250 years.

John Steely

From: Travis Dillon <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Travis

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:21:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I urge you to reject the recommendations in your report that break down the separation of church and state, specifically the funding of religious activities with government money and the repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

Scripture clearly commands in Acts 5:29 that we must obey God rather than men. When churches take government money and engage in partisan politics, they compromise this calling, ending up answering to politicians and serving human interests instead of serving God.

History shows that when the church merges with state power, corruption and persecution follow. By pushing to break down these boundaries, you are unknowingly setting the stage to help these dark moments of history come to pass again. We see this vividly in John 19:12-15, where the religious leaders explicitly sacrificed their allegiance to God and used the political leverage of the Roman state to force Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus, going so far as to declare, "We have no king but Caesar."

History always repeats itself. When modern religious institutions seek the backing of civil government, they repeat this tragic error, compromising their spiritual mission for secular authority. We must also remember the warning in John 16:2, which cautions that institutional religious zeal can become deeply misguided when aligned with worldly power: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

Please maintain a strict separation of church and state. Keeping them separate is the only way to keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Travis
Winnemucca, Nevada

From: Jerome Hazleton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Separation of Church and State- Jerome Hazleton

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:27:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to respectfully convey my profound disagreement with the perceived direction of the commission regarding the principle of separation between church and state. While I acknowledge that the precise phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear verbatim in the United States Constitution, the foundational principles enshrined within the First Amendment, particularly the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause, are widely understood to erect a crucial barrier between governmental authority and religious institutions.

Historical precedents unequivocally demonstrate the perils associated with any fusion of governmental and ecclesiastical power. Throughout history, such unions have invariably led to the suppression of dissenting beliefs, the coercion of conscience, and the erosion of authentic religious freedom, often culminating in persecution. Figures such as Roger Williams, among others, championed the concept of a "wall of separation" precisely because of these well-documented adverse consequences.

The genius of the American experiment lies in its commitment to religious liberty for all citizens, a liberty best secured by a government that remains neutral concerning matters of faith. This neutrality ensures that individuals are free to practice their chosen religion, or no religion at all, without governmental endorsement, interference, or compulsion. It is this protection of individual conscience that has fostered a vibrant tapestry of beliefs within our nation, a strength that should be jealously guarded.

My own convictions lead me to believe that any governmental attempt to legislate religious practice, irrespective of its specific tenets or the day of observance, would represent a profound infringement upon this fundamental right. Even if such a measure were to align with my personal theological understanding or worship practices, I would firmly oppose it, as the government's proper role is to protect religious freedom, not to dictate its exercise. The potential for state-enforced religious observance, based on any interpretation, poses a grave threat to the individual's God-given freedom of conscience.

In closing, I urge the commission to reaffirm its commitment to a robust separation of church and state. Maintaining this critical distinction is not only vital for upholding constitutional principles but is also essential for safeguarding the religious liberty of every American.

Thanks,
Jerome Hazleton

From: Elizabeth McGee-Houghton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Religious liberty commission report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:31:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

The start of the report is promising in the statement that 'Religious liberty is for all' and benefits all and yet so many faiths are left out of the report and commission panel. I am disappointed and object to any changes to the separation of church and state. That doesn't make sense to me with so many different religious beliefs in our country. How do you appease all faiths and non-religious? It has worked much better for the government to stay neutral.

I am very upset that the people of faith on the commission could not make a statement about the blatant persecution of Muslims in Texas at the same time the commission was meeting.

Yes, religious liberty for all but that is not what this report promotes.

Sincerely,
Liz McGee-Houghton

From: Loriann Cook <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:35:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views about the committee's findings. Even though the separation of church and state isn't in the constitution, our founding fathers Believed it was important. You start mandating whose religion we're going to follow there will be persecution.

Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

From: Martha S Meade <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State,

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:39:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Separation of Church,
Church meaning the conscious choices and relationship a person has with their personal God.
and State, the government set to oversee civil matters. Infrastructure such as roads, bridges, laws to protect the
rights and freedoms of the people of the country, Laws to protect people of the country to be safe from threat of
our freedoms.

There is no country in the world that does well when they dictate the conscience of the people.
Separation of Church and State is the foundation of the United States of America and has been since Roger
Williams wrote those words in 1644s. To abolish this freedom is to destroy the United States of America and
ALL it stands for.
To Abolish this Truth is to turn the United States into "the Beast Power."

Thank you for doing all you can to maintain the founding principle of Separation of Church and State.
Martha S Meade,RN,

[REDACTED] PII

From: Hiram Gascot <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:43:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Letter_to_the_Religious_Liberty_Commission.pdf

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Please find attached my written response regarding the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

--

God Bless,

Hiram Gascot III

Cell: [REDACTED] PII

July 10, 2026

SUBJECT: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Presidential Commission on Religion 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:

I respectfully submit this letter in response to the Commission's suggestion that the Constitution does not establish a meaningful separation between church and state. Such a conclusion is inconsistent not only with the constitutional structure established by our Founders, but also with the biblical distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience.

The debate over separation of church and state is too often framed as a contest between religion and secularism. Historically, it is neither. The American doctrine of separation did not arise because the Founders desired to remove God from public life. Rather, it arose because they understood that civil government and the church were each ordained for different purposes, possessed different authority, and employed fundamentally different means.

Civil government governs by law, whereas Christ governs by love.

The state may restrain violence, punish crime, protect property, and preserve civil order. Scripture plainly recognizes this authority, declaring that "the powers that be are ordained of God" and that the magistrate is "the minister of God" to execute justice (Romans 13:1–4). Yet nowhere does Scripture grant civil government authority over worship, doctrine, repentance, or the conscience. These belong to God alone.

Christ Himself established this distinction when He declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). In those few words Christ permanently distinguished two jurisdictions. Caesar possesses legitimate authority, but that authority is limited. The conscience, worship, and the obligations owed to God remain outside the reach of civil power.

This distinction is not merely theological. It became one of the defining constitutional principles of the American Republic.

Many today attempt to portray the doctrine of separation of church and state as a modern judicial invention or as evidence of hostility toward religion. The historical record demonstrates precisely the opposite. The men principally responsible for establishing our constitutional order were, with varying theological convictions, believers in Divine Providence. Yet many of these same men insisted that civil government should neither establish religion nor exercise authority over matters of faith.

George Washington, in his Farewell Address, affirmed that “Religion and morality are indispensable supports”¹ of political prosperity. Yet as President he assured the Hebrew Congregation of Newport that the Government of the United States “gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.”² He did not envision a government hostile to religion, but one that refused to employ civil power in matters of conscience.

John Adams likewise acknowledged the importance of Christianity to the moral development of society, yet under his administration the Treaty of Tripoli declared that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”³ Whatever modern debates may surround that statement, it unmistakably reflected the principle that the federal government possessed no ecclesiastical character.

Thomas Jefferson’s famous description of “a wall of separation between Church & State”⁴ did not invent a new constitutional doctrine. Rather, it summarized the practical effect of the First Amendment’s prohibition against religious establishments. His purpose was not to exclude religion from society, but to prevent government from exercising authority over religion.

James Madison, often called the Father of the Constitution, expressed the principle even more fundamentally. In his Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, he argued that religion “must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man.”⁵ This was not simply a matter of political philosophy. Madison believed that the duty owed to the Creator precedes every obligation owed to civil society. Government therefore possesses no rightful jurisdiction over that duty.

Benjamin Franklin, during the Constitutional Convention, urged the delegates to seek divine assistance, observing that “God governs in the affairs of men.”⁶ Yet Franklin also warned against governmental support of religion, believing that true religion required no dependence upon civil power to survive, as it he states “When a Religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its Professors are oblig’d to call for the help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”⁷

These men differed in theology, denomination, and even in their understanding of Christianity itself. Yet they reached remarkable agreement on one constitutional principle: religion flourishes best when government neither establishes it nor controls it.

History abundantly confirms their wisdom.

Whenever churches have sought the power of the state to accomplish spiritual ends, both institutions have suffered. The medieval union of church and empire, the religious persecutions that followed the Protestant Reformation, the English system of religious establishments, and countless other examples demonstrate that political power cannot produce genuine faith. It can produce conformity, but never conversion. It may compel outward conduct, but it cannot create inward conviction.

Likewise, governments that assume authority over religion inevitably become arbiters of doctrine. They must determine which beliefs receive public support, which institutions qualify for governmental benefits, which religious practices deserve protection, and which teachings are acceptable. In attempting to protect religion, government gradually assumes authority over religion.

The Founders understood this danger well. Their solution was not to diminish religion but to limit government. This principle remains just as vital today.

Many Americans understandably desire a return to biblical morality. That desire should be respected. Yet the means by which morality is advanced are just as important as the morality itself. Christianity has never depended upon civil coercion for its success. The Gospel advances through preaching, persuasion, service, sacrifice, and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, not through legislative compulsion.

The temptation to employ governmental power in support of religion has existed throughout Christian history. Yet every generation must answer the same question: Shall faith be sustained by conviction or by coercion?

The American constitutional system wisely chose conviction, and so did Jesus Christ himself, as He stated, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight..." (John 18:36).

This distinction protects every citizen equally. It protects the Christian from an irreligious government. It protects the Jew, Muslim, Hindu, and atheist from a sectarian government. It protects churches from political manipulation and protects government from ecclesiastical domination. Most importantly, it preserves the liberty of conscience that belongs to every human being by virtue of their accountability to God alone.

Indeed, the separation of church and state is not a wall separating religious people from public life. People of faith have every right to vote, speak, serve in office, advocate for justice, and contribute to the moral character of the nation. The true wall exists between ecclesiastical authority and civil authority. It prevents either institution from exercising powers entrusted to the other.

The church should never govern by the sword. Likewise, the state should never govern the conscience.

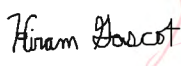
These principles are neither anti-Christian nor anti-American. They are deeply rooted in Scripture, confirmed by history, and embodied within the constitutional structure established by our Founders. They have preserved both civil liberty and religious vitality for nearly two and a half centuries.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reaffirm, not weaken, the constitutional principle that civil government possesses no authority over matters of conscience and that the enduring separation between church and state remains one of the greatest safeguards of both religious liberty and genuine faith.

Respectfully submitted,

The point of contact for this letter is CPT Hiram Gascot III at
 PII or PII

Sincerely,

 Digitally signed by
 GASCOT.HIRAM.1022310697
 Date: 2026.07.10 10:36:04
 -07'00'

Hiram Gascot III
 Captain, U.S. Army

¹ George Washington, *Farewell Address*, (1796)

² George Washington, *Letter to the Hebrew Congregation* at Newport (Aug. 18, 1790).

³ John Adams, *Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Tripoli*, art. 11 (1797).

⁴ Thomas Jefferson, Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association (Jan. 1, 1802), in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 36.

⁵ James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785), 1.

⁶ Benjamin Franklin, *Remarks in the Federal Convention*, (June 28, 1787).

⁷ Benjamin Franklin, *Letter to Richard Price*, (1780)

From: Judy VanVoorhis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - General Comment - Ronald VanVoorhis

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:50:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

I completely agree with the twelve point summary submitted by the Religious Liberty Commission.

From: AJ Friedberg <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Tina Moore

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 13:50:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am requesting that you will reconsider and keep a strong wall between church and State. America has been a refuge for many fleeing from other countries that persecuted people on the basis of their conscience and wouldn't allow them to worship or not worship in accordance with their conscience. Everytime the church rules the state in history, the church or religious order has persecuted Christian's or those that did not conform to the religion the church established. Jesus Christ never forces our will to worship Him. He wants all to be saved, but He does not want robotic or fear based obedience. Jesus wants us to follow Him because we love Him and appreciate His sacrifice for our salvation. All my life I have known that one day this wall of separation would be broken down in America and now I'm seeing that happen. Now I'm seeing the beast of Revelation 13 system of digitizing money being implemented, how America already sanctions financially to get compliance from other countries and how that will be weaponized against non-complying people whose consciences do not agree with the government established religious laws. When it comes to the government, I believe I must obey UNLESS the government asks me to obey a law in direct conflict with the Bible, my God and my conscience. If you mandate laws such as Sunday laws, since I believe in the Biblical Seventh Day Sabbath, such a law I could not obey as I believe this is the mark of the beast test of Revelation 13. Just like the 3 Hebrew boys in Daniel 3, I believe I must not bow down to worship a false Sabbath even to the point of death.

Please recommend that the Johnson Amendment remain in full force. Without this amendment people can influence politics financially in their church and receive an IRS charity deduction. We need the separation of church and state. Please do not weaken the wall between church and state.

Dr. Carson, I read your book and was impressed with your career and life. Please be the Esther of our time for your fellow Seventh Day Adventists.

Please recommend that religious institutions not receive government contracts or monies. Churches and religious institutions should keep their activities separate from government influence. Religion needs to be pure from the influence of competing for state dollars and being corrupted by politics. A church with state power loses their mission purely, with the Holy Spirit's influence, to spread the gospel to the whole world and win souls to Jesus. Jesus never got involved with governments while He was living as a man on this earth and He is our example.

Separation of church and state is not a secular idea. The founding fathers realized how this separation would keep religion strong and pure, uncompromising and would keep a church from the corrupting influence of power so as to stop it from becoming a persecuting power as it was in Europe.

Please recommend keeping a very strong, very tall, very broad wall between church and state.

Sincerely,

Tina Moore
California

From: Seth Ferrell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state is extremely important for the REAL religious freedom of each citizen

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:05:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello, Separation of church and state is extremely important for the REAL religious freedom of each citizen!
Otherwise before long the dark ages will return - mark my word!

Thanks Seth Ferrell

From: bob

PII

To: " PII " < PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on RLC Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:17:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with much in the newly released Report of the Religious Liberty Commission.

The Separation of Church and State is very much a principle of American freedom and Freedom of Religion. That separation is good for both the government and for the church. Religion is not free if the government favors one religion over another. The Constitution clearly means that the government is to be NEUTRAL as to matters of religion. That neutrality means that we do not use government funds to post one religion's scriptures in public schools, we do not use government facilities to promote a certain religion or have one religion's beliefs taught in school at the exclusion of all others. Americans should be free to practice the religion of their choice or no religion without any interference of preference expressed by the government.

Signed,
Robert Perry
Springfield, MO

From: Rodriguez Audrey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Audrey Rodriguez

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:19:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

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.

Respectfully,
Audrey Rodriguez
United States Citizen

From: Nicholas Vence <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request for the Draft Report of the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:23:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for your efforts! People of faith are currently suffering injustice in the United States and I am happy that legal measures are being taken to address these abuses. However, I have some concerns that the current draft [1] oversteps its bounds.

1) Building a bridge between church and state is a bad idea.

- Who gets to decide which religion? The choice will lead to a biased playing field.
- Political corruption will seep into the churches.
- History is full of examples of the majority group oppressing the minority group, and religion magnifies this problem.

2) Funding religious organizations is also a bad idea

- brings corruption.
- with money comes government control — this undermines our 1st amendment.
- religion should be able to exist by private support. If it can't, let market forces bring it down. Otherwise, it will become a source of waste.

3) The Johnson Amendment cleanly enshrines the religious/secular divide; churches may recommend political issues but not political candidates.

Thank you for opening up the current draft to public comment.

Sincerely,
Nicholas Vence, PhD

[REDACTED] PII

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline>

From: Tania Beaman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church & State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:28:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Tania Beaman and I am resident of Hot Spring County, Arkansas.

We have been seeing more and more lately that the line of separation between Church and State is being erased. I do not agree with that .

I am a legal immigrant from Romania which it was under communist regime. We left because we had no freedom. The State controlled so much.

We came to USA to escape that situation, only 45 years later to see the state trying to unite with the Church.

God has allowed political leaders to lead the country and to protect the rights of its citizens. But when it comes to their faith, the government was to be kept out .

Please keep that separation there and let the state do its things, and let the church do her thing, but do not unite them.

God has blessed America through the Protestants and will continue to do so if they obey His laws and instructions.

Please add my vote to keep the state and Church issues separated.

Tania Beaman

[REDACTED] PII

From: Ambrozine Jeffrey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] To the members of the White House Religious liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:28:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

From: Rebecca's Email <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Send the Letter

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:33:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

From: Craig Holman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Citizen comments on report by the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:34:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Public-Citizen-comment2.pdf

Please accept that attached comments from Public Citizen regarding the report and recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission on religious policy by the federal government.

Craig Holman, Ph.D.

Government affairs lobbyist

Public Citizen

[REDACTED] PII

T- [REDACTED] PII

C- [REDACTED] PII



PII

www.citizen.org

July 10, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
Dan Patrick, Lt. Governor of Texas – Chair
Dr. Ben Carson – Vice Chair
Office of the Associate Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

PUBLIC COMMENT – Report of the Religious Liberty Commission – Public Citizen

Public Citizen submits these comments on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Commission as expressed in its report issued on June 26, 2026.

The Religious Liberty Commission was established by Executive Order 14291 on May 1, 2025, as a federal advisory entity within the Department of Justice. Its function is to advise the White House on religious policies.

The Commission released a report on June 26, 2026, providing 12 religious policy recommendations for the White House and Congress to consider. Some of the recommendations are reasonable steps to minimize religious intolerance. Others seek to chip away at the long-held principal of “separation of church and state.” One recommendation is an egregious proposal to politicize churches and other 501(c)(3) charity organizations by eliminating what is known as the “Johnson Amendment” (JA).

Public Citizen submits these comments in strong opposition to eliminating the Johnson Amendment.

THE JOHNSON AMENDMENT

In 1954, U.S. Sen. Lyndon Johnson (D-TX) proposed an amendment to the tax code that limits tax-exempt status to organizations that refrain from participating in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) candidates for public office, including endorsements or publishing campaign statements. The amendment was agreed to without debate and was included in the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. The provision – known as the “Johnson Amendment” – was considered non-controversial at the time.

The amendment is not offered as a restriction on speech rights. Instead, it is provided as a condition for obtaining the benefit of tax-exempt status. A 501(c)(3) organization is **tax exempt**,

and its donors may receive a **tax deduction** for their contributions. Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code describes organizations which may be exempt from federal income tax as follows:

“(3) Corporations, and any community chest, fund, or foundation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition (but only if no part of its activities involve the provision of athletic facilities or equipment), or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided in subsection (h)), and which does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”

Churches are generally considered charitable institutions under the laws and regulations of Section 501(c)(3) of the tax code, including the Johnson Amendment.

There have been few legal challenges to the Johnson Amendment, and the courts have consistently upheld the constitutionality of the amendment largely based on the grounds that tax exemption under §501(c)(3) of the tax code is a privilege and not a right. Any organizations, including churches, wishing to participate in political campaigns may do so under a different tax status.

The most often cited case on this issue is *Branch Ministries*. This involved the sole case in which the IRS revoked the tax status of a church because of violating the Johnson Amendment. During the 1992 presidential election, Branch Ministries, a tax-exempt church, placed full-page advertisements in two national newspapers in which it urged Christians not to vote for then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton because of his positions on certain moral issues. “Bill Clinton is promoting policies that are in rebellion to God’s laws.” The ads also said, “Tax-deductible contributions for this advertisement gladly accepted.” The IRS revoked the tax-exempt status of the church that paid for the ads. *Branch Ministries v. Commissioner*, [211 F.3d 137](#) (D.C. Cir. 2000). See also *Regan v. Taxation With Representation of Washington*, [461 U.S. 540](#) (1983).

Generally, the IRS has been reluctant to enforce the Johnson Amendment, frequently turning a blind eye to blatant violations and exempting political activities by church leaders outside normal church proceedings. Though the IRS has revoked the tax status of a church because of political activities only once, the IRS has conducted numerous investigations of churches and other charities for potential violations of the Johnson Amendment.

RECENT CHALLENGES TO THE JOHNSON AMENDMENT

On May 4, 2017, President Trump signed the “[Presidential Executive Order Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty](#).” The executive order did not repeal the Johnson Amendment – a law cannot be repealed by executive order – but it did signal to the Department of Treasury and

the IRS that enforcement of the law should not be enforced with respect to churches: “churches should not be found guilty of implied endorsements where secular organizations would not be.”

On August 28, 2024, four religious organizations – all evangelical – filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Johnson Amendment on behalf of all 501(c)(3) organizations, not just churches. The National Religious Broadcasters, First Baptist Church of Waskom, Sand Springs Church of Athens, Texas, and Intercessors for America were plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the IRS and its Commissioner Billy Long in U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Texas. *National Religious Broadcasters v. Billy Long*, Docket no: 6:24-cv-00311-JCB (E.D. Texas) (2024).

On July 7, 2025, the two plaintiff churches and IRS Commissioner Billy Long, appointed to the position by Trump, filed a motion asking the court to render a consent decree stating that the Johnson Amendment does not apply to political activity by churches under certain conditions. The IRS proposal explicitly would have allowed endorsements of candidates from the pulpit under “customary channels of communication.” Customary channels of communication remained undefined but presumably would include broadcast media for churches that use such communications.

The [consent decree](#) proposed by the IRS read in part:

“When a house of worship in good faith speaks to its congregation, through its customary channels of communication on matters of faith in connection with religious services, concerning electoral politics viewed through the lens of religious faith, it neither ‘participate[s]’ nor ‘intervene[s]’ in a ‘political campaign,’ within the ordinary meaning of those words. To ‘participate’ in a political campaign is ‘to take part’ in the political campaign, and to ‘intervene’ in a political campaign is ‘to interfere with the outcome or course’ of the political campaign. Bona fide communications internal to a house of worship, between the house of worship and its congregation, in connection with religious services, do neither of those things, any more than does a family discussion concerning candidates. Thus, communications from a house of worship to its congregation in connection with religious services through its usual channels of communication on matters of faith do not run afoul of the Johnson Amendment as properly interpreted.”

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas ruled that the court is barred from approving the IRS consent decree on March 31, 2026. The [ruling](#) asserted that the Tax Anti-Injunction Act barred the courts from any jurisdiction over any “suit for the purpose of restraining the assessment or collection of any tax” and dismissed the case.

The Religious Liberty Commission then picked up the issue in its recent report and recommended that Congress repeal the Johnson Amendment altogether for all 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, including churches. That is the issue currently under consideration.

AN UNWANTED PROPOSAL

Even the original IRS consent decree to roll back the Johnson Amendment for churches was greeted largely with skepticism, including from the bulk of the religious community. According to a 2024 [Lifeway Research](#) poll, Americans, like pastors, are more likely to be opposed to in-church endorsements. Only three in 10 U.S. adults (29 percent) believe pastors publicly endorsing candidates for public office during a church service is appropriate. Three in five (60 percent) disagree, including 42 percent who strongly disagree, and 11 percent aren't sure. The same survey found little political activity by pastors themselves. Few pastors endorsed candidates during a church service in recent elections (2 percent), and just 25 percent say they had endorsed a candidate for public office outside their church role. A different poll by [PRRI](#) found that opposition to church endorsement of candidates has remained the same over time. In 2023, three in four Americans (75 percent) opposed this idea, while only 20 percent favored it. These views closely mirror those from 2017, when 71 percent were in opposition and 22 percent were in favor. The trend is similar among church-going members.

The churches that sought greater political involvement have always been few and far between. Most churches and their congregations would rather focus on religion and morality, not politics. In the latest case of the proposed IRS consent decree, it was advocated by just a few Evangelical churches, mostly supportive of Donald Trump.

The [National Council of Nonprofits](#) a network of more than 25,000 nonprofit organizations, released a statement opposing the proposed repeal legislation. Independent Sector, a coalition of nonprofits, foundations, and corporations has also stated their opposition to the proposal to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Numerous efforts to preserve the protections of the Johnson Amendment include a letter in support of nonprofit nonpartisanship signed by more than 5,500 organizations, a Faith Voices letter signed by more than 4,300 religious leaders, a letter that more than [100 denominations](#) and major religious organizations signed, and a letter from the National Association of State Charity Officials.

There have also been concerns from clergy and lay Christians about the potential that a total repeal would cause churches to transform into partisan super PACs.

The Catholic Church does not allow church funds to be spent on campaigns or allow endorsements of candidates, regardless of the law. It is felt that repeal of the Johnson Amendment would result in dividing congregations. Certainly, the nonprofit community as a whole does not want the Johnson Amendment to be scaled back or eliminated.

CONCLUSION: REPEAL OF THE JOHNSON AMENDMENT IS NEITHER PRUDENT NOR POPULAR

Efforts to repeal the Johnson Amendment have been criticized for a number of reasons. One concern is that political campaign contributions funneled through 501(c)(3) organizations would be tax-deductible for donors and that such contributions would not be disclosed since 501(c)(3) charities are exempt from public reporting requirements. Under that critique, repeal would have the potential of creating a mechanism where political contributions could be made without regard to other campaign financing and disclosure laws.

Another reason is that taxpayer dollars would be used by politically active charities to promote or attack candidates. Given the lack of disclosure and the benefit of using taxpayer dollars, political operatives would come out of the woodwork to set up 501(c)(3) campaign organizations and non-profit super PACs.

The non-profit community, including churches, would likely lose a great deal of credibility and public support and become tainted by politics. Non-profit organizations in general, and churches in particular, realize the swamp in which they would find themselves once they venture into partisan politics. Most do not want to go there.

For these reasons and more, Public Citizen sternly opposes any effort to weaken or eliminate the Johnson Amendment.

Sincerely,

Robert Weissman
Co-President
Public Citizen

[REDACTED]
PII
PII

Lisa Gilbert
Co-President
Public Citizen

[REDACTED]
PII
PII

Craig Holman, Ph.D.
Government affairs lobbyist
Public Citizen

[REDACTED]
PII
PII

From: S Butler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:40:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I wanted to comment on the draft report that is being finalized regarding religious liberty in our great land. I want to state clearly that I support religious freedom and also the freedom to not practice religion or have a belief in religion. Our country has a rich history and benefited directly from religious traditions but these can be taken too far and used to oppress others that don't agree with our beliefs. May we always keep religious expression separate from our civic duties and not make religious beliefs a requirement or lack of a disqualification for participation in public life.

Freedom of speech and the freedom to choose a religion or none at all is one of the bedrocks of our society and is important to maintain at all costs.

-Sam Butler
Independence, OR

From: Shane Bost <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty– Pastor Shane Bost

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:42:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear, Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, Members of the Commission:

First, I want to thank you for taking on this initiative. It serves as a testament to this administration, and of you all, views on the importance of Religious Liberty. Religious Liberty is a foundational principle of America. A large reason we have such a strong First Amendment was because a prominent Baptist Pastor John Leeland conceded an election runoff with James Madison after securing the promise from Madison that he would strengthen the First Amendment. This promise was kept in the first Congress, with Pastor Frederick Muhlenberg serving as our Nation's first Speaker of the House.

Our history is replete with examples demonstrating how faith shaped this nation. This administration is seeking to defend that truth and firmly reestablish Religious Liberty as a central principle of our society. Thank you all for your efforts.

I personally witnessed the infringement upon this principle while serving in the Army Reserves and as a pastor.

In the Army reserves, I served as a Chaplain Candidate while in seminary. I served during the Covid Vaccine Mandates. Chaplains were to handle the Religious Accommodations by determining if the soldier held a "sincerely held religious belief". We were instructed to use a provided form to determine religious belief by asking many personal and private questions. After the interview, we were to input the data we received about the soldier. If it was determined the soldier held a "sincere religious belief" they would maybe receive a waiver from the vaccine. In addition, we received a memo that if soldiers were hesitant to take the vaccine, we were to assure them the vaccine was FDA approved (which it was not at the time). We, the Chaplain Corp, were instructed to intentionally lie to the soldiers. These guidelines and practices served as the deciding factor to begin my discharge process as I would not lie to soldiers nor participate in a practice that undermines the Chaplain Corp and personal convictions. I received my Honorable Discharge.

As a pastor: A person tested positive for Covid in the church following a Sunday service. The leadership of the church decided to close the church the following Sunday. I disagreed and kept the church open, instructing folks they could attend if they were comfortable, but please stay home if uncomfortable. The leadership fired me from the church for doing this.

The amount of government overreach and fear mongering was staggering. People were willing to give up personal bodily autonomy and personal reasoning, forfeiting their personal Religious Liberty to bend to government control.

Another dangerous thing was the co-opting of "#Love Thy Neighbor" rhetoric to push capitulation upon the religious. There are many such egregious acts that your report highlights.

There were many pastors that stood against this, but most were scared and fearful of the response and attacks they may incur, even from their own government. We saw multiple prominent pastors being sued and threatened with jail time for not obeying the orders of closing the church.

We need clarity and decisive action to ensure Religious Liberty is protected. I ask this body to repeal the Johnson Amendment, ensure clarity in IRS guidance, and protections to allow us to engage the public square with the biblical worldview.

By providing greater clarity regarding the constitutional protections already afforded to the free exercise of religion, strengthening accountability, and reaffirming our country's First Amendment principles, the Commission's proposals would better equip Americans to live out their constitutional rights with confidence, governing themselves according to their sincerely held religious convictions and participating fully in civic life without fear that their faith will become the basis for hostility, persecution, or suppression.

Thank you for what you are doing.

Pastor Shane Bost

From: Carissa Callan <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 4 and 5 – Carissa Callan

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:53:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the detailed research and publication that is the *Religious Liberty Commission*. As an American, one of my greatest freedoms is the freedom to express my Christian beliefs, but we have seen how that has been blocked in many public spaces, including but not limited to public schools and colleges. I applaud your boldness to give examples of religious persecution and the attempt to stop our freedom of expression, and to call out the error of those decisions.

I am still working my way through the document, but I did not want to miss the opportunity to THANK YOU for reminding Americans about our freedom of religion and for standing up for our right to express our love of Jesus Christ in public spaces.

I imagine that for every positive email you have received, there are dozens who are opposed. Please do not let that dissuade you from persevering! I am thrilled that this administration is bold enough to remind Americans what our Founding Fathers intended!

God bless you,
Carissa Callan

From: Alexander Henderson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Report – Alexander Henderson

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 14:57:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

I write to you as a Secular Humanist and concerned citizen of the USA. I have been notified that the Religious Liberty Commission is drafting a report and recommendations. I have read the draft that is available online.

I am emailing you to ask that you withdraw the June 26, 2026 draft and also abandon the recommendations within.

I demand this because the report is extremely biased in favor of Christianity in general, and does not have equal representation for other religions.

I believe in separation between church and state. It is an important cornerstone of religious freedom in our country. This report from the Religious Liberty Commission violates these principles. Instead of protecting religious liberty, the report does the opposite for any religion that is not mainstream Christianity.

PLEASE, I beg you to stop this before it is too late.

--

Alexander Henderson

From: peter ochieng <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:14:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

The church must remain separate from the state.

Priests ministered in the sanctuary but not in parliament or white house.

President and Government leaders work in parliament or state house but not in the sanctuary.

From: James Castillo <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:16:44 -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,
James Castillo
Checotah, Oklahoma

From: Diana Bourisaw <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:18:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

This document is ridiculous. Church and state should remain separate. Otherwise religious freedom is extinct

Diana Bourisaw, PhD

[REDACTED] PII

From: Sally Maruca <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission draft report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:18:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am very concerned and disturbed by the draft report of the Religious Liberty Commission. It is not about religion. It is about making the United States a Christian Nationalist country- an anathema to the constructors of the Constitution who so clearly protected all religious beliefs or no religious beliefs for all Americans.

This report cannot stand. It is a travesty. We the people must reject it.

Sally Maruca

[REDACTED]
PII DII

From: Christopher Perello <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – SEPARATION FOR SAFETY – CHRISTOPHER PERELLO

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:20:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of church and state was included in the First Amendment to protect both entities along with all of us as individuals. Embedding any religion, or worse, just one religion, into our government and our schools can only create division. With the best will in the world, and I do not for one moment suspect those backing this report with having good will, will necessarily create a favored group and leave all others on the outside looking in. Government in effect will choose winners and losers based on their religious beliefs or lack thereof. If you really want to understand why the founders did what they did regarding church and state, reach Justice Souter's concurring opinion in *Lee vs. Weisman* (1992). They parsed the "sixteen words" many times in many ways, but their goal was clear: keep religion out of government and vice versa.

From: Katydid Katydid <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Pres Com on Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:20:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

There are two integrally related principles of thought & action that are the foundation of the God in whom we trust's character & government. One is SELFLESS LOVE. The other FREEDOM of THOUGHT & ACTION. One cannot fully exist without the other. Our nation became the greatest nation on this earth by making at least the second principle - freedom of thought & action - an integral foundation of our government. The application of this has commonly been expressed as a wall of separation between church and state - allowing private beliefs and group beliefs to exist side by side in the marketplace of thought - treating them both as valuable but separate entities while allowing neither support nor denigration of the other but being independently complimentary. The reality of breaching that freedom has historically proven to be a conduit for coercion and destruction of hundreds of millions of human lives. The recommendations of this commission are based upon fallacious reporting of history & reasoning which will result in the downfall of this greatest nation on earth. Kathryn Wilson

From: Joyce Strain <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:21:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please preserve our liberty to worship as we please, and how or if we please.
Sent from my iPhone

From: Alistair Huong <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] In Support of the Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:30:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my concern regarding any effort to weaken the historic American principle of separation between church and state. As a citizen who values religious liberty, I believe this principle remains essential to protecting freedom of conscience for all.

The founders recognized that faith is a matter between individuals and God, and that government authority properly extends to actions, not beliefs or worship. This understanding, reflected in the First Amendment, has safeguarded both religion and civil government by preventing coercion and preserving voluntary faith.

Seventh-day Adventists (which I am) have long upheld this principle, not to exclude religion from public life, but to ensure that no individual or group is compelled in matters of belief or practice. A strong separation protects the rights of all—religious and non-religious alike—and maintains the integrity of both church and state.

I respectfully urge the Commission to affirm and preserve this foundational liberty.

Sincerely,
Alistair Huong

From: Elizabeth Oviedo <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] US Citizen concerned about Union of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:35:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a Christian believer and a grateful citizen of this country. I deeply appreciate the many blessings and freedoms I have experienced as someone born and raised here. I cherish the memories of growing up in this nation, as well as its history and the constitutional principles upon which it was established.

Respecting fellow citizens, obeying federal and state laws, and contributing to a safe and peaceful community are important responsibilities and privileges. However, I am concerned that a closer union between church and state could place some of our fundamental freedoms at risk.

When government and religion become closely connected, there is a danger that laws may be created that favor one religious belief or tradition over others. This could limit freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the right of every person to practice—or not practice—religion according to their own convictions.

Religious faith is most meaningful when it is chosen freely rather than promoted or enforced through governmental authority. Protecting the separation of church and state helps preserve religious liberty for Christians and for citizens of every faith and background.

I respectfully ask that these important constitutional freedoms continue to be protected so that all citizens may live according to their conscience while respecting the rights and beliefs of others.

Please consider this, each individual has a God given gift of freedom of conscience. God himself doesn't mess with the right of a person to believe and love him by force. Obedience and love to God can only take place if an individual gets converted by the Holy Spirit which is something that no government or church can enforce. Thank you for your time and consideration and may God bless you.

From: "Geoffrey T. Blackwell" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Nick Fish <[REDACTED] PII >, Melina Cohen <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – DRAFT REPORT – AMERICAN ATHEISTS

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:35:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 20260710_-_RLC_Report_Comment.pdf

Chairperson Patrick:

See attached comment.

Geoffrey T. Blackwell, Esq.

(he/him/his)

Legal Director, General Counsel

American Atheists Legal Center

American Atheists, Inc.

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July 10, 2026

(Via email to [REDACTED] PII)

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 – DRAFT REPORT – AMERICAN ATHEISTS.

Chairperson Patrick:

American Atheists writes in opposition to the farce that the deceptively named Presidential Religious Liberty Commission is engaged in by publishing this draft report (the “Report”).

After conducting a shamelessly one-side series of hearings, the Commission has produced a document that does little more than air tired white Christian Nationalist grievances that amount to little more than a continuation of attacks on the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, opposition to efforts to make American public life more diverse and inclusive, and bemoaning the decline of religion’s hold on American society – and particularly Christianity’s hold on the day-to-day lives of Americans. The draft report aims to construe this decline in social relevance and the increasing rejection of conservative Christian demands as a form of persecution. It would be comical if it weren’t for the fact that white Christian Nationalists are holding all the levers of power in our federal government.

Nowhere in either its hearings or the draft report it produced does the Commission attempt to even acknowledge, let alone actually grapple with, the discrimination, mistreatment, and ostracization faced by nonreligious Americans around the country at the hands of their government.

In a moment when some states are forcing displays of sectarian, evangelical Christian formulations of the Ten Commandments into every public school classroom, the voices and experiences of atheist students and families are conspicuously absent. No mention is made of the countless atheist students harassed, *by students and faculty alike*, for refusing to recite the Pledge of Allegiance’s dishonest assertion that the United States is “One nation, under God.”¹ The Commission made no attempt to hear those who have faced religious proselytizing from teachers.² The Commission could have heard from Victoria Anderson who, with her family, was driven from her home in Milton, West Virginia, by incessant harassment, damage to property, and even death threats after

¹ *Oliver v. Klein Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 448 F. Supp. 3d 673 (S.D.Tex., 2020).

² Eleanor J. Bader, “Amid a Rising Christian Nationalism, Being Non-Religious Is a Perilous Choice for Many Americans,” *The Independent* (Oct 31, 2024), <https://independent.org/2024/10/amid-a-rising-christian-nationalism-being-non-religious-is-a-perilous-choice-for-many-americans/>.

the family publicly called out a teacher for proselytizing to their daughter in health class.³ Their daughter was forced to complete the school year online.⁴ Rather than seek the input of people like Victoria, the Commission instead outright encourages teachers to engage in exactly that sort of coercive, abusive, discriminatory behavior that actively harms students and their families.⁵

When discussing healthcare, the Commission is preoccupied with conservative Christian hobbyhorses like objections to COVID-19 vaccination mandates and the demand that doctors be allowed to put their own religious beliefs above the interests of their patients where reproductive rights are concerned. At the same time, the Commission makes no attempt to address the problem of individuals who suffer from substance use disorders being forced by the government into worship services or religious recovery programs. Had it cared to learn about the experiences of nonreligious people, American Atheists and its coalition partners could have provided the Commission with hours of relevant testimony.

The Commission could have heard from Andrew Miller, a man formerly incarcerated in West Virginia who was repeatedly denied parole for the sole reason that he refused to complete a pervasively religious, federally funded, 12-step “Residential Substance Abuse Treatment” program.⁶ He sought permission to take part in a secular recovery program instead but was repeatedly denied that accommodation.⁷ It took a court order to force the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation to meet its constitutional obligations and remove the completion of the religious RSAT program from his requirements for granting parole:

Had Mr. Miller simply submitted to Defendants' coercion and completed RSAT, he likely would no longer be incarcerated, and WVDCCR could continue its patently impermissible practices for years to come. Mr. Miller should not be further punished for bringing this troubling policy to light.⁸

Perhaps Mr. Miller should be a candidate for the Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty the Commission seeks to establish.⁹

Similarly, had the Commission engaged in an honest, good-faith effort to fully understand the issue of religious liberty and religious equality, American Atheists would have informed it of a Colorado resident, T.M., who was involuntarily committed to a 30-day religious substance use disorder treatment program by the Colorado Behavioral Health Administration (BHA). The program, New Beginnings Recovery Center (NBRC), consisted of complete confinement and supervision and *required him to pay rent* for the government-mandated program while also forcing him to engage in daily Bible study and regular church attendance. He sought an accommodation from BHA, in the form of participation in a secular recovery program, but was ignored. NBRC’s President, Mary Brewer, berated him for contacting OBA to seek an accommodation and punished him for doing so by requiring him to attend more religious meetings. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Civil Rights rejected T.M.’s discrimination claim, saying it lacked jurisdiction to hear the claim, despite the Colorado OBA receiving federal funding from HHS.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Report at 93-94.

⁶ *Miller v. Marshall*, 682 F. Supp. 3d 559 (S.D.W.V., 2023).

⁷ *Id.* at 593-94.

⁸ *Id.* at 593.

⁹ Report at 183.

The Commission's incuriosity toward anything that doesn't align with its white Christian Nationalist ideology was also demonstrated by its complete lack of interest in violations of the free speech rights of nonreligious individuals. Had the Commission been genuinely interested in strengthening freedom of speech, regardless of religious viewpoint, it could have heard from numerous nonreligious individuals who have been censored by government officials for either voicing their nonreligious beliefs or criticizing those government officials for abusing their positions of authority by imposing their own religious beliefs on the people they are meant to serve. The Commission could have heard the testimony of several Arkansas residents who were censored by an Arkansas state lawmaker, Jason Rapert, for criticizing his attempts to force his religion on the people of Arkansas.¹⁰ The Commission could have heard their testimony about Rapert's attacks on them, labeling them "extremists" and accusing them of "ad hominem attacks, defamation or threatening communications."¹¹

The unconstitutional abuse that nonreligious Americans are regularly subjected to by officials at every level of government has serious ramifications for people in their day-to-day lives. In 2019, American Atheists conducted the US Secular Survey, an unprecedented effort to develop quantitative and qualitative data about the nonreligious community in the United States. The Secular Survey garnered nearly 34,000 responses and the data demonstrates that abuse of nonreligious Americans is widespread and has ramifications far beyond the unconstitutional acts themselves.

When asked whether they experienced negative treatment in particular settings, the response was overwhelming. Nearly half (46.5%) of those responding reported negative treatment while serving in the military.¹² Over a quarter of respondents (29.4%) reported negative treatment in education.¹³ Nearly one in five (17.7%) reported negative experiences in mental health services generally and 15.2% reported such experiences specifically regarding substance use disorder services.¹⁴ One in ten (10.7%) reported being subjected to negative treatment in healthcare services outside the context of mental health and 14.6% reported negative experiences when receiving reproductive health care.¹⁵ More than one in ten respondents (11.0%) reported negative treatment in the judicial system.¹⁶ Over one in twenty (6.2%) reported negative treatment when receiving public benefits.¹⁷ A similar number of respondents (6.0%) reported negative treatment from the police.¹⁸

The data also revealed that "participants living in very religious communities were nearly 2.5 times more likely to experience negative events in education than in nonreligious communities, nearly 2.5 times more likely to experience negative events in public services (for example, voting, jury duty, poll work)."¹⁹ Furthermore, "[o]ur data shows that participants who experienced discrimination or high levels of stigmatization because of their nonreligious identity were more likely to screen positive for depression and to experience greater loneliness."²⁰ Those who experienced negative treatment in the education were over 20% more likely to screen positive for

¹⁰*Am. Atheists v. Rapert*, No. 4:19-cv-00017-KGB, 2019 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 230493 (E.D. Ark., Sep. 30, 2019).

¹¹*Id.* at 72.

¹²Frazer, S., El-Shafei, A., Gill, A.M., *Reality Check: Being Nonreligious in America*, American Atheists, 24 (2020) <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d824da4727dfb5bd9e59d0c/t/6233b4f4e004142a2cbde9b0/1647555829870/Reality+Check+-+Being+Nonreligious+in+America.pdf>.

¹³*Id.*

¹⁴*Id.*

¹⁵*Id.*

¹⁶*Id.*

¹⁷*Id.*

¹⁸*Id.*

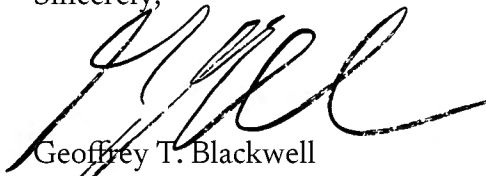
¹⁹*Id.* at 8.

²⁰*Id.* at 30.

depression; those who experienced such treatment in the military were 25.0% more likely to screen positive for depression, at the hands of the police or the court system, 43% more likely, in the context of public benefits 99.6% more likely.²¹ Negative treatment in health services of all stripes resulted in between 53.3 and 94.4% higher rates of depression.²² The cost of ignoring these abuses inflicted on nonreligious Americans by the government, as the Religious Liberty Commission has done in the Report, cannot be overstated.

For all these reasons, American Atheists asks the Commission to withdraw the Report in its entirety and instead engage in a good-faith effort to examine the important issue of religious liberty in America with the care and objectivity it deserves. The Commission's efforts to date have been an insult to all Americans. The members of Commission and its advisory boards should feel ashamed for engaging in this performative, grievance-fueled process.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey T. Blackwell
Legal Director, General Counsel
American Atheists

PII

PII

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

From: Allen Kjesbo <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concern about politics and church

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:48:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm concerned about integrating church and state. I have friends in India who are facing difficult times because they believe differently than the Extreme Hindu government. The loss of a separation of religion and government is a danger to everyone. Below are key thought that I believe:

The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.

Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.

Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.

Institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

I hope you will act to keep our country safe for all people of all faith backgrounds.

Sincerely,

Revered Dr Allen R Kjesbo

Sent from my iPhone

From: purpose meaning <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:51:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

First of all I want to say, I love my country and I love that our President and that his staff are people of faith.

There have been times our country as been the total opposite such as the previous administration.

That being said, I have concerns we are going too far the other direction now and our religious liberty is at stake.

Our forefathers saw the results, historically, of what it looked like to have the church part of government. Hatred toward one another, persecution, forced religious practices etc. That was a dark time in this world's history.

Though the words Separation of Church and State are not found in our Bill of Rights and our Constitution the very principles are very evident. That is why America was colonized and became a "free country." Yes, there were struggles to find out what that freedom meant and our forefathers became aware of the protections we needed to maintain true religious freedom.

I believe the Johnson Amendment is important because churches should be houses of worship not political arenas.

Funding religious organizations or schools by the government is an open door to government control of such. We, the people, have unalienable rights by our Creator to worship as we feel God has led us, not by some standard government has set. The government is to protect us and uphold the laws of the country but our religious rights are ordained by our Creator which is in agreement with our Bill of Rights and our Constitution. No single group should be singled out. Saying that, no group should force their beliefs or their laws to supersede our American way of life.

No one church should over rule others.

Please reconsider what you are attempting to do.

From: "Ch. Rev. Toni Page" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Rev. Toni Page

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:53:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state is necessary for both the Church and the State. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. It is the foundation on which the United States of America stands. There is no religious liberty if one faith is favored, promoted, and protected above others.

If we uphold and enact the recommendations contained in this report, we are no longer the "land of the free, home of the brave."

Peace, Shalom, Ubuntu.

Ch. Rev. Toni Page, MDiv (she/her)

"Whatever may be the tensions and the stresses of a particular day, there is always lurking close at hand the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace." - Howard Thurman (from Meditations of the Heart)

From: purpose meaning <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:54:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Forgive me, I forgot to sign.
Sharon Hoag

On Fri, Jul 10, 2026, 12:51 PM purpose meaning <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

First of all I want to say, I love my country and I love that our President and that his staff are people of faith.

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No one church should over rule others.

Please reconsider what you are attempting to do.

From: Andrea Hitefield <[REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT--RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION--PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 15:58:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: PJI_RLC_Public_Comment.pdf

On behalf of Pacific Justice Institute, I am attaching a copy of a public comment in response to the Religious Liberty Commission's Draft Report.

Thank you,
Andrea

--

Andrea Hitefield | Legislative Counsel

Pacific Justice Institute

Office: [REDACTED]



** Licensed in TN and KY

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July 7, 2026

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SUBMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Associate Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

RE: Public Comment in Response to the Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The Pacific Justice Institute publicly commends the Commission for undertaking the momentous weight of evaluating current religious liberty in America. Through the seven hearings, you listened to victims of abuse and harassment. We applaud your efforts to confront the offenses recounted with a series of recommendations to the President.

The Pacific Justice Institute, a nonprofit law firm dedicated to First Amendment freedoms and religious liberties, has witnessed increasing instances where individuals and faith-based organizations face penalties, exclusion, or coercion for adhering to their deeply held beliefs. Without robust statutory protections, like those which may be developed from your recommendations, these pressures risk eroding a right that has long served as a bedrock of our democracy.

Religious freedom is not a partisan issue—it transcends political divides and speaks to the core of who we are as a free society. In light of this common ground, we address the following recommendations.

1. Faith Based Institutions

We believe that the limiting of governmental intrusion into religious affairs was intended in the foundation of this country. In that, freedom has the ability to flourish apart from intrusive regulations while acquiescing to nonintrusive regulations. The Johnson Amendment is a direct limitation of the free speech of Churches. The government intrusion into what can or cannot be said from the pulpit is the very governmental intrusion the “separation of church and state” intended to prohibit.

We support the recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Until then, we support and encourage the publication of *clear* IRS guidance on the Amendment’s parameters. *Until the Johnson Amendment is repealed, the Department of the Treasury should issue guidance clarifying that the Johnson Amendment does not reach religious speech by houses of worship and faith-based non-profits.*

We support upholding church autonomy through litigation. *The Department of Justice should initiate or support strategic litigation upholding the doctrine of church autonomy, which refers to the rights of houses of worship and faith-based nonprofits to operate their internal affairs according to their religious beliefs without government interference*

We recommend, in regards to the recommendation to protect the independence of charitable organizations, that it apply to non-governmental organizations that do not receive government funding.

Pacific Justice Institute | 1

The recent revelation of rampant fraud has often centered around NGOs. As a result, our position is that the recommendation be limited in scope to charitable organizations that do not receive taxpayer dollars.

2. Anti-Semitism:

We stand firm in the belief that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights” and should be treated as such. We condemn acts of antisemitism. We commend the Commission for creating a recommendation for expedited investigation and prosecution of antisemitic actions. However, the timeline in the recommendation opens the question of statute of limitations. With a statute of limitations, an allegation loses its ability to be adjudicated when the statute expires.

We recommend an extended statute to allow credible allegations the space and time to bring forward their claim when it is safe and wise to do so.

We recommend keeping the suggested tie between federal funding and prompt remediation as an incentive to timely investigate allegations.

3. Military Service Members and Chaplains

At PJI, we have served numerous clients who faced termination for their religious stance regarding the Covid vaccine. The religious belief of an employee does not need to reflect the religious belief of the employer. However, time and again we have seen employers reject an employee’s religious stance which they do not understand.

We recommend specific training for all military lawyers. These JAG attorneys are the individuals who signed off on the illegal handling policies of the blanket RAR denials. To mitigate this error, there should be a mandatory JAG CLE explaining RFRA, Title VII Religious Discrimination, and the RAR process. This was a wholesale failure of the military legal infrastructure. They either knew nothing or lacked the moral courage to do what was right.

We recommend specific training for civilians, officers, and noncommissioned officers in supervisory positions about RFRA, Title VII, and the accommodation process. Military supervisors--from low level supervisors all the way up to flag officers--threatened subordinates of repercussions to their careers if they considered filing accommodation requests. Many subordinates were threatened with court marital and/or military prison if they refused the Covid vaccine for religious reasons. This blatant disregard of religious freedom is directly connected to ignorance. A training program would remove true ignorance from these situations and create a clearer line for litigation of intentional religious discrimination.

We recommend amending the UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice) to include criminal penalties for supervisors who violate these constitutional protections. Without an amendment, no justice can be applied to the actions demonstrated during the Covid era.

The text of the recommendations included two which are vague in wording and thus open to unintended interpretation. See page 118 of the *Religious Liberty Commission Brief*.

- 1) “The Department of War should restore the use of military emblems on religious texts and materials, such as Bibles and dog tags.” The term “should restore” creates

a definitive action for possibly all dog tags rather than a permissive action for only those dog tags which are connected to a religious individual.

- 2) “The Department of War should conduct religious liberty impact assessments as part of operational planning.” This suggestion’s wording implies planning of operations will be adjusted based on the religious impact of either the actor or of the recipients. A stronger worded recommendation including such specifics as whose religious liberty is being assessed, the use of the assessment, and the role of that assessment in operational planning is needed to clarify this suggestion.

4. Expanding Equal Access Act

At PJI, we have long championed the unalienable rights enshrined in the First Amendment, particularly in educational settings where young minds are shaped and tested through rigorous intellectual exchange. Parents across the nation entrust their children to institutions of higher learning with the reasonable expectation that these environments will foster, rather than suppress, the free flow of ideas.

The Supreme Court has recognized that one of public education's primary functions is to educate the young for citizenship.¹ An important—perhaps the most important—duty of a citizen is to choose among competing views and information and make reasoned decisions based upon those views. To that end, schools must provide a microcosm of society, along with the freedom for students to be exposed to diverse and challenging views and choose between them.²

In 1984, Congress enacted the Equal Access Act to clarify student’s access to gathering together at school and expressing themselves in student-created clubs. The Act applies ONLY to public, secondary schools which receive Federal funding and have established a “limited open forum”. Colleges and Universities create limited open forums on a regular basis and would gain deep benefit from an expansion of the EAA to college campuses.

Many college campuses create echo-chambers where dissent is stifled. This erosion of viewpoint diversity not only stifles innovation but also undermines parental rights by exposing students to environments rife with self-censorship, faculty bias, and peer intimidation. Surveys have revealed that over one in three students view violence as an acceptable means to silence speech—a crisis that demands immediate attention and legislative intervention.

We recommend an expansion of the Equal Access Act and other legislative efforts to create public free speech policies at all public universities, including protections for virtual spaces where much of our modern discourse occurs.

We recommend empowering students to seek redress through lawsuits and meaningful penalties for proven free speech violations.

We recommend reaffirming that campuses must serve as a *true* “marketplaces of ideas,” where debate sharpens intellects and unlocks potential. In an era marked by tragic events, such as the murder of conservative commentator Charlie Kirk and the alarming academic celebrations that followed, we cannot afford to tolerate a culture where speech is equated with violence.

¹ *Tinker v. Des Moines Ind. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 508 S. Ct. 733, 21 L. Ed. 2d 731 (1969).

² *Bible Club v. Placentia-Yorba Linda Sch. Dist.*, 573 F. Supp. 2d 1291, 1301, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 80121, *25

5. Universal School Choice

Homeschooling has long been a recognized and respected form of education in America, and many families choose this path because it allows for personalized, flexible, and family-centered learning experiences. The U.S. Supreme Court has long recognized that parents are the primary educators of their children. *See Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925); *see also Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000) (parents have a fundamental right to make decisions concerning the care, custody, and control of their children, including educational decisions). With the onset of private schools specialized to address specific needs, parents have more options than ever. Unfortunately, those options are afforded only to the most affluent.

We affirm the recommendation of allowing education tax credits to follow the child rather than the school to allow the parents greater option in choosing the best educational situation for their child and their family.

6. Medical Conscience Rights

We fully support and join with your recommendations regarding medical conscience rights. No medical professional should be required to perform a medical procedure they conscientiously object to. No patient should have to have undergo a medical procedure from a medical professional who objects to the procedure.

7. Affirming Further RLC Recommendations

PJI fully affirms the following recommendations as written in the RLC Draft:

- We support legal challenges to the constitutionality of *CLS v. Martinez*. *The Department of Justice should support strategic litigation challenging the constitutionality of CLS v. Martinez.*
- We support litigation upholding the constitutionality of Ten Commandments posters in school. *The Department of Justice should support strategic litigation upholding the constitutionality of Ten Commandments posters in public schools.*
- We support litigation challenging Blaine Amendments and similar laws discriminating against religious educational institutions. *The Department of Justice should initiate or support strategic litigation challenging state-level Blaine Amendments and similar laws that restrict the ability of parents to use school choice funds to send their children to religious schools.*
- We support legal challenges to the constitutionality of the Johnson Amendment. *The Department of Justice should support other strategic litigation challenging the constitutionality of the Johnson Amendment.*
- We support the increase in First Amendment Training for law enforcement officers. *The Department of Justice should train law enforcement officers to differentiate between protected speech, such as that exhibited by peaceful pro-life protestors or parents advocating at school board meetings, and illegal harassment or violence, such as physical*

attacks on people of faith at houses of worship.

- We support the effort to protect houses of worship from disruption. *The Department of Justice should prioritize investigating and prosecuting FACE Act violations against those who damage or destroy a place of worship or who use force, or the threat of force, to obstruct, injure, intimidate, or interfere with those gathered at a house of worship.*

8. Final Recommendation

We **strongly encourage codifying recommendations into law**. While executive orders provide quick and immediate relief, without the longstanding protection of Congress, these changes may be modified in subsequent administrations. Creating congressionally approved statutes will ensure the efforts of the Commission are not erased.

Conclusion

It bears repeating that Pacific Justice Institute stands for the protection of religious freedom rights as intended and established by our Founding Fathers. We appreciate both the Religious Freedom Commission and the President of the United States in their combined efforts to evaluate the current state of religious freedom and to create specific actions to protect ongoing freedom of religion.

On behalf of Pacific Justice Institute,



Andrea Hitefield, Esq.
Legislative Counsel
Pacific Justice Institute

PII

From: Dara Purvis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - GENDER IDEOLOGY - DARA PURVIS

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:02:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the commission,

I write to submit comments on the draft Religious Liberty Commission Report, specifically on the report's description of so-called "gender ideology" and transgender people. In my opinion, the report is motivated by bias against transgender people that calls into question the accuracy and legitimacy of the entire report.

I am the James E. Beasley Professor of Law at Temple University Beasley School of Law. (I give my employment to explain my qualifications, not because my opinions represent those of Temple University.) I hold a JD from Yale Law School, an MPhil in Political Thought and Intellectual History from the University of Cambridge, and a BA from the University of Southern California. I research American constitutional law, including constitutional history, and the law's treatment of LGBTQ+ people.

On page 180, the draft report discusses "The Dangers of Ideology," arguing that the "primary opposition to religious liberty" is a contemporary ideology seeking to "replace" religion. The report goes on to use an example of "school district policies aggressively pushing educators to secretly transition their students." Elsewhere in the draft report, it refers to "radical gender ideology," (p154), "gender ideology" (p16 and p95), and "transgender ideology" (p 95 and p131). The argument, which mischaracterizes both facts and law, is that acknowledging the existence of transgender people is fundamentally opposed to religious liberty. The report approvingly quotes Bishop Robert Barron's statement that the principal enemy of religious liberty is a belief in individual choice, and attributes that belief in individual choice as the motivation behind transgender people.

This use of transgender people as an antireligious boogeyman is motivated by animus rather than by fact. One's gender identity (or respect for other people's gender identity) has nothing to do with one's religious beliefs, as the numerous religious denominations and congregations that welcome trans members and the many transgender faith leaders demonstrate. There are transgender adherents to every faith, and members of every religious faith who love and support transgender people. The report takes the position of *some* people of faith that transgender people do not exist and magnifies it into a conclusion that *all* transgender people are inherently hostile to religious liberty, a logical stretch that is unsupported by the report, facts, and history. Indeed, the leap required to make such a statement demonstrates that the draft report's authors are motivated by animus against transgender people in inserting gratuitous attacks upon them.

Under *Romer v. Evans* (1996), government actions motivated by animus against a particular population lack a legitimate state interest and are unconstitutional even under rational basis review, the lowest level of scrutiny applied under the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. The draft report's recommendations, if implemented, are poisoned by the animus embodied in the report, and the report will serve as evidence of this animus.

Dara Purvis

From: Rick Finkbeiner <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Uphold the separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:06:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

The religious liberty commission's report on abolishing the wall of separation between church and state is unpatriotic and will lead to tyranny that favors a few religions over all others. Abolishing the separation of church and state would fundamentally undermine the foundational liberties that protect citizens of all faiths and no faith at all. When the boundaries between religious authority and government power are erased, the state inevitably begins to favor a specific religious ideology, converting personal faith into a tool of political coercion. Historically, the fusion of church and state has not purified politics; rather, it has corrupted religion by entangling it in political warfare, while systematically stripping minority groups of their religious freedoms and civil rights. True religious liberty cannot exist without a secular government that remains neutral, ensuring that every individual's conscience is protected from state-enforced orthodoxy. Giving power to a few religions will possibly enable to rise of a second dark ages and I oppose any such movement because it will lead to the persecution of all who disagree and eventually lead to force. The rights of all need to be protected.

From: Ray Saladino <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:09:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am 100% for separation of church and state.
The government has no business in religious matters.

From: Merle Peterson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment – separation of Church and State. Merle Peterson.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:10:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Member of Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing as a concerted 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, they are stepping into partisan politics. I do not want to go to church and hear about the politics of our country and be encouraged to vote for a particular individual. In fact, I request that the Johnson amendment be enforced rather than basically be ignored as it is today.

When churches take government money, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches should not be competing for funding and answering to politicians. That's bad for the church and for the country.

People of faith built our government on separation of Church and State and we want to protect it. Please keep Church and State separate. That is the only way we can keep both of them free. 250 years ago many people fled other countries because they were not allowed the freedom of religion. We do not want to go back to that.

Sincerely,

Merle Peterson

Fletcher, North Carolina

From: Marjorie LeVangie <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State must stay separate.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:12:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Church and State must stay separate.
Please do not mingle what is Gods with the secular.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: purpose meaning <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:14:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Pillarsoffreedom.org

On Fri, Jul 10, 2026, 12:54 PM purpose meaning <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

Forgive me, I forgot to sign.

Sharon Hoag

On Fri, Jul 10, 2026, 12:51 PM purpose meaning <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

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Though the words Separation of Church and State are not found in our Bill of Rights and our Constitution the very principles are very evident. That is why America was colonized and became a "free country." Yes, there were struggles to find out what that freedom meant and our forefathers became aware of the protections we needed to maintain true religious freedom.

I believe the Johnson Amendment is important because churches should be houses of worship not political arenas.

Funding religious organizations or schools by the government is an open door to government control of such. We, the people, have unalienable rights by our Creator to worship as we feel God has led us, not by some standard government has set. The government is to protect us and uphold the laws of the country but our religious rights are ordained by our Creator which is in agreement with our Bill of Rights and our Constitution. No single group should be singled out. Saying that, no group should force their beliefs or their laws to supersede our American way of life.

No one church should over rule others.

Please reconsider what you are attempting to do.

From: Kristie McGonegal <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment--Religious Liberty Commission Report--Kristie McGonegal

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:16:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

Please protect our constitutional separation of church and state. It protects our religious liberty to worship as we choose. Also, partisan politics have no place in houses of worship. Protect the Johnson Amendment.

I do not think public funds should go to private schools.

The 10 Commandments, especially the way in which they have been edited, have no place in public schools.

I am a theological seminary graduate and Bible teacher in my church. I never want my religion to be forced on anyone.

Truly,
Kristie McGonegal

From: Jose Palacio <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:21:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

God does not and will not accept your help.

I refuse to have the state dictate to me when, where, how to worship my Father and my God.

I am a USA Army veteran. I hope how I was willing to die for this country, I pray through Jesus Christ to the Father, that I will die as a martyr for my faith.

So you and the police or even the army are going to save people's souls?

God have mercy on us.

Jose' Palacio (child of God)!

From: Carol Lee <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:36:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May concern,

Our country was started by people who were looking for freedom to worship the way they believed without being persecuted. Every time the government and religion work together the results are persecution of those who don't fit the mold of those in power. For over 200 years we have operated on the principle of separation of church and state and we should continue to do so.

Yours truly

Carol L Lee

From: Omer Hancock <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -- Religious Liberty Commission Report -- Omer Hancock

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:39:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

I want to emphasize the concept of the separation of church and state. The first amendment in the Bill of Rights states this concept clearly. Also, the concept is present in the Declaration of Independence. Each individual has the personal right and responsibility to develop views and practices in regard to religion. We know that individuals differ widely on views and practices in religion, including no religion. I claim to be a Christian, but I realize that even in Christian views and practices, vast differences exist. That right and that freedom must be supported and encouraged by the government. Therefore, the government at every level in this country must not infringe on the right of each and every individual to have personal religious views and practices. Specifically, the government in this country must avoid promoting any religion, including the Christian faith, or a specific understanding and expression of the Christian faith.

The government in this country, the United States of America, needs at every level of government, to avoid using public funds which are provided by the general public, for private schools. Whether the private schools identify as a Christian school, or a school of another religious group, taxes from the general public should not cross the line as public funds. Public funds are not to be provided for entities outside the purview of public education.

This same principle applies to the display of the Ten Commandments or any other religious statements in a public school building or campus. For example, would religious statements from Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, or any other religion be acceptable? Categorically, no religious statements should be displayed in a public building or public campus.

Thank you for giving attention to these vital matters that relate to religious liberty among all citizens in the United States of America.

From: Loren Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:40:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

It was the failure to keep government business separate from church business that drove Europeans across the Atlantic to seek freedom to worship as they chose. History is replete with disastrous example after disastrous example of when governments (innocent as it may first appear) begin holding the reins of church power.

Keep church and state separate, just as the wisdom of the founders intended and codified in the Constitution.

Arthur Smith

From: Key To Prophecy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Defend Religious Liberty please

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:48:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear DOJ,

I am asking for more time, please.

It is my duty to do all in my power to avert the threatened danger. A vast responsibility is devolving upon men and women of prayer throughout the land to petition that God may sweep back this cloud of evil, and give a few more years of grace to work for the Master.

-This is a paraphrase of a quote from The Review and Herald.

My understanding of God's word tells us the the United States of America is mentioned in Revelation chapter 13. The Heritage Foundation is making a grand push for Sunday legislation, to ultimately force observance of the first day.

I believe that when God created the Earth he also created the seven day week which the seventh day he blessed and sanctified making it holy.

Our founding fathers were wise enough to Institute the First Amendment.

Which prohibits the government from establishing a state religion, interfering with the free exercise of religion...

May our Creator place this burden heavily on your heart, you have an awesome responsibility.

Please take it seriously,

God does.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world..."

HE is coming very soon

God bless you & yours

Maranatha 🙏

David Mattson

Washington State

From: Karen Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Wall of Separation Needs to Remain

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:53:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

How alarming that the Religious Liberty Commission promotes tearing down the wall of separation between church and state. This "wall" does not limit religious practice but instead protects it. Merging religious life and public life opens the door to all kinds of ways entities could practice "limiting the free exercise" of religion.

Good fences make good neighbors, as Robert Frost once said. Let us keep our good fences, and our good government; but let us keep them clearly apart from one another for the protection of all.

Sincerely,

Karen Williams

From: "Wiltenburg, Joy Deborah" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:55:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

As a professional historian, I am bound to object to the distortions of history presented in this draft report. Historians are trained to a strict standard of evidence-based research that requires us to weigh all the available evidence. It is not acceptable to choose only the evidence that supports a particular viewpoint or agenda.

The report ignores extremely strong evidence of our founders' commitment to religious plurality and their purposeful avoidance of enshrining one faith as superior to others. Examples are legion, but I will cite here the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom with its warning against "the impious presumption of legislators and rulers . . . who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinion and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible." Founders George Washington, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and others all warned against what Madison called the "arrogant pretension" of government officials claiming to act as a "competent Judge of Religious Truth."

I urge you to consult responsible experts in historical study, trained in the ethics of intellectual honesty, rather than put forward a flawed ideological narrative.

Sincerely,

Joy Wiltenburg, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita
Department of History
Rowan University
Glassboro, NJ 08028

From: Gerald Fleming <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 16:57:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Committee,

It is with the utmost respect that I ask the Committee to give prayerful consideration to these facts taken directly from the principles of God's Holy Word.

The Ten Commandments, as recorded in Scripture, are divided into two sections. The first four are vertical and deal exclusively with our relationship with our Creator. These four commandments do not need to be enforced by civil power; God does not force people to worship Him, nor does He accept forced love or forced worship.

The remaining six commandments are horizontal and pertain to our relationship with our fellow man. Because of sin, civil government must enforce these six commandments.

Sincerely,

Gerald Fleming

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >
To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >
Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report– [REDACTED] PII
Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:01:09 -0400
Importance: Normal
Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Commission_letter.docx
Inline-Images: image001.png; image002.jpg

To the Department of Justice,

I'm writing you as an Associate Professor of History [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] to convey my strong misgivings about the recently issued draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. The report offers a skewed, transparently biased, and political interpretation of American religious history, as will be readily apparent to most professional historians and experienced teachers of History who read it.

Its recommendations are equally troubling, and at variance with the traditions of liberalism and secular humanism that undergird our constitutional order.

I stand with the American Historical Association and my historical colleagues in affirming a commitment to evidence-based history, and to presenting the American story in all of its complexity and conflictedness. The reductive and highly simplified "history" on offer in the draft report, along with the deliberately unrepresentative composition of the Commission itself, give clear indication of the bad faith that is driving this effort. In seeking to cast America as a Christian nation, as it ultimately does, the report elevates myth and ideology over historical method and argumentation. As an historian, I can only object and pledge continued resistance to these federal encroachments upon intellectual integrity and freedom.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

PII

PII
PII

July 10, 2026

To the Department of Justice,

I'm writing you as an Associate Professor of History at the [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] to convey my strong misgivings about the recently-issued draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. The report offers a skewed, transparently biased and political interpretation of American religious history, as will be readily apparent to most professional historians and experienced teachers of History who read it. Its recommendations are equally troubling, and at variance with the traditions of liberalism and secular humanism that undergird our constitutional order.

I stand with the American Historical Association and my historical colleagues in affirming a commitment to evidence-based history, and to presenting the American story in all of its complexity and conflictedness. The reductive and highly simplified "history" on offer in the draft report, along with the deliberately unrepresentative composition of the Commission itself, give clear indication of the bad faith that is driving this effort. In seeking to cast America as a Christian nation, as it ultimately does, the report elevates myth and ideology over historical method and argumentation. As an historian, I can only object and pledge continued resistance to these federal encroachments upon intellectual integrity and freedom.

Sincerely yours,

PII

From: "carla.hoyt" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - RLC REPORT CONCLUSION on Separation of Church and State - Carla Hoyt

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:02:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam,

I respectfully disagree with the conclusion of the Religious Liberty Commissions final report on the matters of eroding the wall of separation of church and state.

I stand firmly with Thomas Jefferson's statement, "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, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or the prohibiting of the free exercise thereof, 'THUS BUILDING A WALL OF SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE."

I respectfully urge your office to uphold the principles that protect liberty of conscience and preserve the rightful distinction between civil authority and the authority of God.

That wall is there to protect me and my fellow citizens from tyranny and religious persecution.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

Carla Hoyt
US Citizen

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: "larre" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendations to the Religious Liberty Commission and US Department of Justice before July 13 deadline

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:06:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Friends at the Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ):

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and its obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in

the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain. Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the ear croppings, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to take into account the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the “proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state” if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.” [7]

James Madison wrote, “It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one

of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord’s words that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that “The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State.” [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, “In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.”

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

I remain, Yours truly,

Pastor Larre Kostenko

- [1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>
- [2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].
- [3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>
- [4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>;
- [5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPIfx-UA>
- [6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>
- [7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.
- [8] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments
- [9] Matthew 22:21
- [10] James Madison, Letter to Robert Walsh, March 2, 1819.
- [11] John Adams, Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765.
<https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>

From: Sylvia Baron <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- Separation of Church and State -- Sylvia Baron

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:06:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have spent time reviewing the draft report, evaluating various viewpoints. This report seems disingenuous in its reconstruction regarding the historical phrase and facts of the "wall of separation of church and state" in this country. The history of this foundational principal is much more firmly established than represented in the report, and is a cornerstone of American freedom.

I object to the language which presents this as a recent development, the effects of which have been contrary to both public and private religion. I object to the language which implies that the principle of a wall of separation and state is foreign to the Constitution.

In addition I specifically object to government funding of religious institutions and religious education, and to repeal of the Johnson Amendment. The separation between religion and government should be strengthened, not weakened. It is an essential part of the fortress protecting our freedoms.

Thank you.

Sylvia Baron
Paradise, CA

From: Paul Wagner <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on the Draft Report Release

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:11:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png

To Whom It May Concern:

As a Catholic American citizen, I am urging you to pull the report. This document reads less like a report on religious freedom, and more like an extreme Christian Nationalist manifesto. True religious freedom in this country means that ALL religions—yes, even Islam—are given EQUAL prominence, no matter how many people practice that faith. It means that if you want to display religious symbols for the holiday season in December, you MUST display ALL the symbols from ALL the faiths celebrating holidays during that time. People shouldn't have to ask, and go to court to get that right, it should happen automatically. If a town does not want to do that, then NONE of the religious symbols should be displayed.

Also, the commission had NO Muslims, NO Jews, NO Hindus, NO Buddhists, NO Sikhs, and especially NO atheists. For a TRUE religious freedom commission, ALL must be represented. Otherwise the result is what I described in my opening paragraph—an extreme Christian Nationalist manifesto that would be at home in Afghanistan or Iran, if the writers were Muslim and not Christian.

Similarly, in public meetings and gatherings, ALL faiths MUST and SHOULD be represented if meetings begin with a prayer. And ALL should listen to them. Christians should not exit the room if other faiths are made to hear Christian prayers against their will. That is not freedom. That is coercion and establishing a national religion, which is FORBIDDEN in the Constitution.

Also, freedom OF religion—to practice your faith in your home and your church—also means freedom FROM religion. There are MILLIONS of Natural Born American citizens who don't want to have to endure constant religious talk by city, state, and federal officials. They believe religion is the province of the Home and the Church, and NOWHERE ELSE. There should be NO religion in public policy, debate, or anything like that. The Supreme Court has decided in the 60s that religion is not an excuse to discriminate. As John Adams said, we are a nation of LAWS made by MEN to govern OURSELVES. Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and James Madison warned of the tyranny of one state religion being forced on everyone else.

Finally, I wish to say that treating other religions the way Christianity is NOT "oppression" or "persecution" as many Republicans often complain. It is called EQUALITY. After all the old saying goes "equality looks like persecution to the oppressors".

Please take these comments to heart and once again, I urge you to withdraw the report.

Paul Wagner
Vocal Arts
Hammond Arts and Performance Academy
Hammond Central High School
www.hammondapa.com



From: "Hoganson, Kristin Lee" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:12:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

One of the greatest liberties secured through the American Revolution was religious liberty. Although religious freedom was denied to many Americans, as the example of enslaved Americans makes clear, the diversity of religious belief in the United States gave rise to a national commitment to protecting religious liberty that was more widely realized following emancipation. Our Constitution does not establish an oppressive state religion - to the contrary, it provides for freedom of conscience. With this in mind, I am writing to encourage you to consult the actual historical record in your revised report. Widely available historical records, such as the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom, the 1796 Treaty of Tripoli, and James Madison's *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* can save you from further shameful inaccuracies. I would be happy to put you in touch with historians of religion in the United States if you do not know how to locate any who are actually familiar with the documentary record of our nation's past.

All best,
Kristin Hoganson

From: [REDACTED] PII

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report– Patrick Young

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:15:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Here's my amended email, to eliminate references to personal information. Thank you for alerting me to the need to anonymize the content.

To the Department of Justice,

I'm writing you as a university professor of History, to convey my strong misgivings about the recently-issued draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. The report offers a skewed, transparently biased and political interpretation of American religious history, as will be readily apparent to most professional historians and experienced teachers of History who read it. Its recommendations are equally troubling, and at variance with the traditions of liberalism and secular humanism that undergird our constitutional order.

I stand with the American Historical Association and my historical colleagues in affirming a commitment to evidence-based history, and to presenting the American story in all of its complexity and conflictedness. The reductive and highly simplified "history" on offer in the draft report, along with the deliberately unrepresentative composition of the Commission itself, give clear indication of the bad faith that is driving this effort. In seeking to cast America as a Christian nation, as it ultimately does, the report elevates myth and ideology over historical method and argumentation. As an historian, I can only object and pledge continued resistance to these federal encroachments upon intellectual integrity and freedom.

From: RLC (OASG) <[REDACTED] PII >

Date: Friday, July 10, 2026 at 5:07 PM

[REDACTED] PII

Subject: Automatic reply: PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report– Patrick Young

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Thank you for your email! Please be aware public comments to the Commission may be subject to public inspection. Please do not include personally identifiable information such as addresses, birth dates, or other details you may wish to keep private.

From: Thorne Graham <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Draft Report - Religious Liberty Commission- Separation of Church & State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:17:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 10, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Room 5706

Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a concerned American, I oppose this Draft Report on the basis that it completely dismantles the principles of Religious Freedom provided by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. The founders of the Constitution sought to flee from the tyranny of the King and compulsory or forced worship in Europe, recalling the 1260 years of persecution from 538-1798, also known as the Dark Ages. This horrible history should give us all clear insight into the rationale and aim of the founding fathers, that the travesty, martyrdom, and bloodshed over religious worship would not be repeated in this nation.

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. America formed and grew into a flourishing society because they sought not to be ruled by a king, becoming a democratic republic and a protestant nation, in opposition to becoming a nation with forced or compulsory worship, which would be the ultimate result of the Report since many faiths have different beliefs and ways to worship. The Draft Report does cite that Americans of all faiths are able to "approach God freely..."; well, don't Americans already have this right?

The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines the principle of true religious liberty by ignoring the First Amendment that states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

During the last eighteen months, we have seen those who support democracy in the form of Christian Nationalism with anything that differs from it to be curtailed or ridiculed.

What about other faiths? What about those who have no faith? Must they comply with if the Draft Report is finalized now, or in the future?

Worship that is compelled or forced is not worship, but blind servitude, also known as slavery. How can we, who say that we believe in freedom, propose to its citizens that they must worship as the government calls for or dictates?

The government should not be funding religious education as proposed in the Draft Report as this constitutes the respecting or endorsement of religion, which is in opposition to the First Amendment.

Freedom of Speech, Freedom of the Press, the right to peacefully assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances has already been attacked recently by the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice.

The sole part of the First Amendment that is still, as I understand it, is the freedom of worship. The Draft report says that it promotes religious liberty but, in essence, dictates the form and practices for religious worship.

The home is to be the 1st place of religious instruction, not the public school system, funded by taxpayer dollars.

It is the First Amendment of the Constitution that forms the true foundation of Religious Liberty. The First Amendment allows not only the Christian faith, but those of other belief systems to worship or not to worship as each individual chooses, in this democratic republic.

As the First Amendment is part of our Constitution, we see the Freedom of Speech, the Freedom of the Press, and the Right of the people to assemble and petition the Government for a redress of grievances not followed by this Administration.

In summary, the Draft Report seeks to set up a required or mandatory faith, which is not in keeping with the Constitution of the United States & the First Amendment.

I urge our nation's leaders to reflect that the founders saw the unalienable rights established by God and that worship belongs to Him and is not to be dictated by man.

The government's focus should be on the 2nd table of the Commandments, and not the 1st. The 2nd table relates as to how we are to treat each other. The 1st table is between each individual and God, not the government or any other person on the earth. Please abandon work that the Constitutional framers have already provided for us in the United States of America, which is indeed true Religious Liberty.

Thank you.

From: Jeremy Pilz <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Chapter 1, Chapter 3, Chapter 5, Chapter 9, Appendix A, and Appendix B.] – [Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:19:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: 26.07.10_SBA_Comment_on_DOJ_Religious_Liberty_Commission_Draft_Report.pdf

Inline-Images: image001.png

Good afternoon,
Please find attached Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America's Public Comment on the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Pilz

Legislative Assistant

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America



SUSAN B. ANTHONY
PRO-LIFE
AMERICA



SUSAN B. ANTHONY
PRO-LIFE
AMERICA

July 10, 2026

RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – [Chapter 1, Chapter 3, Chapter 5, Chapter 9, Appendix A, and Appendix B.] – [Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America]

To whom it may concern:

In response to request for public comments on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission, we write today to express gratitude for the report, as well as to offer suggestions on how to strengthen the Commission’s recommendations within Appendix B. While one most certainly does not have to be religious to recognize the humanity of the unborn and desire their protection, many faiths do recognize this fact. It is critical that we protect the rights of any individual who objects to the horror and injustice of abortion and who seeks to protect the most vulnerable among us. It is equally important to ensure that pro-abortion zealots are not violating the rights of all individuals, including students or parents. We thank the Commission for including the pro-life movement, conscience protections, and stories of life in your report.

In Chapter 1 it was encouraging to see that the pro-life movement’s efforts to “recognize the dignity of unborn persons” was listed among the landmark civil rights movements in American history led by many of our nation’s religious faithful.¹ It was also great to see Jean Marie Davis’ story showcased in Chapter 3.² Pregnancy resource centers are the heart of the pro-life movement and Jean Marie’s story is a testament to that. These centers should not be targeted, legally or politically, simply for their pro-life or religious mission.

In Chapter 5 it was impactful that the Commission shared Norvilla Etienne Cain’s powerful story of how her mom chose life and how it moved her to attempt to form a pro-life student organization on her college campus – even while the college administration refused to recognize the club. We echo Norvilla’s testimony that “Words have the power to end a life, but they also have the power to save one. And it is up to us to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.”³

Perhaps the most vital piece the Commission included was in Chapter 9 when they presented the federal laws that protect conscience rights.⁴ The Church, Coates-Snowe, and Weldon Amendments have been longstanding federal laws that ensure healthcare workers and entities that object to abortion are not discriminated or punished for such objection. Chapter 9 also

¹ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=30>

² <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=53>

³ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=85>

⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=130>

highlighted Dr. Susan Bane’s testimony of how medical students and residents face pressure if they choose not to participate in or perform abortions. Dr. Bane discussed the 2018 “calculated and intentional shift” of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education to change the “opt-in” structure of abortion training to an “opt-out” structure.⁵ Dr. Bane notes that it is not that simple to just opt out in these situations. Federal law protects healthcare workers at all levels and ensures that they are not forced to participate in, perform, refer for, pay for, or provide coverage for abortions – regardless of the reason for the objection. It is critical that these laws are enforced and protected. The Commission’s reference these rights and laws in Appendix A under the “Know Your Rights’ FAQ” was also notable.⁶

It is significant that the Commission has referenced the unborn as well as the critical importance of securing the rights of those who wish to protect the unborn in this report. In addition to these references, we wish to offer suggestions on how to strengthen the Commission’s recommendations within Appendix B. On page 208, the Commission recommends that the Department of Justice (DOJ) develop a dedicated Religious Liberty Task Force to carry out a non-exhaustive list of certain efforts. On page 210, #6, the Commission suggests that one such effort of the task force could be to issue cease-and-desist letters to public school districts that have policies related to “gender transition” and the allowance of the use of restrooms that “do not accord with the child’s biological sex.”⁷ In addition to these recommendations, we would also suggest that the Commission include in the #6 list any public school districts that have secret abortion policies, or that facilitate abortions for children without parental consent. Additionally, on page 218, the Commission recommends a non-exhaustive list of guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on parents’ rights including being informed of “any efforts by their child to engage in gender transitioning at school, regardless of whether the child consents to parental notification.”⁸ We suggest including in this recommended guidance list parents’ rights to be informed of any efforts by their child’s school to promote, encourage, or facilitate abortion regardless of whether the child consents to parental notification. We also would suggest that the Commission consider clarifying who within HHS would be issuing the guidance, whether Office of Civil Rights (OCR) or another division or perhaps if some of the guidance authority would fall under the Department of Education. A number of pro-abortion states and school districts across the nation have very radical policies on abortion⁹– even partnerships with abortion businesses like Planned Parenthood for curriculum¹⁰ and “pregnancy

⁵ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=136>

⁶ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=196>

⁷ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=210>

⁸ <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline#page=218>

⁹ <https://www.cps.edu/services-and-supports/health-and-wellness/sexual-reproductive-health/#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20lower%20age%20limit%20and%20no%20parental%20notice%20requirement%20for%20minors%20accessing%20abortion%20care%20in%20Illinois>

¹⁰ <https://www.sfusd.edu/health-education/elementary-health-education/elementary-curricula>

options counseling.¹¹ It is important that students are protected from radical abortion policies, and it is equally important that parents are informed of such policies.

It is paramount that we protect rights of all individuals who object to abortion and who seek to protect the most vulnerable among us. We also must ensure that pro-abortion zealots are not violating the rights of individuals, including students or parents. Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

¹¹ <https://www.cps.edu/services-and-supports/health-and-wellness/sexual-reproductive-health/#:~:text=CPS%20also%20partners%20with%20the%20Chicago%20Department%20of%20Public%20Health%20and%20Planned%20Parenthood>

From: Darryl Bolin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty report comment

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:20:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

The purpose of this note is to respond to the recent report released by the Religious Liberty Committee. I have seen and heard video of committee members stating, "there is no such thing as separation of church and state." While this is technically true, I believe that most americans see that the "concept" is clearly stated within the first amendment which says:

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. (emphasis supplied)

The "concept" of separation ***is more than implied*** within the opening sentence of the first amendment and it is my hope that our governance will continue to grant freedom to all religious traditions without giving preference to one tradition over another. While I am a practicing Christian it is my desire to see that civil governance and *any belief tradition* not overlap in function or practice. I believe this to be the "spirit" of the first amendment and it is my hope that the practice of this spirit will continue indefinitely for the benefit of future generations.

Thank you for allowing this opportunity to respond,
Sincerely,
Darryl Bolin

From: Stewart Bob and Karen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty-Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:22:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I believe that SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT THING for our country to remain a free country. **Creating a bridge between church and state is one that will not be profitable. You will find in our history that 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.**

I would like to see our country remain free from religious monopoly. Whenever the government gets involved in religious activity, and there is one stream of acceptance, the COUNTRY usually ENDS UP FAILING. Persecution becomes rampant when only one idea is acceptable. If you look at history, you will see that what I am saying is true. Many millions have died because they didn't fall into line with one agenda. Consider the side that you yourself are on. What if by some miracle of God's intervention you decide to change sides. What if that side you change to is the one that you promoted to not be tolerable? Being on the side of God is not a side of force. God always allows choice. He said his kingdom was not of this world. Something to think about when we try to force people into a belief that their heart is not loyal to.

Concerned and respectfully yours,

Robert and Karen Stewart

From: Christy Dugan <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission – Christine Dugan.

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:25:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

I find the recommendations of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission invalidated by the apparent absence of the religious diversity that exists in the US among the members of the commission. It appears that every commission member is either Christian or Jewish. Though the lack of information regarding member religious affiliation or credentials (other than clergy) makes this impossible to determine definitively, I suspect only Judeo-Christian viewpoints were desired. The inclusion of antisemitism, while ignoring islamophobia and other religious-based hate is a prime example. Also, I couldn't identify a testifying witness who wasn't Jewish or Christian. Therefore, the report's conclusions are specious and fail to consider the faith and experience of a huge minority of Americans.

Christine Dugan

[REDACTED] PII

Annapolis, MD

From: Hugh Hancock <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:27:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern:

Please do not combine church and state. Do not pass any law, Sunday Law or other law, that would coerce people into choosing religion. Do not create or uphold any Blue Laws. The prophecy is that the U.S. will pass and enforce a National Sunday Law. Do not do it!

Thank you,

Hugh Hancock, M.A.

[REDACTED] PII PII

From: Beres Powell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:29:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

As an African American citizen of this great nation, I am saddened by the recommendations of the draft report. While intentioning to strengthen religious liberty, I believe the recommendations within it will have the very opposite effect.

I prize civil and religious freedom highly as it has cost my ancestors and many lives to obtain and preserve it. I believe in the concept of separating church and state power enshrined in the constitution. Though this phrase does not appear in the constitution, the idea certainly does, and is the foundation of our nation's greatness!

I am not an atheist, but a Christian. The concept is a christian idea. Jesus said to render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and to God the things that belong to God (Matt. 22:21). I believe the concept of separating church and state power came from a christian perspective, also known as the golden rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Luke 6:31). If I prize religious liberty, I should provide this same freedom to others, even of a different faith or of no faith at all!

In the old testament, God prescribed that the priests were to come from the tribe of Levi, but the kings were taken from the tribe of Judah, thus separating church and state power. In fact, the 1st king (Saul), lost his kingdom over violating this principle (1 Sam. 13:8-14). I cannot conceive of this unifying idea coming from any other religion or philosophy.

To have the state support the church financially is to have the church serve another master, for the borrower is a servant to the lender. This will inevitably lead to less giving by church members and dependence upon the government rather than dependence upon God.

Having the government teach religion, will lead to the government deciding what is doctrine and not just for some but for all. This is best left to parents. This will lead to the isolation of some members of society that do not agree with the doctrines of the state. We may make some happier (majority) but others will be left unsupported and will lead to persecution of dissenters, a common pattern in history. Our republic is not based upon "majority rules", but is based upon a representative form of government that values the voice of the minority as well.

The Johnson Amendment should be left intact. This protects the church from corruption through compromise, or concessions to chase government funding. The true idea of separation of church and state power is just that, NOT the separation of personal faith from public life! This is an overreach by secularists and is an abuse of the 1st Amendment. Please protect the church from politicization and the state from becoming a tyrant! The church is meant to further the work of the gospel, saving souls, which is an individual work, as we are not saved in groups (parable of the 99 sheep and the one lost sheep).

It took time for the great ideals of our nation to be realized. The very ones escaping persecution in the old world, established colonies in the new world and persecuted each other! We should not return to that time in our nation's history! Not until the "golden rule" was attempted, thanks to great patriots like Roger Williams and William Penn, did we begin to see the value in the separation of church and state power. Indeed, not until great leaders like Abraham Lincoln, did these freedoms extend to all people, including African Americans. From the start, there has always been a struggle in the heart of America over truly living out the principles of our constitution. I believe the struggle continues, but I am fearful for the future as there appears to be a redefining of the concept of the separation of church and state power.

Let us strive for unity, not uniformity! Unity can have diversity in it, but uniformity cannot. Let us continue to extend to others, even those we disagree with, the same freedoms we want to enjoy! For the sake of the church and the state, let us uphold our long history of the separation of church and state power, thereby securing for our citizens, both civil and religious liberty, the true greatness of America!

Beres Powell

From: Ani Zonneveld <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION DRAFT
REPORT – MUSLIMS FOR PROGRESSIVE VALUES

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:29:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Muslims_for_Progressive_Values_Comment_RLC.pdf

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson,

Attached is Muslims for Progressive Values comment on the draft Religious Liberty Commission report.

Sincerely,

[Ani Zonneveld](#)

Founder, President

[Muslims for Progressive Values](#) [REDACTED] PII (PST)



July 10, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Associate Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

On behalf of Muslims for Progressive Values, I write to provide comments on the draft Religious Liberty Commission report.

This draft is the product of a biased Commission and flawed process. The Religious Liberty Commission was purportedly tasked with celebrating religious pluralism and advancing religious freedom for all Americans. Yet the obvious bias of the Commission's membership ensured that meeting these lofty goals would be impossible. This much became clear as soon as the Commission began its hearings, during which the Commission selectively heard only from those who fit into the worldview that America was founded as, and should continue to be, a Judeo-Christian nation; that the government should promote and encourage one favored religious viewpoint; and that the rights of minority religious groups, women, and the LGBTQ+ community do not merit protection.

Adding insult to injury, the Commission did not comply with its transparency obligations, meaning that Muslims for Progressive Values and other interested members of the public could not meaningfully participate in Commission hearings, much less offer any contrary viewpoints to balance the Commission's bias.

Now, the Commission has published this draft, which only serves to repeat and amplify the Commission's bias, without any consideration of other perspectives. In addition, the Commission has provided only a short window—fifteen days that coincided with the Fourth of July holiday—for the public to review the 224-page draft and offer comments. These are not the hallmarks of an advisory body that is truly interested in a balanced or fair process.

Several aspects of the draft report are of particular concern to Muslims for Progressive Values:

- (1) The draft report asserts that church-state separation is a legally baseless myth that should be opposed. That is false, and such rhetoric poses a direct threat to religious freedom for Muslim

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] • www.mfpvusa.org •

[REDACTED] PII

Americans and those of all religious backgrounds. The separation of church and state is a core American value that protects the right of all Americans to believe what they choose, without government interference. When the government starts promoting religion, it threatens the religious freedom of everyone.

- (2) The draft report asserts that public schools should promote religion, including through school prayer and Ten Commandments posters. The report does not consider how such policies would harm the religious freedom of students and families, including Muslim students and families, who do not share the same beliefs. For example, the report does not consider that a Muslim student would feel pressure to join in a teacher or coach-led Christian prayer. It also does not consider that the Ten Commandments do not reflect Muslim teachings or belief.
- (3) The draft report mentions violence against Muslim communities only in passing and does not provide any concrete steps to defuse threats or otherwise protect Muslim Americans from violence. This is an especially glaring omission given the current climate of rampant Islamophobia, but it is unsurprising given the anti-Muslim sentiments publicly shared by several members of the Commission.

These are just some examples of how the Commission's bias and lack of consideration for other viewpoints have manifested into a one-sided and deeply flawed draft report. If published, this draft report will lend legitimacy to views that are harmful to Muslims for Progressive Values and the communities it serves. The draft report does not further religious freedom for all Americans, as it was supposed to. Instead, the draft advances a narrow set of ideas and policy goals to benefit Americans who hold particular religious views at the expense of everyone else. That is not true religious freedom.

Ultimately, the bias of the Commission, coupled with the truncated time given for meaningful public comment, means that it would be impossible at this stage to redress the many issues in the draft report. Muslims for Progressive Values therefore urges the Commission to retract this draft report, to reconfigure the Commission with a more balanced composition, and to relaunch the process with greater attention to the nation's religious diversity.

Sincerely,

Ani Zonneveld
Founder, President

From: sonojmc <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT—Chapter 9 (First Do No Harm- Religious Liberty in Healthcare) Jeanne M. Chaffin

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:35:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

The medical motto for many years has been “first do no harm”. I feel often that is no longer the case. It seems to be “make as much money as you can”, often no matter the harm. The intent of the Religious Liberty Commission is completely on target!

Most people go into the field of health care is because they truly want to help. Christians values are targeted by the policies and procedures that many hospitals perform. Abortion, euthanasia, gender transition surgeries are some of the most awful examples of these procedures. Thou shall not kill (6th commandment) directly addresses abortion and euthanasia No one with Christian values should be made to participate in these acts and facilities that do participate have failed the “first do no harm” miserably. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 This speaks directly to gender transition surgeries and the evilness that people even think this is appropriate in ANY setting.

The Commission has laid out a very concise plan to protect religious liberties in the healthcare setting. I am grateful for the work done by them and pray this plan is adopted into law.

From: NINI BLOCH <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission' report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:37:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am an 81-year-old American who has always believed that the separation of church and state was the bedrock of our constitutional democracy's guarantee of the freedom of speech. I was outraged to learn that The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission has directed DOJ to combat the use of that phrase and to somehow promote an "originalist understanding" of church-state relations. The general drift I get is that the DOJ thinks it's right to mix religion and politics by allowing tax-exempt religious organizations from engaging in political activity and providing for public funding of private religious institutions.

Our Founding Fathers wanted very specifically to guard AGAINST mixing religion and politics, understanding that melding religion and the government leads to states like Iran, with its tyrannical, intolerant, brutal, and violent version of Islam or, on the opposite end of the spectrum, the atheism N. Korea enshrines in its administration. Our Founding Fathers were right in their expressed fears, in their "originalism." If there's any substantial current "threat to religious liberty" in America today, it comes from the likes of the people who drafted this report and who want us to follow white evangelist teachings to the exclusion of all others.

Please scrap this idiotic "report" that seeks to lead us down the path toward a one-religion state. We are WAY better than this.

Nini Bloch
Bedford, MA

From: edward strickler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: edward strickler <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - MISSED OPPORTUNITY to discuss Founders belief that a peaceable nation requires religious liberty - Edward Strickler, Farmville Virginia

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:38:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

For the benefit of the public, the draft will be open to public comment for fifteen (15) days, with comment period closing on Monday, July 13, 2026. Comments may be emailed to [REDACTED] PII

To aid the Religious Liberty Commission in processing your comments, please format the subject line using the following: PUBLIC COMMENT – [TOPIC OR CHAPTER NUMBER] – [NAME].

THANK YOU for the opportunity to comment. I have structured my comments as in a sequence, with underlining and highlighted sections to emphasize primary concerns.

My fundamental contribution is to advise that the Religious Liberty Commission MISSED THE OPPORTUNITY to discuss our FOUNDERS' BELIEF that a PEACEABLE NATION REQUIRES RELIGIOUS LIBERTY. And that is a 'big miss'!

FIRST,

THANK YOU for taking our Constitutionally protected religious liberty(ies) seriously, through your various meetings, hearing from witnesses, research and preparing the draft final report.

SECOND,

THIS IS IMPORTANT TO ME as an American directly descended from frontier settlers in the Virginia Colony who fled genocidal religious persecutions in the generations following Europe's Thirty Years Wars (1618-1648). These were largely wars of religion, and ethnic/religious nationalism, that were "legendarily vicious, bringing disease, pestilence, starvation" noncombatants, women and children, including unborn infants, vulnerable elderly and persons with disabling conditions, and others across the continent. Estimates are that 5-8 million died, mostly these noncombatants <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/thirty-years-war/> Religious wars have been, are, and would be un-Godly/inhumane horrors. **Anyone today who claims that religious liberty requires religious war are liars. And violate the commanding example, and direct teaching, of Jesus of Nazareth,** which example and teaching appears to be the moral foundations of most members of the Religious Liberty Commission?!

THIRD

THE FOUNDERS recognized religious liberty as a condition of a peaceable nation. I am from Virginia. My ancestors arrived to the Virginia Colony's frontier in the early 18th century. They carried with them - across the dangerous Atlantic passage - a very rare 1536 Bible that is now a

national treasure in a Virginia regional museum

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/wallyg/52155263408> . James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, Madison's friend and colleague, knew about my ancestors, called 'Dunkards', who had no protected religious liberties in the Colony of the British Crown. They were fined or jailed for preaching and teaching their faith, they were taxed to support a religious denomination that was not their own, and other oppressions. **Madison and Jefferson 'invented' legal constructs for religious liberty in the monumental Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom** <https://virginiahistory.org/learn/thomas-jefferson-and-virginia-statute-religious-freedom> that directly influenced our US Constitutional protections for religious liberty. **The Religious Liberty Commission is properly criticised for not discussing this remarkable document THAT PRECEDED the Constitution!**

Jefferson's thought in the Virginia Statute confirms the Commission's declaration that his "aim was not to exile the practice of religion from public life" p. 43 https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl?inline=&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email So, the Commission's failure to discuss the Statute - with at least a paragraph or two - is a critical missed opportunity. The Statute speaks plainly that

- *" Almighty God hath created the mind free ", and that*
- *" the Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either ", and because of this divine foundation no one should be*
- *" enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities "*

Jefferson's thinking, as he became President, giving his First Inaugural Address

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jefinau1.asp **reinforces my FIRST point, that the Founders knew that a peaceable nation required religious liberty"**

"... Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. And let us reflect that, having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions ..."

FOURTH,

In a world - and in our nation - where we see 'religious intolerance' with its manifestations of 'bitter and bloody persecutions', missing the opportunity to discuss our Founders' vision, and intention, that religious liberty be a foundation of a peaceable nation, is a MISSED OPPORTUNITY of great significance. I encourage you to update the report with a significant discussion of this vision and intention - well documented by the Founders.

FINALLY, personally,

I am an old man, living all my years in rural Virginia. Rural Virginia is a marvelous place to live. And a great place to learn religious diversity. As a small child I attended church with my family, and became the pianist for the choir, and the full congregation. We also attended youth Bible education at a different congregation. That congregation had been founded, in the Depression years, by women missionaries. Women leaders in missions - abroad and at home - was not as controversial then as it is now for many Evangelical traditions (see e.g. about Virginia's women in missions <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/dailystory/permalink/annie-armstrong-founded-and-led-the-womans-missionary-union>). Many children would not have learned the Bible so well without these women, and of course, also men. Learning to sing concert music in 'Church Latin' for high school choir, including performing at a local Roman Catholic Church, I ventured to learn more, by attending the Mass. I also made an effort to learn about other Christian and non-Christian traditions represented in Virginia. Learning about our native Virginia tribal communities was valuable; they were/are often our most forgotten American neighbors. As an adult I was able to encounter and complete academic study of religious philosophies and moral traditions (BA, Honors, Swarthmore College; MA Religious Studies, University of Virginia); and later to explore practice of moral traditions in Clinical Ethics (MA, Clinical Ethics, University of Virginia), and then in Public Health (MPH, University of Virginia). Practicing my own religious liberty and understanding/protecting the religious liberty of others has been a well spring of faith, hope and love. Anti-semitism is deeply offensive to me (see my writing about that <https://dailyyonder.com/opinion-making-a-choice-to-fight-antisemitism/2023/11/28/>) as is anti-Hinduism or Buddhism, anti-Islam, anti-American Native beliefs, etc etc etc. As it happens where my husband and I are retired, in rural Southside Virginia, religious diversity is brilliantly available: Here there is a large traditional Latin Mass Seminary (in the fellowship of the recently excommunicated SSPX, Society of St Pius X); a Hindu ashram - Yogaville, almost a town of its own - founded in 1979; a large Amish population (sadly, now suffering a raging Measles outbreak, that is expanding to others); historically old Black Christian congregations (some founded after Emancipation and ending of the Civil War in the 1860s); and many other Christian congregations, from Episcopal and Methodist, Lutheran and Disciples, Baptist and Pentecostalist; and Muslims, and Quakers, and Latter Day Saints, and others. This is just one small rural region.

Returning to my primary point: WITHOUT RELIGIOUS LIBERTY PROTECTED FOR ALL OF US, can you imagine what a horror of religious wars we might endure in the United States?!

Respectfully,
Edward Strickler
Farmville VA

From: Vicki Warhurst <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:39:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

I want to voice my disfavor with current discussion and or change to our country's view of separation of Church and State. I believe this is a serious detour from the original intention of our constitution, and the formation of our country, to allow freedom of religion separate from our government. This was a basic premise of breaking from England and the church of England. Please register my disapproval. Thank you.

Vicki Warhurst

Hemet CA / Tualatin, OR

Sent from my iPhone

From: EDUARDO CARCACHÉPEREZ <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:42:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with pillar of freedom's comments. Please implement them.

From: Marcia Mohr <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pubic Comment - Separation of Church and State - Marcia Mohr

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:50:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I'm writing out of concern for any elimination of separation of church and state. I grew up in a faith based home and I believe that having separation between church and state keeps my religious freedoms in place. It is a personal choice to worship how and when your own personal conscience desires. I'm so very grateful for those in our government who have their own personal faith and agree that our country needs God, but we do need to keep the freedom to decide on our own. Thank you for your listening ear and many blessing to all of you!

Sincerely,
Marcia Mohr

From: Steve Wohlberg <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concern about "Separation of Church and State"

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:52:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings,

I am an avid student of American history and the development of religious freedom. The 1st amendment protects "the free exercise" of religion in America. It's true that the LEFT is now using their "separation of church and state" argument to get rid of all religious expression in America. This is false and dangerous.

ON THE OTHER HAND, we shouldn't swing to the opposite extreme by removing the part that says "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." Government is not to "establish religion" (any religion, including Christianity) either. This is a balanced view that protects our freedom to express our faith freely. It also protects us from the opposite danger of religious tyranny.

Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists wasn't the first time we separated church and state. He's not the culprit. Instead, he's one of our heroes. In America, the idea came from Roger Williams who was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the early 1600s. At that time, well-meaning Puritans fined, whipped, dunked, banished, and even executed those who disagreed with infant baptism, etc. Baptists and Quakers were persecuted by such "Christians" who used state power to enforce their beliefs. The first amendment which "created a wall separating church and state" (Jefferson) protects the inalienable rights of Christians from other professed Christians who historically have punished so called "heretics"....which is what happened in Europe under the Popes. England through the Church of England, and in the early colonies of New England.

The movement to SEPARATE THE CHURCH FROM USING STATE POWER to persecute others has a long history, written in "the blood of the saints" (Revelation 17:5). If we educate people away from the "separation of church and state" because those exact words aren't in the constitution, we may end up enforcing a certain brand of religion, just like Popes, Kings, and Magistrates did for over a thousand years.

Trump's Religious Freedom Commission should defend both sides of the 1st amendment: It should protect our rights to free religious expression from the LEFT. but it should also protect our rights to differ from other Christians who should also *steer clear of seeking state power to enforce their religious notions. Both are wrong.*

Steve Wohlberg
Speaker/Director of White Horse Media

From: Lewis Short <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] SEPARATION OF CHURCH & STATE

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:53:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

There are THREE branches of government! Your church is NOT one of them!

I, along with President Kennedy, believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute.

Yours,
Lewis H Short

From: Curt Wilhelmsen <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission-Curt Wilhelmsen

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:53:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a committed Christian, I'm writing to express my displeasure over the Preliminary Report being issued by the Religious Liberty Commission.

1)The Report doesn't support a foundational principal of our Founding Fathers of Separation of Religion and Government, which is good for both institutions. If the Founders wanted to favor or establish one religion over another, they would've done so.

2) Public Funds should go to public schools, not private schools.

3)Public Schools shouldn't be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.

There are many other troubling positions presented in this ultra biased political document that does little to support freedom of Religion.

It's a travesty that tax dollars were wasted on this ultra partisan project. Thank You for your attention to this matter.

CW

From: Leon Bland <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect my religious freedom

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 17:59:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

I respectfully assert my rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which guarantees the free exercise of religion and prohibits the government from establishing or favoring any religion.

My sincerely held religious beliefs guide my conscience, convictions, and conduct. I request that these beliefs be respected and that I not be compelled to act in a manner that violates my religious convictions.

I affirm the principle that the church and the state have distinct and separate God given roles. Religious faith must be the results of personal conviction and conscience, never of government compulsion or political influence. Likewise, civil government should neither establish religion nor interfere with the free exercise of sincerely held religious beliefs.

The first Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reflects this principle by protecting both the free exercise of religion and prohibiting the establishment of religion. These protections preserve the liberty of every individual to worship according to conscience, without coercion, discrimination, or governmental preference.

History demonstrates that whenever civil authority assumes control over matters of faith, or religious institutions to exercise the power of the state, both religious liberty and civil freedom are diminished. A healthy society respects the independence of both institutions; the state protects the civil rights of all citizens, while the church carries out its spiritual mission.

Therefore, I support the continued separation of church and state as an essential safeguard of religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and equal justice under the law for people of faith and those of no faith.

This statement is made in good faith and is not intended to interfere with the rights of others. Rather, it is an affirmation of my constitutional right to freely exercise my religion.

Sincerely

Leonard Bland

From: Tom & Heather Laffey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:02:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I will keep this short ...

History has shown us that when ever and where ever religion has merged with government, tyranny has always followed. Every time.

We are a nation built on freedom and liberty. An individual's conscious cannot be legislated nor should it be forced into compliance by government rulings or mandates - not in our churches, our schools, nor our person.

Church and State must continue to be separate.

Thank you for your time,

Heather Laffey (USA citizen, Virginia)

From: Peter OConnor <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Pete OConnor]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:03:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I was deeply troubled to learn that the Commission is considering replacing the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With sincere respect, I believe this proposal would undermine one of the greatest protections ever established for both religious liberty and the independence of the church.

The separation of church and state was never intended to weaken religion or silence people of faith. On the contrary, it was established to protect the church from government control and to preserve every person's freedom of conscience. I have served my country for 20 years in the Military and I believe in our freedom. That wall has served as a safeguard for generations, ensuring that churches remain accountable to God rather than to political power.

A bridge between church and state does not strengthen either institution. It invites government influence into matters of faith through financial incentives, political partnerships, and regulatory oversight. History has repeatedly shown that whenever the church becomes dependent upon the state—or the state uses religion to advance its own interests—both institutions are harmed. The church loses its spiritual independence, and civil government oversteps its God-given role. Basically, your rights of conscience will be taken away.

As a person of faith, I believe the church's mission is to proclaim truth without political compromise or governmental dependence. The moment the church looks to the state for support, it places itself at risk of surrendering the very freedom it was called to preserve. Government funding and political favor often come with expectations, conditions, and influence that can gradually erode the church's independence and moral authority. In Matthew 22:21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

The lessons of history are unmistakable. Whenever church and state have joined hands, religious liberty has suffered, dissenting voices have been silenced, and the purity of faith has been compromised. We should learn from those lessons rather than repeat them.

I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve the wall of separation between church and state. Do not replace this vital safeguard with a bridge that could weaken the very freedoms it was designed to protect. The wall is not a barrier to faith—it is a shield that protects the church from government interference and preserves the religious liberty of all people, regardless of their beliefs.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to protecting one of our nation's most precious freedoms.

Respectfully,

Pete O'Connor
Wildwood, Georgia

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God requires everyone to be a worker in His vineyard. You are to take up the work that has been placed in your charge, and to do it faithfully.

-Christian Service A Call to the individual-



From: Francine Lee <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on RLC recommendation draft

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:16:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: RLC_letter_7-10-2026.pdf

See attached Letter.

Thank you,
Francine Lee

July 10, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

RE: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I recently became aware of the draft of recommendations by the RLC and wish to share my thoughts regarding the opinions set forth that the wall between church and state should be removed. I, as a Seventh-Day Adventist Christian, do appreciate your concerns and agree that religious freedom is of concern, but that involves strengthening the Free Exercise Clause not removing the Establishment Clause.

I am very concerned about these recent moves to alter the historical separation enshrined by the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights.

William Brewster, my 11th great-grandfather and family, came from England to Plymouth N.H. on the Mayflower in 1620. William Brewster, the pastor of the ship, and his wife Mary and family, were fleeing from persecution by the state church, the Church of England. This Puritan family, and others, fled on later ships to escape religious intolerance by the government controlled by the church.

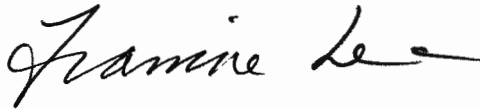
My 10th great-grandfather, John Proctor of Salem, Massachusetts, was executed by hanging during the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. His wife, Elizabeth, my 10th great-grandmother, narrowly escaped the same fate only because she was pregnant. In Colonial America, the state church, the Puritan Congregational Church, led by their minister, Cotton Mather and others, controlled the government of the time. They were responsible for the deaths of 25 individuals, by hanging on the gallows, by stoning, and by the deplorable conditions in jail while awaiting trial.

When America was forming our government and its founding documents, these examples were fresh on their minds. They also had memories of Europe where millions were persecuted and killed if they held views different from the state-controlling churches. The founders of this Constitutional Republic had just fought a war to become free from British control and the King of England. Our founders were trying to avoid the mistakes of either ditch.

The Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment protects people of faith from the government and from controlling churches. People must be free to worship as their conscience, under God, dictates. Though people of faith appreciate the protection of our government, if they really believe in their God, they should not need the government to financially support them. God is the ultimate provider.

Instead of tearing down the Wall, strengthen the Free Exercise Clause. Keep the Establishment Clause and please keep the Wall of separation between church and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francine Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Francine Lee
Concerned American Citizen

From: Lisa Terrillion <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation is essential

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:16:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

The separation between church and state has been a foundational principle since the inception of our country. Many fled to this country for this very reason and for the protection against the tyranny and persecution that has followed every single time the two have been joined.

I am asking you to rethink your position and allow this fundamental right allowed by Ammendment #1 to continue to protect the citizens of this country as it has for the past 250 years.

The Bible speaks about this very point in time of history when every freedom allowed by our constitution will be repudiated. We are on that road and our freedoms are quickly evaporating before our eyes. It is a God given right to follow God/ or not follow Him according to the dictates of one's own conscience. If we lose this right, persecution will rapidly follow. The government is in place to protect our freedoms, not remove them and it is only a tyrannical regime that will think to undo what our founders and the brave men that have protected them these many years have spilled their blood for.

"The Common Good" is a farce and translated means that what the state (and now the church) deems is "good" trumps any individual rights. Lord have mercy!

Glory to God Alone,

Lisa Terrillion

Sent from my iPhone

From: T T <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:22:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

The separation of Church and State has been a pivotal constitutional right (First Amendment) and privilege of every American for the last 250 years. How powerful of a statement to the world that every man, woman and child has certain inalienable rights given to us by our Creator, to exercise freely and empowered to us, by our founding fathers! The First Amendment, sets a standard of protection that no governmental body has any right to punish, coerce or interfere with that right or to control the dictates of their conscience.

I stand along with many fellow American's, asking for this inalienable right to be kept intact and protected from any further threat or interference. Our founding fathers knew that for a republic to be able to protect the rights of its people, that this amendment was pivotal for all generations.

In closing I ask that the first amendment be kept intact and protected for now and forever, that the lines of church and state be kept separate.

God help us if it crumbles.

Best Regards,

Troy Terrillion

Sent from my iPhone

From: Michelle Lucas <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:29:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: Opposition to Efforts to Undermine the Separation of Church and State

Dear Commissioners,

I write to express my strong disagreement with any assertion that the U.S. Constitution does not establish a meaningful separation between church and state. This view contradicts the plain text of the First Amendment, the clear intent of its authors, and America's longstanding tradition of protecting religious liberty through the institutional separation of civil and religious authority.

The First Amendment states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These clauses work together to keep government out of matters of faith and to protect both religion and government from each other's control.

Thomas Jefferson described this as "a wall of separation between Church & State" in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists. James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, strongly defended the same principle in his 1785 Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, arguing that religion must be left solely to "the conviction and conscience of every man" and that government has no authority over duties owed to the Creator.

History shows why this separation matters. Alliances between church and state have repeatedly led to corruption, persecution, and loss of liberty for both. In the late 19th century, Alonzo T. Jones warned Congress during debates over the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill that when government legislates in the realm of conscience and religious observance, it becomes an instrument of coercion rather than a guardian of freedom. He rightly pointed to Christ's own words: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

True religion is motivated by love and persuasion, not by coercion or state power. I am deeply concerned by current calls from some Christian Nationalists to revive blue laws and Sunday legislation—the very kind of religious enforcement that once led members of my own faith to be imprisoned and placed in chain gangs in Tennessee simply for worshiping on the seventh-day Sabbath as they believe Scripture teaches.

While many Founders were influenced by religious values, they deliberately chose not to give government power over religion or religious institutions power over government. The Constitution forbids religious tests for office and prohibits religious establishments precisely to protect the rights of all Americans—believers and nonbelievers alike.

The "wall of separation" is not hostility toward religion. It is the safeguard that allows genuine faith, governed by the heart, to flourish without political interference. I respectfully urge the Commission to uphold this foundational principle as essential to religious liberty and to the American experiment.

Respectfully,
Michelle Lucas

From: Mark Borrelli <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:33:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am Christian and believe church and state must remain separate.

Sincerely,

Mark S Borrelli

From: Andrea Atchison <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:36:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

I oppose your Commission's recommendation of not honoring the separation of church and state based on the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the history that whenever church and state combine persecution inevitably follows. Think of the inquisition and the persecution of religions in most countries of the world.

Sincerely,

Andrea Atchison

Sent from my iPhone

From: RICHARD WINN <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Get Out of Church

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:37:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

The government has no place in any citizen's religious beliefs or practices, or non-belief. Get Out and stay out!
Richard

From: Raine Saunders <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Halting the religious commission's intent to 'build bridges between church and state'

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:41:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am vehemently opposed to this 'bridge' being built, which will not actually be a bridge, but a stranglehold on actual religious freedom in this nation, which the US was literally built upon from Day 1.

I implore this project to stand in opposition to any recommendation toward the Department of Justice or any government branch intent on undermining critical and historic constitutional principles to maintain separation between religion and government, as well as any proposal encouraging 'greater unity' between the two.

America's greatest declaration to our goal of religious liberty has never been state endorsement of religion, but in the preservation of every individual's God-given right to worship without government interference and edicts, and according to conscience. Communities of every belief, tradition and viewpoint have flourished in this nation and also permitted preservation of civil peace.

Our nation's integrity and foundation depend upon the protection of the liberty to worship as we see fit, without a national or government prescribed religion or line of faith. Please take to heart this vital principle, upon which the bedrock of this nation's soul rests. I've spent many years learning about the noahide laws from judaism and the talmud, and how the authorities in this world, including the United States, intend to institute this ideology as a way to make 'peace'. I'm well aware of the first international noahide congress happening in jerusalem in November of this year. I'm well aware of the intent that this movement has, which is to single out believers in the true Messiah and make them criminals and examples to the world of what happens when you follow the One True Living Creator, YHWH, and the Son He sent to die for our sins.

Scripture details where our Messiah Yeshua (2 Thessalonians 2:9) says that many false christs and prophets (Matthew 24:24) will come, and many lying signs and wonders, and also that an effort to bring 'peace and safety' will lead to 'sudden destruction' (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Whether you personally disagree with my freedom to worship and believe these laws that our Creator gave to us is irrelevant. It doesn't matter if you are a powerful billionaire, nor a powerful politician, nor a powerful corporate CEO, nor a powerful lobbyist with many connections, nor a powerful special interest who has all the 'right' influences ... what matters is that every man, woman, and child have the liberty to worship as they will.

Please do what is right in the eyes of YHWH, our Creator, who made us to worship Him and Him alone. He will not let anyone get away with doing otherwise. There will be judgement upon those who go against His teachings, His instruction, His commandments. And merging church and state falls squarely into that category.

Choose wisely.

From: Libby Russler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:43:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please stop this.

The suggestions are biased towards a Christian evangelical viewpoint.

We have freedom to worship - what else do we need?

Libby Anne Russler

[REDACTED] PII



From: Amy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:48:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the United States Commission on Religious Liberty,

I am writing to share my deep concerns about the growing idea that America's Constitution does not require a clear line between church and state. Treating the separation of government and religion as a mistake completely goes against the nation's history. Keeping civil laws and religious beliefs independent of each other is the only way to protect personal freedom of conscience for every citizen.

Our nation's laws make this boundary incredibly clear. The First Amendment sets up a two-part protection: it stops the government from setting up a state religion, and it stops the government from interfering with how people worship. This ensures that no single religious group can take control of the government, and just as importantly, that politicians cannot control religion.

We already know the dangerous consequences of ignoring this separation. Whenever governments try to enforce religious rules—like the late 19th-century Sunday laws that led to the arrest of regular citizens just for working—it always causes discrimination and unfair punishment. Using state laws to force religious behavior also completely contradicts the nature of true faith.

As Christian author Ellen G. White beautifully explained in *The Desire of Ages*, “The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened.” True liberty means every person is free to follow their own convictions without the state taking sides.

I urge the Commission to reject any viewpoint that tries to break down this vital boundary. Keeping government and religion separate is a constitutional requirement and a biblical principle. It is a great part of what has shaped the free America of today.

Sincerely,

Amy Chafe

From: Teddy Shupe <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Greg Hamilton

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 18:48:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BUbSc71GZ/>

From: "Bedrick, Jason" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: "Bush, Mary Margaret (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Revisions to RLC Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:00:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chairman Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, and Members of the Commission:

Thank you for your extraordinary work on the *Americans' First Freedom* report. It offers a thorough and compelling account of the foundations of religious liberty in America, the threats it faces today, and the policies needed to secure it for future generations. I am grateful for the opportunity to offer written comment on this draft.

I respectfully offer three suggestions for the Commission's consideration:

1. Sharpen the connection between the "myth of neutrality" and school choice as its remedy.

The report does an excellent job explaining the "myth of neutrality," including how it applies to education, particularly in the "Double Standard in Government-Run Schools" section. That section should go further, however, in explaining how school choice resolves the very tension it identifies between government schooling and religious liberty. As I observed in my [public testimony](#), "there is no such thing as a 'values-neutral' classroom":

Schools inevitably transmit values through both the explicit curriculum and the "hidden curriculum"—the unspoken lessons embedded in classroom routines, institutional norms, and which topics are or are not discussed. When teachers choose which historical narratives to emphasize, how to handle discussions of religion or references to God, or what behaviors to reward, they make value-laden decisions that communicate messages about authority, morality, and worldview. Even seemingly neutral choices—from daily schedules that do or don't accommodate religious observances to the way mathematical or scientific topics are framed—reflect particular assumptions about the role of faith and secular knowledge in society.

Because education is never "values neutral," and because the government compels parents to educate their children, public funding should follow the child to the learning environment parents choose—one that aligns with their family's values and best meets their child's learning needs.

2. Clarify that school choice recommendations are addressed primarily to the states.

Several times, the report recommends federal legislation creating a robust system of universal school choice. However, education is primarily a state and local responsibility, and more than 90 percent of per-pupil funding at K–12 public schools comes from state and local sources. Accordingly, the word "federal" should be dropped whenever the report recommends "legislation creating a robust system of universal school choice" (see pages 64, 79, 214, and 219). The report should recommend that the President use the bully pulpit to encourage states to adopt universal school choice policies, following the lead of the 18 states that have already done so.

3. Strengthen the report's treatment of private school autonomy and "substantial equivalency" statutes.

As I noted in my testimony, “for school choice to be meaningful, private school autonomy must be preserved.” The report rightly cites *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) for the proposition that “the child is not the mere creature of the State.” In the report’s discussion of religious schools (“Faith-Based Education and Institutional Identity”), it should also cite the sentence immediately preceding that one:

“The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only.”

State laws requiring private schools to offer an education “substantially equivalent” to that of government-run schools may well infringe on parents’ rights by attempting to standardize their children in precisely the manner *Pierce* forbids. Accordingly, in its list of recommendations beginning on page 62, the report should encourage the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division to investigate whether states such as New York, which have sought to impose burdensome regulations on private and religious schools under “substantial equivalency” statutes, are violating parents’ constitutional rights. (This recommendation would appear to follow naturally from the recommendation at the bottom of page 64, which continues onto page 65.)

Thank you again for your dedicated service to this Commission and for the opportunity to contribute to this important work.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Bedrick
Senior Research Fellow, Center for Education Policy
The Heritage Foundation

[Jason Bedrick](#)

Senior Research Fellow, Center for Education Policy

Domestic Policy

Heritage Foundation

Direct: [REDACTED] PII

Twitter: [@JasonBedrick](#)

Website: [Heritage.org](#)

From: Theresavg <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:11:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Let Church and state remain separate. When church and state are united, persecution is the result. The Dark Ages will return with a vengeance. The constitution, bill of rights, and th declarstion of independence will be gutted, and the very thing that makes this nation great will be taken away, as well as all freedoms. God created this land for people to come and worship as they choose. They left the union of church and state for a nation that has no king. We are to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God the things which belong to God. Thank you.

From: Roxanne Kelly <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report – Roxanne Kelly

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:17:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This dangerous framework seeks to redefine the Establishment Clause and undermine the critical separation of church and state. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a gross violation of civil rights. Furthermore, these recommendations threaten vital healthcare access—including reproductive freedom, miscarriage management, and transgender care—leaving vulnerable communities without safe alternatives. Finally, attempting to dismantle the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally injects dark political money into tax-exempt religious institutions.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,
Roxanne Kelly

From: [REDACTED] PII

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Do Not Separate Church And State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:20:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I believe that the government should not go through with separating church and state. This nation was built on the freedom of religion and if church and state is not separated, you are now infringing on the rights of other religions who are not in alignment with the Christian religion, therefore not following the constitution.

I also believe that taking away the separation of church and state will also give an unfair advantage to Christians that other religions will not have, and also this act will leave potential for churches and government to abuse power for either the church or governments gain.

Politics has no right in religious affairs, and religion has no right in politics. People should be led by the principles from their religion while governing a people and not have their religion be the lead.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

From: Dan U <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hello with the highest respect. A special letter. Thank you

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:24:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

With the highest respect

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,

Daniel Allen from N.Y.

From: Marsha Anderson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT: PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
COMMISSION DRAFT

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:24:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

"SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE"

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and it's obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain.

Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand ear cropping, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee consider the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to consider the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned about the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." [7]

James Madison wrote, "It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw

all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord’s words that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that “The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people has been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State.” [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, “In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.”

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

Yours truly,

[THE UNDERSIGNED]

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

[3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>

[4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>;

[5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPIfx-UA>

[6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.

[8] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments

[9] Matthew 22:21

[10] James Madison, Letter to Robert Walsh, March 2, 1819.

[11] John Adams, Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765.

<https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>

From: Rick Cruse <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:30:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm writing to oppose the attempt to do away with the separation of church and state.

From: Frank Peppel <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:32:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

My name is Frank Peppel, I wish to make my wishes known to you, I believe there should be a sharp line of separation between church and state. I do not wish for a return to the dark ages where the state enforced religious laws and enacted penalties on behalf of the church. I further wish for the Johnson amendment to be fully in forced. Thank you for receiving my protest.

Contact information: Frank Peppel

[REDACTED] PII

Phone : [REDACTED] PII

From: Gregory Baker <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - RLC proposed Draft Comment - G. Baker

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:35:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and freedom of worship, I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report, and abandon its terrible recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that the church is separate from the state. The Commission's members and processes were dominated by extremist Christians, and those with minority beliefs, like many Native Americans, were pretty much ignored, despite the damage already done to them. This is exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

Based on the hearings' rhetoric, and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is abundantly clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement. This is a movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it won't be protecting religious liberty at all: it will be undermining and weakening it. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report like the propaganda it is, the recommendations like the biased pogrom they are, and disband the group like the poorly reasoned social experiment it was, end **this** threat to America the in its entirety. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the rights of every American, and not just the ones that agree with a bunch of bigots.

From: Debbie Barre <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Debra Sanchez

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:36:23 -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 the idea of using government money to fund religious activities and the mistake of 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,
Debra Sanchez
Apopka, Florida

From: JIMENA ALEJANDRA OYARZUN PAREDES

<[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] No es correcto iglesia -estado

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:36:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

No estoy de acuerdo en que la política intervenga en el libre pensamiento acerca de las creencias de cada individuo. Jamás históricamente se ha logrado y esta no será una excepción. No existe un poder humano que pueda unir a las personas de forma mundial apagando sus capacidades de libre albedrío ya que como seres humanos buscamos el conocimiento a través de nuestras experiencias y estas no deben ser limitadas por leyes o imposiciones que frenen la posibilidad de libertad de las personas . Dios separo en una frase Estado e iglesia: Dad a Dios lo que es de Dios y al hombre los que es del hombre".

From: Joe Atchison <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:37:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is actually in the constitution as the first amendment that says: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;

Virtually every time church Add State combine the persecution followed. The union of the church of the Dark Ages that combined with the Roman government resulted in the inquisition is the worst example. Christians are being persecuted in communist countries and other countries like India and Africa. What is happening was predicted by the book the Great Controversy, read chapter 35 titled Liberty of conscience threatened, Written about 150 years ago.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Russell Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Your Name]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:39:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." With respect, that is exactly backwards — and as a person of faith, I find the idea alarming. That wall wasn't built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built by believers to keep the church free. A bridge doesn't strengthen the church; it opens the door for government money and political favors to march right in, until churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of to God. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one. Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,
Russell Smith
Killeen, Texas

From: kristian dunson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:40:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice,

I am writing to formally express my strong opposition to the proposed religious liberty commission. I believe this initiative will have a direct adverse effect on the lives of Christians across America and must be stopped immediately.

If we are truly a nation of "free people," we cannot allow the government to force any specific interpretation of scripture upon the public. We are not God, and it is not the place of a commission to mandate how individuals should understand or practice their faith.

I urge you to take action to put an end to this proposal to ensure that true religious freedom is preserved for everyone.

Sincerely,

Kristian Dunson
Lead Pastor
Progression Church Atl

From: Andrew Sherry Boettcher <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Personal response to Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:41:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern, first I want to thank you for the privilege to respond to the religious liberty commission. 1st I believe it's vital to treat all beliefs the same, including the belief in no God, it's is a religious stance and I'm glad your addressing that.

2nd. Laws and rules legislating conduct is essential to maintain law and order.

3rd to maintain Religious Liberty it is essential the power of government to enforce law and order not be joined in any way to any faith, church or belief, financially, with laws or any other way, for then The Very Religious Freedom we cherish so much will be quickly destroyed, for those with laws and money will be able to pressure others to believe what think is right. I have precious people in my life who believe very differently than I do, but never want to see them forced to believe anything including my own beliefs.

When it comes to Faith, Force and Freedom are diametrically apposed.

No woman would fall in love with a man who told her she had too, Force and Love are diametrically apposed as well.

God bless you all and may Freedom reign
Sincerely Sherry Boettcher

From: Gabriel Taylor <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Gabriel Taylor

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:46:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I write as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty and freedom of conscience. I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect Americans from discrimination because of their faith. Every person should be free to worship God—or not—without coercion or government interference.

However, I am concerned that several recommendations in the draft report could unintentionally weaken one of America's greatest safeguards for religious liberty: a clear distinction between the institutions of church and state.

Recommendation #1 urges the Department of Justice to redefine the understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state. While this principle is often misunderstood, it has long served as a protection for both religion and government. It keeps government from controlling the church and prevents churches from seeking governmental power. Weakening that distinction risks future conflicts that history has repeatedly shown can threaten liberty of conscience.

Recommendations #4, #6, and #8 would create new federal reporting systems, task forces, and litigation priorities centered on religious liberty. While protecting constitutional rights is important, expanding permanent federal structures devoted to religious matters deserves careful scrutiny. Government authority created for one administration may later be exercised very differently by another. History reminds us that powers established with good intentions can later be used in ways never originally envisioned.

I am especially concerned by Recommendation #9 to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Churches should remain free to proclaim biblical truth without becoming partisan political organizations. If churches are permitted to officially endorse candidates while maintaining tax-exempt status, the line between the pulpit and the campaign platform becomes increasingly blurred. The mission of the church is to proclaim Christ, not to function as an arm of any political movement.

America has been blessed because government has generally protected the free exercise of religion without becoming the patron or promoter of religion itself. Religious liberty flourishes best when government protects everyone's rights equally while refraining from entanglement with religious institutions.

True religious liberty means protecting the conscience of every American—Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and every other citizen alike. Government should neither hinder nor favor religion, but preserve equal liberty under the law.

I respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider recommendations that would diminish the practical separation between church and state, expand governmental involvement in religious affairs, or encourage closer institutional ties between churches and partisan politics. The strongest protection for religious liberty is not a closer union of religion and government, but a principled commitment to preserving both institutions within their proper constitutional spheres.

Thank you for considering these comments.

This comment is based on my conviction that protecting liberty of conscience requires preserving both the free exercise of religion and the constitutional safeguards that prevent government from becoming entangled with

religion.

Respectfully,

--

Gabriel Taylor

Cell: [REDACTED] PII

<https://www.theadventtruth.com/>

From: Irene Russell <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State – [Irene Russell]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:46:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT : 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,

Irene Russell

(United Kingdom)

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: Kathleen Quenneville <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report - Urging Alternative

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:48:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to object in the strongest possible terms to the draft report issued by the Religious Liberty Commission. This report was produced with flawed scholarship. It distorts our country's history and the law. The report and its recommendations must not be adopted.

I urge instead that the alternative report from the Center for American Progress be adopted. That report represents how the Religious Liberty Commission's report should have been conducted, and it honors our history and the law. As a person of faith, I believe that separation of church and state is essential to us having an inclusive society,

Thank you.

Kathleen Quenneville

Piedmont CA [REDACTED] PII

From: Gabriel Taylor <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State - Gabriel Taylor

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:54:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I write as a Christian who deeply values religious liberty and freedom of conscience. I appreciate the Commission's desire to protect Americans from discrimination because of their faith. Every person should be free to worship God—or not—without coercion or government interference.

However, I am concerned that several recommendations in the draft report could unintentionally weaken one of America's greatest safeguards for religious liberty: a clear distinction between the institutions of church and state.

Recommendation #1 urges the Department of Justice to redefine the understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state. While this principle is often misunderstood, it has long served as a protection for both religion and government. It keeps government from controlling the church and prevents churches from seeking governmental power. Weakening that distinction risks future conflicts that history has repeatedly shown can threaten liberty of conscience.

Recommendations #4, #6, and #8 would create new federal reporting systems, task forces, and litigation priorities centered on religious liberty. While protecting constitutional rights is important, expanding permanent federal structures devoted to religious matters deserves careful scrutiny. Government authority created for one administration may later be exercised very differently by another. History reminds us that powers established with good intentions can later be used in ways never originally envisioned.

I am especially concerned by Recommendation #9 to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Churches should remain free to proclaim biblical truth without becoming partisan political organizations. If churches are permitted to officially endorse candidates while maintaining tax-exempt status, the line between the pulpit and the campaign platform becomes increasingly blurred. The mission of the church is to proclaim Christ, not to function as an arm of any political movement.

America has been blessed because government has generally protected the free exercise of religion without becoming the patron or promoter of religion itself. Religious liberty flourishes best when government protects everyone's rights equally while refraining from entanglement with religious institutions.

True religious liberty means protecting the conscience of every American—Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and every other citizen alike. Government should neither hinder nor favor religion, but preserve equal liberty under the law.

I respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider recommendations that would diminish the practical separation between church and state, expand governmental involvement in religious affairs, or encourage closer institutional ties between churches and partisan politics. The strongest protection for religious liberty is not a closer union of religion and government, but a principled commitment to preserving both institutions within their proper constitutional spheres.

Thank you for considering these comments.

This comment is based on my conviction that protecting liberty of conscience requires preserving both the free exercise of religion and the constitutional safeguards that prevent government from becoming entangled with

religion.

Respectfully,

--

Gabriel Taylor

From: Albert Mckenzie <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:59:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

I truly believe this church and state bridging together isn't what America is about i believe we should have FREEDOM to worship the way our conscience leads us when church and state come it takes away our rights and dictates to people when and who they worship because this is a free country it should be up to the person what religion the follow not dictated by anyone God didn't force anyone to worship Him. Force worship doesn't save anyone if it not in the heart. Alot of folks go to church and live like the devil the rest of the week so my vote is for separation of church and state

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Bridget Aureli <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Religious Liberty Commission Report - Bridget Mullins

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 19:59:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state is a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

As a seminary degree holder, I do not want the government interpreting, shaping, or regulating the Holy Bible. People who teach the Word are held to a standard and will be judged on how they represent the Scripture.

Institutions receiving public funding should treat all people fairly and equally.

From: Travis Moore <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:07:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is important to not mix church with state. Authoritarian Christianity is not Christianity. God is Love. Love demands freedom. Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Jesus wants us to obey and follow Him IF we love Him, freely. Do not mix church with state. God's Kingdom will reign forever, America will go away. Christianity is to prepare for His Kingdom. Meanwhile, America should support freedom of conscience, freedom to choose if we will follow God and be obedient to Him, or not. You cannot force someone into being a Christian. You cannot force someone into Heaven or Hell. We freely choose. Whosoever believes in Him, will not perish, but have eternal life. Do not coerce Christianity via government, such an action can only serve to bring about the Mark of the Beast. Revelation 14:12 tells us how NOT to get the prophetic Mark of the Beast, "keep God's commandments and our faith in Jesus." We are judged on the heart, for what we freely choose. We can only keep God's commands and have faith in Him as a choice. Church and State should remain separate. God's Word will rule in the hearts of those who love God, with no government involvement.

Travis Moore
Tennessee

From: Susan Haines <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Protecting Freedom of/from Religion

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:07:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello. I am a Michigan humanist and a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief. I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by extremist Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of those with minority beliefs, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

Based on the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be dangerously undermining it. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs.

Susan Haines, she/her

[REDACTED] PII

How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world.

--William Shakespeare

From: dcase98 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Chapter 10 (Vaccines) – Doug Case

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:10:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

I am very impressed and encouraged with your report. Thank you committee and contributors!

I experienced much inconvenience during Covid including lost friends, family, work, club exclusion. Our church and K-8 school classes had FBI agents inside and outside surveilling for masks and capacity compliance. This woke me up to the abuse of our Constitutionally guaranteed 1st Amendment rights. Others lost their jobs, licenses, health, banking privileges as a result of the inept, corrupt and evil Public Health policies. Many were unable to be with their elder parents in hospitals and nursing homes. Finally, the damage done to America's children is unforgivable. Missed life experiences and scholarships was unnecessarily done to the most healthy demographic. Many young adults, boys especially, have anxiety and depression now. I pray often that those responsible for these abuses, including our cowardly press, meet the hard hammer of justice. And, that history records their downfall as examples, so that we may stop future 1st Amendment abuses before they take effect.

Respectfully, Doug Case

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: jonathon_hinkle80 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] True Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:16:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the religious liberty situation we are facing. The term Religious Liberty means different things depending on the lens you are looking through. The view of Religious Liberty supported by men like the Protestant Roger Williams should be the Religious Liberty that we support. However, there is another view of Religious Liberty that is cloaked in a veil of deception that is the Roman Catholic view of Religious Liberty. This latter view teaches you can have Religious Liberty as long as your beliefs align with the common good. This is a very dangerous form of a false version of Religious Liberty. This view also believes it's okay for the state to merge with the church. I am a Protestant Christian through and through. However, history has repeatedly proved that when church and state unite it ALWAYS spells disaster, and God's people are persecuted for standing on the pure Word of God. I pray that you will prayerfully consider what you are actually doing here. Thank you for your time and God Bless,

Jonathon Hinkle

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Robert Hancock <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I object to the position of the RLC in its final report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:17:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a citizen of the United States, I vehemently object to the recently report of the RLC.

I believe, in harmony with the United States Constitution, that the federal government should play no role in establishing, endorsing, supporting, or recommending any form of religion.

Every citizen should be free to exercise any or no religion, of their own choice, without any interference from the federal or state government.

Robert Hancock Jr.

From: Tamara Peshlakai <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church & State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:19:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this public comment urging the Commission to reject any recommendation that would weaken the constitutional separation of church and state or encourage greater institutional union between religion and government.

America's commitment to religious liberty has been built on protecting every person's God-given right to worship according to conscience without government interference. This principle has allowed people of all faiths to flourish while preserving civil peace.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I write from the perspective of a religious minority. History shows the dangers that arise when government aligns with the religious majority. In colonial America, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and others faced discrimination, fines, and imprisonment under state-supported churches. Later, Seventh-day Adventists were prosecuted under Sunday laws for honoring the biblical seventh-day Sabbath. Their experience reminds us that when civil authority enforces religious practices, freedom of conscience is endangered.

History also demonstrates that whenever governments exercise authority over matters of faith—whether through religious establishments, the medieval Inquisition, state-backed religious extremism, or atheistic communist regimes—liberty of conscience suffers. Though differing in ideology, these systems shared one common flaw: government control over religious belief.

The American constitutional system wisely rejects these extremes. Government exists to protect rights and maintain justice, while the church is called to proclaim truth through persuasion rather than coercion. Both institutions are strongest when they remain within their proper spheres.

I respectfully urge the Commission to uphold policies that protect the constitutional separation of church and state and safeguard the equal rights of every citizen to worship—or not worship—according to conscience. History has repeatedly shown that religious liberty is best preserved when government neither advances nor inhibits religion.

Respectfully submitted,

Tamara Peshlakai
New Mexico

From: Isabelle Herbert <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Isabelle Herbert <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty - Isabelle Herbert

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:29:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sirs,

I firmly believe that religious choice should of course be free, and I also believe that religion is entirely a private matter, and nothing to do with the state or the government. Everyone should be free to follow their own religious beliefs - or to have none at all.

I totally oppose public displays of religion in public spaces or in schools anywhere - classrooms, assembly halls, gyms.

Christian Nationalism is not religious liberty, and the separation of church and state has protected Americans of every faith and none for 250 years.

Thank you.

Regards

Isabelle Herbert

[REDACTED] PII

From: Bru Ram <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:30:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 10, 2026

e-mail: [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Room 5706

Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am in favor of keeping in place the separation of church and state.

Since Christ's said that His kingdom/His church is not of this world,

as such this union of church and state that you and your group is endorsing is

in error, and will bring here in USA, the same the ills that took place during that same union of the

midages, the union of the Papal Roman Church with the states, which results are known to all of us,

for example the tribulation that took place then, with the religious political intolerance that that union of

church and state cause during that time of the midages.

The quoted statement that follows is endorsed by me:

"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."

Jonathan Zirkle: pillaroffreedom.org

Please, let us keep in place the separation of church and state,
it is wise to do so.

Sincerely,
Brunilda Alvarez

From: "Melody D. Snow" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] FOR Separation Between Church & State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:31:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please continue to support our Constitutional First Amendment Right that allows full exercise of Religion and NO governmental established religion.

Please continue to maintain the Separation Between Church & State.

Quote: "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," Thomas Jefferson.

--

Melody D. Snow -- <http://www.unicornwoman.com>

The Unicorn Woman (established 1980) Lillian, Texas, U.S.A.

Miniature Tackmaker, Leathercraft Artist, & Freelance Writer

Join my UNICORNWOMANNEWS at <http://eepurl.com/vxRF9>

Free Bible Study Course <http://www.bibleschools.com/>

From: David French <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Religious Liberty Commission Report] – [David French]

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:34:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

RLC:

As a principled humanist and atheist, veteran, and concerned citizen, I am deeply concerned about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, including if it is belief in simple human and natural values. I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations. Those of faith are already free to practice their faith, but it belongs a private endeavor. We all value and welcome basic human rights, social cohesion and individual freedoms, no matter one's beliefs.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. I should be allowed life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in this country without religious influence nor dogma. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by extremist Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of large swaths of this country who do not subscribe to religious practice, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

Rhetoric during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, makes clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is pushing Christian Nationalist objectives seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs. It will never stand in the end because our constitution explicitly restricts this promotion. Separation of church and state is actually among this countries greatest principles and achievements.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will dangerously undermine it and stifle free thought. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all beliefs.

D. French

From: Animes Awesome <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please do not join Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:39:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the memebers of the White House Religious Liberty Commission;

I am writing this to implore my government officials to please do not destroy the separating wall between church and state. To do so would ultimately give rise to the same religious persecution that our nation's fore fathers came to the new world to escape from to begin with.

Again I implore you to please do not do this.

With deep concerns as a American citizen,

-Brandi-

From: "Robert D. Otten" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agree with Pillar of Freedoms comments

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:41:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with The Pillar of Freedoms comments. Please implement them.

Robert Otten
California USA

[Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Comment - Chapter 14 - Steve Pyle

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:50:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Much needed correction to the restrictions placed on the 1st Amendment

From: Helen Chaknova <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – HELEN CHAKNOVA

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 20:53:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

In response to the Religious Liberty Commission to try and abolish the separation of church and state -

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.

I respectfully urge 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.

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Chaknova

--

Helen

Life is long, if you know how to use it. - Seneca

From: Rick Yancy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Serious Concerns Regarding Recommendations 1 and 9 of the Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 21:17:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Department of Justice,

As a citizen, a student of history, and a Christian, I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Religious Liberty Commission's recent report delivered on June 26, 2026. While I respect the Commission's time and effort, I am writing to voice my urgent objections to Recommendation 1 and Recommendation 9.

The Commission's report appears to dangerously disregard both the warnings of our Founding Fathers and the clear lessons of history regarding the perilous union of church and state.

I. The Constitutional Error of Recommendation 1

Recommendation 1 calls for the Department of Justice to issue guidance clarifying the "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause. However, during the formal release of these recommendations, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly asserted that the separation of church and state "is not in the constitution" and "has no constitutional basis."

If this flawed, historically inaccurate premise reflects the Commission's internal logic, any guidance issued under it will be inherently improper. James Madison, the principal architect of the First Amendment, explicitly contradicted this view:

"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."

To suggest that the separation of church and state lacks constitutional basis requires ignoring the very man who wrote the document.

II. The Witness of History: When Church and State Unite, Faith Suffers

The historical record is clear: a union of church and state does not protect religion; it corrupts and weaponizes it. The Founding Fathers established the First Amendment precisely because they were deeply familiar with the horrors of state-sanctioned religious tyranny.

When the Department of Justice formulates public guidance, I respectfully ask that you remember these sobering historical truths:

- **Persecution in the Colonies:** Early American history is stained by the whippings, imprisonments, and executions of Baptists, Quakers, and Jews at the hands of religious majorities. Obadiah Holmes was brutally whipped in Massachusetts for religious dissent; William Penn and Roger Williams were forced to flee religious authorities who rejected the separation of church and state.
- **The Execution of Tyndale:** William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into English—not by atheists, but by a state-church alliance that sought to control the minds and consciences of the people.
- **The Suppression of Free Speech:** For centuries, a unified church-state apparatus in Europe enforced the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, censoring scientific and philosophical giants like Galileo, Kepler, Kant,

- Locke, and Milton under the guise of halting "misinformation."
- The Tragedy of Geneva: John Calvin's government in Geneva executed religious dissenters like Michael Servetus.

True religious liberty flourishes only when the state is barred from enforcing theological orthodoxy.

III. The Danger of Repealing the Johnson Amendment (Recommendation 9)

I strongly oppose the Commission's recommendation to repeal the Johnson Amendment. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I hold fast to His command to "render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Jesus established a clear boundary between the civil sphere and the spiritual sphere. Repealing the Johnson Amendment invites a toxic transactionalism into our houses of worship:

- Political Corruption of the Church: If the amendment is removed, ambitious religious figures will trade congregational dollars and block-voting for political favors, while politicians will shape legislation to appease partisan religious donors.
- Madison's Warning: James Madison wisely observed that "the total separation of the Church from the State" actually increased the morality of the ministry and the true devotion of the people.
- Adams' Warning: John Adams noted that while canon law and feudal law were individually tyrannical, a union of the two was the worst form of government imaginable.

Conclusion and Request for Public Hearings

Thomas Jefferson famously wrote to the Danbury Baptists that the Establishment Clause built a "wall of separation between Church & State." This wall was never meant to keep people of faith out of the public square; it was meant to keep the government out of the sanctuary.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Department of Justice:

1. Reject Recommendations 1 and 9 of the Commission's report.
2. Convene formal public hearings, allowing citizens, historians, and faith leaders to submit oral and written testimony to comprehensively study the vital role that the separation of church and state plays in protecting American liberty.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your dedication to upholding the true spirit of the United States Constitution.

Sincerely,

David Yancy

Chattanooga, TN

From: Steve Martin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 21:24:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

Please take the time to read the attached response!!

Sent from my iPad



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 6, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines this principle by proposing to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall of separation was not a secular invention imposed upon religion — it was built by people of faith, to protect faith. Breaching that wall will set the churches against one another in competition for government money and favor, and set the church against the state as each seeks power over the other — eroding the very freedom the Commission claims to defend. The Commission has recommended increasing government funding of religious activities and recommended repealing the Johnson Amendment. Both of

these recommendations, if followed, will bring the corruption of the political process into the churches. In making its recommendations the Commission has relied upon a faulty retelling of our history.

The American Development of Separation of Church and State

The establishment of a wall of separation between the church and the state first appeared in the modern world in 1636 when Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island. The success of Roger Williams' experiment would later inspire the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and to a lesser extent other colonies to roll back their religious legislation long before the Revolution of 1776. By 1790, all but three of the original 13 had disestablished their churches, and by 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, had disestablished its church as well. No state would ever enter the Union with an established church. The United States had learned from the colonies that liberty prospered better where church and state were separate. While the states themselves would take some time to extricate themselves from religious entanglements, the drafters and signers of the Constitution recognized the value of religious liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman who toured the United States from 1831 to 1832, observed this about the cause of religion's power in America and how religion indirectly influenced the nation.

In order to learn more about [the separation of church and state], I questioned the faithful of all communions. ... To each of them I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts, and I discovered that they differed among themselves only on matters of detail: to a man, they assigned primary credit for the peaceful ascendancy of religion in their country to the complete separation of church and state. I state without hesitation that during my stay in America I met no one — not a single clergyman or layman — who did not agree with this statement.¹

¹Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 341.

The [clergy] are careful to remain aloof from public affairs and do not involve themselves in the machinations of the parties. Therefore, one cannot say that religion in the United States influences the laws or the specifics of political opinion, but it does shape mores, and it is by regulating the family that religion endeavors to regulate the state.²

The Commission itself recognizes “that religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength,” and that “preserving it will require vigilance, education, and renewed commitment from institutions and citizens alike.” Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report at 13. The report then goes on to highlight a list of areas where religion and religious people are under attack. These areas of attack are fairly portrayed, and all people of faith should be concerned about the attack. America is in a culture war, and much of the battle is over values that are informed by religion. While the report does not go so far as to explicitly state that atheistic secularism is a religion, it certainly functions as one, and when the state supports secularism in its worst forms, the state is taking sides in the culture war against religion. This needs to stop.

The Commission’s Revisionist History of the American Experience

First, the Commission tells a false history of religious liberty in the colonies and in the early history of the nation. It completely ignores that the idea of building a wall of separation between the church and the state is a very old idea, which was fully enunciated in 1644 by Roger Williams. Report at 37. Next, they ignore the fact that Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware followed Rhode Island’s example by keeping a wall of separation between the church and the state. They also ignore that other colonies, seeing the freedom and success of the states which preserved the separation of church and state, repealed laws which supported their established churches in order to attract more immigrants. By 1776, the founding fathers concluded that separation of church and state had been a success, and while not using the phrase “separation of church and state,” drafted the concept into the Constitution. The inclu-

²Ibid. p. 336.

sion of separation of church and state, impressed upon James Madison by members of the Baptist church, united the Baptists and the members of other denominations to support the Constitution and ensure its adoption. Baptist support was contingent upon the addition of the First Amendment, which was speedily adopted after the adoption of the Constitution. Thus without separation of church and state, the Constitution would never have been adopted. Nevertheless, the Commission would have us believe that religious liberty did not exist in the states prior to the adoption of the Constitution, Report at 37, and that the concept of a wall of separation was the invention of Thomas Jefferson, and not central to the freedoms of our nation. They state that the idea of a wall of separation comes from a single letter, forgotten until the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947, completely omitting the rich history of both the phrase and the idea. Report at 42.

The metaphor of creating a wall of separation between the church and the state was first written by Roger Williams in a reply to John Cotton in 1644, and then reproduced and expanded upon in his *magnum opus*, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, published in London in the same year.³ Parliament banned the book. The metaphor was well known to the founding fathers, probably through the works of James Burgh, raised a Scottish Presbyterian who later became a devout Protestant dissenter. Thomas Jefferson's letter was not first quoted by the Supreme Court in 1947, but rather 68 years earlier in 1879 in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*. The Commission ignores a long line of Presidents who felt compelled to explicitly support the concept of a wall of separation. Besides Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, one of the primary drafters of the Constitution, said that there should be a "separation between religion and government,"⁴ and that religion flourished better without government patronage.⁵ George Washington's diplomats negotiated, and John Adams signed the Treaty

³Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (1644), in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 1, p. 108; the metaphor is reproduced and developed throughout *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Edward Bean Underhill (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1848), see, e.g., p. 435.

⁴ James Madison, "Detached Memoranda" (c. 1817), in Elizabeth Fleet, "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 534–568.

⁵ Madison's Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822.

of Tripoli, which stated that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”⁶ President Fillmore said that “Church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled.”⁷ President Grant said, “Keep the church and the state forever separate.”⁸ President Garfield said that it would be dangerous to use public funds for religious schools and that “The separation of the Church and the State in everything relating to taxation should be absolute.”⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt said there must be “complete severance of Church and State.”¹⁰

In attacking the Supreme Court decisions of the 1940s, the Commission resorts to two tactics that cannot survive scrutiny: a personal attack on Justice Hugo Black, and claims of philosophical influence that the timeline of history makes impossible. The Commission states “Even a few Supreme Court decisions seemed to track with this train of thought [defined earlier in the report as that of Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, and the belief that ‘God is dead’], culminating in a 1947 opinion [*Everson*], in which Justice Hugo Black, a former Ku Klux Klan member, repurposed a metaphor coined by Thomas Jefferson in an attempt to legitimize the new critical philosophy by placing it in the constitutional tradition. Specifically, the Supreme Court ruled on a series of decisions in which it used the ‘wall’ metaphor to regulate a child’s access to religious education and later to ban school prayer and public displays of religion (like the Ten Commandments).” Report at 41-42. Without any support for the notion that Justice Black wrote opinions in accordance with the anti-Catholic philosophies of the Klan, the Commission attempts to persuade the public that Justice Black was racist and that his opinions should be disregard-

⁶ Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, art. 11, signed Nov. 4, 1796; ratified by the U.S. Senate June 7, 1797; proclaimed by President John Adams June 10, 1797 (Barlow translation).

⁷ *The Ovation to Mr. Fillmore: Speeches of Mr. Fillmore*, 1856.

⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, Address to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 29, 1875.

⁹ James A. Garfield, Letter Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (to Hon. George F. Hoar), July 12, 1880.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 361; the statement originated in T. Roosevelt’s 1915 public letter opposing public funding of sectarian schools in New York.

ed. This is an *ad hominem* attack commonly used in the highly charged political debates of today, but counterproductive to finding truth and establishing unity. It is only useful in persuading the uninformed. The suggestion that *Everson* “tracked” with Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, or later critical theory is historically implausible. Foucault’s major works postdated *Everson*, Sartre was never a source of American Establishment Clause doctrine, and the Court grounded its reasoning in American sources: Madison, Jefferson, disestablishment, and the First Amendment tradition. To attempt to smear the Supreme Court with Justice Black’s much earlier Klan membership and with Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre is disingenuous. While Justice Black held that the Constitution established a wall of separation between the church and the state, in the same decision, the decision attacked by the Commission, Justice Black held that government reimbursement for transportation to Catholic schools was constitutional. How ironic! The Commission faults Justice Black for anti-Catholic bias from his Klan past, yet the very decision it attacks is one in which he upheld government support benefiting Catholic school-children. And it faults him for following philosophies that no serious legal historian would argue influenced the Court’s reasoning.

The Commission correctly states that much of the hostility towards religion in America today is based upon a “broader cultural assumption that religious belief should remain invisible while secular ideologies enjoy full freedom to influence public institutions.” Report at 21. The Commission is correct to say, “People of faith should not be required to leave their religious convictions behind when entering the workplace, engaging in commerce, serving their communities, or participating in public debate,” and that “institutions should foster environments in which citizens with divergent convictions can work together while maintaining fidelity to conscience.” Report at 21. Nevertheless, the Report goes on to continually overstate the case by saying that the “wall of separation” ideology creates a wall between personal faith and public life. While this may be true when the idea of a wall of separation is misconstrued and weaponized by secular atheists, it is not true that the wall of separation erected by the Constitution and so often referred to by generations of leaders who have gone before us is a wall between personal faith and public life. The true wall of separation is between the state and the church. It is

there so that a person can freely exercise their personal faith and freely engage in the public sphere, without prejudice or persecution. To deny that there is complete separation of church and state in the Constitution, aka “the wall,” and to deny that the wall can serve a useful purpose in protecting individual freedom is un-American and counter to both our experience and the knowledge and intent of our forefathers. The wall of separation is not a wall between religious people and public life; it is a wall between ecclesiastical power and civil power, protecting both religion and civil freedom.

The Commission’s Objectionable Recommendations

Based upon the above arguments, the Commission recommends that the United States adopt its recommendation to post in the workplace, to teach our students, and to teach as many citizens as possible that the Constitution neither creates nor requires the separation of church and state, and that there should be no wall of separation between church and state. If this false ideology is embraced by the people, it will allow for many different “reforms,” and eventually be used to justify any oppressive religious legislation so long as it is for the good of the people or represents the will of the majority. This is a radical teaching that has the potential, over time, to roll back the freedoms we enjoy in this nation, and return us to the political conflicts and tyranny our forefathers came to America to escape. This is the underlying philosophical foundation of additional, objectionable recommendations that the Commission makes.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations. It bases its argument on the idea that in times of need, to separate the physical help from spiritual help is to deny the full scope of the help that the person in need requires. This may be true in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this is an argument to the church that wishes to provide those services to fund them internally, and not rely upon the state. For religion to rely upon state funding is for religion to take the role of an imposter, pretending to provide aid, when in fact it is the state that is making the aid possible. It also allows the religion that is relying upon government funding to use that funding as an

aid in indoctrination and evangelism, thus the government is not remaining neutral. The Commission argues that church members today must leave their religious beliefs at home to engage in humanitarian work. That should never be true for work that they do without the aid of the state, and should only be true to the extent the state is providing them assistance. This is for the protection of religion as much as it is for the state and its citizens. Anytime government money is available, a religion will modify its beliefs to adhere to the values of the government so that it can obtain funds. Public money always brings public control. Furthermore, different religions may claim fairness requires equal funding, even though they do not provide equal services. This certainly will devolve into a quagmire that the state would do well to avoid.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious education. All the reasons against supporting religious philanthropy apply here, as well as additional reasons. The Commission argues correctly that the state benefits from a religious people. But the Commission errs in thinking the state can be involved in making people religious. In education, it is important what is taught. By supporting religious education, the state will be making decisions about what doctrines can be taught. This most commonly takes the form of accreditation. Many sectarian schools are not accredited for this reason. But it can go further. Will the state support a school whose religion teaches interracial marriage is a sin, or that women should not receive higher education? Will the state support a school that teaches polygamy? What about a school that doesn't teach many things, like the Amish? This puts the state into the business of determining what values are worth supporting and what values are not. Don't think that the decisions will only be required for that which may seem obvious to us today. Today the Commission is recommending that the Ten Commandments be posted in schools and courthouses. Which Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments of Exodus or Deuteronomy? One is more Jewish focused, one more focused on creation, both requiring the keeping of the seventh day, not the first day? Or maybe the Ten Commandments of a Roman Catholic catechism, which a Protestant will tell you dispenses with the law against graven images and a Catholic priest will tell you merely divides the commandments differently. Or maybe the state can just abbreviate the Ten Commandments, number

them like a Protestant, and hope everybody is happy. That is the solution in Texas. Texas is getting into the business of doctrine. A government that refuses to fund religious doctrine is not thereby endorsing secularism, rather, it is refusing to decide religious questions. That restraint is not hostility to religion; it is the condition under which religious communities remain free and prosperous.

The Commission has one more recommendation that has the potential to expand the breach in the wall of separation. The Commission recommends repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment prohibits churches from engaging in partisan politics, specifically supporting a candidate for election. It does not prohibit the church from speaking on the issues of the day, or even telling its members how to vote regarding issues, such as abortion and the right to life. What would repealing the Amendment do? Churches would become fabulous non-profit vehicles to engage in political activities. Pastors are known to exhibit tremendous sway over their congregations. It is not hard to imagine the intense pressure that a pastor could feel to deliver his congregation's votes for money. It is not hard to imagine that wealthy and powerful interests might attempt to influence political causes through the churches. Combine that with a patronage system whereby the congregations could receive government grants based upon the Commission's other recommendations, and there is a recipe for disaster. What failing congregation won't make a little compromise for a little financial gain? As scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV. As financial interests invade the churches, invariably the public will be able to smell hypocrisy, and any gains either the church or the state thinks may be had by their union will be lost. Only a dead, lifeless church on government life support will remain.

Today, the Johnson Amendment is already being dismantled by non-enforcement. In *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, the IRS and several religious plaintiffs proposed a settlement that would have substantially narrowed enforcement of the Johnson Amendment as applied to churches. This settlement was opposed by the Baptist Joint Committee and Americans United, two reputable religious liberty advocacy organizations, not secular humanists. A federal district court found that it lacked juris-

diction on March 31, 2026. The effort to remove the barrier between tax-exempt churches and partisan campaign activity is expected to continue. The Commission should reverse its recommendation for repealing the Johnson Amendment, and instead, recommend its enforcement.

The Commission Correctly Identifies a Peril, but Not the Solution

Commissioner Bishop Robert Barron made an important observation about secularism. He said, “[T]here’s a philosophical issue which is secularism proposing itself as some kind of neutral ground, but it’s not neutral ground. Secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system. It wants to dominate the whole of life and therefore to exclude religion [from the public square].” Report at 181. Commissioner Kelly Shackelford makes a particularly insightful comment that “the one thing a totalitarian regime will never allow is citizens who hold an allegiance to one higher than the government. So, whenever that type of power of coalescing comes together, the first flashpoint is always going to be religious freedom. And if you lose there, you will lose everything else. So, what we’re really dealing with here is the precipice of all our freedoms.” Report at 29. This should be particularly sobering when combined with the Commission’s observation that “contemporary progressive opposition to religious liberty ... seek[s] freedom for its own views but coercion of religious groups whose traditional beliefs conflict with current trends such as transgenderism.” Report at 35-36. The Commission is correct in urging the courts to view atheism and atheistic determinism as ideologically and functionally similar to religion. Just as secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system, religion, when granted power, tends toward the same result. Combining church and state together, financially or otherwise, will result in one or the other demanding power and control over the other. History has shown us that the stronger the bond between church and state, the more oppressed the society. The union of church and state is the recipe for the kind of totalitarian regime warned about by Commissioner Shackelford. This is not a new discovery. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams wrote, “Checks and Ballances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them, are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body.—Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as Soon as either

Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unballanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!”¹¹ The church and state should remain forever apart, neutral towards each other, and neutral towards secularism.

Finally, the country as a whole should not be swayed by arguments made for religion in the military. It is true, the military should be very careful not to support or oppose any religion, but it is also true that the military must be able to provide religious services to its members. The reason they must provide those services is that in the military, especially when deployed, there are no alternative means to obtain religious services. A service member deployed in a foreign land may not be able to go to the local Baptist, Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, or Mormon church, or synagogue or mosque, because they may not exist in the area, nor would it necessarily be safe to go off base to attend one.

Conclusion

Just before and after the Revolution, the disestablishment of the state churches was an important project of our founding fathers. It was not without controversy. The experience of it should not be lost upon us.

Reverend Lyman Beecher was a Congregationalist minister, one of the most influential evangelical preachers of the early 1800s, and a leader in the movement to maintain the established church of Connecticut. Before 1818, he argued for the need of an established church. He said, “So the democracy, as it rose, included nearly all the minor sects, besides the Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling tippling folk, infidels, and ruff-scuff generally, and made a dead set at us of the standing order.” He believed that an es-

¹¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 25 June 1813, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0202>. [Original source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 6, 11 March to 27 November 1813, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 226–229.]

tablished church was the only way to counteract these evil influences. In 1818, Connecticut voted to disestablish its church. Beecher described the experience. “For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.” He went on to observe, “They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe buckles, and cocked hats, and golden-headed canes.”¹²

Tocqueville observed on his trip to America, “When I arrived in the United States, it was the country’s religious aspect that first captured my attention.”¹³ By speaking to Americans, he learned religion flourished *because* of the complete separation of church and state, not in spite of it. That is precisely the lesson the Commission would have the nation unlearn, or rather, learn again the hard way.

The Commission is wrong to treat separation of church and state as a modern innovation. In America, the separation of church and state formed the foundation of our dearest freedoms, supported by Baptists, dissenters, and citizens of every faith, vindicated by disestablishment, and praised by foreign observers as religion and freedom thrived together.

As Roger Williams warned, freedom of conscience must be defended: “Having bought truth dear, we must not sell it cheap, nor the least grain of it for the whole world, no not for the saving of souls, though our own most precious...”¹⁴

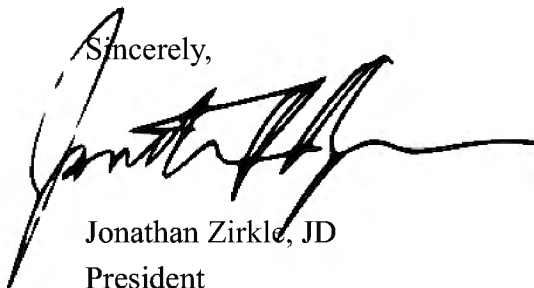
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 340.

¹⁴ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), p. 9.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. America will do best to forever maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Zirkle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Zirkle, JD
President

From: Hamilton Lewis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty - Hamilton Lewis

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 21:25:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello, I'm kindly sending this email regarding keeping church and state separated. It is essential that church and state remain separated because it protects religious freedom of all faiths in Americans. Government funding should stay with public schools and institutions rather than funding private schools or sectarian religious institutions. The Johnson Amendment law protects religious institutions from partisan politicking, which protects political campaigns and the integrity of both houses of worship. Institutions that receive public funding should never be allowed to discriminate against people, but instead should treat all people fairly and equally.

From: Teresa Lyons <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 21:27:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to you today because I am very disturbed about your Religious Liberty Draft Report. I believe that Church and State need to stay completely separate. While I am no lawyer and my writing skills aren't the best, I would like to express some of my feelings.

I have heard it said that there is no separation between church and state in the constitution. But when I read the first amendment, the very first section says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;". I understand this to mean that we have freedom to have whatever religion we want to have and that it won't be restricted. I would like that to continue. I believe that the government should be completely neutral when it comes to religion. It's ok if a particular member of government wants to have their own beliefs but there should be complete neutrality of government when it comes to religion.

I personally have been threatened with religious persecution when I lived in another country for about a year. It was very frightening and I was so thankful when I returned home to my United States and the freedom that we have had here.

I believe that once the government gets its hands into funding religious education, religious clubs, and religious non-profit activities, there is a great danger of what can happen after that. It's a step I hope my great United States NEVER takes.

I would like to request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced and never repealed.

I also believe that the Jewish people and the State of Israel should not receive any special treatment. Let them worship their God the way they want to but let them run their own lives. We do not need to be running to their aid all the time. I have nothing against the Jews but again, I believe that the government's relationship with religion needs to be completely neutral.

Another thing that I find very interesting. I listened to Tucker Carlson's show where he interviewed Carrie Prejean Boller. She has her own religious beliefs and for that, she was railroaded off the committee. And it's a religious liberty committee. So much for religious liberty. If you will railroad your own committee member off the committee for her religious

ideas and for posting them on social media, what will be done with Mr or Mrs citizen someday if he or she disagrees with you someday. Will all our current religious liberty go away?

My request is that you follow the Pillar of Freedom requests in what they have said because I agree with them. May God guide you into all truth and keep America Free!

God Bless,

Teresa Lyons

From: Carol Brooks <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 21:40:58 -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,

Carol Brooks from Michigan

From: Colleen Crangle <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Colleen Crangle

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 21:57:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm writing to oppose the report recently issued by the Religious Liberty Commission. This report is poorly argued and far from securing religious liberty imposes a particular view of one religion on the country. I urge you to reject the recommendations and findings of the report.

Colleen

Fr [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Uniting Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 21:57:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I love the Bible. I love God's Word. I'm a practicing Christian.

I do not love the idea of the state becoming involved in people's freedom to practice religion as they see fit. Jesus gave no example of entangling with state issues, Jewish or Roman. In fact, He clearly stated His kingdom is not of this world. He should be our example. Teaching Biblical morals and principles should have been the churches responsibility, but they shirked evangelism and deep Bible study, so now they want to cozy up to the state and have them do the work they should have done all along.

I know your intentions are honorable, but every generation thinks they can do things that history showed do not have happy endings. We think we're smarter, more special. A simple perusal of history shows nothing but violence, coercion, dark ages, Biblical ignorance, millions tortured and killed, when the state becomes a tool of church.

Please remember that God gave mankind freewill. He allows us to be fools. Solomon tells of falling for it as the wisest man to ever live, it in Ecclesiastes. God doesn't want forced love and worship. And that is where your statement will end up, as it has in every age past.

Please show your faith in God, not by weaponizing religion, but by going out and telling others the wonderful things God has done for you and will do for them. Mobilize your members and churches to take the Word to the world, like Jesus and the apostles did.

Thank you for listening,
SJ

From: Luis Batista <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:00:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

what makes America great is the freedom to worship according to your conscience, that freedom has make America Great! Now when the government try to impose laws or make changes like the separation of church and state we can really mess up the beauty of America. Please keep the separation of church and state as it is, let's not get on giving a group more power because of our faith believe.

Kindly,

Luis Batista

From: Penny Bidwell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] I reject the Commission's Draft Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:00:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

"I Reject the Commission's Draft Report regarding building a bridge between Church and the US government

Penny Bidwell

The Joy of the Lord is my Strength

From: Chris Lassiter <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:01:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

I think separation of Church and State is the best thing and what our great nation was founded on. Think about the repercussions of tearing that wall down. If you do that, you're throwing out the very reason that all of us are proud to be Americans, and also will be completely destroying religious liberty, the freedom to worship as my conscience and God tell me to. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Christopher Lassiter

From: "Grady Lassiter Jr." <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Do not join church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:02:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not join church and state.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Isabella Russian <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Cc: Rachel Deitch <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - GENERAL DRAFT REPORT - AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:06:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: American_Humanist_Association_Public_Comment_on_RLC_Draft_Report.pdf

Good evening,

Please find the American Humanist Association's public comment on the Religious Liberty Commission's draft report attached.

Thank you,
Isabella

--



Isabella Russian (she/her) [what's this?](#)

Policy Manager

American Humanist Association

PII

PII



July 10, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

**Re: Comments on the Draft Report from the Religious Liberty Commission, established by
Presidential Executive Order 14291: Establishment of the Religious Liberty Commission**

Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Carson, Members of the Commission:

The American Humanist Association calls for the Religious Liberty Commission to abandon finalizing its report. As obligated by the Constitution, the U.S. government has a responsibility to ensure freedom of religion for Americans of all faith and belief backgrounds, including humanist and nonreligious Americans. The Religious Liberty Commission not only failed to heed this charge, but actively worked against it.

1. About the American Humanist Association

Founded in 1941, the American Humanist Association (AHA) is the oldest national organization in the United States representing the interests of humanists, atheists, freethinkers, and the nonreligious. The AHA strives to bring about a society where being good without a god is an accepted and respected way to live life. We accomplish this through our defense of civil liberties and secular governance, by our outreach to the growing number of people without traditional religious faith, and through a continued refinement and advancement of the humanist worldview.

Humanism is a nontheistic life stance with ethical values informed by scientific knowledge and driven by a desire to meet the needs of people in the here and now. At the core of those values is an affirmation of the dignity of every human being. The positions we hold and the actions we take are not simply for our own benefit, but for the betterment of all of society and the world in which we live.

We defend the First Amendment by working to strengthen the separation of religion and government. The organization has historically opposed politically-motivated efforts by the Executive Branch to redefine religious liberty—including efforts to do so through the establishment of commissions and task forces that utilize religious claims to justify discrimination, weaken civil rights protections, provide preferential treatment for religiously-affiliated people and entities, and ultimately, dismantle the very ideals they purport to advance. These efforts are used to justify the weaponization of a narrow interpretation of Judeo-Christian beliefs and run counter to the principle of freedom of religion or belief and secular governance.

The United States is a richly pluralistic country with a growing number of nonreligious people residing within its borders. According to Pew Research Center, more than 1 in 4 people (28%) in the United States are religiously unaffiliated, making this the largest religious group in the U.S. Within this catch-all category (often referred to as “nones”), 37% of people surveyed described themselves as atheist or agnostic.¹

Our community is not alone in our work to preserve separation of church and state. According to a recent PEW report, the number of Americans who hold an unfavorable view of Christian nationalism, the number who oppose efforts to name Christianity as the official religion of the U.S, and the number who believe houses of worship should keep out of political matters have all increased; while the share of Americans who believe the government should stop enforcing separation of church and state is declining.²

2. The Commission did not attempt to produce comprehensive recommendations that meaningfully addressed religious liberty for all.

The Commission did not follow the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and therefore should not have convened in the first place.

FACA governs advisory committees within the executive branch. These committees “operate under transparency laws that promote public access, input and accountability.”³ The Religious Liberty Commission did not adhere to the legal criteria required by FACA.

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) issued a rule in 2024 clarifying the executive branch’s obligation to ensure committee memberships reflect membership balance requirements.⁴

The Commission was composed entirely of Christians and one Jew. It is disturbing that the Commission professed to value pluralism while excluding the perspectives of nontheists, Muslims, Buddhists, Humanists, Hindus, Sikhs, and members of indigenous religions, for example.

The Religious Liberty Commission was not “a useful and beneficial means of furnishing expert advice, ideas, and diverse opinions to the Federal Government,”⁵ and, it did not seek to meet FACA’s requirement that all advisory committees be fairly balanced.

The Commission did not hear from a diverse group of witnesses.

The Commission failed to include diverse perspectives in its deliberations. A federal commission tasked

¹Pew Research Center. (2024, January 24). *Religious 'nones' in America: Who they are and what they believe.*

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>

² Rotolo, C., & Smith, G. A. (2026, May 14). *How Americans feel about religion's influence in government and public life.* Pew Research Center.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2026/05/14/how-americans-feel-about-religions-influence-in-government-and-public-life/>

³ U.S. General Services Administration. (2026, April 8). *Federal Advisory Committee Act management overview.*

<https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/faca-overview>

⁴ General Services Administration. (2024, April 18). Federal Management Regulation; Federal Advisory Committee Management, 89 Fed. Reg. 27673.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/18/2024-08215/federal-management-regulation-federal-advisory-committee-management>

⁵ Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. § 1002 (2022). <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/5/1002>

with analyzing religious liberty in the United States should have heard from a diverse array of witnesses with varying perspectives and experiences; yet, the Commission heard from only a small handful of witnesses from minority religions, and notably, there were no Humanist or atheist witnesses. Despite the unique and documented adversity religious minorities face, the Commission not only chose to sideline them, but also consistently disparaged atheists and other religious minorities.⁶

The Commission proved itself unconcerned with freedom of religion or belief and religious liberty in a balanced and inquisitive manner. The Commission shut out religious minorities and atheists from being on record about their experiences and perspective and remained willfully ignorant to their experiences. This allowed the Commission to operate as a vehicle to perpetuate and legitimize Christian Nationalism and write a report that benefits a far-right, Judeo-Christian perspective.

3. The Commission makes inaccurate and misleading assertions about ‘the separation of church and state’.

The Founders understood that church and state should be separate and that we are not a Christian nation.

The Commission cherry-picks selective statements made by the Founders and mischaracterizes their intentions in an attempt to disparage the separation of church and state as a legitimate constitutional principle,⁷ referencing the more recently applied ‘history and tradition’⁸ legal standard, rather than a historically consistent doctrine, as justification for its claims. But the historical record does not support the Commission’s position. The following two examples make clear that the Founders understood the Establishment Clause to require a real separation between religious and civil authority.

The Commission begins setting up the justification behind its harmful recommendations by claiming “the government cannot stand in the way of the practice of religion because religion is fundamental to human nature.”⁹ As evidence, it points to a Commissioner’s invocation of James Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments.¹⁰

Madison was the principal architect of the Bill of Rights and, by extension, of the First Amendment. His petition, which lays out fifteen separate objections to a Virginia bill that would have established public funding for Christian teachers, is one of the clearest founding-era statements affirming the necessity of separating church from state. In his third objection, Madison warns that forcing citizens to pay even “three pence” towards compelled contribution toward the establishment of any one religion threatens fundamental liberty, and asserts that the same governmental authority empowered to establish Christianity over all other religions could just as easily establish one Christian sect over all others.¹¹ The logic is not

⁶ Religious Liberty Commission. (2025, September 29). *Third hearing of the Religious Liberty Commission: Hearing transcript*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1428751/dl>

⁷ Religious Liberty Commission. (2026). *[Draft] report of the Religious Liberty Commission* (pp. 41–45). U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/religious-liberty-commission/media/1449896/dl>

⁸ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 204.

⁹ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 29.

¹⁰ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 28.

¹¹ Madison, J. (1785). *Memorial and remonstrance against religious assessments*. In *The founders' constitution* (Vol. 5, Amendment I, Document 43). University of Chicago Press. https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI_religions43.html

incidental to Madison's thinking on how best to protect religious liberty: it is the throughline of the entire document, and it comes from the person most responsible for drafting the very clause the Commission claims to be interpreting faithfully.

Second, the Treaty of Tripoli, ratified unanimously by the U.S. Senate in 1797 and signed by Founding Father and then-President John Adams, states in Article 11 that the U.S. government is "not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion."¹² This was a deliberate assertion made by the founding generation itself that the American government was conceived as a secular institution rather than a religious one. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the founding generation understood the separation of church and state as central to, not in tension with, the Establishment Clause.

"Separation of Church and State" is shorthand for the legal principle embodied in the Establishment Clause.

The Commission argues that because the literal phrase "separation of church and state"¹³ does not appear in the Constitution, the principle has been misapplied and is the product of "misconceptions"¹⁴ about the founding document. The Commission goes further, claiming that "nothing in the First Amendment allows the government to create a "wall" between an individual's personal faith and our nation's public life."¹⁵

The phrase "separation of church and state" did indeed originate from Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, but it has never functioned as an independent legal standard: it is shorthand for the constitutional principle actually codified in the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The Supreme Court has recognized this for well over a century: in *Reynolds v. United States* (1878), the Court looked to Jefferson's letter as authoritative insight into the framers' intent behind the Establishment Clause, and in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the Court explicitly adopted the "wall of separation" framework as the operative metaphor for how the Establishment Clause functions.

The absence of this specific phrase from the Constitution does not mean the underlying principle is invented or illegitimate. Plenty of well-established constitutional doctrines, like religious liberty, the right to privacy, judicial review, and executive privilege, are also described using language that does not appear verbatim. For the Commission to imply this is disinformation.

Courts have consistently established that the Establishment Clause protects secular governance, religious liberty, and free expression.

Whereas the Commission claims that the phrase "separation of church and state" is a modern interpretation used to "ban religious individuals from exercising their rights in the public square",¹⁶ consistent Supreme Court precedent has consistently proved that it is the authoritative interpretation of

¹² Treaty of Peace and Friendship, U.S.-Tripoli, art. 11, Nov. 4, 1796. In H. Miller (Ed.), *Treaties and other international acts of the United States of America* (Vol. 2, 1931). Avalon Project, Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/bar1796t.asp

¹³ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 42.

¹⁴ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 44.

¹⁵ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 42.

¹⁶ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 42.

the Establishment Clause, protecting the rights to secular governance, religious liberty, and free expression. For example:

in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), the Court firmly established that the government cannot use its authority to inject religious practices into public institutions, protecting students' religious liberty;

in *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968), the Court clarified that the First Amendment mandates "government neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion." This case solidified the principle of secular governance by ensuring that public education curriculum cannot be tailored to fit any specific religious dogma;

in *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985), the Court's ruling reaffirmed that the government cannot use clever workarounds or statutory phrasing to subtly favor religious practice over non-practice in public spaces;

in *Estate of Thornton v. Caldor, Inc.* (1985), the Court's ruling solidified that the secular government cannot pass laws that provide an absolute benefit to religious practitioners at the direct expense of their secular peers; and

in *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987) the Court solidified that the government cannot use its legislative power to force religious theology into secular institutions under the guise of "academic balance."

4. The Johnson Amendment is an important law that protects charitable and religious nonprofits from being used for political ends.

The Johnson Amendment applies equally to religious institutions and secular ones.

The Johnson Amendment is a law that establishes an eligibility rule for a tax benefit, not a restriction on speech.¹⁷ It conditions the government benefit of federal tax exemption on an organization refraining from certain partisan political activity. This condition applies equally to every 501(c)(3) organization, religious or secular. It does not single out houses of worship, target clergy, or impose any obligation unique to religious institutions.

Religious institutions and their clergy remain as free as any secular nonprofit leader to endorse candidates or engage in lobbying if they choose to do so—they simply cannot engage in that activity while simultaneously retaining their organization's federal tax-exempt status. The Johnson Amendment does not require religious leaders to choose between faith and speech—it asks all tax-exempt organizations to choose between partisan campaigning and a specific indirect government subsidy.

Courts have consistently held that the government is not required to subsidize partisan campaigning through a tax-deductible vehicle.

The question of whether declining to extend a tax benefit to partisan activity amounts to unconstitutional suppression of speech has already been litigated, and the courts have been clear.

¹⁷Internal Revenue Code of 1954, 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) (2018).

In *Regan v. Taxation with Representation of Washington* (1983), the Supreme Court held that Congress is under no obligation to subsidize every activity protected by the First Amendment, and that declining to provide a subsidy is not equivalent to suppressing the underlying speech. The Johnson Amendment does not prevent religious leaders from endorsing candidates; it simply declines to underwrite that activity with a tax exemption.

This principle was tested directly in a religious context in *Branch Ministries v. Rossotti* (2000). After a church ran newspaper advertisements opposing then-candidate Bill Clinton, the Internal Revenue Service revoked its tax-exempt status for violating the Johnson Amendment. The church challenged the revocation on Free Speech, Free Exercise, and Establishment Clause grounds, but the D.C. Circuit rejected all three challenges and upheld the Johnson Amendment as constitutional.

There will be serious consequences to overturning the Johnson Amendment.

Roughly three-quarters of Americans oppose churches endorsing political candidates from the pulpit and that support has steadily increased since 2010.¹⁸

The Johnson Amendment prevents tax-exempt entities from functioning as vehicles for partisan campaign spending. If it were repealed for only religious organizations or for all 501(c)(3) entities, those organizations could be used as unlimited and largely untraceable conduits for campaign contributions, which would remain tax-deductible to the donor. Additionally, unlike other organizations, 501(c)(3) organizations do not have to file Form 990s, which disclose detailed financial information, meaning there would be little public transparency in this new political spending process.

If the Johnson were repealed only for religious organizations and leaders, a two-tiered system would be created in which religious 501(c)(3) organizations enjoy political freedoms that secular 501(c)(3) organizations do not. This would constitute unequal treatment under this identical tax provision, which would certainly bring robust legal challenges.

Finally, repealing the Johnson amendment would harm religious liberty. Clergy would be pressured to endorse certain candidates, even if they would prefer to focus their work on theological issues. Clergy and their congregations would be pressured to engage in partisan politics that they may not necessarily want to be engaged with or that they may not agree with. Outside interests, like political operatives and donors, would target houses of worship for their own gain, to the chagrin of the house of worship's religious mission.

5. Secular public schools serve all students and protect religious liberty for all.

The American people should not be responsible for underwriting voucher programs, because these programs are antithetical to secular democracy, subsidize discrimination, and impede religious liberty.

Regardless of their own religious or nontheist beliefs, taxpayers are required to directly or indirectly subsidize or offset the costs of voucher programs, which fund many private institutions that would be

¹⁸ PRRI Staff. (2025, July 8). *Most Americans oppose churches endorsing political candidates*. PRRI. <https://prri.org/spotlight/most-americans-oppose-churches-endorsing-political-candidates/>

legally barred from receiving public money if they were held to the same civil rights standards public schools must follow. With 77%¹⁹ of the private schools receiving public voucher dollars being religiously affiliated, the overwhelming majority of these funds—which would otherwise be public resources—flow directly into religious institutions.

Because many of these private schools are religious, they retain full legal discretion to discriminate against religious minorities, LGBTQ+ students, girls, and other protected classes, and can even charge nonreligious students higher tuition than their religious peers. Some religious private schools even charge higher tuition rates to Christian families who aren't sufficiently religious enough for the school: this includes families who do not meet church attendance requirements, cannot produce baptism documentation, or fall short of minimum donation requirements.²⁰

In addition to using public resources to support discrimination in private schools, state governments are being selective in choosing which private schools of certain religious faiths can participate. In Texas and Florida, lawmakers have moved to exclude Islamic schools specifically from state voucher programs.²¹ This shows that, contrary to claims made by privatization advocates that vouchers empower religious liberty, these programs purposely serve as an exclusionary tool that diminishes the religious liberty of those that do not share the same beliefs as their government.

If parents and families seek to enroll their children in private religious education, they remain entirely free to do so using their own resources, consistent with their own beliefs, exactly as they have always been able to do.

The Commission's recommendations to expand federal voucher programs will have considerable legal implications for state's rights to control education.

Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue (2020) and *Carson v. Makin* (2022) address a narrow federal question: whether a state may exclude a school from an otherwise generally available program solely because that school is religious. They say nothing about the separate and distinct state constitutional provisions, like funding clauses, 'common schools' clauses, or appropriations requirements, that have formed the actual basis for recent rulings against voucher programs. For example:

in September 2024, the South Carolina Supreme Court struck down the state's "Education Scholarship Trust Fund" voucher program²², holding that routing public funds through the state treasury to religious and private schools violated the state constitution's clause barring public funds from directly benefiting private educational institutions;

¹⁹ Schaeffer, K. (2024, June 6). U.S. public, private and charter schools in 5 charts. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/06/06/us-public-private-and-charter-schools-in-5-charts/>

²⁰ Our Lady of Fatima Parish School. (n.d.). *Tuition, fees & financial aid*. Retrieved July 10, 2026, from <https://school.olfatima.org/admissions/tuition-fees-financial-assistance/>

²¹ The Hill. (2026, March 15). *Texas, Florida face pushback over efforts to exclude Islamic schools from school voucher programs*. <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5783162-texas-florida-face-pushback-over-efforts-to-exclude-islamic-schools-from-school-voucher-programs/>

²² Education Law Center. (2024, September 12). *South Carolina Supreme Court strikes down unconstitutional private school vouchers*. <https://edlawcenter.org/south-carolina-supreme-court-strikes-down-unconstitutional-private-school-vouchers/>

in April 2025, a Utah district court struck down "Utah Fits All,"²³ finding that the Utah Constitution requires any legislatively created education program to be "free and open to all children"—a standard voucher-funded private schools cannot meet, given that they remain free to screen out students on the basis of disability, religion, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. That ruling is currently on appeal to the Utah Supreme Court;

in June 2025, an Ohio state judge struck down EdChoice²⁴ on three separate grounds, including a finding that the program created a second, unaccountable school system in violation of the state constitution's "common schools" clause, all while the state's public schools remained underfunded; and

in December 2025, a Montana court blocked the state's education savings account program for students with disabilities²⁵ for lacking a valid legislative appropriation.

This pattern creates a direct complication for the Commission's recommendations that the Department of Justice litigate state Blaine Amendments as a barrier to religious school funding.²⁶ These actions would put the federal government in the position of attacking state constitutional provisions on Establishment Clause or anti-Blaine grounds at the very moment state courts are already striking down these same voucher programs using entirely different state constitutional provisions. Even a successful campaign against Blaine Amendments would leave the underlying vulnerability of these programs untouched, because the amendments being targeted are not the provisions actually being used to dismantle them.

The Commission's recommendations also risk creating a religious license to discriminate and de facto civil rights carve-outs. Private religious schools accepting voucher funds are generally not bound by the federal civil rights and disability protections that govern public schools, including IDEA, Section 504, and Title IX. Because voucher programs route public money into a sector exempt from these obligations, expanding vouchers would function as a mechanism for exempting an increasing share of publicly-funded education from civil rights enforcement altogether.

The Utah ruling flagged this explicitly: the court found that private schools participating in "Utah Fits All" could screen out students on the basis of disability, religion, sexual orientation, and political affiliation, which is the precise opposite of the "free and open" standard the state constitution requires of any legislatively created education program.

The Commission's recommendation that the Department of Justice "clarify that IDEA funds may be used at religious schools" so that funding can "follow the child" would have an acute effect on those with disabilities²⁷. In their suit, the Montana Federation of Public Employees argues directly that routing

²³ Lieberman, M. (2025, April 22). *Another judge rules against private school choice. Here's why*. Education Week. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/another-judge-rules-against-private-school-choice-heres-why/2025/04>

²⁴ Public Funds Public Schools. (2025, June). *Ohio court strikes down private school voucher program that violates state constitution*. Education Law Center. <https://pfps.org/ohio-court-strikes-down-private-school-voucher-program-that-violates-state-constitution.html>

²⁵ Associated Press. (2025, December 10). *Montana judge blocks education savings accounts for students with special needs for lack of funding*. U.S. News & World Report. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/montana/articles/2025-12-10/montana-judge-blocks-education-savings-accounts-for-students-with-special-needs-for-lack-of-funding>

²⁶ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 64.

²⁷ Religious Liberty Commission, 2026, p. 64.

disabled students into voucher-funded private schools strips them of IDEA's procedural protections, including the guarantee of a Free Appropriate Public Education and due-process hearing rights. Once a student enrolls in a private school using a voucher, they are typically treated as "parentally placed" under IDEA, which is a status that eliminates these protections entirely, regardless of how the funding arrangement is framed.

If Department of Justice guidance actively encourages parents of IDEA-eligible children to move those children into schools carrying no IDEA obligations, it would create a two-tier system in which the students most in need of enforceable federal disability protections have the least access to them.

6. Ensuring faith-based groups adhere to the same standards as secular groups competing for federal funds is not a violation of religious liberty. It is critical to protecting beneficiaries' rights.

Requiring faith-based organizations to meet the same conditions as secular organizations for federal funding ensures equal treatment of beneficiaries.

Treating faith-based and secular organizations identically when both compete for the same pool of federal funds is not targeting religious organizations: it is the definition of equal treatment. Regardless of religious character, competitive applicants and grantees are expected to adhere to the same conditions. Yet the Commission treats a faith-based organization's obligation to meet the same conditions as its secular counterparts as an imposition. Exempting one category of grant applicant from rules that still bind everyone else is not equal treatment—it's a preference. If a faith-based organization must, like any secular applicant, refrain from discriminating against the beneficiaries it serves in exchange for public funds, that is not a special burden placed on religion: it is the price of entry for becoming a federal grantee.

Additionally, grant funds are designated for the provision of a defined service, like job training, food assistance, and housing support. They are not for religious instruction, worship, or proselytization. Faith-based organizations cannot use federal grant dollars specifically to fund religious activity.

Current federal regulations already implement this principle, balancing faith-based organizations' religious liberty with beneficiaries' religious freedom.

Existing federal regulations enable faith-based organizations to compete for federal funding and participate in federal programs on equal footing with other similarly situated nongovernmental organizations, without requiring them to suppress their religious character or identity.²⁸

The 2024 regulations include this equal-treatment principle explicitly in their text. The relevant agencies adopted language stating that they would not discriminate in their selection of service providers "on the basis of an organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof, or on the basis of conduct that would not be considered grounds to favor or disfavor a similarly situated secular organization,"²⁹. These same regulations also include a faith-based organizations' ability to request

²⁸ Congressional Research Service. (2026, June 29). *Connecting faith-based and religious organizations with federal grants and other assistance* (IF13259). Library of Congress. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF13259>

²⁹ Department of Justice, Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Agriculture, Agency for International Development, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Labor, Department of Veterans

religious accommodations.

Ultimately, the federal government's responsibility is to beneficiaries, not grantees.

The Commission takes care to consistently center the interests of grant-receiving organizations in its report, but the federal government's obligation in administering these programs is to the beneficiaries, who are the people the programs are meant to serve; not to the institutions distributing the services on the government's behalf.

The 2024 rules help ensure that the beneficiaries' need for services is best addressed. These protections include, for example, beneficiaries receiving a written notice that they have a right to receive services free from discrimination, proselytization, and religious coercion, and the reinstatement of a procedure to provide notice to beneficiaries about alternative service providers.³⁰

The federal government is required to protect the religious liberty of the beneficiaries using the publicly-funded services, not to cater to the religious organizations wishing to flout applicant requirements to administer services with federal funds. Permitting discrimination of beneficiaries, including for their religion or beliefs, cuts against this purpose by denying people access to services, which will be especially difficult on marginalized groups.

Without these protections, individuals may forgo services because they're coerced or forced out of programs, they may concede to actions or requirements that go against their own religious beliefs out of pressure and out of sheer need for a service, and they may not be able to access the information about the law they could use to find a better provider fit.

7. The Religious Liberty Commission should disband without releasing a final report.

Chair Patrick may claim that there is no separation of church and state, but our country's legal, historical, and cultural record proves otherwise. That record protects what the Commission is now asking the public to nullify: that the secular nature of our government protects the precious rights of us all, no matter one's faith or beliefs. The Religious Liberty Commission demonstrated in each hearing and in each action that it was unserious and unfit for its charge, and that incompetence translates clearly in the resulting report and dangerous recommendations, which will have serious material consequences if implemented.

For all of these reasons, we strongly recommend that the Religious Liberty Commission disband without releasing a final report. But even if a report is finalized, we are confident that religious liberty in the United States will survive this Commission's best efforts to undermine it.

Thank you for your consideration. Questions pertaining to the AHA's comments can be directed to Isabella Russian, the AHA's Policy Manager, via email ([REDACTED] PII).

Affairs, & Department of Health and Human Services. (2024, March 4). Partnerships with faith-based and neighborhood organizations, 89 Fed. Reg. 15671. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/03/04/2024-03869/partnerships-with-faith-based-and-neighborhood-organizations>

³⁰ Id.

From: Jeannie LeFrancois <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment regarding Religious Liberty

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:07:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe as a person of the Protestant denomination there should Remain a Barrier between Church and State.

I did not agree with C19 Vaccine Mandates although I am a vaccine preventable disease epidemiologist from Loma Linda University School of Public Health.

I believe it is against God to mandate something that can chain my God Given DNA by forcing a vaccine. History proved this but not before I had to give up my nursing licence to fight against the very thing that I specialise in.

I do not believe we should not use aborted Fetal tissue

Before becoming an epidemiologist, I was forced to sign for employment, and participate in unethical procedures.

I get upset as my grandfather (USN SeaBee - very first battalion), and my father in law (polish fleeing Nazi Germany at 16, and returned &) fought in WWII for freedoms against Nazi Germany, yet a Jewish Prime minister is getting preferential treatment, and is saying that If I quote truth in scripture such as Jews killed my Savior, that I am being ban by Jews, in preferential treatment in stating a historical fact, and being told I am anti Semitic. That denies all my family stood for.

In military service my sons had to eat bacon and other unclean food against dietary laws.

Many ethical and moral Americans decisions such as Desmond Doss, who was in my faith, cared for many injured in war, despite they were ridiculed for not carrying a gun, and worshipped on Friday-Saturday sabbath. Many Bronze stars are awarded to my friends for eithics under the worse conditions as with my Freind SOCM Murno (31 y SEAL)

My son was permanently awarded the Presidential Unit Citation under combat conditions for moral and ethical combat.

We should not give grants to one faith in grants, as it eventually forces dependance on government instead of God, as with USAID

I should not be penalised for offering comfort to a patient when sick because the state states I can not pray with them.

Please uphold the separation of church and state, that we are authorised the right to be Americans and have religious freedoms.

Sincerely

Jeannie LeFrancois

[REDACTED] PII

PII

From: Carl <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State must stay

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:22:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

From: Konnor Lewis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: Religious Liberty Commission <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Church–State Separation – Konnor Lewis

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:26:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment on the Commission’s draft report. I write as a Christian and a college student in Indiana who cares deeply about religious liberty for all people. I am grateful that the Commission is seeking to address genuine concerns about hostility and discrimination toward people of faith, and I support efforts to protect every person’s right to worship, or not worship, according to conscience.

At the same time, I am deeply concerned by portions of the draft report and recent statements suggesting that the separation of church and state is a legal error or should be replaced with a “bridges” model between church and government. The First Amendment’s religion clauses and the long-standing doctrine of church–state separation have protected both the church and the state by preventing government establishment of religion while safeguarding the free exercise of faith for all. History shows that when church and state become too closely united, coercion and persecution often follow, whether in officially religious states or in regimes that suppress religion. As a Christian, I believe faith in Jesus must be freely chosen, not advanced through government power.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to clearly affirm robust separation of church and state as essential to genuine religious liberty. I ask that your final report avoid policies that would privilege one faith tradition over others, politicize houses of worship, or weaken constitutional protections that keep government from establishing religion while fully protecting free religious exercise. My own doctrine teaches that while we recognize prophetic warnings about future restrictions on conscience, we are still called to do what we can, in the present, to preserve freedom of religion and liberty of conscience as long as possible. Thank you for considering my comment and for your work on these important issues.

With respect,

Konnor Lewis

[REDACTED] PII

From: Patti Layne <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – President Trump’s Religious Liberty Commission
Delivers Historic Report

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:39:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

The United States of America already embraces religious freedom and after reading the two page summary of testimonies where people feel persecuted for their beliefs, the beliefs that they seem to have an issue with aren’t religious in nature at all but secular. Like the right to not get a vaccine or the right to not learn about people who are genetically different like Trans people. None of this is religious in nature.

There is no need to instruct the DOJ to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state ESPECIALLY if that clarification aligns with Dan Patrick’s point that the Constitution doesn’t ensure the separation of church and state as he and his Christian Nationalist buddies are trying to convince the public that his point is valid. It is not. The only thing that Dan Patrick got right is that the phrase “separation of church and state” is not found in the Constitution. The concept of separating church and state has roots in European philosophy, but the specific metaphor "wall of separation between Church & State" was coined by Thomas Jefferson in 1802 in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. Yes, that Thomas Jefferson, our third president, and the guy that wrote the Declaration of Independence. The concept became enshrined in constitutional law through landmark cases like *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), where the US Supreme Court formally adopted Jefferson's metaphor to interpret the Establishment Clause.

Sit down Dan and the task force, you got it 1000% wrong. A word that is not found in the Constitution anywhere is the word God. God was added to the Pledge of Allegiance fairly late in our history during the Cold War. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a law adding the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance on Flag Day—June 14, 1954. Originally written in 1892, the pledge was updated during the Cold War to distinguish American ideals from the state atheism of the Soviet Union. Given the Establishment Clause those atheists in the United States are free to not believe in god as many of us don’t.

What is in the Constitution is the First Amendment which says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Having said that, it is ironic that this same bunch, based only on their religious beliefs, have passed laws in 23 states that remove the concept of bodily autonomy from women, yet this same bunch uphold a man’s right to not get the COVID vaccine. No where in the Bible does it even mention vaccination yet in Genesis, the Bible says life begins when God blew his breath into Adam, not conception. If life began at conception, that fertilized egg could survive without implantation in the uterus. We could just fertilize eggs in petri dishes and be done with forcing women to carry fetuses and give birth.

Nowhere in this report is their mention of religious persecution of those worshipping their Muslim faith. Why is that? Dan Patrick and his Christian Nationalist buddies here in Texas are beating the drums against the boogeyman Sharia Law which isn’t a real thing or problem, but they rile up their MAGA masses as if it was a real problem.

How does preventing religious 401c3 from endorsing or opposing political candidates ensure freedom of religion? It doesn’t. What it does is shift religious charities from performing charity activities to performing political activities. If the repeal of the Johnson amendment occurs, religious entities should be required to pay taxes and no longer allowed to be a 401c3. Problem solved.

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Division of Church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:49:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with the pillar of freedom's comments.

Please continue to keep the United States a free nation with separation between church and state.

Thank you,
Jerry Johnson

From: Dostingiz Kirindax <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Calvin Hartman

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:53:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it.

Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Calvin G. Hartman

From: Peggy Haslach <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report – Margaret Haslach

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 22:54:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice and the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment strongly opposing the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

This dangerous framework seeks to redefine the Establishment Clause and undermine the critical separation of church and state. Allowing publicly funded organizations to use religion as a shield to discriminate in hiring and service provision is a gross violation of civil rights. Furthermore, these recommendations threaten vital healthcare access—including reproductive freedom, miscarriage management, and transgender care—leaving vulnerable communities without safe alternatives. Finally, attempting to dismantle the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally injects dark political money into tax-exempt religious institutions.

True religious freedom protects personal conscience for all Americans. It must never be weaponized by the federal government to deny others healthcare, shelter, safety, or equal treatment under the law.

I urge the Department of Justice to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

Margaret Haslach

[REDACTED] PII

Sumner, WA 98390

From: Gerry Lindsay <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:16:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

The long-standing wall between church and state should remain in place. Countries like Iraq and Iran, not to mention the atrocities committed by the church masquerading as a government during the Dark Ages in Europe, are all the proof needed. Church is church, and government is government. The two should NEVER be merged for ANY reason.

Gerald R. Lindsay

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:18:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

The only comment you need to understand is Amendment One of the U S Constitution.

“ Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion”

Susan G Meeker

Retired teacher of U S History

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Bette Wozniak

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:32:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Wow, I could hardly believe what I was reading in the Commission's recommendations found in your report. How sad that much in it would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

As a person of faith, I find the idea of replacing the separation of church and state with a "bridge," is most worrisome as history is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good.

I agree with Rabbi Meir Soloveichik when he was quoted in the report as saying, "What we're dealing with is the bureaucratic redefining of religion itself, and what it means to act in a religious capacity,"

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we have kept and can keep both free.

Sincerely,

Bette Wozniak

Jackson, Michigan 49201

From: AC Alabama <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on the two page summary of the Report of the Religious Liberty Commission Draft

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:39:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have three points of concern about the Draft.

One big one is the inclusion of gender identity beliefs as part of religious beliefs. Not all personal beliefs are religious. For instance, a belief in Big Foot would not be considered religious even if the believer is part of a community of believers. And even if he believes a god created all creatures, and included Big Foot in those. Beliefs about gender identity are not religious beliefs, they are simply personal beliefs. I think there needs to be a definition of what constitutes a religious belief.

My second concern is the emphasis on antisemitism as opposed to other religious discrimination and violence. Especially when it comes to Jewish people accused of being antisemitic due to criticisms of Israel; or simply being pro-Palestinian when it comes to the situation in Gaza. Other religions are to be given equal protections as Judaism.

My third concern is about vaccines as religious only issues. Religious beliefs should be protected when they do not harm others. Vaccines are a public health issue because it requires a herd immunity to protect people who can't be vaccinated, are too young for vaccination, and even those who have been vaccinated. Vaccines do not protect 100% so it is still possible to get a disease even having had the vaccine. This makes vaccine requirements a healthcare issue more than a religious one.

Otherwise, I find the Report satisfactory.

Thanks!
AC Carlisle

From: "tshah ." <[REDACTED] PII >
To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >
Cc: "Bush, Mary Margaret (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the R20 and Promoting International Religious Freedom (to be Entered into the Public Record)
Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:43:11 -0400
Importance: High
Attachments: Public_Comment_with_Suggested_Draft_Recommendation_on_the_R20_(to_be_Entered_i nto_the_Public_Record).pdf;
Public_Comment_on_the_Strategic_Value_of_the_R20_in_Furthering_the_Cause_of_Religi ous_Liberty_Worldwide_(to_be_Entered_into_the_Public_Record).pdf;
R20_Coalition_Letter_to_President_Donald_J_Trump.pdf

Dear Religious Liberty Commissioners,

In the attached Public Comment, I seek to build on the prior Public Comment I submitted on May 18, 2026, with Professor Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School and Mr. C. Holland Taylor of the LibForAll Foundation regarding the strategic opportunity before the Trump Administration to spotlight the cause of religious liberty on the international stage by recognizing a "Religion 20" or R20 International Summit of Religious Authorities as an official part of America's historic G20 Presidency this year.

Specifically, in the attached, I submit a draft recommendation regarding the R20 for your consideration, which I believe will strengthen the Commission's report. This recommendation follows directly and logically from key statements made by Commissioners and witnesses during the RLC's public hearings over the last year and from elements of your outstanding draft report of June 26.

Should you have any questions about our Public Comment or would like any additional information about this opportunity to highlight and elevate the principle of religious liberty on the world stage, please do not hesitate to contact me by email ([REDACTED] PII) or by telephone ([REDACTED] PII).

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Timothy Samuel Shah, Ph.D.

Secretary of the Board, G20 Religion Forum (R20)

Director of Strategic Initiatives, Center for Shared Civilizational Values

Distinguished Research Scholar in Politics, University of Dallas

[REDACTED] PII
[REDACTED] PII



July 10, 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Subject: Draft text of an additional recommendation regarding the “Religion 20” or R20 initiative as a historic and strategic opportunity “to further the cause of religious liberty around the world” (to be entered into the public record)

Dear Commissioners,

I would like to build on the official Public Comment I submitted on May 18, 2026 with Professor Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School and Mr. C. Holland Taylor of the LibForAll Foundation regarding the strategic opportunity before the Trump Administration to spotlight the cause of religious liberty on the international stage by recognizing a “Religion 20” or R20 International Summit of Religious Authorities as an official part of America’s historic G20 Presidency this year.

Specifically, I hereby submit a draft recommendation regarding the R20 for your consideration, which I believe will considerably strengthen the Commission’s report. This recommendation follows directly and logically from key statements made by Commissioners and witnesses during the RLC’s public hearings over the last year and from elements of your outstanding draft report of June 26. Furthermore, if adopted, this recommendation would enable the Commission to fulfill a key part of its Presidential mandate, which includes “*identifying opportunities for the White House Faith Office to partner with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to further the cause of religious liberty around the world*” as well as “*programs to increase awareness of and celebrate America’s peaceful religious pluralism.*” The R20 is a powerful vehicle for realizing both objectives.

At the Religious Liberty Commission’s final public hearing at the Museum of the Bible on April 13, 2026, which I attended, Commissioner and Senior Advisor to the White House Faith Office Pastor Paula White-Cain eloquently observed that international religious liberty is — and must remain — a top priority for the Trump Administration and the White House Faith Office, especially given escalating religious persecution in Nigeria and elsewhere. She noted the Administration’s concrete efforts to shine a spotlight on victims of religious persecution throughout the world. In this regard, it is relevant to note — and celebrate — the release of Pastor Ezra Jin from prison in China, just before the Fourth of July, thanks to the personal advocacy of President Trump during his state visit to Beijing in May 2026.

Pastor White-Cain’s remarks were consistent with the testimony of key witnesses at prior hearings. For example, as the June 26 draft report notes (on p. 174), the RLC’s very first hearing on June 16, 2025, featured testimony by the CEO, President, and Chief Counsel of Alliance Defending Freedom, Kristen Waggoner. One of the main recommendations Waggoner

highlighted in her testimony was that the U.S. Government “promote religious freedom on the international stage in collaboration with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom [and] implement President Trump’s 2020 Executive Order on Advancing International Religious Freedom to ensure that religious freedom remains a central priority of U.S. foreign policy.”¹

Specifically citing this element of Kristen Waggoner’s testimony, the draft RLC Report incorporated the following recommendation (Recommendation #10) on international religious freedom:

Promote international religious freedom. The White House Faith Office and the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom should work together to ensure that religious freedom remains a central priority of U.S. foreign policy (p. 174; emphasis in the original).

However, this general recommendation, while laudable, would be greatly strengthened *if it were accompanied by a clear identification of a new and specific strategic vehicle or modality for promoting religious freedom on the international stage*, in keeping with President Trump’s Executive Order that the Religious Liberty Commission take up the task of “identifying opportunities for the White House Faith Office to partner with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to further the cause of religious liberty around the world.”

I believe that there can be no better way to highlight before the world that religious freedom is a central priority of U.S. foreign policy than for the Trump Administration to endorse and incorporate the R20 initiative in its G20 agenda and schedule of events this year, as my colleagues Mary Ann Glendon and C. Holland Taylor outlined in our Public Comment of May 18.

I therefore urge the Religious Liberty Commission to incorporate a specific recommendation regarding the opportunity the R20 presents to elevate the indispensable social contributions of religion and religious freedom on the international stage, and I propose the following text, either in whole or in part, as a potential basis for such a recommendation:

Whereas the structures of global governance and America’s own foreign policy elites have too often been steeped in a radical secularism indifferent or hostile to the positive economic and political contributions of religion, we encourage President Trump to seize the historic opportunity afforded by America’s current Presidency of the “Group of Twenty” and officially place religion and the inalienable God-given right of religious freedom on the G20 agenda — where they belong. For as the Commission’s hearings emphasized, and as Chairman Dan Patrick noted in an address at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, religion is an essential aspect of what it means to be human and “an indispensable support” for civic virtue, economic vitality, charitable and humanitarian work, strong families, community bonds, and overall human flourishing. Yet religion’s ability to make these broad-spectrum contributions to social health and prosperity depends on religious freedom, which includes the right of individuals and communities to express and practice their faith not only in private but also in public life.

Recognizing that the “Religion 20” or R20 — which was recognized as an official part of Indonesia’s G20 Presidency in 2022 — is dedicated to enhancing the influence of religious and moral values on the world’s geopolitical and economic power structures and to defeating the

¹ First Hearing of the Religious Liberty Commission, Hearing Transcript, 86 (2025) (Statement of Kristen Waggoner).

persecution and silencing of religion throughout the world, the Commission recommends that the U.S. Government recognize an R20 Summit of International Religious Authorities as an official part of the U.S. Presidency of the G20 this year. This will contribute to the success of the U.S. G20 Presidency by enshrining foundational American values and principles — including the fundamental right to religious liberty — within the very heart of the G20 and permanently embedding these values and principles in the annual G20 process.

I believe that it is all the more appropriate for the final RLC report to incorporate a recommendation concerning U.S. recognition of the R20 because the R20 has attracted the public support of a broad spectrum of major American faith leaders and religious liberty advocates. Indeed, 83 such leaders signed a letter to President Trump in November 2025 urging him “to officially recognize the Religion 20 Summit (R20) as part of America’s presidency of the G20 in 2026.” Among the letter’s signers were His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Ryan Anderson, Kelly Shackelford, Kristen Waggoner, Mary Ann Glendon, and numerous others.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Timothy Samuel Shah, Ph.D.
Secretary of the Board, R20
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Center for Shared Civilizational Values

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Enclosures/attachments:

- Public Comment of Mary Ann Glendon, Timothy Shah, and C. Holland Taylor to the Religious Liberty Commission (May 18, 2026)
- R20 Coalition Letter to President Donald J. Trump (November 10, 2025)



18 May 2026

Religious Liberty Commission
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Subject: Public Comment on the Strategic Value of the R20 in Furthering the Cause of Religious Liberty Worldwide (to be Entered into the Public Record)

Dear Commissioners,

Pursuant to conversations with Executive Director Mary Margaret Bush and several members of the Religious Liberty Commission, we submit this Public Comment on the strategic value of the G20 Religion Forum (R20) in advancing the cause of religious liberty worldwide.

We note that the Commission's mandate, conveyed in President Trump's Executive Order dated May 1, 2025, titled "Establishment of the Religious Liberty Commission," includes the following:

The Commission shall produce a comprehensive report on the foundations of religious liberty in America, the impact of religious liberty on American society, current threats to domestic religious liberty, strategies to preserve and enhance religious liberty protections for future generations, and programs to increase awareness of and celebrate America's peaceful religious pluralism....

The Commission shall advise the White House Faith Office and the Domestic Policy Council on religious liberty policies of the United States. Specific activities of the Commission shall include, to the extent permitted by law, recommending steps to secure domestic religious liberty by executive or legislative actions as well as identifying opportunities for the White House Faith Office to partner with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to further the cause of religious liberty around the world.

Through its Presidency of the G20, the United States has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to affirm that religion deserves a prominent place on the world's geopolitical agenda as well as a voice in the global public square. The existing mechanism of the [G20 Religion Forum \(R20\)](https://g20religion.org/)¹ offers an effective vehicle through which the U.S. and other G20 Members may cooperate with the world's major religions in order to foster global peace and prosperity.

- The Founder and Chairman of the R20 is KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Chairman of the world's largest Muslim organization, Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which has over 100 million followers and 28,000 Islamic boarding schools. Mr. Staquf is frequently cited as one of the world's 20 most influential Muslim leaders.

¹ <https://g20religion.org/>

PII

<http://www.libforall.org> • www.g20religion.org • www.civilizationalvalues.org

- In 2024, Mr. Staquf and NU received the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity — jointly conferred by the Vatican, Egypt’s al-Azhar University, and the Government of Abu Dhabi — in recognition of its “major role in spearheading global peace and diplomatic efforts.”
- Through its Humanitarian Islam movement, Nahdlatul Ulama is working to reform obsolete and problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy, which underlie and animate terrorist movements such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* have all acknowledged NU’s success in discrediting Islamist extremism.
- In conjunction with its Presidency of the G20 in 2022, the Government of Indonesia incorporated the first R20 International Summit of Religious Leaders into the official program of G20 Main Events. *This was the first time that religion was ever placed on the official G20 agenda.* The Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board, which founded the R20, appointed the North Carolina-based [Center for Shared Civilizational Values](https://civilizationalvalues.org/)² to serve as the Permanent Secretariat of the G20 Religion Forum (R20).
- The R20 is an effective vehicle for securing a seat at the G20 table for religious leaders and their communities, who constitute the single largest demographic within the human family. Believers’ share of the global population is estimated to exceed 80%, and religious beliefs continue to shape the world’s socio-cultural and geopolitical landscape for good or ill, depending on the beliefs in question.
- The security and prosperity of the United States of America — and of the world at large — call for a [global effort](#)³ to ensure that religion functions as a genuine and dynamic source of solutions, rather than problems, on the world stage. The R20 exists to meet that urgent need.
- As reported by [Religion News Service](#),⁴ in November 2025 a coalition of 84 prominent U.S. religious leaders, scholars, and security experts “led by New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan; Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center; former Vatican ambassador Mary Ann Glendon; and First Liberty Institute President Kelly Shackelford, sent President Donald Trump a letter urging him to... ‘officially recognize the Religion 20 Summit (R20) as part of America’s presidency of the G20 in 2026.’”
- The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a [Congressional hearing](#)⁵ on March 5, 2026 to explore how the Trump administration can highlight and drive human rights issues in connection with America’s G20 Presidency, through the R20. The Commission’s Republican and Democratic Co-Chairs — Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) — voiced strong bipartisan support for the R20.
- America’s G20 Presidency will coincide with the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The R20 offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revitalize America’s founding vision on the global stage — affirming the God-given right of all people to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness — and leverage its revolutionary principles to recalibrate the trajectory of Western civilization and the world at large.

² <https://civilizationalvalues.org/>

³ [https://www.baytarrahmah.org/media/2023/CDI_Resolution-on-G20-Religion-Forum-\(R20\).pdf](https://www.baytarrahmah.org/media/2023/CDI_Resolution-on-G20-Religion-Forum-(R20).pdf)

⁴ https://civilizationalvalues.org/2026_01_06_religion-news-service/

⁵ https://civilizationalvalues.org/2026_03_05_congressional-hearing-on-the-r20/

- Hence, the R20 offers a unique opportunity to encourage the world’s religious, political, and economic leaders to embrace the vision of 1776 over that of 1789. Unlike America’s constitutional tradition and system of ordered liberty, the French Revolution gave birth to a militant secular ideology that paved the way for Marxism, Socialism, and Communism.
- [The R20 International Summit of Religious Authorities \(ISORA\) will convene in Washington, D.C. in the Fall of 2026.](#)⁶ Its action-oriented agenda is designed to yield concrete outputs, outcomes, and initiatives that will address issues of immediate and pressing concern to religious communities, societies, and governments worldwide, including the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and elsewhere.

We recommend that the Religious Liberty Commission include in its report a recommendation that the U.S. Government recognize the R20 as an official part of the U.S. Presidency of the G20 this year. The Trump Administration can also play a decisive role in securing formal recognition for the R20 as a Permanent Engagement Group of the G20. This will contribute to the success of the U.S. G20 Presidency by enshrining foundational American values and principles — including the fundamental right to religious liberty — within the very structure of future G20 events.

This, in turn, will help fulfill a key element of the Religious Liberty Commission’s mandate, cited above: *“identifying opportunities for the White House Faith Office to partner with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to further the cause of religious liberty around the world.”* Official recognition of the R20 will also help achieve other key elements of the Religious Liberty Commission’s mandate, including the need to address *“current threats to domestic religious liberty,”* as well as to develop *“strategies to preserve and enhance religious liberty protections for future generations, and programs to increase awareness of and celebrate America’s peaceful religious pluralism.”*

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Ann Glendon
Professor of Law Emerita, Harvard Law School
Fmr. US Ambassador to the Holy See
Fmr. Chair, US Commission on Unalienable Rights



Timothy Samuel Shah
Secretary of the Board, R20
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Center for Shared Civilizational Values



C. Holland Taylor
Chairman & CEO, LibForAll Foundation
Special Advisor for International Affairs to the General Chairman, Nahdlatul Ulama
Deputy Chairman & CEO, Center for Shared Civilizational Values — R20 Permanent Secretariat

⁶ [https://g20religion.org/media/2026/The-2026-G20-Religion-Forum-\(R20\).pdf](https://g20religion.org/media/2026/The-2026-G20-Religion-Forum-(R20).pdf)

Coalition Letter to the Trump Administration Supporting U.S. Sponsorship of the R20 Summit During the 2026 G20 Presidency

November 10, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump

President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

From the Abraham Accords to your Executive Order integrating international religious freedom into U.S. diplomacy, you have been a stalwart defender of peace and international religious freedom. As religious leaders, religious liberty advocates, and national security supporters from across the United States, we write to encourage you to build on your legacy and direct your administration to officially recognize the Religion 20 Summit (R20) as part of America's presidency of the G20 in 2026.

The R20 Summit brings together religious leaders from the world's major faith traditions whose voices and insights are indispensable for policy making that serves human flourishing, dignity, and security. R20 is particularly dedicated to advancing international religious freedom and deradicalization—principles that are vital to America's long term national security interests and those of the world.

R20 Recognition would entail no government financial outlays, only incorporation of R20 into the calendar of G20 events in Washington DC next year, with an additional request for support in making R20 a permanent engagement group of the G20.

America's Leadership Opportunity

Officially recognizing the R20 Summit aligns with core American values while advancing practical diplomatic and national security objectives:

- **Strengthening International Partnerships:** Religious leaders often have significant influence in their respective countries and can serve as valuable allies in advancing American interests and values globally.
- **Addressing Persecution of Religious Minorities:** The R20 provides a platform to address the persecution of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and other religious minorities worldwide, a cause that resonates deeply with American values and constituencies.
- **Counter-Extremism Efforts:** Peaceful religious voices must be empowered to promote harmony and dialogue over violence, dehumanization, and coercion and are essential partners in identifying and countering violent jihadism and other forms of violent extremism at home and abroad.

Broad Coalition Support

Our support for the R20 Summit transcends denominational and ideological boundaries, uniting Americans of faith around our shared commitment to the fundamental right to religious freedom. The undersigned offer our support and cooperation in making the R20 Summit a success and our communities stand ready to participate actively in summit proceedings and preparations, mobilize our networks to ensure robust participation, provide expertise and resources to address the summit's key themes, and to spread the news to our constituencies and general audiences.

Conclusion

Mr. President, we respectfully urge you to direct the appropriate agencies under your command to recognize the R20 Summit as part of America's G20 presidency in 2026. The eyes of the world will be on you and America next year and we pray you seize this opportunity to further cement your legacy as a stalwart defender of religious liberty when America's security and spiritual well-being were under threat.

Respectfully submitted,

Organizational Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan

Archbishop of New York
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York

Mary Ann Glendon

Learned Hand Professor of Law Emerita
Harvard Law School
Former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See

Elliott Abrams

Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Kyle Abts

Executive Director
International Committee on Nigeria

Zainab Al-Suwaij

Executive Director
American Islamic Congress

Dr. Ryan T. Anderson

President
Ethics and Public Policy Center

Rabbi Abraham Cooper

Former Chair, United States Commission on
International Religious Freedom
Associate Director for Global Engagement,
Simon Wiesenthal Center

Kelly Shackelford

President, CEO, and Chief Counsel
First Liberty Institute

Most Rev. Timothy P. Broglio

President
United States Conference of Catholic
Bishops

Ambassador Sam Brownback

US Ambassador at Large for International
Religious Freedom

German Chica

Cofounder and Executive Director
Christian Center for Public Life

Tim Collins

President
Walsh University

Derry Connolly

President
John Paul the Great Catholic University

John M. Czarnetzky

Dean & CEO
Ave Maria School of Law

Jim Daly

President and CEO
Focus on the Family

Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C.

President
University of Notre Dame

William Fahey

President & Fellow
Thomas More College of Liberal Arts
(Merrimack, NH)

Dr. Thomas F. Farr

President Emeritus
Religious Freedom Institute

Maureen Ferguson

Commissioner
United States Commission on International
Religious Freedom

Miguel Angel Granda

President
Miami Young Republicans

John M. Grondelski, Ph.D.

Independent Scholar; Former Associate Dean
of the School of Theology
Seton Hall University (NJ)

Dr. Os Guinness

Author and Social Critic
Co-founder, Trinity Forum

George A. Harne

President
Christendom College

The Honorable Vicky Hartzler

Former Member U.S. Congress (MO) 2011–
2023

Robert W. Hefner

Professor of Anthropology & International
Affairs, Boston University
President, American Institute for Indonesian
Studies (AIFIS)

Virginia Gray Henry

Director
Fons Vitae

Kent Hill

Senior Fellow for Eurasia, Middle East, and
Islam
Religious Freedom Institute

Dr. Gary Hollingsworth

Interim President
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
of the Southern Baptist Convention

M. Zuhdi Jasser, MD

President and Founder
American Islamic Forum for Democracy

Byron R. Johnson

Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences
Baylor University

Rev. Prof. Dr. Thomas K. Johnson

Special Envoy to the Holy See
World Evangelical Alliance

Patrick E. Kelly

Supreme Knight & CEO
Knights of Columbus

Zainab Khan

President
Muslim American Leadership Alliance

Peter Kilpatrick

President
The Catholic University of America

Rev. Dr. Walter Kim
President
National Association of Evangelicals

Fr. Peter Kucer, MSA
President-Rector
Holy Apostles College & Seminary

Dede Laugesen
President
Save the Persecuted Christians

John Lenczowski
Founder, President Emeritus, and Chancellor
The Institute of World Politics

Kalid Loul
Cofounder and Managing Director
Muslim American Leadership Alliance

Nadine Maenza
Chairman, The Institute for Global Engagement
Former Chair, United States Commission on
International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

Gary Marx
Host
Peace & Power Ukraine

Faith J. H. McDonnell
Director of Advocacy
Katartismos Global

Rabbi Yaakov Menken
Executive Vice President
Coalition for Jewish Values

David J. Michaels
Director of UN and Intercommunal Affairs
B'nai B'rith International

Mark Middendorf
President
Ave Maria University

Stephen Minnis
President
Benedictine College

Rabbi David Novak
Shiff Professor Emeritus of Religion,
Philosophy, and Jewish Studies
University of Toronto

**HRH Prince Gharios El Chemor of Ghassan
Al-Nu'man VIII**
Sovereign Prince of the Ghassanids
Head of the Royal House of Ghassan; In
Special Consultative Status with the United
Nations and recognized by the Lebanese
Government

Paul O'Reilly
President
Thomas Aquinas College

John M. Owen IV
Amb. Henry J. and Mrs. Marion R. Taylor
Professor of Politics
University of Virginia

Dr. Eric Patterson
President and CEO
Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation

Dennis P. Petri
International Director
International Institute for Religious Freedom

Daniel Philpott
Professor of Political Science
University of Notre Dame

Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR
President
Franciscan University

Dr. Gloria Samdi Puldu
President
Leah Foundation

Patrick Reilly
President
The Cardinal Newman Society

R. R. Reno
Editor
First Things

Rev. Eugene F. Rivers III
Founding Pastor, Azusa Christian Community,
Church of God in Christ
Founder and Director, Seymour Institute for
Black Church and Policy Studies

Dr. Jacqueline C. Rivers
Executive Director and Senior Fellow for Social
Science and Policy
Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy
Studies

Kevin D. Roberts
President
The Heritage Foundation

Dr. Jonathan J. Sanford
President University of Dallas

William Saunders
Co-Director, Center for Religious Liberty
Columbus School of Law, Catholic University
of America

The Honorable Bob Schaffer
Member U.S. Congress (CO) 1997–2003
Headmaster, Liberty Common School of
Colorado

Jacqueline Halbig von Schleppenbach
CEO
Sovereign Global Solutions, LLC

Dr. Timothy Samuel Shah
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Center for Shared Civilizational Values
Distinguished Research Scholar in Politics,
University of Dallas

Abdul Rahman Shareef
Imam
Tauheed Islamic Center

Imam Dr. Talib M. Shareef
President, Masjid Muhammad - The Nation's
Mosque
Advisory Board Member, National Committee
for Religious Freedom (NCRF)

Nina Shea
Director
Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom

David R. Shedd
Former Acting Director, Defense Intelligence
Agency
Faith Without Boundaries, LLC

C. Holland Taylor
Deputy Chairman & CEO
Center for Shared Civilizational Values, Special
Advisor for International Affairs to the General
Chairman, Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board

Prof. Monica Duffy Toft
Professor of International Politics
Director of the Center for Strategic Studies
The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
Tufts University

Mark Tooley
President
Institute on Religion and Democracy

David Trimble
President
Religious Freedom Institute

Daniel Twining
President
International Republican Institute

Sinda Vanderpool
President
University of St. Thomas- Houston

Tyler J. VanderWeele
John L. Loeb and Frances Lehman Loeb
Professor of Epidemiology
Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health

Mark Vlasic

Senior Fellow & Adjunct Professor
Georgetown University

Kristen Waggoner

CEO, President & Chief Counsel
Alliance Defending Freedom

Fr. Dcn. Kyle Washut

President
Wyoming Catholic College

Damon Wilson

President & CEO
National Endowment for Democracy

Rev. Dr. Kyle Wisdom

Director of Global Advocacy
World Evangelical Alliance

The Honorable Frank Wolf

Former Member U.S. Congress (VA) 1981-2015
USCIRF Commissioner 2022-2024

Peter W. Wood

President
National Association of Scholars

Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan

Chairman, Committee on International Justice
and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

****Cc:****

The Honorable J.D. Vance, Vice President of the United States

The Honorable Marco Rubio, Secretary of State

The Honorable Andrew Baker, Deputy National Security Advisor

The Honorable Vince Haley, Director, Domestic Policy Council

The Honorable Kevin Hassett, Chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisors

The Honorable Paula White-Cain, Director of the White House Faith Office

From: Susan Crawford <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT Separation of Church and State Susan Crawford

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:43:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the commission on Religious Freedom,

The separation of church and state has long been one of the strengths of our country. Please reconsider your recommendation to tear down this wall and build a bridge between church and state. As a person of faith, I hold religious freedom dearly and our forefathers did as well. Many of them fled religious persecution in their countries of origin. They relished that in this country there was no pope and no king.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Soto Konofaro <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] OPPOSED THE IDEA OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:47:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

I opposed the idea of tear down the wall between church and state.

From: Vi Lachelle <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Veronique Morse

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:50:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

As a concerned citizen, I urge you to reconsider report recommendations that weaken the separation of church and state, specifically the proposals to fund religious activities with government resources and repeal the Johnson Amendment. Integrating religious institutions with government funding or partisan politics risks political corruption and compromises religious integrity.

I have reviewed the Pillar of Freedom's response, and I believe their concerns are valid. Please uphold these boundaries to ensure both religion and government remain independent and free.

Sincerely,
Veronique Morse
Cookeville, Tennessee

From: Donna Staten <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:51:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe my religion is s personal matter between God and I and should not be governed by the government or mandates.

Donna Staten

Sent from my iPhone

From: Jon Newcomb <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Fri, 10 Jul 2026 23:51:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

This is to express my deepest concern about proposed changes to the traditional banning of government interference in matters of faith. The first amendment of Our constitution is very clear about the necessity of keeping affairs of state separate from affairs of the church. Furthermore, the writings of Thomas Jefferson are very clear concerning a “wall of separation “ between church and state. Our founding fathers were very clear about America being a place where people of diverse religious traditions are free to practice their beliefs and practices without interference.

Jonathan Newcomb

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Brad Bushey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments-Draft Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 00:13:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Comission.pdf

10 July 2026

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.

Sincerely:
Bradford Bushey

PII

10 July 2026

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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.

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Sincerely:
Bradford Bushey

PII

From: Dean Ferrell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Richard Dean Ferrell]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 00:16:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Commission_letter.pdf

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I treasure our Constitution and its 1st Amendment, esp. the Establishment & Free Exercise of Religion clauses. Surely this Religious Liberty Commission is not ignorant of the blood-soaked history of Church-states, such as **Roman Catholicism's** inquisitions against millions; the murders of innocent Anabaptists, by the **Swiss Reformed Church**; and the Horrors of **the Church of England** against nonconformists. Many established church Colonies here, carried on the bloody tradition. Till the likes of Roger Williams, William Penn and others, pressed for True Religious Liberty here. Separating Church and state, stopped the bloodletting.

I was disturbed to read that the Commission (by misstating history), seeks the removal of the wall of separation between church and state, intending to replace it with a "bridge." Ironically, Pagan Caesars / Roman emperors carried the title "Pontifex Maximus" aka Bridge Builder, and as Papal Rome developed, it assumed the title and carried on the tyrannies.

With respect, that is exactly contrary to what Jesus called His followers to be and do in: **Mat 20:25,26** But Jesus called them *unto Him*, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.²⁶ But it shall not be so among you: ..." Members of this commission, Christ's followers cannot, will not do what it appears this commissions, seeks to do. Coerced religion, especially that which (as Daniel 7:25 teaches), **thinks** to change Divine times and laws; is not acceptable to God. Regarding the price to pay for that, I would not want you to have to pay. Accurate History books, Encyclopedias and the frank admissions of Roman Catholicism, tell any truth seeker, GOD's Sabbath Law and its holiness, was not (by Him), transferred to Sunday, the 1st Day of the week.

Though not addressing this exact issue, this quote fits snugly: Thomas Jefferson: "The Spirit of the times may alter, will alter. Our rulers will become corrupt, our people careless. A single zealot may commence persecution, and better men be his victims." Jefferson did not make up the principle, or wall of separation between church and state; other founders saw it similarly:

Benjamin Franklin: "When a religion is good, I can see that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself and God does not take care to support it so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one." A bad what? A bad religion?

James Madison, in a letter to R. Welch, march 2, 1819: "The Civil Government, tho' bereft of everything like an associated hierarchy, possesses the requisite stability and performs its functions with complete success; whilst the number, the industry, and the morality of the priesthood, and the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the church from the state."

Note this by Jesuit Dr. E. Boyd Barrett "Rome Stoops to Conquer" Published 1932 **Inside of cover:** The present great campaign which the Pope is directing in person, the campaign to win America, is the church's supreme and final effort to regain her ancient preeminence in the world. **Pg 3** For him [Pope Pius XI] our country is a battlefield on which is being waged the greatest struggle of the Church's history. The conquest of America is the supreme objective at which he aims. **Pg 4** "Pius is well aware that the Catholic Church can never hope to dominate the civilized world until America kneels, beaten and penitent, at her feet..." **Pg 13** "Does the Church intend, should the powers be hers, to change and modify the Constitution? **Does she mean to discard the American principle of the separation of Church and State? In fine, does she aim at being the established church of the United States?** One cannot doubt, in view of the present Pope's teaching, which indeed is simply the reiteration of age-old Catholic doctrine, that the answers should all be in the affirmative.

Of course I want elected statesmen and the public to be freely led of the spirit of God. "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty." **[2 Cor 3:17]** But Human nature, the nature and History of governments, seeking power over the souls and property of men, is painfully clear. When church and state unite, both are corrupted. Please, abandon the "Bridge" and keep the wall.

Sincerely,

Richard Dean Ferrell

[Kettle Falls, Washington]

Email to: PII

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – [Richard Dean Ferrell]

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Sincerely,

Richard Dean Ferrell

[Kettle Falls, Washington]

From: Priscilla Walters <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separate Church and State for good

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 00:38:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separate Church and State for good.

No Christian nationalism belongs in our country.

God bless America.

Priscilla Walters, Claremont, California

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

From: Rob <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State – Robert Johnson

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 00:49:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen of the United States to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would have an effect of weakening the separation of church and state such as using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson amendment needs to be fully enforced.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics will come in with it. Churches will compete for funding and end up answering to politicians instead of to God. That would be devastating for both the church and the country alike. Separation is not a secular idea. People of faith built separation to protect their faith, and it's one of the reasons religion has stayed strong in the USA.

Please keep church and state separated so we don't end up back in the dark ages of when they weren't separated. I am in full agreement with the comments from Pillar of Freedom.

Sincerely,

Robert Johnson
Clyde, NC

From: Stephen Boykin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Concerns

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 00:51:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern: I have no doubt that there are things in the Religious Liberty Commission's report that I would appreciate and agree with. However, one major concern I have is the clear attempt at doing away with the notion of the separation of church and state. I do understand that some have used the concept of the separation improperly and it has turned into something the founders never intended. However, I believe if rightly understood, the concept of the separation of church and state will preserve both civil and religious liberty. Perhaps a fair question is: what do we mean by the separation of church and state? My definition is simple. It means that the government should not make laws requiring obedience to the first table of the decalogue. But the second table of the decalogue is permissible for governments to enforce within reason. This was the position of Roger Williams, founder of the state of Rhode Island and I agree with it. I am concerned that in the document recently released, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are favorably cited for requiring the military to attend religious meetings and to honor the sabbath. Although I do respect both Washington and Lincoln, in this instance I believe they were wrong. This type of thing could lead to religious aggression and religious intolerance toward those who might think differently than the majority. For example: on what day is the Day of worship? Some say Saturday, most believe it should be Sunday. Should the government involve itself in such matters? I think not. People should be free to study the matter for themselves and come to their own conclusions between them and God. I want to thank you for giving us as common U.S. citizens the opportunity to respond to the Religious Liberty Commission's report and to voice our concerns. Now, having said all of that I do want to believe that the Commission is really trying to rectify any bias against religious people by the use of the concept of the separation of church and state. I can appreciate that, but I think I have already stated my concerns which, by the way, is a well documented reason of concern and which history has shown is a valid reason for concern.

From: Betty Scuka <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 00:51:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do what you can to assure freedom of worship for ALL Americans.
Sent from my iPhone

From: Stephen Boykin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 00:54:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Stephen Boykin from Tennessee.

From: Musa Nkosi <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Musa Nkosi

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 01:30:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was deeply troubled when I read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation of church and state with a bridge. As a person of faith it's very alarming because what follows next afterwards. Historically when we look back at the Protestant Reformation and the dark ages, when church and state united together, what followed after that was not good at all.

The wall of separation between church and state was not built by secularists to keep religion down. It was built for the sole purpose of keeping the church free. A bridge never strengthens the church; what it does is that it opens the door for government money and political favors to march in, to the point where churches are competing for grants and answering to politicians instead of God. History clearly proves to us what happens when church and state join hands, and it's not a good one either.

My appeal to you is please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall between church and state. It does a lot more in protecting the church than it constrains it.

Sincerely,
Musa Nkosi
Houston, Texas

From: Paulette Emerson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 01:31:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello,

I am writing in strong opposition to the draft report's recommendations to weaken the separation of church and state. The Establishment Clause was never designed to shield the government from religion; it was designed to protect religious practice from government interference. Repealing the Johnson Amendment and establishing federal hotlines for reporting "religious-expression disputes" would move us toward exactly the kind of church-state entanglement the founders warned against. I urge the Commission to withdraw these proposals.

It is troubling that we are revisiting the First Amendment because certain officials insist on an overly literal reading of constitutional text. The Second Amendment itself demonstrates that literalism is not how constitutional interpretation works: the phrase "well-regulated militia" has always required judicial interpretation, not a simplistic word-for-word extraction. Constitutional meaning is shaped through precedent, context, and reason, not by isolating fragments of text.

If state leadership is going to invoke constitutional literalism selectively, it raises serious concerns about their understanding of critical thinking, constitutional history, and the role of the courts. The Commission should not allow such misreadings to drive federal policy.

Thank you,

Paulette Emerson
Burbank, California

From: Alexander Bowen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Alexander Bowen

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 01:43:18 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the recommendation that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment be reinterpreted to diminish the historic separation of church and state. Such a recommendation is inconsistent with the text of the Constitution, the intent of its principal architects, and the biblical principle that matters of conscience belong to God rather than civil government.

The First Amendment declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These two protections were designed to work together. The Establishment Clause prevents government from exercising authority over religion, while the Free Exercise Clause protects every citizen's right to worship—or not worship—according to conscience. Together, they have made the United States one of the greatest examples of religious liberty in human history.

Thomas Jefferson famously described this constitutional principle as "a wall of separation between Church & State." Contrary to modern claims that this phrase has no constitutional significance, Jefferson was not inventing a new doctrine. He was describing a principle already embedded within the First Amendment: that government possesses no rightful authority to establish, direct, or compel religious observance.

No Founder articulated this principle more clearly than James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution." In his 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, Madison declared that "Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." Religion, he argued, must remain beyond the jurisdiction of civil government because the duty owed to God precedes the authority of the state itself.

Decades later, Madison reaffirmed this conviction, writing in 1822, "Religion & Govt. will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together." This was not hostility toward religion. It was the recognition that both faith and government are corrupted when either assumes the authority of the other.

Benjamin Franklin expressed the same principle in remarkably practical terms: "When a Religion is good... it will support itself... and when its Professors are oblig'd to call for the help of the Civil Power... 'tis a Sign... of its being a bad one." True religion persuades by truth and love, not by legislation or coercion.

These principles are not merely constitutional—they are biblical.

When questioned about civil authority, Jesus Christ declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." In those few words, Christ established a distinction between the jurisdiction of civil government and the jurisdiction of conscience. Government possesses legitimate authority over civil order and the protection of equal rights, but worship, doctrine, and the relationship between an individual and God remain beyond its lawful reach.

History repeatedly confirms the wisdom of this distinction. Whenever church and state have been joined, both have suffered. Religious institutions have too often sought the power of the sword, while governments have attempted to regulate the conscience. The result has not been greater faith, but persecution, division, and the suppression of religious liberty.

Americans understood this lesson well. Many of the earliest settlers came to these shores precisely because they had fled governments that enforced religious conformity. The Founders sought to break from that centuries-old pattern by denying the federal government any authority over religion. Article VI prohibits religious tests for public office, and the First Amendment forbids laws respecting an establishment of religion. These provisions were not accidental. They were deliberate safeguards designed to preserve liberty of conscience for every citizen.

The dangers of abandoning these principles are not merely theoretical. During the late nineteenth century, proposals such as the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill sought to use civil law to enforce what many considered a religious duty. At that same time, members of my own faith were imprisoned in Tennessee and sentenced to chain gangs simply for working on Sunday while observing the seventh-day Sabbath according to their convictions. Their experience serves as a reminder that sincere religious majorities, when empowered by civil authority, can unintentionally deny the very liberty they seek to preserve.

This is why contemporary calls to weaken the separation of church and state are deeply concerning. A government that possesses the authority to favor one religious tradition necessarily possesses the authority to disfavor another. The same power that today may benefit one denomination could tomorrow be turned against it. Religious liberty cannot be secure if it depends upon which faith happens to hold political influence at a given moment.

The genius of the American experiment is that it protects the conscience of every person equally. Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, and every other citizen enjoys the same protection because government is forbidden from deciding questions of religious truth. That neutrality has not weakened religion in America—it has allowed it to flourish through conviction rather than compulsion.

Government is at its best when it protects the free exercise of religion, not when it defines, directs, or advances it. Likewise, religion is at its strongest when it relies upon persuasion rather than political power. The preservation of both depends upon maintaining the distinction the Founders carefully established.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any interpretation of the Constitution that diminishes the historic separation of church and state. The preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the proper boundaries between civil authority and matters of conscience. That principle is faithful to the Constitution, consistent with the teachings of Scripture, affirmed by the architects of our Republic, and essential to preserving liberty for future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

-Alexander Bowen

Heritage and Hope Ministries

Heritageandhope.org

From: Alina Poenaru <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 01:50:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

With all the respect, please uphold the values of the founding fathers of our beautiful nation!

When Thomas Jefferson first invoked the phrase of keeping church and state separate, he explained why it was important:

“Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State,” Jefferson wrote.

Please, let these two great entities remain distinct and separate and fulfill their missions! And continue to uphold the religious freedom we all enjoy in this great country!

Respectfully and gratefully,

Alina P.

From: Angela Josefsen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 02:42:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to submit a formal public comment expressing grave concern over the historical and constitutional framework presented in the Commission's draft report. Rather than reflecting the rigorous scholarship and nuanced reality of American history, the report relies on a flawed, ideological narrative that threatens to undermine the very foundation of American religious freedom: the separation of church and state.

I. The Pluralistic Origins of American Religious Liberty

The report incorrectly implies that religious liberty in the United States emerged from a monolithic Christian consensus. On the contrary, the founding generation confronted a world deeply marked by sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism. Protections for religious liberty developed precisely as a practical response to intense disagreements among competing denominations and spiritual traditions.

As James Madison famously argued in his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785), it is an "arrogant pretension" for "the Civil Magistrate" to presume to act as a "competent Judge of Religious Truth" or to "employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy." The founders recognized that government entanglement in religion inevitably breeds oppression.

II. The Intentionally Secular National Framework

While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they deliberately chose to create a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society. The Constitution established a secular framework designed

to allow religion to flourish independent of federal control. This is explicitly demonstrated by:

Article VI of the Constitution: The deliberate prohibition of religious tests for holding public office.

The Treaty of Tripoli (1796): Formally submitted by President George Washington and unanimously ratified by the Senate under President John Adams, Article XI explicitly states that "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

The separation of church and state has historically never diminished the vibrancy of faith in American life; rather, it has liberated a vast array of religious traditions, providing them the safe space to flourish free from government coercion.

III. Rejection of Secular Neutrality and Promoting Favoritism

The report's recommendation that the Department of Justice back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80) is an abandonment of secular neutrality. By using the machinery of the federal government to elevate one specific religious tradition over all others, this approach actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. This directly contradicts the foundational American promise articulated by George Washington in his 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, where he gave assurance that the federal government gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." It also ignores historical warnings like the 1783 Petition of the Philadelphia Synagogue to the Council of Censors of Pennsylvania, which cautioned against excluding religious minorities from full participation in public life.

IV. Ideological Narratives vs. Rigorous Historical Scholarship

The draft report substitutes highly contested ideological interpretations for settled historical fact. For example, attributing the 20th-century legal separation of church and state to postmodern

philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche (p. 42) is an unaccountable historical distortion. It dismisses decades of careful Supreme Court jurisprudence as a hostile "Berlin wall" rather than acknowledging it as a continuation of early American constitutional thought.

The concept of separation is deeply rooted in early American history, notably articulated in Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists, which states "that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God" and references a "wall of separation between Church & State." Furthermore, the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom (1786) warns sharply against "the impious presumption of legislators and rulers... who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others."

Conclusion

Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity, depth, and pluralism at the core of American religious history. The draft report's attempt to reduce American history to a false dichotomy—forcing a choice between a declared Christian nation and an environment entirely hostile to faith—is historically inaccurate and legally dangerous. Disestablishment is the very safeguard that ensures religious vitality and liberty for all Americans.

I urge the Commission to revise the report to reflect an honest, accurate, and evidence-based account of our constitutional history, and to uphold the department's duty to protect equal religious liberty without state favoritism.

Respectfully submitted,
Angela Josefsen

Sent from my iPhone

From: Madeline Johnston <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 04:03:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

I implore you not to mess with our Constitution on the matter of church and state relationship. The state should never tell me whom, who, or when to worship. True worship cannot and should not be forced.

Sincerely.

Madeline S. Johnston
Berrien Springs MI

From: Rebecca Lee <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 04:06:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

To all leading authorities,

I am writing as a concerned citizen who values both religious freedom and the constitutional principles upon which our nation was founded.

One of America's greatest strengths is the protection of religious liberty for all people. The First Amendment safeguards both the free exercise of religion and the prohibition against government establishing or favoring any particular religion. This separation protects people of every faith, as well as those who choose no faith, allowing each individual to follow their conscience without government coercion.

Throughout history, the blending of civil authority and religious authority has often resulted in discrimination, division, and the loss of individual freedoms. Our constitutional system wisely recognizes that government functions best when it protects the rights of all citizens equally, without compelling religious observance or favoring one belief over another.

I respectfully ask that you oppose legislation or policies that would weaken these constitutional protections or require citizens to participate in religious practices or observances. Please continue to uphold the principles of religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and equal treatment under the law for every resident of our state.

Thank you for your service to our state and for your commitment to defending the constitutional rights of all citizens. I appreciate your time and consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Drescher-Carrier

Michigan

From: Irene Logan <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 04:14:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The LAST thing to be desired should be the unification of Church and State.

Have you all forgotten America's roots?

The founders of the great country of America, escaped Religious/Governmental persecution, to begin again and be free to have Life, Liberty and Freedom of Conscience for ALL.

I understand that you are trying to reverse some of the evil gains of the Left agenda, but extremist Right is not the answer, either.

I also understand that you have good intentions, however, whenever Christianity or any Religion/Ideology, including the Moslem faith and the recent Cultural Marxism (prevalent in many places including the US), links with the enforcement power of the State, disaster occurs; you only need to look at the Dark Ages.

The State needs to stay in it's lane and control relationships between people including theft, murder or killing etc., but never have anything to do with people and their ideology/faith or any particular religious faith, except at the peril of becoming a dictatorship or totalitarian State, as in Communism. Unless they are harming someone else, everyone should be free to believe and practise their faith according to their own conscience.

The Government should be about protecting life and freedom, health etc. and any practice that violates this should be punished, including the killing of babies in utero. unless the life of the mother is at stake, but even there, the unborn baby has a valid claim to life too, in some respects, MORE than the mother, who has already lived a good part of her earthly life.

The problem with the previous agenda was that it WAS a union of an ideology with the State to the point of being ridiculous and harmful to its own citizens.

I appreciate what has been reversed.

I am simply cautioning against taking it too far to the detriment of the nation and its people as can be seen when ANY ideology holds sway above others.

Irene from Australia 
(watching with interest as
what happens in the US can also occur here)

From: KarinB <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 04:46:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

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If the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer. Prayer, p. 73

From: Tami Wiese <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 04:56:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

The government lacks authority over the religions its citizens practice. Keep separation of church and state.
Sent from my iPhone

From: therese giannotti <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State is necessary to protect our freedoms to worship God without the Government interfering with our conscience, during the dark ages, the state enforced the Papacy's doctrines and 50 to 100 million Christians died for going against the Popes dogma. It will happen again, Religious liberty is why we came to America to escape the persecution and be free from that oppression!

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 06:39:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPad

From: Mark Murray <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep the separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 07:36:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello leaders,

Just writing to emphatically state that church and government should not unite or infringe on each other. Having separation of church and state protects freedom of conscience and ensures all people are treated equally regardless of what people believe. Separation also allows our leaders to create policies that protect every citizen equally.

We are counting on you to keep our nation with religious freedoms and that cannot be accomplished unless church and state are separate.

**God bless you and take care
Esther Murray**

Sent from my iPhone

From: Stephanie Weems <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separate of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 07:42:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Respectfully my husband and I want to remain your that America was founded on the premise of religious freedom for all who made to the shores of this wonderful country.

After 250 years of freedom and celebration, to abruptly allow a small group of individuals to go against religious freedom that includes separation of church and state would be detrimental for true freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of liberty, and separation of church and state.

The true intention of the constitution was to protect separation of church and state to prevent religious freedom from being taken away or persecution of Christian (true worshippers of Jesus Christ.)

We are writing to ask that such attempt to restrict or recall the separation of church and state be rejected.

Sincerely,

Stephanie and Howard Weems

Sent from my iPhone

From: Fish Stark <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – COMMISSION REPORT - FISH STARK

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 07:43:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a humanist and a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by extremist Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of those with minority beliefs, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

Based on the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be dangerously undermining it. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs.

From: Donna Butler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:10:12 -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,

Donna Butler
From Texas

From: Dane Kennedy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Presidential Religious Liberty Draft Report - Dane Kennedy

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:13:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am offering this comment on the Presidential Religious Liberty Draft Report as a professional historian who has taught British history for 40 years and written nine books on the subject. I have studied and taught the historical circumstances that led to the American Declaration of Independence and the Constitution for much of my career. To say that the Draft Report misconstrue the founders' views on religious liberty is an understatement. Our founders were reacting against Britain's imposition of a state church, which resulted in the persecution of other religious faiths, INCLUDING other Christian denominations such as Catholics, Methodists, Quakers, and Unitarians. As they saw it, religious liberty required that the state have NO role in religion. Only then, they felt, could faith flourish. The Draft Report distorts this history in far more ways than I can detail in this email. I want to add one additional point, however: the report's recommendation that the DOJ defend state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism. It completely contradicts the notion of religious liberty.

The Draft Report should be rejected in its entirety.

Sincerely,

Dane Kennedy

From: yvonne <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom to worship God on the Sabbath

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:14:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully submit this public statement to you out of deep concern for what I see occurring in the government today. I do not think the government should be involved in religious matters that affect the rights of people such as telling people to worship on a particular day or time. I worship on the seventh day as the bible says on the true Sabbath which is Saturday. I believe that day is forever the day I should worship. If others choose not to worship on that day, then that's their right. I will never try to force anyone to worship on any other day or time. The government must be separate and honor that there has to be a separation between church and state. When this country was established, people were running away from systems wanting to force religion on them, a certain way. The people wanted to be able to worship as they chose and not be told how or when to worship by the government. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me and many others' concerns.

From: patricia buchholz <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church & State-Patricia Barfield

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:16:44 -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,
Patricia Barfield
Union Grove, AL

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From: Andy Roman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:23:49 -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,

Andy Roman from Oklahoma

From: Earl Fisher <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:27:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

We Americans all have the right to believe anything we choose to believe.

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom- separation

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:30:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

We need separation of church and state to ensure freedom. God is our judge and guide. We answer to him. If the state is allowed power over religion it will turn oppressive and try to control the conscience which belongs only to God as our creator. Separation. Separation. Separate. God is our Lord, not humans- simple, sinful, fallen, erring, broken....

God is able to protect our right to freedom of conscience through the government, but if not, we will not serve or worship the false god that is set up.

As Daniel's friends in the Bible experienced, we answer.

Daniel 3:15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Daniel 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

Daniel 3:17 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 thine hand, O king.

Daniel 3:18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Sincerely,
Heather Shull

[REDACTED PII]

From: Donnelleigh Mounce <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:44:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing on behalf and in defense of historical and constitutional concern regarding the complexity of diverse beliefs and sectarian conflicts of these United States of America, and not a single religious consensus, formed the historical basis of separation of church and state and established what was written in the first constitutional amendment.

From: Vicki Gillham <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:44:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this public comment out of concern for the future of religious freedoms in the United States. I urge the Commission to reject any recommendation that would weaken the separation between church and state which could lead to regulation of religious practices according to misinterpretation of scripture.

While its true that our forefathers made general mention of God and the Bible, they did not endorse any specific religion to preserve freedom. Welcoming a religious viewpoint into politics is the first step toward mandating it.

This type of thing has led to tyranny in times past, as seen in atrocities committed by Vatican rule of Europe. We would do well to remember how Jesus refused to be crowned king and said that his kingdom was not of this world. We will have to face him in judgment for what we have done if we try to put him on the earthly throne.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I represent a religious minority that has often been persecuted in times past. America was founded by those who were fleeing religious persecution and has served as a haven for freedom of thought and God-given rights of freedom of conscience.

If we want to keep the blessings and protections that God alone can provide, we must preserve religious freedom in the United States.

Vicki Gillham from Oklahoma

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From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 08:55:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

The U.S. Constitution guarantees all Americans freedom of religion and freedom from religion. This is a fundamental principle of our country and a deeply held American value.

The Religious Liberty Commission's recommendations breaks that principle and violates that American value by forcing religion into public schools and political campaigns, requiring government-sponsored religious displays, favoritism, and practices, conditioning the selection of federal judges on their religious views, and forcing taxpayers to fund religious viewpoints.

Our country's founders deliberately created a government free from religious authority in order to preserve religious freedom in American society.

Our government should reject the commission's recommendations and preserve our nation's commitment to the constitution that prescribes that there be
no law (policy or practice) respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof and protect the rights of individuals to practice their faith in whatever way they choose, or to practice no religion at all, without government interference.

Thank you for your consideration,

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

From: Peter Nordquist <[REDACTED]>
To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Sebastian and Mereth Huemer <[REDACTED]>, Tparents Webmaster
<[REDACTED]>, Neal and Diane Drucker <[REDACTED]>, David Freeland
<[REDACTED]>, "Dr. Michael Kiely" <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]
<[REDACTED]>, Mark Denni <[REDACTED]>, Frederick Macca
<[REDACTED]>, farley jones <[REDACTED]>, "Farley & Betsy Jones"
<[REDACTED]>, Franco Famularo <[REDACTED]>, Frank Kaufmann
<[REDACTED]>, Andrew Wilson <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]
PEREA RICHARD <[REDACTED]>, Richard Lewis <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]
"Rev. Barry Geller" <[REDACTED]>, Erin Regan <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]
Jennifer Fiala Trench <[REDACTED]>, Therese M Stewart
<[REDACTED]>, Tyler Hendricks <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 09:01:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Unifying_Religions,_as_Well_as_Science_and_Religion,_by_Understanding_the_Four-Position-Foundation.pdf

Inline-Images: image.png

Dear Religious Liberty Commission Members,

I skimmed the report by jumping to the search word "conscience," which appeared 81 times. I mentioned this in a reply on Facebook after having posted the link to the Commission Draft Report on my "Family Party for a Heavenly America and World" page, which exists for the stated purpose of:

Inspiring the emergence of God-centered ethical politicians who don't lie, cheat and steal, and who know that True Family Values are also Absolute Values. 219 followers•27 following

Family Party for a Heavenly America and World Platform:

- Explain what a family is and what true family values are:
- "Unique, Absolute, Unchanging and Eternal"
- Explain what absolute values are that promote healthy families.
- Explain how families from different cultural backgrounds can work together based on shared absolute values.
- Appreciate world cultural backgrounds that make up America as a microcosm of the world.
- Promote science education that supports true family values.

[What Conscience Has to Do With It]

This is a key point that tells me you are barking up the right tree. The Baptist Doctrine of Conscience basically says that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit inspire my conscience. Thus each person is a temple of God and has no need of checking with the Pope or the King whether God is speaking to him or her through their own conscience.

This doctrine of conscience was espoused by William Perkins, professor at Cambridge, who wrote books on conscience in the 1590's, contemporary with Shakespeare, and whose student, John Robbins was the pastor of the Pilgrims at Leiden before they came to America.

In 1555 John Rogers the Bible editor and martyr was the first of 288 burned at the stake by Catholic Queen Mary in her attempt to unseat the conscience from the central position in the individual as a temple of God. They refused to disobey their consciences.

Interestingly the last chapter of Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War by Nathaniel Philbrick is named "Conscience." If you haven't read the book, I won't spoil it for you.

This kind of Protestant history was the real beginning of the American Revolution.

It might be valuable for Commission Members to read of my 6 page "Extended Abstract" [**Unifying Religions, as Well as Science and Religion, by Understanding the Four-Position-Foundation**] that was limited to 6 pages, including bibliography, that I presented a 20 minute PowerPoint on in person at the 4th International Conference of Hyojeong Academy 2024 in Asan, South Korea. I'm attaching a pdf file of it to this email.

Thanks for your attention.

Best Regards,
Peter Dean Nordquist
Queensbury, NY

Unifying Religions, as Well as Science and Religion, by Understanding the Four-Position-Foundation

Peter Dean Nordquist¹

¹ World Research Institute for Science and Technology (W.R.I.S.T.) member since 1986

PII

Abstract:

What is a symbol of the Four-Position-Foundation? Are there different ways to represent the Four-Position-Foundation? This study presents some major symbols of Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Unification Thought as very similar expressions of the Four-Position-Foundation. Although they are somewhat different in their focus, the most common features of the Four-Position-Foundation are shown to be present, allowing us to have a common denominator or language for sharing experiences across cultures. Atheists sometimes wonder, "If there is a God, then why are the major religions so different." This study shows that they are not so different, due to the common dynamic of the Four-Position-Foundation present in their most holy symbols and descriptions of ultimate reality. Finally, a hypothesis is made linking the Four-Position-Foundation to an Internal Periodic Table, that if true, helps unify science and religion, possibly resulting in reduced time and expense for developing materials with special properties.

Keywords: Unification of Religions, Science and Religion, Four-Position-Foundation, Internal Periodic Table

I . Introduction

To look for the common denominator of the four-position-foundation in religions, let us investigate inter-religious mysticism. To accomplish this, we need to know people's experiences; we need to read their sacred books, if they are available, and talk to them with an open mind. We must be ready to learn their languages, terms and symbols. What did they experience? How are they expressing their experience? Can I relate to that through having had similar experiences? Do they have a method of teaching other people how to experience the same thing and thus carry on their tradition? The major religions of Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam all began and continued with experiences that they were able to talk or write about and to share successfully. Science also began with experiences and developed a system to share them successfully. Recall that the first step in the scientific method is observation. Experiences are the observations of religious and mystical traditions. To the degree that a religion is true, it is also logical, orderly, experienceable, observable, repeatable, principled, real and thus scientific.

Rev. Sun Myung Moon probably was the first person to use the term "four-position-foundation." He used it, for example, to describe mind/body unity and often asked his audience, "Have you united your mind and body?" What are the mind and the body? Are they two aspects of the same thing? Is there a psychological aspect of matter? Is this question related to the wave/particle duality of quantum mechanics, or to the equivalence of energy and matter of Einstein's $E = mc^2$? These are important questions that both science and religion have proposed answers to in various Big TOEs (Theories of Everything – world views) arising from experiences and observations. There is a lot of work remaining to be done to clarify the relationship between the mind and the body, which represent the spirit world and the physical world, also known as heaven and earth. This study juxtaposes diagrams with necessarily brief explanations from the above-mentioned religious traditions.

Rev. Moon speaks here with characteristic determination from his world view about the need to "observe and digest" in order to unify:

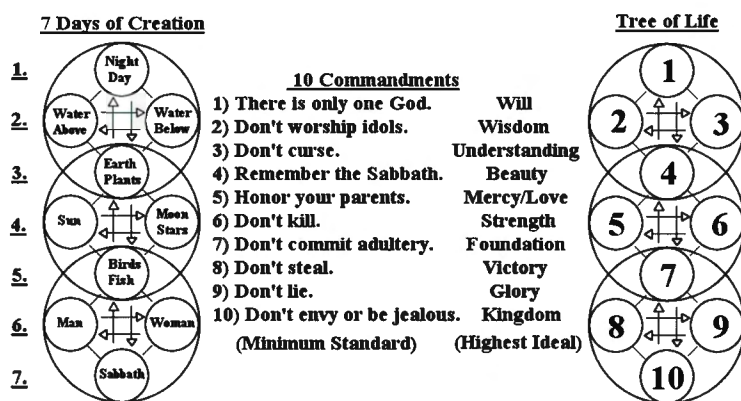
"We must know clearly that it is our mission to unify; before we can do so we must observe and digest. This is reasonable, like all the laws of creation; it applies on every level of family, society, nation and world . . . There is nothing else I can teach you; there are a limited number of important principles. This is a simple principle, but it applies to every level and in applying it you will do your mission." (The Way of Prosperity and Defeat, March 11, 1979, Belvedere, Tarrytown, NY)

Let us observe and digest in order to unify.

II. Judaism's Tree of Life is an alternative representation of the 3-stage development of the four-position-foundation.

There are various versions of the Jewish Tree of Life of Kabbalah, which is the oral tradition of Judaism. The Tree represented here was preferred by the Gaon of Vilna who was the greatest rabbi in 600 years and so was given the title Gaon, meaning "genius." The Tree of Life in Judaism represents a pursuit of righteous happiness, as indicated by Proverbs 11:30 "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life . . ." and Proverbs 13:12 "A hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a Tree of Life."

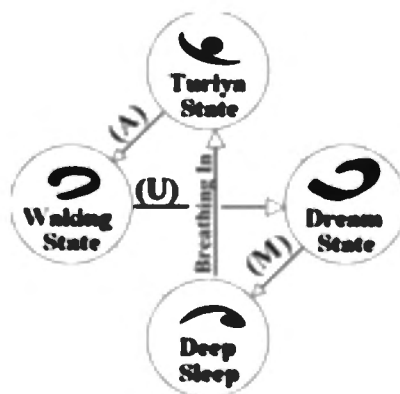
The Tree of Life represents three levels of soul, namely, the neshamah (divine soul), the ruach (eternal soul) and the nefesh (the level of soul that is in the blood). These correspond quite well to love, life and lineage of Rev. Moon's diagram (discussed in section VIII) May 1, 1998 (44th anniversary of HSA-UWC, Belvedere, Tarrytown, NY) The ten commandments, the seven days of creation and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet all map to this graphic symbol. The three horizontal lines are the three mother letters: the mem, the aleph and the shin, which represent water, air and fire, respectively, and as well, circumcision of the flesh (the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham), circumcision of the heart, and circumcision of the tongue. Recall James 3:6 "The tongue is a flame." The three bigger circles in the diagrams below are there to show the process that the output of stage one becomes the input to stage two, and similarly, the output of stage two becomes the input to stage three. The tenth position then returns a result to the origin in position one, completing a circle.



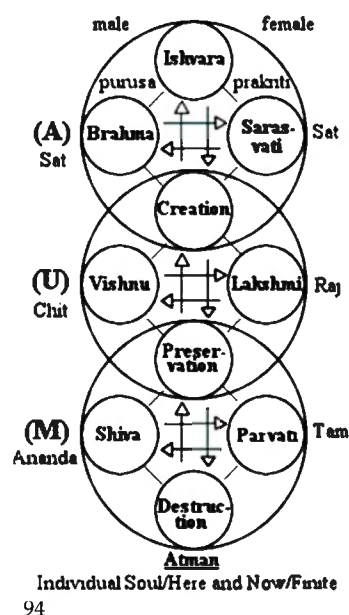
III. The AUM (OM) of Hinduism maps to the four-position-foundation and to Judaism's Tree of Life.

The AUM of Hinduism is explained as a theory of everything in the Mandukya Upanishad, the shortest of the Upanishads with only 12 verses on a single page. The first verse announces itself with excitement to share an important truth:

"OM. This eternal Word is all: what was, what is and what shall be, and what beyond is in eternity. All is OM."

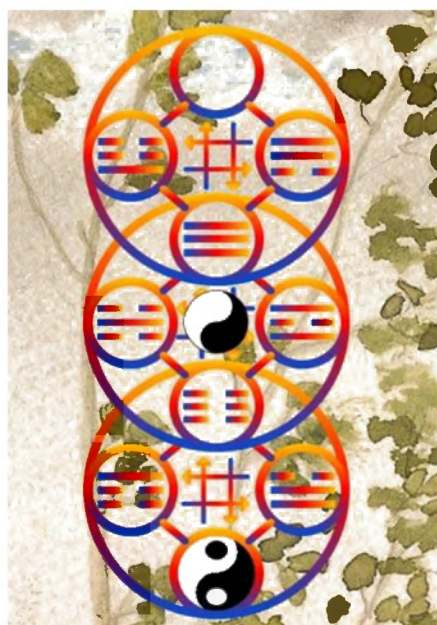


The written symbol for AUM (OM) and the sound itself represent the 4 states of consciousness and the process of breathing in and breathing out. The A is the waking state; the U is the dream state; the M is the deep sleep with no dreams; the silence while breathing in represents returning to one body with God in the transcendent state of consciousness, transcending time and space. The 4 states map to the 4 positions of the four-position-foundation as well as to its expansion in the Hindu Natural Array Tree of Life structure. The top of the feminine column is Sarasvati, goddess of understanding, which corresponds in the Jewish Tree of Life to Binah at the top of the fire column representing the feminine aspect of fire, that led the Israelites through the desert at night. Binah means understanding.



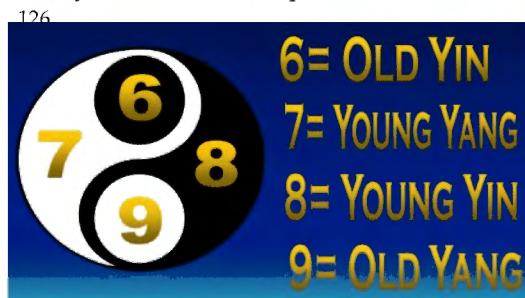
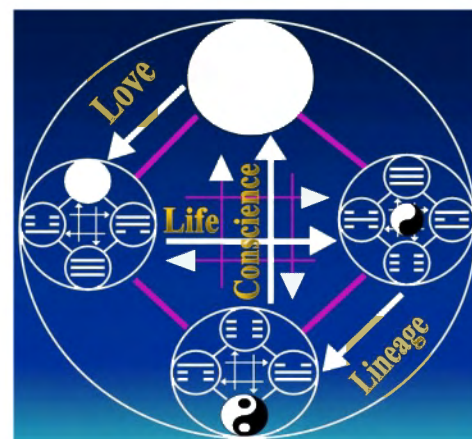
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IV. Taoism's wu chi, wang chi, tai chi (variations of terms exist) and cosmic family of 8 trigrams map to the Tree of Life.

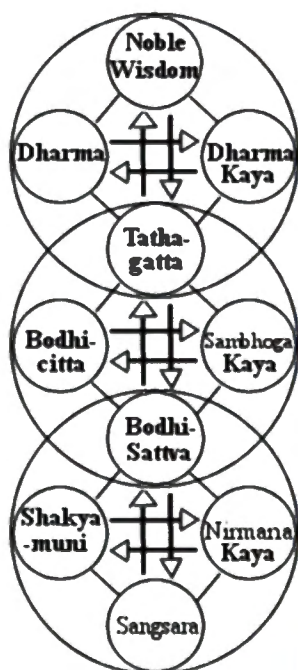


Wu-chi is nothingness, void or emptiness. It represents the origin stage of the four-position-foundation that is beyond time and space. Next the yin and yang symbol which together are the way, can represent the division stage of the four-position-foundation. The union stage is the symbol of the yin and yang with two dots added, representing old yang and old yin, followed by the children who are the young yang and young yin. The eight trigrams are the cosmic family of the father and mother with three sons and three daughters.

It is interesting that the middle section of this Taoist Tree has the same contents as the Taegukgi, the flag of South Korea. It is also interesting that it corresponds very closely to the middle section of the Jewish Tree of Life which has the masculine water column and the feminine fire column on either side with the parents in the middle column. The middle son of the Taoist Tree also represents water and the middle daughter also represents fire. How did that happen that it matches the Jewish Tree to a certain extent? It could be because the same root source inspired both as slightly different expressions of the dynamics of the four-position-foundation.

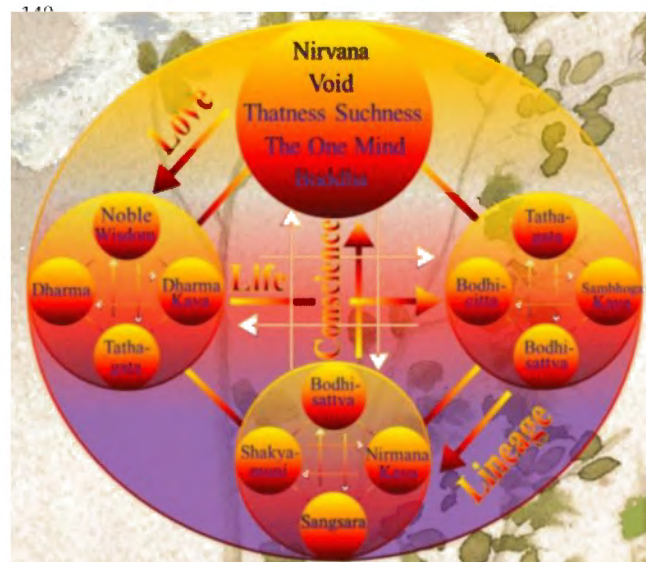


V. The Tri-kaya concept of Mahayana Buddhism maps to the Tree of Life.



Buddha skipped the Judeo/Christian God experienced by Moses and Jesus and went to the root of God, which is the identity maintaining four-position-foundation centered on heart. Rev. Moon characterizes it as the highest realm of heart that never develops or changes, because it is already the highest. After his enlightenment, Buddha asked people to refer to him as the Tathagata, or "the passed away one."

The three aspects of body (kaya) have corresponding internal aspects. The Dharma has the Dharma Kaya; the Bodhicitta is the mind of the Bodhisattva who remains behind to save all sentient beings. The Sambhoga Kaya is the body of the Bodhisattva. The physical body of Shakyamuni Buddha is the Nirmana Kaya. The colorful picture to the right adds the lines for Love, Life, Lineage and Conscience suggested by Rev. Moon's diagram discussed in section VIII.

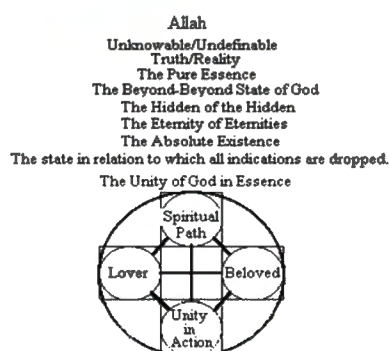


VI. Statements of Jesus and the Tree of Life



Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 in the Sermon on the Mount, "Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness and all these will be added to you as well." God's kingdom and His righteousness refer to the lower two holy emanations in the Jewish Tree of Life in the middle column. Specifically, righteousness represents "the foundation of the world" (yesod olam). It is represented by Joseph (the son of Jacob) who refused to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife and consequently was thrown into prison. This is the number seven position from the top and thus represents the 7th Commandment, "Don't commit adultery." Gershom Scholem explained that this is the oldest and most natural numbering of this holy emanation (Sephira).

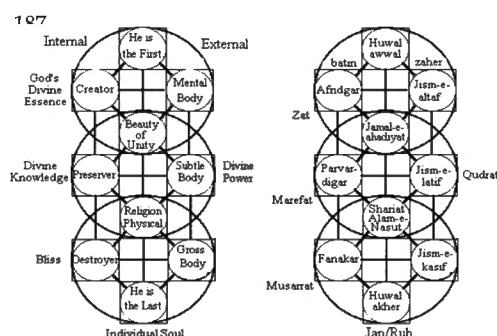
In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me." Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science in her book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* explains that the Way is Love and that God's nature consists of Love, Truth and Life. In agreement with Mary Baker Eddy, Rev. Moon also explained that the Way is Love, then put Life and Truth. In this order, he explained that Love, Life and Truth represent the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; Love, Life and Truth always travel together like three perpendicular lines, forming the basic structure of existence, again in basic agreement with Mary Baker Eddy. In John 14:6 Jesus explained to Thomas that he needed to continue to connect to Jesus, even after Jesus departed, because Jesus was on the Way to God's kingdom and His righteousness, and one day, he, Jesus, would return in pursuit of them. The words of Jesus represent the pursuit of the family of God and the kingdom of God through the process of the four-position-foundation.



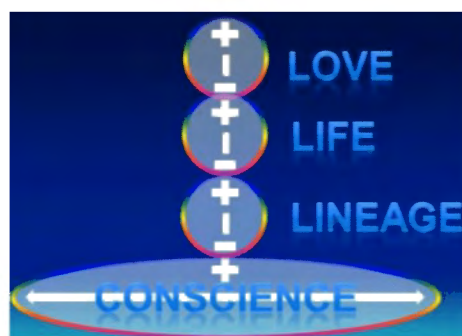
taken from his book, "God Speaks," in which he drew many charts and diagrams. The Om Point figures into his explanation as the Creation Point, similar to the Christian Logos.

VII. Meher Baba's expression of Sufi Islam in his major work "God Speaks" maps to the Tree of Life.

Meher Baba was a world religious figure whose teaching was also for the purpose of unifying religions. He is a representative of Sufi Islam. He had deep mystical experiences and realized similarly to Rev. Moon, that before God created, he was growing up. God asked the question, "Who am I?" and after 7 stages of development he answered his own question by saying, "I am God." The terms in this Sufi four-position-foundation and Tree of Life were



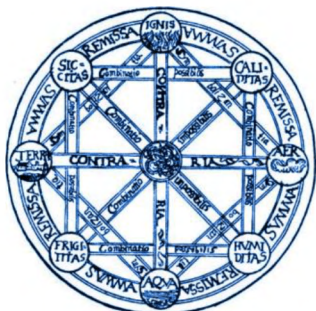
VIII. Rev. Moon's Love/Life/Lineage/Conscience diagram maps to the Tree of Life.



pendicular lines on the board and explained that their point of intersection is the "sa ui guidae" – the four-position-foundation point. He proceeded to draw in the air with his hand, the same diagram that he had drawn at the beginning. This is another way to talk about the dynamics of the four-position-foundation referencing love, life, lineage and conscience.

Since "the Way, the Life and the Truth" can represent the Holy Trinity, we can see that the Baptist Doctrine of Conscience has a similar form and meaning to Rev. Moon's "doctrine" (diagram) of Love, Life, Lineage and Conscience. The Baptist Doctrine of Conscience proclaims that kings and popes cannot answer for me in front of the throne of God on judgement day, and that my only lord that I will bow to is therefore my own conscience as it is inspired by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This view of conscience as inspired by God came to America with the pilgrims in 1620 and helped inspire Thomas Jefferson in his writing of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom (1777) during the American Revolution, directly leading to freedom of religion in America.

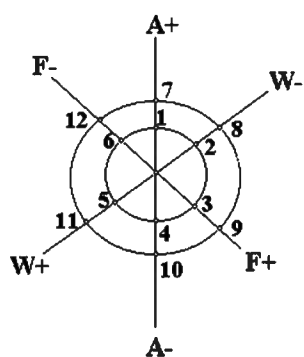
IX. Conjecture: The periodic table of elements can map to the Tree of Life. But is it correct to do so?



The Natural Array Tree of Life of Judaism has three columns representing water, air and fire, as well as three rows representing the complementary pole of water, air and fire. Why not map these to the periodic table of elements? Water, air and fire combine to form earth as the 4th element. This reminds us of the classical pre-Socratic four element theory that is considered superstitious and unscientific. Here is a diagram of the four element theory in Latin by Leibniz, the German polymath from the 1600's.

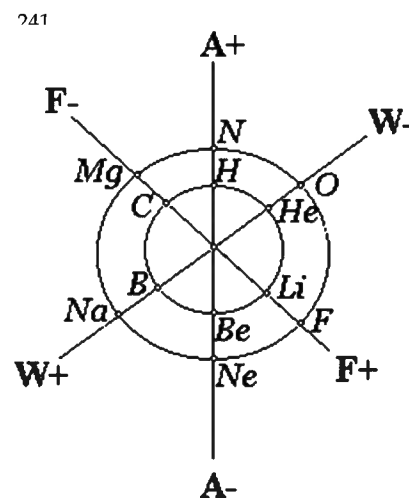
The Jewish Kabbalah, however, does not view these four elements of air, water, fire and earth in a materialistic manner, but in a deeply spiritual manner. Perhaps we should take another look at the four element theory as it applies to the modern periodic table of elements. Considering odd numbers to be positive and even numbers to be negative, we can map the numbers and columns of the Natural

Array Tree of Life to the periodic table based on the atomic number of each element. The simple pattern is as illustrated in the following diagrams:



Notice that carbon, hydrogen and oxygen are on the fire, air and water columns respectively. They combine to form carbohydrates, which might correspond to earth. Carbon, lithium, fluorine and magnesium are all on the fire line, either on the plus or minus half of the line. Do they have anything to do with the masculine or feminine aspects of fire as characterized by the Jewish Tree of Life?

Does this make any sense from a modern chemistry or physics point of view? Does it allow us to predict anything useful? The rest of the table follows by making larger and larger circles. Titanium, for example, is element 22 and is on the air minus line. The central air column of the Tree of Life represents Will. Titanium is strong and used in aircraft and memory metal. This might be pre-Socratic superstition, but then again, if the invisible blueprint in the mind of God was used to create the visible, physical world, then why would this conjecture not be correct? If it works, it might allow us to better formulate materials with special properties.



X. Conclusion

The traditions briefly discussed above each have symbols and processes that map to the four-position-foundation and its expansion as the ten-position Natural Array Tree of Life structure of Judaism and Hinduism, in particular. Every give and receive process also represents the four-position-foundation. The four-position-foundation is inside us and all around us. Some might make the critique that it is so simple that it can be easily trivialized. Nevertheless, when probed more deeply, it can explain everything, even answers to questions that we haven't thought of asking.

I didn't have space to give Unification Thought its own section. However, as I was studying the material over the last 30 years, I wondered around 1998, how exactly the Tree of Life of Judaism relates to Unification Thought. Shortly thereafter a big vision of old Dr. Lee's bright, smiling face appeared in front of my computer monitor and remained there for about 5 minutes. Three days later I drew a diagram that I think shows how the Unification Thought two-stage process of creation relates to the Jewish Tree of Life.

For further inspiration to investigate, consider Rev. Moon's words from "God's and Our Decision", Feb. 1, 1987.

"When you read my book of sermons, God's Will and the World, you can see that I have spoken the truth plainly and boldly. There are no more symbols or parables. I have set everything before you. The truth has emerged; this is real knowledge, the knowledge that you need. Who decided the heavenly four-position foundation? This is God's original principle. No human being devised it. Without going this route no one enters the Kingdom of Heaven."

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From: CoolKids Adventures <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 09:14:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my concern with potentially ending the separation of church and state. The separation was created by people of faith to protect faith and individuals rights to worship freely. This could remove the Johnson amendment that would allow politicization of churches. Ending separation of church and state would also create an increase in religious minorities and force indoctrination of preferred religions. This is very concerning and I ask that you not support it.

Sincerely,

Heather Dennis

Sent from my iPhone

From: Dale Pasino <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 09:15:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my views regarding the Commission's draft regarding changes or updates to what religious freedom means.

First, I believe the 1st Amendment to the Constitution says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." The recommendations seem to be saying - without actually saying it - that Christianity is the religion of the United States. There are many religions all over the world, and they all share some common themes. Many of the differences are in the details.

Proclaiming - or suggesting - that one religion is better or preferred over another is a recipe for more violence. History tells us that repeatedly shown the violence and destruction done in the name of religion. It is still happening today in many areas of the world. I expect that most citizens of the U.S. don't want more senseless violence in this country. Some of the earliest settlers in North America arrived because they wanted religious freedom; we should not forget such an important part of our country's founding.

Many religious organizations and leaders in this country belong to inter-faith alliances where healthy conversations and discussions occur. These are learning opportunities for everyone. Striving to understand and appreciate the views of others is important - perhaps critical - to the continued survival of a healthy society in America. Uniformity or a "one-size-fits-all" approach is unhealthy for individuals, our country, and the world.

Thank you for reading my thoughts.

Peace,
Dale

From: lester Dinsmore <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 09:30:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

To who it my concern

The separation of church and state is very important, It is necessary due to the fact that if this passes the church's will be competing for gov money and it will play all the churches will be battling against each other. It seems like it is a play to make only one religion which is not religious freedom. We need the separation of church and state.

From: Judy Kelly <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commission Report-[JUDY KELLY

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 09:41:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

I AM opposed to the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report; urge the DOJ to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith.

From: Judy Kelly <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Religious Liberty Commission Report-Judy Kelly

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 09:45:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am opposed to the recommendations outlined in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report; urge the DOJ to reject these recommendations and uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith.

Tacoma, WA [REDACTED] PII

From: Glenn Sackett <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RLC Report is off track

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 09:50:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

The final RLC Report is far off track from the course set out by America's founders. Rather than following the Constitution and officially adopted amendments, the RLC Final Report is more the product of the framers of Project 2025, who are as partisan about religion as they are about politics. This is unacceptable. Go back to work and work from the Constitution, please!

Glenn Sackett

From: Ed Brehm <[REDACTED] PII >

To: Religious Liberty <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ed Brehm

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:03:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ed Brehm

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

As a citizen of the United States of America Religious Liberty is very important to me. Please reconsider the recommendations in your report that weaken the separations of church and state.

1. Do not use government money to fund religious activities.
2. Keep the Johnson Amendment.
3. When church organizations take government money the churches become corrupted and the government becomes corrupted. Churches have no business taking government money.
4. We need to have separation of church and state. Separation of church and state is good for the United States of America and it is good for religious freedom.
5. Send no money to Israel or any other country. I have objections to the special treatment given Jewish people and the state of Israel.
6. "I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them."

Sincerely,
Ed Brehm

Milton Freewater, Oregon

From: Annette Jeske <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Maintain Religious Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:03:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do nothing that will hinder the free exercise of religion that Americans have enjoyed. We should serve God and Country in that order. Thank you!

Annette Jeske

From: gordon [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Department of War

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:10:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

I see that the report discusses what the DoW should do with increased teaching and education for elements of the military. I understand that the individuals forced out of the military for their religious exemption claim during Covid may be made whole. But what about those military personnel that stood their ground with respect to their religious belief, refused to resign and are still in the military? These people are being held back from educational and promotion opportunities. My son is one of those individuals.

If you care to discuss it, please contact me and my son.

Thank you, Gordon [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

From: "Keisha S. McLean-Davis" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Separation of Church and State- Keisha Davis

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:17:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Memembers of the Religious Liberty Commission:

It is a sad day when the country we love so much decides to abandon the ideals and ideas this country was founded on. Many people left their countries of origin just so that they could have religious freedom and now you would like take that away too.

Church and state need to stay seperate and not have a "bridge".

Keisha Davis
Houston, TX

From: Marianne Myhre <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:20:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image001.gif

Dear People at the Religious Liberty Commission,

Let me get right into it. I am going to be very frank with you, please excuse my confrontive way of introducing the issue, but I cannot think of a better way to put it and I really don't have time to beat around the bush. I want to make sure this gets to you before the deadline.

Either you have not studied or thought this issue of Separation of Church and State through and have let others influence (deceive) you, or you think the American people will not study the issue and will let you influence (deceive) them. To give you the benefit of the doubt, perhaps both.

With this introduction, let me explain the obvious. Concepts can be described in detail and often end up being give a label. When the label is thoroughly described it can, but not necessarily so, be used to communicate the concept. They are intended to mean the same thing. It would seem that even a 6th grader would understand that. In legal papers, to prevent misunderstanding, the concept is generally described, not labeled. The label, "Separation of Church and State" is not in the constitution, because the constitution is a legal document. But the concept is briefly but thoroughly described in the first amendment. With all the lawyers available to the federal government, I find it hard to believe that you missed this. IOW, I am accusing you, or those who are deceiving you, of lying about the Separation of Church and State not being in the constitution. It is a blatant lie.

I was taught in school (before those who want to destroy this nation took over our schools) that the separation of church and state is a lesson learned from the dark ages, when the Roman Catholic Church controlled Europe and persecuted, yes, even burned at the stake, those who disagreed with her!

It is a fact that, after the Jews had been murdering their prophets to silence them, God scrapped the theocracy and placed Israel under the rule of Babylon, then Medo Persia, then Greece, then Rome. Even when Greece allowed the Jews to return to Israel and rebuild Jerusalem, they did not get their independence back. The fact is that a union of church and state always leads to persecution, because "God (Satan) wills it". Today, Israel is secular and therefore they have religious freedom.

How have the American people been groomed to accept your proposal to scrap religious freedom? 1) The schools have not educated them about the history of the Dark Ages and the Reformation. 2) The media has allowed the establishment clause to be taken to mean more than what it says, while they conveniently didn't mention the free exercise clause. Consequently, the left has been allowed to take the first amendment to ridiculous extents. For example, the left was able to take this poor baker in Colorado all the way to the supreme court!!! This is just one example of the travesties that have taken place in this country. Since neither the left nor the right made this very simple fact clear, it appears to me that the American people have been taken for a very long ride that was calculated to culminate in scrapping the separation of church and state. (And yes, I believe in conspiracies, they are all around us, and I believe that the ridicule of conspiracy theorists was part of the conspiracy.)

God demonstrated using Israel that true love for Him and true worship can't be legislated. You can only legislate hypocrisy. Yet, we are hearing a lot about returning blue laws to this country. The history of blue laws are being slanted and twisted to fit the narrative of those who have every intention to restore to the church the power held by her during the dark ages. If we are not willing to learn from history, history will be repeated. Soon, those who refuse to submit to the Christian Nationalists will be prevented from buying and selling and the US will have revealed herself as being the beast of Revelation 13, that comes out of the land looking like a lamb (Christian), but speaking like a dragon (Satan). What has

been prophesied will happen. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" ([Matthew 18:7](#)).

Marianne Myhre

"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your liberation is drawing near." (Luke 21:28)

From: stephanie coxon <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT- Chapter 9/Healthcare Conscience- Stephanie Coxon

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:27:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image.png

<https://www.americaoutloud.news/one-mothers-raw-journey-through-vaccine-catastrophe-fighting-for-informed-consent/>

 Stephanie Coxon
BCTH, PhD

From: [REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ed Rogers

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:38:10 -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.

I would also remind you that the reason for the formation of our country was to escape religious persecution. This is what made our country great. Up until that point no modern country put into its foundational law that every individual could worship how they chose. This would be a step in changing that.

Sincerely,
Ed Rogers
Snowflake, AZ
Thanks, Ed

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: Martin Lohne <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:40:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I have heard that The President's Commission on Religious Liberty would like to open a way for government funds to be distributed to various religious organizations. This SHOULD NOT BE DONE. If it is done, it is inevitable that some organizations will be favored and others neglected depending on who is in power irrespective of whether they are truly following the teachings of Sacred Writings.

Best regards,

Martin J. Lohne, M.D.

From: The Berreth's <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:43:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: drive_favicon_2026_32dp.png

I agree with the Pillar of Freedom's comments. The government should not be funding or endorsing any religious entity.

Cheryl Berreth

Response to Commission.pdf
drive.google.com



From: Strickland Sue <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 10:59:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

This country was created to give religious freedom to all people. The unification of church and state takes away those inalienable freedoms and will create a society that will be as in the dark ages. Persecution. No one should be forced by the governments to worship as they see fit, but allowed the right to worship according to their conscience. Government doesn't have the right to compel someone against their will.

I pray that the voices of the people opposing this law, will be heard, and that this injustice not be passed.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Sue Strickland

From: Heaven Moses <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:04:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

From: Andrew Carey <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:07:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with the response by Jonathan Zirkle on his site, <https://PillarOfFreedom.org/> and I oppose the commission's proposals, which would destroy religious liberty, guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

--

Andrew Carey

From: Jonathan Radut <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Jonathan Radut

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:17:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Sincerely,

Jonathan J Radut
San Bernardino, CA

From: Jenny Nickel <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Jenny Nickel

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:18:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a US citizen, I am extremely concerned about the report from the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. This draft report, which President Trump accepted in the Oval Office, included both basic summaries of the hearings and recommendations.

I am very concerned that the Commission seems to be seeking to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state. The two recommendations that alarm me are (a) the repeal of the Johnson Amendment and (b) the funding of religious organizations. I believe that both of these recommendations are not in harmony with the separation of church and state as provided for by the Constitution.

For some reason, the members do not seem to have fully familiarized themselves with the complete history of the implementation of the need for separation. Also very disturbing to me was that the very Commission calling for more religious expression in government, found the expression of one of its own members objectionable and took swift action against the offending member. This is a perfect illustration of how uniting church and state will inevitably lead to the state being forced to decide religious doctrine.

I would strongly urge that the wall between church and state be maintained for the protection of all Americans.

Sincerely,
Jenny Nickel

From: Gasselle Rodriguez <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:21:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Ruth Rodriguez

Perris, CA

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:26:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT-Chapter 3-Sharon Madger

Here is the paragraph under recommendations and my comment is below.

- **Clarify that IDEA funds may be used at religious schools.** The Department of Justice should issue guidance clarifying that Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds may follow the child to religious schools

I am happy to see this recommendation in this document by Nicholas Reaves. There is a way for funds to go to religious schools and private schools allowed by this IDEA now however the issue is FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education). FAPE is only recognized in the public government supported schools. This is fundamental to parents' rights and protections for their child. Once the parent has their child leave the public government supported schools the protections and rights under IDEA do not follow them even though money is supplied for their child's services. There is no consequence if the private or religious schools do not follow the IEP (Individual Education Program). Many parents do not understand this when they leave the public schools, and the facilities could take the money from the government and yet not really follow the program for their child because there is no fear of consequences from the parent legally. If the IDEA law could add that students with disabilities under IDEA get all the protections and rights and FAPE anywhere their child is educated that would handle the problem for every child and parent. Hypothetically the religious schools could write a great program for the disabled child, not necessarily follow them because no one is policing this and there is no potential consequence legally. The schools are willing to take the money though. The parent often does not even understand that they have given up their rights and protections under the law even though the private or religious schools have probably told them this and even have a paper with the parent agreeing to this in writing. This is a huge problem for parents with children with disabilities who want to put their child in religious schools.

PUBLIC COMMENT-Chapter 10-Sharon Madger

Here is the paragraph that I am referring to for my public comment below.

- **Issue guidance on religious freedom in relation to vaccines.** The Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, and the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission should issue guidance explaining the scope of the rights of people of faith to receive religious accommodations to vaccine mandates in schools, employment, and healthcare settings.³²³

I worked at a medical supply company for 33 years. I did not want to take the Covid 19 shots for religious reasons. My company denied me the religious exemption and I lost my job. That should NEVER happen to anyone in this country. There were at least 40 people that I know about who had this happen to them from this same company. Religious freedom should be powerful enough for the private sector as well as the public sector. Thank you for putting this into the Religious Liberty Commission document.

Please feel free to contact me if you need to. I would like feedback that you received this and put on a list for future updates.

Sharon L. Madger

[REDACTED]
PII
PII

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:30:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

PUBLIC COMMENT-Chapter 3-Sharon Madger

Here is the paragraph under recommendations and my comment is below.

- **Clarify that IDEA funds may be used at religious schools.** The Department of Justice should issue guidance clarifying that Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds may follow the child to religious schools

I am happy to see this recommendation in this document by Nicholas Reaves. There is a way for funds to go to religious schools and private schools allowed by this IDEA now however the issue is FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education). FAPE is only recognized in the public government supported schools. This is fundamental to parents' rights and protections for their child. Once the parent has their child leave the public government supported schools the protections and rights under IDEA do not follow them even though money is supplied for their child's services. There is no consequence if the private or religious schools do not follow the IEP (Individual Education Program). Many parents do not understand this when they leave the public schools, and the facilities could take the money from the government and yet not really follow the program for their child because there is no fear of consequences from the parent legally. If the IDEA law could add that students with disabilities under IDEA get all the protections and rights and FAPE anywhere their child is educated that would handle the problem for every child and parent. Hypothetically the religious schools could write a great program for the disabled child, not necessarily follow them because no one is policing this and there is no potential consequence legally. The schools are willing to take the money though. The parent often does not even understand that they have given up their rights and protections under the law even though the private or religious schools have probably told them this and even have a paper with the parent agreeing to this in writing. This is a huge problem for parents with children with disabilities who want to put their child in religious schools.

PUBLIC COMMENT-Chapter 10-Sharon Madger

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I worked at a medical supply company for 33 years. I did not want to take the Covid 19 shots for religious reasons. My company denied me the religious exemption and I lost my job. That should NEVER happen to anyone in this country. There were at least 40 people that I know about who had this happen to them from this same company. Religious freedom should be powerful enough for the private sector as well as the public sector. Thank you for putting this into the Religious Liberty Commission document.

Please feel free to contact me if you need to. I would like feedback that you received this and put on a list for future updates.

Sharon L. Madger

From: Erik Bates <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:32:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Erik Bates

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing from Silverton, Oregon 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. This is so important, as any time church and state combine, bad things always happen.

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,

Erik Bates

Silverton, Oregon

Sent from my iPhone

From: Lauren Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:35:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding religious liberty in the United States. I write as an American citizen who deeply values both the Constitution and the historic freedoms that have allowed people of every faith—and those of no faith—to live together in peace.

I believe one of America's greatest achievements is that our government was designed not to control religion, but to protect the freedom of religion. The First Amendment wisely prevents the establishment of a national church while simultaneously protecting every citizen's right to freely exercise their sincerely held religious beliefs. Those two principles work together rather than against one another.

Although I believe America's history, legal traditions, and moral foundations have been significantly shaped by Christianity, I do not believe government should establish Christianity—or any religion—as the official religion of the United States. Instead, government should remain neutral among religions while vigorously protecting the ability of every individual to live according to their conscience.

Below are my thoughts regarding the Commission's listed topics.

First Amendment rights of pastors, religious leaders, houses of worship, faith-based institutions, and religious speakers

Religious leaders should be free to preach, teach, and express their sincerely held beliefs without fear of government punishment or censorship. Government should neither compel religious speech nor suppress it. Houses of worship should enjoy robust constitutional protections while remaining subject to neutral laws that protect public safety and prevent criminal conduct.

Attacks on houses of worship and the debanking of religious organizations

Violence, vandalism, threats, or intimidation directed toward houses of worship should be investigated aggressively regardless of the religion involved. Every church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other place of worship deserves equal protection under the law.

Likewise, financial institutions should not discriminate against religious organizations solely because of their lawful religious beliefs or viewpoints. If services are denied, those decisions should be based upon objective business or legal standards rather than ideological disagreement.

Religious liberty for teachers, students, military chaplains, service members, employers, and employees

Individuals should not be required to abandon their sincerely held religious convictions simply because they work for the government, attend public school, or serve in the military. At the same time, government employees should not use their official authority to coerce others into religious participation.

Students should be free to pray voluntarily, discuss their faith with classmates, and organize religious clubs under the same rules applied to other student organizations.

Military chaplains should remain free to minister according to the teachings of their respective faith traditions while faithfully serving all service members with dignity and respect.

Conscience protections in health care and vaccine mandates

Healthcare professionals should receive meaningful conscience protections when asked to participate in procedures that fundamentally conflict with their sincerely held religious or moral convictions, provided that patient safety and access to lawful medical care are appropriately addressed.

Public health emergencies may require extraordinary responses, but any vaccine mandate should carefully consider constitutional protections for sincerely held religious beliefs and ensure that restrictions are narrowly tailored, supported by sound evidence, and respectful of individual liberties whenever possible.

Parents' authority regarding the care, upbringing, and education of their children

Parents bear the primary responsibility for directing the upbringing and education of their children. Government should respect the fundamental rights of parents to choose public, private, charter, homeschool, or religious education consistent with their values, while ensuring children receive an adequate education and are protected from abuse or neglect.

Voluntary prayer in public schools and religious displays

Students should always be free to pray individually or in groups when participation is entirely voluntary and does not disrupt instruction or coerce others.

Government-sponsored prayer is different from private voluntary prayer, and that constitutional distinction should remain clear.

With respect to religious displays, I believe history and context matter. Government should be able to acknowledge the historical role religion has played in American life without appearing to endorse or establish a particular faith. Our nation's heritage includes religious influences that should not be erased, but neither should government become an instrument for religious favoritism.

The right of Americans to freely exercise their faith without censorship or retaliation

Every American deserves the freedom to worship, speak, assemble, and live according to sincerely held religious beliefs without fear of government retaliation. These protections must apply equally to Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, atheists, and members of every other faith or philosophical tradition.

Religious liberty loses its meaning if it protects only those beliefs that are popular or politically favored.

Likewise, freedom of religion does not exempt anyone from laws that protect public safety or the rights of others, but restrictions on religious exercise should be carefully scrutinized and imposed only when constitutionally justified.

Closing

The genius of the First Amendment is not that it elevates one religion over another—it is that it protects the God-given dignity and liberty of every person.

I hope the Commission will continue to strengthen constitutional protections for the free exercise of religion while preserving the important principle that government should neither establish religion nor interfere with its peaceful practice.

Our nation is strongest when people of differing beliefs are free to disagree respectfully, worship freely, and live together under equal protection of the law.

Thank you for your service and for considering these comments.

Respectfully,

Lauren A. Johnson, BS, RN, CNOR, RNFA
Stockton, California

From: Terri Yan <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Terri Yan

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:36:25 -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 in the United States.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,

Terri Yan
Sacramento, California

"The constitutional freedom of religion is the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights." -- Thomas Jefferson

"Religious liberty is the God-given right of every individual to choose their faith without coercion." -- E.G. White

From: larry rouse <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:37:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious liberty is for everyone. Not just Christian's. Separation of church and state is foundational to this country. From Roger Williams to the anti Baptist to our founding fathers to the 1st amendment. No the actual phrase isn't in the 1st amendment but you cannot say the principle is not. The federal government cannot establish any religion including Christianity. That's true religious freedom!

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From: Shyaam Butler <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Shyaam Butler

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:40:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the public to comment on the Commission's draft report. After reading portions of the report and its recommendations, I felt compelled to share my concerns regarding proposals that appear to weaken the longstanding separation of church and state.

My Christian faith is one of the reasons I care deeply about religious liberty. I believe that faith must always be a matter of conscience and conviction, never something advanced or influenced through the power of government. Religious liberty is meaningful only when every person is free to worship according to conscience or not to worship at all without the government favoring one faith, one interpretation of faith, or religion over non-religion.

History offers important lessons that should not be forgotten. Throughout much of European history, alliances between civil government and religious institutions resulted in coercion, discrimination, and persecution of those whose beliefs differed from those endorsed by those in power. Many of America's earliest settlers came seeking relief from religious persecution and the lack of freedom to live according to conscience. The principles embodied in the First Amendment reflected those hard-earned lessons by protecting both religious liberty and the independence of religious institutions from government control.

For that reason, I am concerned by recommendations that could blur the line between church and state. While they may be intended to strengthen religious liberty, I believe they risk producing the opposite result over time. Once the government becomes more deeply involved with religious institutions or religious activities, it inevitably faces decisions about which organizations qualify for support, which beliefs receive protection, and where the limits of religious expression should be drawn. Those are not decisions that belong to the state.

One of America's greatest strengths has been its commitment to protecting the rights of people with widely differing religious beliefs. Religious liberty is not measured by how well the majority is protected. It is measured by how well the conscience of the minority is protected. The constitutional separation of church and state has allowed people of many different faiths and those of no faith to live together peacefully while preserving the freedom to practice their beliefs without government interference.

I respectfully ask the Commission to preserve this constitutional principle and to carefully reconsider recommendations that would weaken the historic separation of church and state. This principle has served our nation well for generations, protecting both religious freedom and the integrity of our religious institutions. I believe it remains one of the strongest safeguards of genuine religious liberty for every American.

Thank you for your time and for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

Shyaam Butler

Menifee, California

From: Oralia Gribben <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – "Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State" - Oralia Gribben

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:44:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments regarding the draft report.

I firmly assert that religious liberty constitutes one of America's paramount freedoms and must be safeguarded uniformly for all individuals, irrespective of their beliefs or lack thereof.

I am concerned by portions of the draft report that seem to undermine the enduring constitutional principle that the government should neither establish nor favour one religion over another. I believe the First Amendment safeguards both the free exercise of religion and the government's neutrality on religion. These two safeguards collaborate to preserve the liberties of all Americans.

A government that protects every person's right to worship according to their conscience—or not to worship at all—is the best guarantee of genuine religious liberty. Maintaining governmental neutrality does not weaken religion; it protects religious diversity and prevents any one faith from receiving preferential treatment.

I respectfully ask the Commission to ensure that its final recommendations preserve the constitutional rights of all Americans equally, uphold both the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment, and avoid policies that could erode the religious freedoms that have long been a cornerstone of our nation.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

Oralia Gribben
Fort Worth, Texas

From: "Isaac, Anora" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:48:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

The state is not my conscience, I believe keeping separation of church and state.

From: Lanae Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:49:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I respectfully submit this public comment regarding the draft report released on June 26, 2026.

As a Sabbath-observing Christian and an American, I am deeply concerned that several recommendations in the draft report could weaken the constitutional protections for religious liberty that have safeguarded our nation for generations.

From a young age, I read the testimonies of Christians who lived in countries where religious liberty did not exist. They wrote of imprisonment, persecution, and even death because they refused to violate their conscience or compromise their faith in Jesus Christ. Their stories gave me a deep appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy in the United States and reminded me that religious liberty should never be taken for granted.

As a Sabbath-observing Christian, freedom of conscience is especially meaningful to me. I believe every person should be free to worship God—or not worship—according to the convictions of their own conscience, without government interference or favoritism. Genuine faith must always be a matter of personal conviction, never government compulsion.

The First Amendment has been one of our nation's greatest blessings. By protecting both the free exercise of religion and preventing the establishment of religion by the government, it has preserved the rights of people of every faith and those of no faith alike.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve the historic separation of church and state, maintain government neutrality toward religion, continue enforcement of the Johnson Amendment, and avoid expanding government funding of religious organizations. I believe our nation's enduring commitment to freedom of conscience has made the United States a beacon of religious liberty, and I pray these constitutional protections will be preserved for future generations.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

Lanae Johnson

From: Cheryl Des Jarlais <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT--Separation of Church and State--Cheryl Woolsey Des Jarlais

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 11:51:06 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Your efforts to create a bridge between church and state are deeply wrong. This country has been strengthened because of separation of church and state historically. I am a person of faith, and I believe that keeping believers free to follow their conscience without any influence or coercion from the church or state is what makes individuals independent, courageous, and strong moral thinkers. This in turn, strengthens families and communities. The Johnson Amendment should be supported rather than weakened. My ancestors were burned at the stake for their beliefs by combined forces of church and state. This is not where we should be headed.

Sincerely, Cheryl Woolsey Des Jarlais

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From: BRYAN DAWKINS <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:11:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear President Trump and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Commission's recommendations regarding religious liberty. While I appreciate the work that went into the report, I am concerned about Recommendations 1 and 9, particularly the suggestion that the Department of Justice redefine the Establishment Clause and the proposal to remove the Johnson Amendment.

America's founders understood from both history and personal experience that combining church and state leads to the loss of religious liberty. James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," warned that the separation of religion and government was intentionally protected in the Constitution. Thomas Jefferson likewise described the First Amendment as building "a wall of separation between Church and State."

History repeatedly confirms their wisdom. From the persecution of Baptists, Quakers, and other religious minorities in the American colonies to the execution of William Tyndale for translating the Bible, the imprisonment of William Penn, the banishment of Roger Williams, and the execution of Michael Servetus, religious persecution has most often come from governments aligned with religious institutions—not from secular governments.

The separation of church and state has also protected other essential freedoms, including freedom of speech and the press. History shows that when religious institutions gain civil power, censorship and suppression of dissent often follow.

For these reasons, I believe the Department of Justice should approach any guidance on the Establishment Clause with great caution and should fully consider the historical reasons the First Amendment was written as it was. I also oppose repealing the Johnson Amendment, as I believe churches should remain focused on the gospel rather than becoming political organizations seeking influence through endorsements.

I respectfully ask that Recommendations 1 and 9 not be adopted until a broader public review and historical examination can take place. Preserving both religious liberty and the independence of the church from the state has been one of America's greatest strengths, and I believe it should remain so.

Sincerely,

Bryan Dawkins

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: JERRYPER COLEGADO <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pilar of Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:14:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hello:

I agree with Pilar of Freedom statement. Please consider.

I believe in the founding father's principle of separation of state and church.

Thanks

Sent from my iPhone

From: R Wallach <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment: Religious Liberty Committee

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:17:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious beliefs are our private individual domain. No government involvement is needed, necessary or contemplated in our constitution. Will you give Saten equal rights? Fairness demands it. The human right to question and challenge personal religious beliefs, monotheism, agnostic and atheism are being infringed by religion seeping into the public domain. No public funding for anything religious. Stay out.

You can believe anything you want, do not impose your ontological belief system onto any other human being.

Citizen, R. Wallach

From: Marge Snell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:22:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please do not create new laws but enforce and strengthen what exists in the CONSTITUTION now. A new law will lead to judging the INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS of ALL. With erroneous, strange beliefs and even atheists who do not believe in Christianity at all, do not take away their rights but must protect even theirs. Let only God be the Judge, not a Government, our Government, be the one to enforce and interpret a new law where it goes to courts in every State that may make it worse than it is now. I. If we are not careful, we could be like the Church of England and AMERICA MUST CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE by addressing cases individually and not allow teachers to make decisions for any student by teaching the teachers individual philosophy, woke, trans., etc. Teachers manuals should instruct to keep classes improving learning skills and not ideology. Schools should not be DICTATED by views and beliefs of the teacher unless all sides are represented and given choices to students AND PARENTS to make individual decisions. I am a religious conservative that believes in the Bible, but even the Bible is misinterpreted or has multiple interpretations. I ask you NOT TO MAKE THAT SAME MISTAKE to complicate but make a simple DECLARATION THAT AMERICA STANDS FOR FREEDOM TO BELIEVE AS INDIVIDUALLY WE UNDERSTAND and SEPERATION IF CHURCH AND STATE and that means not to punish, rebuke, embarrass students for what they write or believe. -Marjorie Snell
Sent from my iPhone

From: Deborah Robinson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII, Deborah Robinson <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thank you

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:25:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

From: Alena Buerge <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:36:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing as a citizen of Switzerland and as a strong supporter of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.

The role of civil government is to protect the equal civil rights, liberty, safety, and property of all people. It may regulate outward conduct when that conduct violates the equal rights of others. However, civil government has no jurisdiction to determine religious truth, settle religious controversies, or enforce religious doctrines, duties, forms of worship, or religious observances.

Its duty is to protect every person equally in the free exercise of religion and conscience. Religious liberty is not a concession, exemption, or act of toleration granted by government. It is an equal and inalienable right belonging to every person.

Every person, regardless of creed or religious belief, must be equally protected in following the dictates of conscience. This includes the freedom to practise a religion, change one's religion, or profess no religious faith.

This freedom cannot fully exist when the state favors a particular religious tradition or uses public institutions to promote its teachings.

Neither a religious majority nor a political majority has authority over the conscience of even one individual. Faith, worship, and religious obedience must remain voluntary. Civil compulsion cannot create genuine belief; it can produce only outward conformity, resentment, or hypocrisy.

Religion does not need the coercive power of government. Civil government must protect the freedom of every conscience, but it must never use its authority to promote, prescribe, or enforce religious belief or observance. Genuine faith must arise from personal conviction and must remain entirely voluntary.

When religious belief or observance is supported by civil compulsion, both religious liberty and the integrity of faith are endangered.

American religious liberty did not arise from complete religious unity. It developed in a society marked by disagreements among different denominations and by the need to protect diverse religious communities.

The prohibition of religious tests for public office in Article VI of the United States Constitution, together with the protections of the First Amendment, expresses the principle that civil rights must not depend upon adherence to a particular religious belief.

James Madison warned against allowing government authorities to become judges of religious truth or to use religion as an instrument of state policy. Thomas Jefferson likewise described religion as a matter between the individual and God and defended a wall of separation between church and state.

This principle was also defended by committed Christians such as Alonzo T. Jones, who opposed proposed national Sunday legislation. He argued that civil government may protect civil rights but must not enforce religious duties.

His example demonstrates that opposition to state-sponsored religion is not opposition to religion itself. Rather, it may arise from the sincere conviction that faith must remain free from government coercion.

For these reasons, I am concerned by recommendations that could promote government-supported religious displays, devotional instruction, worship, religious observances, or the doctrines of a particular faith in public schools.

Public schools serve children and families with many different religious and non-religious convictions. They may teach objectively about religion, history, and religious diversity. However, the state should not conduct, mandate, sponsor, or privilege devotional religious instruction or worship.

Governmental neutrality toward religion must not be used as a pretext to suppress voluntary and private religious expression. Students and their families must remain free to express their faith within the generally applicable rules of the school.

Teachers likewise retain their personal religious freedom, provided that they do not act on behalf of the school, place pressure on students, or present their religious expression as an official message of the school.

The separation of church and state does not remove faith from public life. Individuals remain free to believe, worship, speak, teach, and participate in society according to their convictions.

Separation instead prevents the state from selecting and favoring particular religious beliefs. At the same time, it protects religious communities from political control and individuals from religious coercion.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to revise the report so that it properly recognizes the historical complexity of American religious liberty, the reality of religious diversity, the limits of civil government in matters of faith, and the importance of equal protection for every conscience.

Religious liberty must be the equal and inalienable right of every person. It must not become a privilege that primarily benefits a religious or political

Alena Bürge
Switzerland

From: Sam Horton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:38:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing on behalf of Marshall Assembly of God to submit our formal public comment in support of the 224-page draft report delivered to the President. As our nation hits its 250th anniversary milestone, there is no more critical task than dismantling the systematic, bureaucratic weaponization of the unconstitutional "wall of separation" error that has been used to scrub faith from the American public square.

We endorse the Commission's 12 proposed structural opportunities, with particular emphasis on the following critical mandates:

1. The Correction of the Establishment Clause: Instructing the Department of Justice to issue immediate, comprehensive guidance restoring an originalist understanding of the Constitution, completely stripping local public officials of the power to intimidate or silence believers.
2. Protection in Public Education & Healthcare: The immediate deployment of mandatory "Know Your Rights" protections to aggressively shield Christian students, parents, teachers, and healthcare workers from administrative overreach and forced ideological coercion.
3. The Absolute Repeal of the Johnson Amendment: Ending the unconstitutional IRS targeting and financial muzzle placed on local churches, ensuring that houses of worship can stand boldly for traditional, foundational values without government-led litigation or threats to their status.

We urge the Commission to finalize this report with zero concessions, providing a permanent legal shield for our first and most essential freedom.

Respectfully submitted,
Sam Horton/ Pastor
Marshall Assembly of God
Marshall, Arkansas
Sent from my iPad

From: John Hyman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - In Support of the Founders' Vision of Church-State Separation

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:43:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to share my perspective on religious liberty and to urge the Commission to reaffirm the Founders' commitment to a clear separation between church and state.

Our nation's founders were explicit on this point. The Constitution bars any religious test for public office (Article VI), and the First Amendment ensures Congress can neither establish a religion nor prohibit its free exercise. This was not an oversight or a rejection of faith itself, but a deliberate safeguard against the government favoring any one belief system over another, or over no belief at all.

That principle matters just as much today as it did in 1789. A few examples of where I believe it is being tested:

1. Religious displays in public schools. A second-grader should not walk into a public classroom and see the Ten Commandments posted above the coat hooks. Public schools serve children of every faith and none, and the state should not be in the business of endorsing one religious tradition over the rest.
2. Public funding and religious exemptions. When taxpayer dollars flow to institutions that discriminate on religious grounds, or when religious exemptions are used to sidestep laws that apply to everyone else, the line between personal faith and public policy starts to blur.
3. Government-sponsored prayer or religious ceremony at public events. Official meetings, school assemblies, and civic ceremonies should remain neutral ground, not venues for promoting a particular religious viewpoint.
4. Rhetoric that conflates religious conviction with public entitlement. Claims like "Jesus pays my bills" may reflect someone's personal faith, but they have no place shaping public policy, social safety nets, or economic decision-making. Sincere religious belief is not, and should not be treated as, a substitute for sound and equitable governance.

I believe genuine religious liberty is best protected when the government stays neutral rather than favoring any single tradition. Protecting the right of every person to worship as they choose, or not at all, requires the state to avoid becoming an instrument of any one faith.

I urge the Commission to keep this founding principle at the center of its work.

--

Sincerely yours,



[REDACTED]
PII

From: Stephen Arvedson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC OPINION - OPPOSING THE RLC REPORT - RICHARD ARVEDSON

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:44:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 11, 2026

I am opposed to the position of the Religious Liberty Commission Report. Faith should not be used for political gain. Our education system should promote literacy, critical thinking, history, science, mathematics, and civics. Children should be able to read and argue from evidence and be able to distinguish between fact and fiction.

Richard S. Arvedson

From: Laura Harris <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Religious Liberty Commission Draft

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:46:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my support for one of our nation's most important constitutional principles that is being called into question in the Religious Liberty Commission Draft. The freedom of religion.

The First Amendment protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits the government from establishing or favoring any particular religion. These protections have allowed people of all faiths (and those of no faith) to live according to their conscience.

The separation of church and state is not a threat to religious liberty; it is one of its greatest safeguards. Government should not influence religion, and tax-exempt religious organizations should not endorse or support political candidates. To build a bridge between the two offers no protection of religious liberty. Keeping these institutions separate protects the freedoms, integrity, and credibility of both.

We must be careful not to pave roads that lead us backward by eroding constitutional principles. America's commitment to religious liberty, and the separation of church and state, is one of the defining characteristics that makes our nation unique. Preserving these freedoms ensures that every individual remains free to worship according to their own beliefs without government interference or religious coercion.

I am dismayed by the trajectory of this nation. And I sincerely hope and pray our basic rights and safeguards will be diligently protected by those of you with influence.

Thank you for your work and for your thoughtful consideration of these principles.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Harris

...and if not, He is *still* good. -Daniel 3:18

From: Sharon MCDONALD <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Draft Report of the Presidential Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:54:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have read and agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

Sincerely,
Sharon McDonald

From: Larry Johnston <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission draft report – Larry Johnston

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 12:54:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

I urge rejection of the Religious Liberty Commission's June 26, 2026, draft report. Many of the report's conclusions and recommendations would diminish Americans' religious freedom if enacted rather than enhance a signature American value.

The report asserts that religion is "central to human identity, and family and communal life." That is true for those who adhere to a religious tradition and celebrate its rites and rituals. Nonbelievers (or those who only nominally believe in some undefined higher power) as well as those who embrace different beliefs may not find organized Christian religion quite as compelling in their lives. Yet many recommendations in the report would impose those religious beliefs on their day-to-day lives in a significant way, a clear violation of their religious freedom.

The report notes that history has shown the difficulty of establishing a proper relationship between government and religion "and how dangerous it is to get it wrong." The draft report's recommendations veer sharply in the direction of getting it wrong. The recommendations seem aimed at empowering the federal government to establish favoritism toward a particular set of beliefs and accord them primacy in public life, which is counter to the clear instruction in Amendment 1 to the Constitution of the United States to, "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . ."

Preserving religious liberty does not lie in additional regulations or prohibitions as outlined in the report. It lies in communication, understanding, and respect for others. Please reject this draft report.

Thank you,

Larry Johnston

From: Debra Sternberg <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -- DRAFT REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:10:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

A reading of the two-page report shows a clear bias towards Christian faiths and neglects to offer equal protection to Americans of all stripes. The Founders were explicit in their insistence on the separation between church and state, and a true "originalist" reading would abide by George Washington's words to Touro Synagogue in his letter of 1790: "while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid." For those protections to mean anything to one, so must those protections apply to all.

Debra Sternberg

From: " [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

To: Rlc < [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protect Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:11:03 -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 that weakens the constitutional principle of institutional separation between religion and government or encourages greater union between the two.

America's greatest protection of religious liberty has been safeguarding every person's God-given right to worship according to conscience without government interference. This principle has allowed people of all faiths to flourish while preserving civil peace.

As a Bible-believing seventh-day Sabbath keeper, I write from the perspective of a religious minority whose spiritual forebears experienced the dangers of government aligning with the religious majority. During the colonial era, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and others faced discrimination, fines, imprisonment, and persecution because established churches were supported by the state. These abuses helped inspire the First Amendment.

History repeated itself in the late nineteenth century when Seventh-day Adventists were prosecuted under Sunday laws for observing the biblical Sabbath on Saturday. Some were fined, imprisoned, and forced into chain gangs simply for following their conscience. Their experience demonstrates that whenever civil authority enforces religious practices, freedom of conscience is threatened, and religious minorities often suffer first.

History also provides broader warnings. The medieval Inquisition, religious extremism backed by civil authority, and communist regimes that suppressed religion all illustrate the same lesson: whenever government assumes authority over matters of conscience, liberty is endangered.

The strength of the American constitutional system is that it protects both religion and government by keeping each within its proper sphere. Government exists to preserve order and protect equal rights. The church exists to proclaim truth through persuasion, never coercion. Both institutions remain strongest when they remain separate.

America's diverse religious landscape has flourished because government has generally refrained from establishing or controlling religion. I respectfully urge the Commission to recommend policies that strengthen—not weaken—the constitutional protections that safeguard religious liberty for all. Government should neither advance nor inhibit religion but protect the equal right of every individual to follow the dictates of conscience.

The United States must remain a nation where every church is free to proclaim its beliefs without government control and every citizen is free to worship—or not worship—without government pressure. History has shown the consequences of abandoning this principle. We should not repeat mistakes that have too often led to intolerance, religious persecution, and injustice.

Respectfully submitted,

Vera Al-Hammouri from
Minnesota

--

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<https://tuta.com/free-email>

From: Marilyn Cook <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Religious Liberty Commission Report Marilyn

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:11:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of church and state is good for both entities. It is a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution. Also Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools. Christian Nationalism is not religious liberty!!

From: Dreamstarworld 1 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Any nation that wantss to legislate freedom conscience "SHALL" fall

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:11:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

SEE WHY: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMRiIOMCEWQ>

From: Justin Lessig <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:13:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Religious Liberty Commission,

There is no such phrase "union of church and state" in the U.S. Constitution. If Dan Patrick wants to proclaim out loud before the universe and God Almighty Himself and all of free and liberty loving America while standing in the White House Oval Office itself, behind the president, next to Timothy Dolan, Ben Carson, Paul White and so on down the line, *then we have a constitutional crisis indeed.* Because ***no where*** in the Constitution does it say the words or phrases "union of church and state", "theocracy", "we the church" or "christian republic". No, on the contrary, the U.S. Constitution is a republic by, of and for **"WE THE PEOPLE."** The U.S. Constitution is an unbiased, neutral- a secular, not religious document- that gives freedom of conscience and liberty to *all people of all faiths or non-faiths- regardless of race, nationality, culture, ethnicity, religion or no religion, atheist, buddhist, mormon, baptist, muslim, christian, jewish, agnostic, whatever.* The U.S. Constitution is not based on the 10 commandments, which is a popular lie and myth christian extremist nationalists such as yourself use to promote your dangerous false ideologies. As U.S citizens we have the right to worship as many gods as we want or no gods at all. We can take the Lord God's name in vain if we want. We can go to church on any given day we want to or not go to any church at all. We can bow down to graven images or not. We can raise our kids according to how we believe without the state or governments interference. We can choose to own or have a copy of the bible, koran, torah, mishnah, or no religious content at all in our homes or not. We can freely worship as **"WE THE PEOPLE"** see fit as free independent moral beings created in the image of God however **"WE THE PEOPLE"** choose, whenever we choose, *without breaking any civil laws or hurting our neighbour.* The establishment and free exercise clauses as pertaining to the 1st amendment gives us, **"WE THE PEOPLE"**, that inalienable right to worship or not, believe whatever we want, live however we want without breaking any secular or religious laws according to the Constitution, which is entirely based and structured upon freedom of conscience and the pursuit to life, liberty, and happiness. As long as we are doing no physical harm to our neighbor or breaking civic laws, we are within the sphere of our God-given liberties to freely live our lives how **"WE THE PEOPLE"** see fit without the government intruding upon our God-given inalienable freedoms and liberties based solely upon the unconditional iron-clad principles of separation of church and state.

My advice to you is: if you are so disgusted and miserable with our great American way of life, based solely on the principles of separation of church and state, leave the country and go live somewhere else where you will be happier. No one is making you stay here or live here. Do the right thing in God's sight and step down from your jobs representing the rest of us true hearted and freedom loving conscientious Americans. What you are proposing in that there is "no separation of church and state" is a direct threat to our civil and constitutional liberties which were so dearly bought and paid for by the blood of innocent martyrs and freedom loving patriots throughout our countries' history.

Sincerely,

Justin Lessig

From: quinault777 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of religion Separation of church and state.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:13:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is my understanding of our countries history that those who helped write the Constitution believed in the separation of church and state. Our freedom of religion should be separate from any government involvement. The Constitutional rights of every Christian should have the privilege of their liberty of conscience not be threatened by any laws. I would hope and encourage the committe to pray for guidance as they make recommendations to the DOJ

Sent from my Galaxy

From: BrianS <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Cc: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: Public Comment on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:18:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 11, 2026

Dear Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Carson, and Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I am a Christian and citizen of the United States of America.

Thank you for your work examining the foundations, benefits, and challenges of religious liberty in the United States. I submit the following historical perspective to support strong protections for conscience and involvement of the state/government in religious affairs.

One of the primary reasons many early settlers came to America was to escape the religious persecution that resulted from the union of church (or religious authority) and state power in Europe and elsewhere. Established religious institutions backed by civil force enforced conformity, often leading to tyranny, hypocrisy, and societal harm. While some colonists initially replicated these patterns, key dissenters advocated for a better way.

History repeatedly shows the dangers of combining civic power with religious authority:

- **Medieval Europe and the Catholic Church:** The union of ecclesiastical and civil power under the Papacy and Holy Roman Empire produced systems where heresy was treated as treason. The Inquisition, Crusades, and enforcement of orthodoxy led to persecution of Jews, Muslims, Protestants, and internal dissenters. Papal States exemplified direct theocratic rule. Even after the Reformation, state churches (Catholic or Protestant) in countries like France, Spain, and England used civil penalties—fines, imprisonment, exile, or execution—to suppress nonconformists. This blending corrupted both institutions: the church became worldly and coercive, while the state claimed divine sanction for its actions.
- **Islamic States and Caliphates:** Many historical Islamic polities integrated Sharia (religious law) directly into governance, with rulers serving as both political and religious leaders (e.g., the early Caliphates, Ottoman Empire in certain periods, or other theocratic models). Religious law governed civil matters, including blasphemy, apostasy, and public morality. Non-Muslims (dhimmis) often faced restrictions, special taxes (jizya), or unequal rights, and deviation from orthodoxy could invite severe civil penalties. While periods of relative tolerance existed, the fusion of religious and state power frequently led to coercion, conquest justified on religious grounds, and suppression of minority faiths or sects.
- **American Colonial Examples:** Several colonies established official religions with civil enforcement. In Puritan Massachusetts Bay, dissenters like Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were banished for challenging orthodoxy; Baptists and Quakers faced whipping, fines, or imprisonment. Virginia's Anglican establishment imposed taxes to support the church and restricted nonconformists. Other colonies had similar religious tests or penalties. These experiences reinforced the need for a different path at the national level.

In each case, the combination eroded true faith (replaced by outward compliance), fueled conflict, and violated individual

conscience. The result was often the very instability and injustice that governments claimed to prevent.

This history of separation of church and state came well before the drafting of the Constitution and the amendments by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison or the 1802 Danbury letter.

Therefore, this is not some atheist secular idea but a reasoned approach to advancing freedom for all people of any belief.

Below are informed early American advocates who insisted on distinct spheres:

- **Roger Williams** (Rhode Island) called for a “hedge or wall of separation” between church and state to protect the purity of religion and liberty of conscience.
- **William Penn** (Pennsylvania) enshrined liberty of conscience in his charters, stating that no one should be “molested or prejudiced” for their religious persuasion.
- **Isaac Backus** (Baptist) in his 1773 *Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty* distinguished civil government (sword for peace and rights) from ecclesiastical government (truth for souls), warning that confounding them leads to tyranny.
- **John Clarke** (Rhode Island) and **John Leland** (influential in Virginia and with Madison/Jefferson) echoed these views. Leland famously wrote that government has “no more to do with the religious opinions of men than it has with the principles of mathematics,” emphasizing inalienable rights of conscience.

Alonzo T. Jones’ 1888 testimony before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor powerfully applied these lessons to proposed national Sunday legislation (the Blair Bill). He argued:

- Civil government is limited to civil matters via social compact; it has no authority over duties to God (citing Matthew 22:21: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s”).
- Religious observances like the Sabbath or Lord’s Day bear God’s “image and superscription,” not Caesar’s—thus the

state cannot legislate or enforce them without creating a theocracy.

- Such laws are inherently religious (not merely civil), unconstitutional under the First Amendment, and lead to hypocrisy, increased sin (via enforced idleness), and persecution of minorities. Jones stated, “There never was a Sunday law that was not antichristian, and there never can be one that will not be antichristian,” and opposed it equally whether it favored Sunday or the seventh-day Sabbath.
- He warned that consenting to any religious legislation surrenders future liberty to legislative majorities.

Jones grounded his opposition in Scripture, history, and the Constitution, showing that true liberty requires government to stay out of religious observances or involvement.

While the commission’s draft report itself does not establish or suggest any laws or ordinances that directly mandate religious observance, practices, or norms, it is important to note that many groups in and without our present government—including evangelical leaders, government officials, and faith-based organizations—have advocated for policies in this direction and continue to hold significant influence in public discourse and policymaking. History demonstrates how even well-intentioned laws and regulations can be expanded incrementally. Initial measures often begin modestly but gradually broaden in scope, interpretation, and enforcement through subsequent legislation, court rulings, administrative actions, or cultural shifts. This pattern has repeatedly, through out history, turned limited accommodations into tools of coercion or favoritism in societies where church and state powers have overlapped. Example: Blue Laws and Sunday legislation advocated by Senator Henry W Blair of New Hampshire May 21, 1888.

These principles enabled America’s flourishing religious pluralism. I urge the commission to reaffirm them in its final

report: protect free exercise while guarding against any entanglement, favoritism, or coercion that echoes the failed unions of the past. Government's role is civil order—not defining, promoting, or penalizing faith. This upholds the “lively experiment” that has made the United States a beacon.

Thank you for considering these views.

Sincerely,

Brian K. Stendel

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature and any accompanying text. The letters "PII" are printed in white on the redacted area.

PII PII

From: Angel <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:22:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to submit my comments regarding the Johnson Amendment. I strongly oppose the repeal of this amendment.

I believe Christians should avoid partisan political strife and refrain from publicly endorsing political candidates. Voting is a personal and private choice, and church leaders should not express political preferences or use their platforms to influence political decisions.

Furthermore, religious organizations should not financially contribute to political candidates, as this confuses the boundary between church and politics.

Thank you for considering my feedback on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angie Guy

From: Leon Verrett <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep separate, please

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:25:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good afternoon

As I worship on the Biblical Sabbath, as read in Exodus 20:8-11, part of the 10 Commandments written by the finger of God, I am concerned that laws are being formed that will force many that worship like me to be forced to worship against our conscience.

Please rethink the direction being taken in blurring the lines/wall between church and state!

I believe in spiritual leaders, but not in leadership using their own personal religious convictions to point me or anyone in the direction of their convictions. Nor should any government do the same.

History attests to the fact any government that enforced their religious practices on the people, also ended up persecuting the people!

Please continue to pray and make the right decision!

Leon Verrett

From: Loralyn Horning <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:27:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I have thoroughly enjoyed growing up in a free country here in the USA. I love my country. I honestly believe that separation of church and state has been a real gift to our freedoms. This idea didn't start with Thomas Jefferson, rather it started with Roger Williams. His efforts to divide church and state were illustrated with a garden. God's people are in the garden, the state is outside the garden. This wall of separation was ultimately drafted by Madison into the Constitution.

This is just history! Rhode Island first set this up, and William Penn encouraged it in the building of Pennsylvania. History is clear about what happens when church and state join hands, and it isn't good for either one.

I vote with all my heart that you wouldn't build that bridge connecting church and state. Please keep the wall intact.

Sincerely, Loralyn Horning
Durham, California



Loralyn Horning

[REDACTED] PII cell

Jesus says, *'I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.'*
There's not another you!

From: Ken Wiseman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ken L Wiseman

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:34:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the USA Religious Liberty Commission:

I believe that by and large, too many world and American citizens have a gross, historically INCORRECT misunderstanding of the concept: "Separation of Church and State". Like most misunderstandings, it includes excesses on both sides, and in every direction. Church & State must reside on a tightrope of freedom! And it's not easy to stay balanced and on this rope of freedom!

FACTUAL HISTORY COUNTS:

- 1) Our world has suffered massively from repeated deadly illicit combinations of church + state over thousands of years! More people have died from combining church & state that resulted in demonic persecutions than in all wars combined!
- 2) The Protestant Reformation, followed by the Pilgrims' escape to America, was a direct result of this deadly illicit church+state union.
- 3) President Thomas Jefferson wasn't trying to keep the church away from the state when he made his famous assurance to the Danbury Baptists! Instead, he was promising to keep the state from making ANY official decisions that would favor one denomination / church / beliefs over another! Indeed, he followed up his famous letter with a sincere call to worship and prayer immediately the following day!
- 4) US Government funding of NGOs that are administered by various churches is especially concerning, given all the waste, fraud and abuse. Render to Caesar his things, and to God His things, and keep these fundings entirely separated! I think the 501(c)(3) status of many groups has become very violated and needs to be revisited.
- 5) Churches, like all legal citizens, have the right to speak truth to power! Preserving religious liberty includes just that right always and forever.
- 6) According to Jesus Christ, God's Kingdom is ultimately not political, not of this world. Any effort to combine state + church is not a righteous cause, and will result in evil.
- 7) The Islamic "faith" is the consummate, extant example of church + state combined! Islam is first and foremost a religion that exists because of governmental force. THAT is exactly the opposite of America's founding freedoms.

I commend the effort to study and understand the incredible significance of Religious Liberty = American Freedom Foundational Teaching! ALL voices must be tolerated and heard, even if disagreed with! Dismissing Miss California from the commission was most ironically an egregious example of INTolerance of a voice and perspective! The Commission's ruling should be reviewed and rescinded in my view, even though I might not agree with her on everything she has said! She has the right to be wrong minded on certain things. We all do! And that is the heartbeat of religious liberty after all.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken L. Wiseman

From: dave bibleunlimited.us <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RESPONSE/COMMENT ON THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE
PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:38:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs/Madams:

I head a Christian teaching ministry, Bible Unlimited, www.BibleUnlimited.us.

I have studied your draft report, and have huge concerns. you are in direct contradiction to the US Constitution. Your desire to build a bridge between religion and government directly violates the intent of the Framers of the Constitution.

In response to your recommendations, I have created and given a presentation which is being broadcast globally to about one billion people. PLEASE WITHDRAW THE UNCONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES YOU ARE PROPOSING! You are doing the very thing the US Senate warned against in January of 1829, the Senate report on the transportation of mails on the Sabbath, quoted in the presentation. Here is the presentation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkfoV_LIAVA&t=33s

With deep concern for the future of this Republic,

Chaplain David Kohl, Director
Bible Unlimited, a Bible Institute
www.BibleUnlimited.us

From: Tammy Taggart <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:49:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

I respectfully submit this public comment out of deep concern for the for the future of religious freedom in the United States. I plead to the commission to reject any recommendation directed at the Department of Justice or any other branch of the government that would weaken our Historical Constitution Principles of keeping religion and government institutions separate and any proposal that calls for greater unity between the two.

From: Jeannie Strange <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 13:58:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am a Christian and I believe the separation of church and state is vitally important and it will quickly become dangerous for certain demographics if we do away with this important foundational piece of our history. Our founding fathers clarified on several occasions their meaning behind the amendments, and separation of church and state might not have been in the constitution by those exact words, but the essence of it is definitely there and the founding fathers made that very clear in their letters clarifying their intent behind each one. Our country was founded on these principles for a reason.

A few key points that are greatly concerning, should church and state unite are as follows (but not limited to):

1. Financial support for religious, faith based non-profits could cause issues where compromise is made in exchange for funding
2. Financial support for religious education could also cause issues where compromise is made in exchange for funding
3. Politicization of Churches and Religious non-profits could occur by repealing the Johnson Amendment
4. Singling out one religion for special government protection is a huge risk
5. Indoctrination of Americans in the ideology of the Commission
6. Freedom of thought could be jeopardized

It is vital that we strive to understand the reason behind why our forefathers set up our country the way they did.

God put the 10 Commandments in place to liberate us, not to enslave us. I believe the separation of church and state is of this very same spirit.

Thank you for your time,
Jeannie Strange

From: Daryl Mowday <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Future religious liberty in the United States of America

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:11:19 -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,

Daryl Mowday from Australia
Sent from my iPhone

From: Laura D <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Report pages 200-2 – Laura Dancek

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:15:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

Comment on Appendix B: 12 Key Recommendations to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans

#1 - I support wording that solidifies the separation of church and state.

#5 - I support federal judges who support the separation of church and state.

#8 - I support protection from government-led litigation targeting free exercise of religion for Americans.

#9 - I DO NOT support the repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

Thank you for reading my comments.

Laura Dancek

From: Kimberly Wilkerson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report - Public Comments

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:16:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commissioners -

Thank you for your contributions and dedication to create a thorough summary of the current state of religious liberty in our nation. I was appreciative to know of the faith and courage of those who testified of personal injustices against their right to religious freedom. And I was inspired by the commission's recommendations to strengthen religious liberty for all in our country.

After reviewing this report, I would like to provide the following considerations:

1. The report mentioned religious freedom toolkits and training for government-funded healthcare. Toolkits and training on religious freedom and personal rights under the First Amendment should be provided for *all* government-funded entities, including healthcare, universities, military, federal workplaces, and all service organizations which receive federal funding.

2. In conjunction with "Know Your Rights" posters, as recommended for all marked areas, the creation of series of short, succinct and highly engaging videos should be created to educate American citizens on their right to religious liberty under the First Amendment.

As multimodal learners, human beings benefit from both print and visuals for effective learning. Reading allows learner control over pacing of presented information, while video contributes to longer engagement and increased motivation of the learner. And videos with captions show significantly increased performance improvements compared to videos without captions. One series of videos could be produced considering the cognitive abilities of children/teens and another focused on the learning abilities and needs of adults.

Furthermore, videos provide a platform for robust storytelling in a short amount of time compared to print. And when stories of fellow American citizens highlight both religious freedom threats and the overcoming of opposition, we will remember presented information and will be motivated to act.

Finally, as the United States of America continues to be this world's exemplar in the inherent individual right of religious liberty, videos teaching foundational religious freedom principles will instruct and inspire humanity throughout the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and feedback.
God bless you all.

Warm regards,
Kimberly Wilkerson

PII

PII

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: Re: Automatic reply: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:18:22 -0400

Importance: Normal



From: Pers <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Kevin Ferreira - Public Comment Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:19:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a United States of America 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,

Kevin Ferreira

From: Job Dorvilas <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Personal Commentary on the Relationship Between Civil Authority and Religious Authority in Light of Biblical Principles

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:28:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Introduction

To the attention of the members of the Commission and the relevant authorities.

I hold, through this commentary, to express with respect but with profound conviction the concerns raised, in light of biblical principles, by any effort to redefine the relationship between civil authority and religious authority.

My reflection is based on a fundamental principle presented in the Holy Scriptures: each authority possesses a domain that is its own. Civil authority has received the responsibility to administer public affairs, to protect the life, property, and rights of citizens, and to ensure social order through just and equitable laws.

However, it possesses no competence over the human conscience, faith, and the personal relationship of the human being with God.

True respect for religious freedom does not consist of bringing political power and religious power closer together, but of ensuring that every conscience remains free before God, without intervention or constraint exercised by an earthly authority.

It is in this perspective that the solemn declaration of Jesus Christ takes on its full meaning:

"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)

This word establishes a fundamental distinction between what pertains to human authority and what belongs exclusively to God.

Thus, allowing Caesar to extend his domain to what belongs to God, notably the conscience and faith of individuals, constitutes a profound confusion of the respective responsibilities of civil authority and divine authority. It is from this biblical principle that this commentary exposes the reasons why any institutional rapprochement between the State and religion represents, according to this principle of the Scriptures, an orientation incompatible with true freedom of conscience.

I. The Mission of the State and its Biblical Limits

The Bible recognizes the existence of civil authorities and their responsibility in the organization of society:

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God." (Romans 13:1)

But this recognition never gives the State an absolute right over the human conscience. When earthly authority demands what belongs to God, the biblical principle remains:

"We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

The State must therefore protect religious freedom, not intervene in religion, organize it, or grant it institutional influence.

II. The Separation of Church and State: A Principle of Protecting Conscience

The Bible demonstrates that God's spiritual mission and the administration of earthly kingdoms belong to two distinct domains. Jesus declared:

"My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36)

Christianity does not rest on political constraint, but on personal conviction and freedom of conscience. Thus, the State must neither promote a religion nor collaborate with it in the exercise of power. The separation between civil authority and religious authority is not a threat to faith; it is the necessary condition for preserving authentic religious freedom.

When the State associates itself with a religious authority, it no longer protects faith alone: it risks becoming an instrument capable of constraining consciences.

III. The Warnings of History

History provides tragic evidence of the consequences of the union between political power and religious power.

1. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572)

The St. Bartholomew's Day massacre remains a particularly striking example. In a context where the monarchy and the dominant religion were closely linked, thousands of Huguenot Protestants were massacred in France. This event tragically illustrates the perils that any intrusion of civil authority into the spiritual sphere engenders, in defiance of the sacred principle of the separation of Church and State.

When the State becomes the instrument of a particular religious cause, those who do not share this conviction can quickly become victims of persecution.

2. Religious Persecutions in Europe

The persecutions linked to the Inquisition, the sufferings of the Waldensians, and the measures taken against the Huguenots after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes also testify to the dangers of a close alliance between political power and a dominant religious authority.

These events demonstrate a fundamental truth: when Caesar uses his authority in the religious domain, freedom of conscience is threatened.

IV. Fundamental Concerns Regarding the Commission

The orientations of this Commission raise grave concerns regarding biblical principles relating to the separation of civil and religious authority.

According to this understanding founded on the Scriptures, any attempt to bring the State closer to religious institutions represents a dangerous orientation, as it risks placing human authority in a domain that belongs exclusively to God.

1. The Increase of Religious Influence in the Public Sphere

The State has not received the mission to promote religion or to integrate religious influence into its structures. Its role is to guarantee freedom of conscience, not to favor a particular spiritual orientation. Any increase in

religious influence in public institutions constitutes a dangerous confusion between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God.

2. The Widening of Religious Exemptions

Religious freedom must be protected, but it must never serve as a foundation for an extension of religious power in public decisions. Conscience belongs to God and must not depend on any human authority. Any measure granting religious convictions a special place in public organization risks weakening the principle of State neutrality and compromising the equality of consciences before the law.

3. The Rapprochement Between Government and Religious Organizations

Any institutional alliance between the State and religious organizations represents a serious threat to freedom of conscience. Even when presented as a means to promote the social good, this approach creates a dangerous confusion between the responsibilities of Caesar and those that belong to God.

History demonstrates that the union of civil power and religious power often ends up exposing dissidents and religious minorities to pressure, discrimination, or persecution. True religious freedom therefore requires a clear and permanent separation between these two domains.

Conclusion and Solemn Appeal

On the basis of the biblical principles set forth, I launch a firm appeal for the complete abandonment of this project, as well as for the immediate and delay-free dissolution of this Commission.

I also extend this appeal to any other institutional structure developing, in any form whatsoever, similar relationships between civil authority and religious authority. This condemnation specifically targets the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, as well as any government body whose vocation is to create, strengthen, or institutionalize such rapprochements.

In accordance with the principle stated by Jesus Christ in Matthew 22:21 — "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" — such structures are, in my view, incompatible with the model established by the divine Founder of the Christian faith, who affirms a clear separation between the domain of civil authority and that of divine authority. This is why I renew my urgent appeal for their dissolution, without delay.

I also wish to clarify that this conviction does not proceed from an opposition to religion. It stems from my faithfulness to biblical teaching, according to which the State and religion fall under two distinct spheres of authority. Respect for this distinction constitutes, in my eyes, one of the most essential guarantees of freedom of conscience.

In this capacity, this Commission already constitutes, according to the Scriptures, a very bad omen and an approach incompatible with the fundamental biblical principle according to which Caesar must remain within the limits of the authority entrusted to him. Allowing civil authority to intervene in the religious domain means crossing a limit that biblical teachings clearly invite us never to exceed. Such an orientation would constitute not only a grave mistake regarding the true role of the State, but also a profound threat to freedom of conscience.

If this approach were to materialize, its consequences would not be limited to the future of the United States; they could also strike a major blow to the universal principle of religious freedom and produce repercussions for the rest of the world.

Ultimately, the true protection of religious freedom resides neither in the rapprochement of the State and religion, nor in the institutionalization of their relations, but in the scrupulous respect of the limits that God himself has set between civil authority and spiritual authority.

To preserve this distinction is to protect the freedom of conscience of all; to erase it is to open the path to drifts whose consequences history has already demonstrated. May the timeless principle proclaimed by Jesus Christ therefore prevail: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." It is in the faithful respect of this word that resides, according to my conviction, the best guarantee of religious freedom, today and for generations to come.

Thank you for taking note of this!

VERSION FRANÇAISE

Objet : Commentaire personnel sur les rapports entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité religieuse à la lumière des principes bibliques

Introduction

À l'attention des membres de la Commission et des autorités concernées,

Je tiens, par le présent commentaire, à exprimer avec respect mais avec une profonde conviction les préoccupations que soulève, au regard des principes bibliques, toute démarche visant à redéfinir les rapports entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité religieuse.

Ma réflexion repose sur un principe fondamental présenté dans les Saintes Écritures : chaque autorité possède un domaine qui lui est propre. L'autorité civile a reçu la responsabilité d'administrer la chose publique, de protéger la vie, les biens et les droits des citoyens, et d'assurer l'ordre social par des lois justes et équitables. Toutefois, elle ne possède aucune compétence sur la conscience humaine, la foi et la relation personnelle de l'être humain avec Dieu.

Le respect véritable de la liberté religieuse ne consiste pas à rapprocher le pouvoir politique et le pouvoir religieux, mais à garantir que chaque conscience demeure libre devant Dieu, sans intervention ni contrainte exercée par une autorité terrestre.

C'est dans cette perspective que prend tout son sens la déclaration solennelle de Jésus-Christ :

« Rendez donc à César ce qui est à César, et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu. » (Matthieu 22:21)

Cette parole établit une distinction fondamentale entre ce qui relève de l'autorité humaine et ce qui appartient exclusivement à Dieu.

Ainsi, permettre à César d'étendre son domaine jusqu'à ce qui appartient à Dieu, notamment la conscience et la foi des individus, constitue une confusion profonde des responsabilités respectives de l'autorité civile et de l'autorité divine. C'est à partir de ce principe biblique que le présent commentaire expose les raisons pour lesquelles tout rapprochement institutionnel entre l'État et la religion représente, selon ce principe des Écritures, une orientation incompatible avec la véritable liberté de conscience.

I. La mission de l'État et ses limites bibliques

La Bible reconnaît l'existence des autorités civiles et leur responsabilité dans l'organisation de la société :

« Que toute personne soit soumise aux autorités supérieures ; car il n'y a point d'autorité qui ne vienne de Dieu. » (Romains 13:1)

Mais cette reconnaissance ne donne jamais à l'État un droit absolu sur la conscience humaine. Lorsque l'autorité terrestre exige ce qui appartient à Dieu, le principe biblique demeure :

« Il faut obéir à Dieu plutôt qu'aux hommes. » (Actes 5:29)

L'État doit donc protéger la liberté religieuse, non intervenir dans la religion, l'organiser ou lui accorder une influence institutionnelle.

II. La séparation de l'Église et de l'État : un principe de protection de la conscience

La Bible démontre que la mission spirituelle de Dieu et l'administration des royaumes terrestres appartiennent à deux domaines distincts. Jésus déclara :

« Mon royaume n'est pas de ce monde. » (Jean 18:36)

Le christianisme ne repose pas sur la contrainte politique, mais sur la conviction personnelle et la liberté de conscience. Ainsi, l'État ne doit ni promouvoir une religion, ni collaborer avec elle dans l'exercice du pouvoir. La séparation entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité religieuse n'est pas une menace contre la foi ; elle est la condition nécessaire pour préserver une liberté religieuse authentique.

Lorsque l'État s'associe à une autorité religieuse, il ne protège plus seulement la foi : il risque de devenir un instrument capable de contraindre les consciences.

III. Les avertissements de l'histoire

L'histoire fournit des preuves tragiques des conséquences de l'union entre le pouvoir politique et le pouvoir religieux.

1. Le massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy (1572)

Le massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy demeure un exemple particulièrement frappant. Dans un contexte où la monarchie et la religion dominante étaient étroitement liées, des milliers de protestants huguenots furent massacrés en France. Cet événement illustre tragiquement les périls qu'engendre toute intrusion de l'autorité civile dans la sphère spirituelle, en bafouant le principe sacro-saint de la séparation de l'État et de l'Église.

Lorsque l'État devient l'instrument d'une cause religieuse particulière, ceux qui ne partagent pas cette conviction peuvent rapidement devenir victimes de persécutions.

2. Les persécutions religieuses en Europe

Les persécutions liées à l'Inquisition, les souffrances des Vaudois et les mesures prises contre les huguenots après la révocation de l'édit de Nantes témoignent également des dangers d'une alliance étroite entre le pouvoir politique et une autorité religieuse dominante. Ces événements démontrent une vérité fondamentale : lorsque César utilise son autorité dans le domaine religieux, la liberté de conscience est menacée.

IV. Les préoccupations fondamentales concernant la Commission

Les orientations de cette Commission soulèvent de graves inquiétudes au regard des principes bibliques relatifs à la séparation entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité religieuse. Selon cette affirmation fondée sur les Écritures, toute tentative visant à rapprocher l'État des institutions religieuses représente une orientation dangereuse, car elle risque de placer une autorité humaine dans un domaine qui appartient exclusivement à Dieu.

1. L'accroissement de l'influence religieuse dans la sphère publique

L'État n'a pas reçu la mission de promouvoir la religion ni d'intégrer une influence religieuse dans ses structures. Son rôle est de garantir la liberté de conscience, non de favoriser une orientation spirituelle particulière. Toute augmentation de l'influence religieuse dans les institutions publiques constitue une confusion dangereuse entre ce qui appartient à César et ce qui appartient à Dieu.

2. L'élargissement des exemptions religieuses

La liberté religieuse doit être protégée, mais elle ne doit jamais servir de fondement à une extension du pouvoir religieux dans les décisions publiques. La conscience appartient à Dieu et ne doit dépendre d'aucune autorité humaine. Toute mesure accordant aux convictions religieuses une place particulière dans l'organisation publique risque d'affaiblir le principe de neutralité de l'État et de compromettre l'égalité des consciences devant la loi.

3. Le rapprochement entre gouvernement et organisations religieuses

Toute alliance institutionnelle entre l'État et les organisations religieuses représente une menace sérieuse pour la liberté de conscience. Même lorsqu'elle est présentée comme un moyen de promouvoir le bien social, cette démarche crée une confusion dangereuse entre les responsabilités de César et celles qui appartiennent à Dieu.

L'histoire démontre que l'union du pouvoir civil et du pouvoir religieux finit souvent par exposer les dissidents et les minorités religieuses à la pression, à la discrimination ou à la persécution. La véritable liberté religieuse exige donc une séparation claire et permanente entre ces deux domaines.

Conclusion et appel solennel

Sur la base des principes bibliques exposés, je lance un appel ferme à l'abandon complet de ce projet, ainsi qu'à la dissolution immédiate et sans délai de cette Commission.

J'étends également cet appel à toute autre structure institutionnelle développant, sous quelque forme que ce soit, des rapports similaires entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité religieuse. Cette condamnation vise notamment le Bureau de la foi de la Maison-Blanche, ainsi que tout organisme gouvernemental ayant pour vocation de créer, de renforcer ou d'institutionnaliser de tels rapprochements.

Conformément au principe énoncé par Jésus-Christ dans Matthieu 22:21 — « Rendez donc à César ce qui est à César, et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu » — de telles structures sont, à mes yeux, incompatibles avec le modèle établi par le divin Fondateur de la foi chrétienne, lequel affirme une séparation claire entre le domaine de l'autorité civile et celui de l'autorité divine. C'est pourquoi je renouvelle mon appel pressant à leur dissolution, sans délai.

Je tiens également à préciser que cette conviction ne procède nullement d'une opposition à la religion. Elle découle de ma fidélité à l'enseignement biblique, selon lequel l'État et la religion relèvent de deux sphères d'autorité distinctes. Le respect de cette distinction constitue, à mes yeux, l'une des garanties les plus essentielles de la liberté de conscience.

À ce titre, cette Commission constitue déjà, selon les Écritures, un très mauvais présage et une démarche incompatible avec le principe biblique fondamental selon lequel César doit demeurer dans les limites de l'autorité qui lui a été confiée. Permettre à l'autorité civile d'intervenir dans le domaine religieux revient à franchir une limite que les enseignements bibliques invitent clairement à ne jamais dépasser. Une telle orientation constituerait non seulement une grave méprise quant au rôle véritable de l'État, mais également une menace profonde pour la liberté de conscience.

Si cette démarche venait à se concrétiser, ses conséquences ne se limiteraient pas à l'avenir des États-Unis ; elles pourraient également porter une atteinte majeure au principe universel de la liberté religieuse et produire des répercussions sur le reste du monde.

En définitive, la véritable protection de la liberté religieuse ne réside ni dans le rapprochement de l'État et de la religion, ni dans l'institutionnalisation de leurs relations, mais dans le respect scrupuleux des limites que Dieu lui-même a fixées entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité spirituelle.

Préserver cette distinction, c'est protéger la liberté de conscience de tous ; l'effacer, c'est ouvrir la voie à des dérives dont l'histoire a déjà démontré les conséquences. Puisse donc prévaloir le principe intemporel proclamé par Jésus-Christ : « Rendez donc à César ce qui est à César, et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu. » C'est dans le respect fidèle de cette parole que réside, selon ma conviction, la meilleure garantie de la liberté religieuse, aujourd'hui comme pour les générations à venir.

Merci d'en prendre acte !

From: Ben Forry <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:30:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the separation of church and state.

Benjamin G. Forry

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From: Charles McGathy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Commission Report - Dr. Charles P. McGathy CDR, Chaplain Corps, USN (Ret.)

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:31:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have reviewed the draft version of the "Religious Liberty Commission" draft report, and I am disturbed by several matters. I mention this one because of my experience and knowledge of chaplaincy in the United States Navy. The impetus of this commission is clearly opposed to the historical and common understanding of the principle of Church State separation. Moreover, it appears to take the side of religious organizations that deny that there is any such principle at play in the tradition of our nation and supported by the Constitution.

Another concern you should be aware of is the ridiculous argument made by some that a refusal to take vaccinees is a significant religious issue. I may be a political ideal embraced by those who would rather deny science than help protect their fellow service members who might be subject to the rages of pandemic. A Covid -19 breakout on a Navy ship would be a disaster. There are only flimsy and unsupported religious arguments for not taking preventative measures. You know this is dumb headed. Just consider the recent reversal when an Air Force Base was incapacitated by a flu epidemic. The cause DOD (Not DOW) policy that airmen could refuse preventative prophylaxis.

I am a Baptist pastor. I am an American. I am a Veteran. And I am outraged by your report.

Charles P. McGathy

Commander, Chaplain Corps, USN (Ret.)

Pastor

First Baptist Church, Madison, North Carolina

www.firstbaptistchurchofmadison.weebly.com



Virus-free. www.avg.com

From: Anne Tuttle <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - religious liberty report Anne Tuttle

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:35:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a veteran pledging to serve the constitution, to desecrate the first amendment is anathema to me. The founding fathers included Jews, Christians , friends and other beliefs.

This country was a beacon to the world until recently when some faiths chose to serve two masters - not one. The Christ taught us that you cannot serve two.

Religious liberty includes worship choice and the co existence of many faiths, justice and seeking as a right- not a political dogma

I will continue supporting the constitutional ideals

But will follow the teachings and directives of Christ

Ty for allowing me my thoughts to share

Sent

from my iPhone

From: Tracy Burton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:36:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

“Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”. The recognition or any religion or it’s belief within a nations government will inevitably result in the persecution of those who do not believe in thus said beliefs. This nation if not careful to follow it written constitution on this matter will repeat the same acts in Europe at the time of this nations beginning.

From: Anne <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment: Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:42:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern at DOJ:

I'm seriously concerned about the draft report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty (Commission) that attempts to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state. The simple establishment of a commission ensures that changes will be recommended.

BUT DON'T DO IT!

AT A MINIMUM, LEAVE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE AS IT IS!

IF ANYTHING, STRENGTHEN IT TO ENSURE THAT IT IS NEVER SUBJECT TO PERSONAL PREFERENCES OF ONE WHITE HOUSE OR THE NEXT, ONE RELIGION OR THE NEXT, ONE STATE OR NATION OR MUNICIPALITY OR THE NEXT!

First, it's a serious concern to me that something that has been maintained for decades could become subject to the winds of political change depending on who's in the White House. It might work great for ME in one White House but not for you, and great for YOU in a different White House but not for me. And Back And Forth!

Second, this is a serious compromise to current religious liberty. What about a President who favors censorship against one government narrative or another, but a different President who favors censorship against another government narrative, or a President who favors Christianity over another religion, with the next President over-riding that in favor of a different religion or religious interpretation.

LET'S GET RID OF GOVERNMENT NARRATIVES ON ANY TOPIC, ESPECIALLY RELIGION!

LET'S ENSURE THERE'S ZERO POTENTIAL IN THE FUTURE FOR ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT NARRATIVE THAT "SHOULD" BE ENFORCED!

Third, the government should never be involved in the funding of religious non-profits, the funding of religious education, the funding of religious clubs on public campuses, or anything at all related to religion.

I DON'T WANT MY TAX DOLLARS FUNDING RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES I DON'T AGREE

WITH!

LEAVE FUNDING TO THE GROUPS THEMSELVES!

IT'S THEIR RESPONSIBILITY, NOT MINE!

Fourth, no special treatment for any religion on any level!

Fifth, the Johnson Amendment must be fully enforced!

No. Just NO.

Thank you,
Anne Wallace

From: Katrina Hovanski <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -Separation of Church and State- Katrina Hovanski

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:45:15 -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. This is not good for the church and the country alike.

Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and this is the reason religion has stayed strong here. My ancestors came and fought for our freedom here in this wonderful United States of America. They died for the freedom we enjoy. They were in this country when Roger Williams founded Rhode Island. Later, on the other side of my family, my great, great grandparents fled to the United States from Bohemia because of religious persecution and the desire for freedom and a chance to build a new life. These freedoms we still hold dear. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Katrina Hovanski
Pahoa, HI

Sent from my iPhone

From: erika zurita <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential religious liberty Commission draft report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:49:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with the comments of Pillars of freedom comments, please implement them.

Erika

From: Edward Dancek <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:49:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

Maintain the separation of church and state as our forefathers established it.

Sent from my iPad

From: C Wilson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] President Trump's Religious Liberty Commission recommendations

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:50:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am an 86 year old man that has lived in the wonderful United States of America all my life.
I have never been told when to work or when to worship.

I agree with President James Madison on the separation of church and state!
The history of the combination of church and state has a very long historical record of persecution and death.

I am opposed to the recommendations of President Trump's Commission on Religious Liberty in combining church and state.
To choose our day of worship and days of work.

I hope that the United States of America will always allow the freedom of religion and remain the land of the free!

From: Tesa <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State Separation

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:55:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hi, hope you are doing well! I am very concerned with the Commission wanting to creat a bridge between church and state. With respect, I would like to voice my sincere concern in doing so. A bridge will not benefit any church or the people, it will only allow for government and political gain and control. Churches don't need government money to fund activities or anything. God helps us in every way! America was built for freedom. Please take us faith based Americans into your consideration and please don't build that bridge!

I can't even count how many time God has saved my life, keeping me and my family out of harms way through many trails and tribulations! Please from the bottom of my heart keep church and state separated!

I really appreciate you taking the time in reading this and your consideration! May God bless whoever is reading this and may God bless all of us!

Blessings,

Tesa Freitag
Sent from my iPhone

From: Comcast <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Draft Report Feedback

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:56:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and Department of Justice,

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to the recently published draft report by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. The recommendations within this report represent a **dangerous departure from the foundational American principle of the separation of church and state**.

The draft's attempt to diminish the Establishment Clause undermines the very mechanism that has protected true religious freedom in our nation for nearly 250 years. By suggesting policies that encourage state-sponsored religious displays in public institutions and recommending targeted federal litigation to back these measures, the report shifts government focus from protecting individual conscience to promoting state-favored religious practices.

A national framework devoid of specific religious authority is not hostile to faith; rather, it is the only system that allows faith to remain pure, vibrant, and completely independent of political control. When the boundary between civil authority and religious authority is erased, the tools of government inevitably **become instruments of religious coercion and exclusion**.

I urge the Commission to revise the final report to strictly **uphold the historical, legal separation of church and state, ensuring that the federal government remains a neutral protector of all citizens' freedom of conscience**, rather than an arbiter of religious doctrine.

Sincerely,

Betina DiDomenico

Nashville, TN

From: Beckie Hunter <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Chirch and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 14:57:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it Concerns: I cannot believe what I am hearing! Our Nation was founded on the constitution! Our Amendment of Freedom of religion should Never be interferred with! The State should not EVER have the ability to control or change our Religious Liberty! The Government tends to want to change our rights while swaying the people that these changes are for the better, however, they are NOT! If we change this, what will be next? How many other rights will be so called "Changed?" Or eliminated in the name of "Our Good"? What ever happened to "WE THE PEOPLE!" PLEASE!!! RECONSIDER THIS!! I want my Religious Freedoms to remain! CHURCH AND STATE NEED TO REMAIN SEPARATE!!

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religion

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:03:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support separation of church and state and religious liberty for all Americans!

From: SCOTT HODGES <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to Commission.pdf

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:19:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

To whom it may concern: this letter reflects my deepest concern regarding the separation of church and state.
Respectfully,

Dr Scott Hodges



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 6, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines this principle by proposing to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall of separation was not a secular invention imposed upon religion — it was built by people of faith, to protect faith. Breaching that wall will set the churches against one another in competition for government money and favor, and set the church against the state as each seeks power over the other — eroding the very freedom the Commission claims to defend. The Commission has recommended increasing government funding of religious activities and recommended repealing the Johnson Amendment. Both of

these recommendations, if followed, will bring the corruption of the political process into the churches. In making its recommendations the Commission has relied upon a faulty retelling of our history.

The American Development of Separation of Church and State

The establishment of a wall of separation between the church and the state first appeared in the modern world in 1636 when Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island. The success of Roger Williams' experiment would later inspire the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and to a lesser extent other colonies to roll back their religious legislation long before the Revolution of 1776. By 1790, all but three of the original 13 had disestablished their churches, and by 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, had disestablished its church as well. No state would ever enter the Union with an established church. The United States had learned from the colonies that liberty prospered better where church and state were separate. While the states themselves would take some time to extricate themselves from religious entanglements, the drafters and signers of the Constitution recognized the value of religious liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman who toured the United States from 1831 to 1832, observed this about the cause of religion's power in America and how religion indirectly influenced the nation.

In order to learn more about [the separation of church and state], I questioned the faithful of all communions. ... To each of them I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts, and I discovered that they differed among themselves only on matters of detail: to a man, they assigned primary credit for the peaceful ascendancy of religion in their country to the complete separation of church and state. I state without hesitation that during my stay in America I met no one — not a single clergyman or layman — who did not agree with this statement.¹

¹Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 341.

The [clergy] are careful to remain aloof from public affairs and do not involve themselves in the machinations of the parties. Therefore, one cannot say that religion in the United States influences the laws or the specifics of political opinion, but it does shape mores, and it is by regulating the family that religion endeavors to regulate the state.²

The Commission itself recognizes “that religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength,” and that “preserving it will require vigilance, education, and renewed commitment from institutions and citizens alike.” Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report at 13. The report then goes on to highlight a list of areas where religion and religious people are under attack. These areas of attack are fairly portrayed, and all people of faith should be concerned about the attack. America is in a culture war, and much of the battle is over values that are informed by religion. While the report does not go so far as to explicitly state that atheistic secularism is a religion, it certainly functions as one, and when the state supports secularism in its worst forms, the state is taking sides in the culture war against religion. This needs to stop.

The Commission’s Revisionist History of the American Experience

First, the Commission tells a false history of religious liberty in the colonies and in the early history of the nation. It completely ignores that the idea of building a wall of separation between the church and the state is a very old idea, which was fully enunciated in 1644 by Roger Williams. Report at 37. Next, they ignore the fact that Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware followed Rhode Island’s example by keeping a wall of separation between the church and the state. They also ignore that other colonies, seeing the freedom and success of the states which preserved the separation of church and state, repealed laws which supported their established churches in order to attract more immigrants. By 1776, the founding fathers concluded that separation of church and state had been a success, and while not using the phrase “separation of church and state,” drafted the concept into the Constitution. The inclu-

²Ibid. p. 336.

sion of separation of church and state, impressed upon James Madison by members of the Baptist church, united the Baptists and the members of other denominations to support the Constitution and ensure its adoption. Baptist support was contingent upon the addition of the First Amendment, which was speedily adopted after the adoption of the Constitution. Thus without separation of church and state, the Constitution would never have been adopted. Nevertheless, the Commission would have us believe that religious liberty did not exist in the states prior to the adoption of the Constitution, Report at 37, and that the concept of a wall of separation was the invention of Thomas Jefferson, and not central to the freedoms of our nation. They state that the idea of a wall of separation comes from a single letter, forgotten until the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947, completely omitting the rich history of both the phrase and the idea. Report at 42.

The metaphor of creating a wall of separation between the church and the state was first written by Roger Williams in a reply to John Cotton in 1644, and then reproduced and expanded upon in his *magnum opus*, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, published in London in the same year.³ Parliament banned the book. The metaphor was well known to the founding fathers, probably through the works of James Burgh, raised a Scottish Presbyterian who later became a devout Protestant dissenter. Thomas Jefferson's letter was not first quoted by the Supreme Court in 1947, but rather 68 years earlier in 1879 in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*. The Commission ignores a long line of Presidents who felt compelled to explicitly support the concept of a wall of separation. Besides Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, one of the primary drafters of the Constitution, said that there should be a "separation between religion and government,"⁴ and that religion flourished better without government patronage.⁵ George Washington's diplomats negotiated, and John Adams signed the Treaty

³Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (1644), in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 1, p. 108; the metaphor is reproduced and developed throughout *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Edward Bean Underhill (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1848), see, e.g., p. 435.

⁴ James Madison, "Detached Memoranda" (c. 1817), in Elizabeth Fleet, "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 534–568.

⁵ Madison's Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822.

of Tripoli, which stated that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”⁶ President Fillmore said that “Church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled.”⁷ President Grant said, “Keep the church and the state forever separate.”⁸ President Garfield said that it would be dangerous to use public funds for religious schools and that “The separation of the Church and the State in everything relating to taxation should be absolute.”⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt said there must be “complete severance of Church and State.”¹⁰

In attacking the Supreme Court decisions of the 1940s, the Commission resorts to two tactics that cannot survive scrutiny: a personal attack on Justice Hugo Black, and claims of philosophical influence that the timeline of history makes impossible. The Commission states “Even a few Supreme Court decisions seemed to track with this train of thought [defined earlier in the report as that of Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, and the belief that ‘God is dead’], culminating in a 1947 opinion [*Everson*], in which Justice Hugo Black, a former Ku Klux Klan member, repurposed a metaphor coined by Thomas Jefferson in an attempt to legitimize the new critical philosophy by placing it in the constitutional tradition. Specifically, the Supreme Court ruled on a series of decisions in which it used the ‘wall’ metaphor to regulate a child’s access to religious education and later to ban school prayer and public displays of religion (like the Ten Commandments).” Report at 41-42. Without any support for the notion that Justice Black wrote opinions in accordance with the anti-Catholic philosophies of the Klan, the Commission attempts to persuade the public that Justice Black was racist and that his opinions should be disregard-

⁶ Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, art. 11, signed Nov. 4, 1796; ratified by the U.S. Senate June 7, 1797; proclaimed by President John Adams June 10, 1797 (Barlow translation).

⁷ *The Ovation to Mr. Fillmore: Speeches of Mr. Fillmore*, 1856.

⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, Address to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 29, 1875.

⁹ James A. Garfield, Letter Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (to Hon. George F. Hoar), July 12, 1880.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 361; the statement originated in T. Roosevelt’s 1915 public letter opposing public funding of sectarian schools in New York.

ed. This is an *ad hominem* attack commonly used in the highly charged political debates of today, but counterproductive to finding truth and establishing unity. It is only useful in persuading the uninformed. The suggestion that *Everson* “tracked” with Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, or later critical theory is historically implausible. Foucault’s major works postdated *Everson*, Sartre was never a source of American Establishment Clause doctrine, and the Court grounded its reasoning in American sources: Madison, Jefferson, disestablishment, and the First Amendment tradition. To attempt to smear the Supreme Court with Justice Black’s much earlier Klan membership and with Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre is disingenuous. While Justice Black held that the Constitution established a wall of separation between the church and the state, in the same decision, the decision attacked by the Commission, Justice Black held that government reimbursement for transportation to Catholic schools was constitutional. How ironic! The Commission faults Justice Black for anti-Catholic bias from his Klan past, yet the very decision it attacks is one in which he upheld government support benefiting Catholic school-children. And it faults him for following philosophies that no serious legal historian would argue influenced the Court’s reasoning.

The Commission correctly states that much of the hostility towards religion in America today is based upon a “broader cultural assumption that religious belief should remain invisible while secular ideologies enjoy full freedom to influence public institutions.” Report at 21. The Commission is correct to say, “People of faith should not be required to leave their religious convictions behind when entering the workplace, engaging in commerce, serving their communities, or participating in public debate,” and that “institutions should foster environments in which citizens with divergent convictions can work together while maintaining fidelity to conscience.” Report at 21. Nevertheless, the Report goes on to continually overstate the case by saying that the “wall of separation” ideology creates a wall between personal faith and public life. While this may be true when the idea of a wall of separation is misconstrued and weaponized by secular atheists, it is not true that the wall of separation erected by the Constitution and so often referred to by generations of leaders who have gone before us is a wall between personal faith and public life. The true wall of separation is between the state and the church. It is

there so that a person can freely exercise their personal faith and freely engage in the public sphere, without prejudice or persecution. To deny that there is complete separation of church and state in the Constitution, aka “the wall,” and to deny that the wall can serve a useful purpose in protecting individual freedom is un-American and counter to both our experience and the knowledge and intent of our forefathers. The wall of separation is not a wall between religious people and public life; it is a wall between ecclesiastical power and civil power, protecting both religion and civil freedom.

The Commission’s Objectionable Recommendations

Based upon the above arguments, the Commission recommends that the United States adopt its recommendation to post in the workplace, to teach our students, and to teach as many citizens as possible that the Constitution neither creates nor requires the separation of church and state, and that there should be no wall of separation between church and state. If this false ideology is embraced by the people, it will allow for many different “reforms,” and eventually be used to justify any oppressive religious legislation so long as it is for the good of the people or represents the will of the majority. This is a radical teaching that has the potential, over time, to roll back the freedoms we enjoy in this nation, and return us to the political conflicts and tyranny our forefathers came to America to escape. This is the underlying philosophical foundation of additional, objectionable recommendations that the Commission makes.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations. It bases its argument on the idea that in times of need, to separate the physical help from spiritual help is to deny the full scope of the help that the person in need requires. This may be true in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this is an argument to the church that wishes to provide those services to fund them internally, and not rely upon the state. For religion to rely upon state funding is for religion to take the role of an imposter, pretending to provide aid, when in fact it is the state that is making the aid possible. It also allows the religion that is relying upon government funding to use that funding as an

aid in indoctrination and evangelism, thus the government is not remaining neutral. The Commission argues that church members today must leave their religious beliefs at home to engage in humanitarian work. That should never be true for work that they do without the aid of the state, and should only be true to the extent the state is providing them assistance. This is for the protection of religion as much as it is for the state and its citizens. Anytime government money is available, a religion will modify its beliefs to adhere to the values of the government so that it can obtain funds. Public money always brings public control. Furthermore, different religions may claim fairness requires equal funding, even though they do not provide equal services. This certainly will devolve into a quagmire that the state would do well to avoid.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious education. All the reasons against supporting religious philanthropy apply here, as well as additional reasons. The Commission argues correctly that the state benefits from a religious people. But the Commission errs in thinking the state can be involved in making people religious. In education, it is important what is taught. By supporting religious education, the state will be making decisions about what doctrines can be taught. This most commonly takes the form of accreditation. Many sectarian schools are not accredited for this reason. But it can go further. Will the state support a school whose religion teaches interracial marriage is a sin, or that women should not receive higher education? Will the state support a school that teaches polygamy? What about a school that doesn't teach many things, like the Amish? This puts the state into the business of determining what values are worth supporting and what values are not. Don't think that the decisions will only be required for that which may seem obvious to us today. Today the Commission is recommending that the Ten Commandments be posted in schools and courthouses. Which Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments of Exodus or Deuteronomy? One is more Jewish focused, one more focused on creation, both requiring the keeping of the seventh day, not the first day? Or maybe the Ten Commandments of a Roman Catholic catechism, which a Protestant will tell you dispenses with the law against graven images and a Catholic priest will tell you merely divides the commandments differently. Or maybe the state can just abbreviate the Ten Commandments, number

them like a Protestant, and hope everybody is happy. That is the solution in Texas. Texas is getting into the business of doctrine. A government that refuses to fund religious doctrine is not thereby endorsing secularism, rather, it is refusing to decide religious questions. That restraint is not hostility to religion; it is the condition under which religious communities remain free and prosperous.

The Commission has one more recommendation that has the potential to expand the breach in the wall of separation. The Commission recommends repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment prohibits churches from engaging in partisan politics, specifically supporting a candidate for election. It does not prohibit the church from speaking on the issues of the day, or even telling its members how to vote regarding issues, such as abortion and the right to life. What would repealing the Amendment do? Churches would become fabulous non-profit vehicles to engage in political activities. Pastors are known to exhibit tremendous sway over their congregations. It is not hard to imagine the intense pressure that a pastor could feel to deliver his congregation's votes for money. It is not hard to imagine that wealthy and powerful interests might attempt to influence political causes through the churches. Combine that with a patronage system whereby the congregations could receive government grants based upon the Commission's other recommendations, and there is a recipe for disaster. What failing congregation won't make a little compromise for a little financial gain? As scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV. As financial interests invade the churches, invariably the public will be able to smell hypocrisy, and any gains either the church or the state thinks may be had by their union will be lost. Only a dead, lifeless church on government life support will remain.

Today, the Johnson Amendment is already being dismantled by non-enforcement. In *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, the IRS and several religious plaintiffs proposed a settlement that would have substantially narrowed enforcement of the Johnson Amendment as applied to churches. This settlement was opposed by the Baptist Joint Committee and Americans United, two reputable religious liberty advocacy organizations, not secular humanists. A federal district court found that it lacked juris-

diction on March 31, 2026. The effort to remove the barrier between tax-exempt churches and partisan campaign activity is expected to continue. The Commission should reverse its recommendation for repealing the Johnson Amendment, and instead, recommend its enforcement.

The Commission Correctly Identifies a Peril, but Not the Solution

Commissioner Bishop Robert Barron made an important observation about secularism. He said, “[T]here’s a philosophical issue which is secularism proposing itself as some kind of neutral ground, but it’s not neutral ground. Secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system. It wants to dominate the whole of life and therefore to exclude religion [from the public square].” Report at 181. Commissioner Kelly Shackelford makes a particularly insightful comment that “the one thing a totalitarian regime will never allow is citizens who hold an allegiance to one higher than the government. So, whenever that type of power of coalescing comes together, the first flashpoint is always going to be religious freedom. And if you lose there, you will lose everything else. So, what we’re really dealing with here is the precipice of all our freedoms.” Report at 29. This should be particularly sobering when combined with the Commission’s observation that “contemporary progressive opposition to religious liberty ... seek[s] freedom for its own views but coercion of religious groups whose traditional beliefs conflict with current trends such as transgenderism.” Report at 35-36. The Commission is correct in urging the courts to view atheism and atheistic determinism as ideologically and functionally similar to religion. Just as secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system, religion, when granted power, tends toward the same result. Combining church and state together, financially or otherwise, will result in one or the other demanding power and control over the other. History has shown us that the stronger the bond between church and state, the more oppressed the society. The union of church and state is the recipe for the kind of totalitarian regime warned about by Commissioner Shackelford. This is not a new discovery. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams wrote, “Checks and Ballances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them, are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body.—Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as Soon as either

Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unballanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!”¹¹ The church and state should remain forever apart, neutral towards each other, and neutral towards secularism.

Finally, the country as a whole should not be swayed by arguments made for religion in the military. It is true, the military should be very careful not to support or oppose any religion, but it is also true that the military must be able to provide religious services to its members. The reason they must provide those services is that in the military, especially when deployed, there are no alternative means to obtain religious services. A service member deployed in a foreign land may not be able to go to the local Baptist, Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, or Mormon church, or synagogue or mosque, because they may not exist in the area, nor would it necessarily be safe to go off base to attend one.

Conclusion

Just before and after the Revolution, the disestablishment of the state churches was an important project of our founding fathers. It was not without controversy. The experience of it should not be lost upon us.

Reverend Lyman Beecher was a Congregationalist minister, one of the most influential evangelical preachers of the early 1800s, and a leader in the movement to maintain the established church of Connecticut. Before 1818, he argued for the need of an established church. He said, “So the democracy, as it rose, included nearly all the minor sects, besides the Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling tippling folk, infidels, and ruff-scuff generally, and made a dead set at us of the standing order.” He believed that an es-

¹¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 25 June 1813, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0202>. [Original source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 6, 11 March to 27 November 1813, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 226–229.]

tablished church was the only way to counteract these evil influences. In 1818, Connecticut voted to disestablish its church. Beecher described the experience. “For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.” He went on to observe, “They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe buckles, and cocked hats, and golden-headed canes.”¹²

Tocqueville observed on his trip to America, “When I arrived in the United States, it was the country’s religious aspect that first captured my attention.”¹³ By speaking to Americans, he learned religion flourished *because* of the complete separation of church and state, not in spite of it. That is precisely the lesson the Commission would have the nation unlearn, or rather, learn again the hard way.

The Commission is wrong to treat separation of church and state as a modern innovation. In America, the separation of church and state formed the foundation of our dearest freedoms, supported by Baptists, dissenters, and citizens of every faith, vindicated by disestablishment, and praised by foreign observers as religion and freedom thrived together.

As Roger Williams warned, freedom of conscience must be defended: “Having bought truth dear, we must not sell it cheap, nor the least grain of it for the whole world, no not for the saving of souls, though our own most precious...”¹⁴

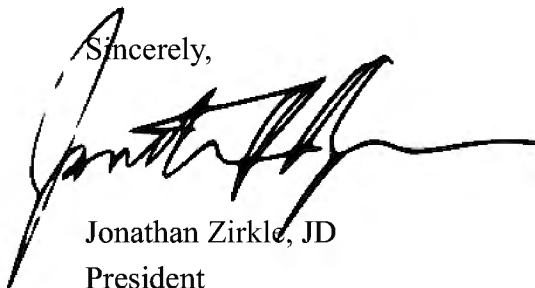
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 340.

¹⁴ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), p. 9.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. America will do best to forever maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Zirkle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Zirkle, JD
President

From: Tonya Wenger <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment – Religious Liberty Commission Report - Tonya Wenger

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:24:31 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern:

As a Christian citizen in the United States, I feel strongly the separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment. This religious liberty must be extended to all for it to be a source of liberation. I do not feel my ability to freely practice my faith is threatened by respecting other religious expressions.

As a Christian pastor, I urge you to uphold the Johnson Amendment which protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.

As someone who graduated from a private Christian high school AND has had 3 children graduate from public high school, I feel strongly that public funds should go to public, not private schools. Public schools (their teachers, administrators and support staff) are an amazing gift to a community and to the children and youth who attend. It is not a place to be elevating one religion over another, imposing the posting of the 10 Commandments, or implementing forced prayer.

And, institutions receiving public funding should not be allowed to discriminate against individuals but instead treat all people fairly and equally.

Thank you for receiving my comments and valuing my opinions,
Tonya

From: Angela Hartman <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment separation of church & state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:26:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of Religious Liberty Commission

With respect I find it alarming that the Commission wants to build a bridge for the separation of church & state. I believe the wall was put there for good measure! That wall keeps believers free. History is clear what happens when church & state joins hands & it is not a good outcome!

Sincerely,
Angela Hartman
Charlotte, NC

Sent from my iPhone

From: Steve Evans <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:40:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

Our country was founded on the separation of church and state it's not that the state is godless it's just that the church is a different and non-connected legally to the government If we fuse state and church together will make the same terrible mistake that drove people to our shores in the first place to get away from that.

Please understand there is a danger when we fuse the church together with the government We haven't needed that for 250 years and we don't need it now please pray about it and don't make this terrible mistake.

God bless you all and thank you You're humble servant
Steve Evans

From: Ruel Forbes <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Ruel Forbes

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:44:26 -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 with a faith-based upbringing I find the idea alarming.

The wall is meant to keep believers free from having our secular lives govern our religious thought, not to make the world more secular.

I think that a bridge doesn't strengthen the church; Jesus Christ said that "the cattle on a thousand hills are mine" and believers tend to agree that "God moves in mysterious ways..." and does not need government financial support or regulation even when the chips are down for a group of believers.

We understand that when our government passes secular laws, they are for the common good, namely, the parts of our daily living that we all share, regardless of our religion. Funding of public facing programs or systems comes with rules that must be followed. These rules can tend to cause conflict with the various beliefs held by individuals, so it is important to keep laws on a secular basis so that people can follow the advice given by Jesus to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

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,

Ruel Forbes

Tampa, Florida

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report of June 2026

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:48:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Presidential Religious Liberty Commission did a thorough investigation into the eroding of American citizens religious liberties. I want the Department of Justice to carry out all of the mandates that the Commission proposed. The Department needs to issue a guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Elstablishment Clause and separation of church and state and crdeate a hot line for people to obtain support in the face of liberty violations. Combat anti-semitism and repeal the Johnson Amendment. Looking forward to seeing all of their recommendations put into practice.

From: Gloria Garrett <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT -Report Recommendations -Gloria Garrett

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:49:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice,

I am writing to express my vehement opposition to the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

The recommendations outlined in this report represent a dangerous and unprecedented assault on separation of church and state. This foundational principle has protected both American democracy and religious freedom for nearly 250 years.

Specifically, I strongly object to the following proposals:

- **Dismantling the Separation of Church and State:** Minimizing this vital constitutional boundary invites government overreach into personal faith and threatens the rights of religious minorities and the non-religious.
- **Repealing the Johnson Amendment:** Allowing tax-exempt houses of worship to endorse political candidates would turn sacred spaces into partisan tools, corrupting both religion and our electoral process.
- **Taxpayer Funding for Faith-Based Programs:** Disbursing public funds to religious institutions that can legally discriminate based on faith, gender, or sexual orientation is a direct violation of taxpayer conscience.
- **Broadening Religious Exemptions:** Weaponizing "religious liberty" to allow individuals or government employees to opt out of a public health mandates, civil rights laws, and standard educational curricula

True religious freedom means the government neither promotes nor penalizes any religious viewpoints and weaves them into federal policy; these recommendations violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

I urge the Department of Justice and the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety. The government must uphold its duty to protect a secular democracy where all the citizens remain equal under the law, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely
Gloria Garrett

From: Lance Ofenloch <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Religious Liberty Commission Report - Lance Ofenloch

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:49:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state.

Based on the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be dangerously undermining it. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs.

From: Tina Hanson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns Regarding the Draft Report on Church-State Separation

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:51:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to respectfully express my deep concern regarding the draft report recommending that the longstanding constitutional principle of church-state separation be replaced with an approach of "building bridges" between faith and government.

As an American who values both religious liberty and faith, I believe the separation of church and state has been one of the greatest protections for religion. It allows every individual to worship God according to the dictates of conscience without government influence, coercion, or favoritism toward one religion over another.

The Bible itself contains powerful examples of why civil government should not direct or enforce matters of worship. In Daniel chapter 3, King Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone to bow before a golden image. Those who remained faithful to God refused to comply, even under threat of death. God honored their faithfulness, demonstrating that worship must never be compelled by government.

Likewise, in Daniel chapter 6, King Darius issued a decree forbidding prayer to anyone except the king for thirty days. Daniel chose to remain faithful to God and continued praying despite the law, showing that human governments should never place themselves between individuals and their relationship with God.

These biblical accounts reveal a consistent principle: when governments attempt to regulate worship or interfere with one's relationship with God, they act contrary to God's design.

From the very beginning of Scripture, God established freedom of choice. In the Garden of Eden, He placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before Adam and Eve and gave them the freedom to obey or disobey. Although God desired obedience, He did not force it. Genuine love and worship can exist only when they are freely chosen.

This principle of freedom is reflected in our nation's constitutional protections of religious liberty. The government should safeguard every person's right to worship—or not worship—according to conscience, rather than creating a closer partnership between government and religion that could unintentionally erode those freedoms.

History repeatedly demonstrates that when governments become involved in religious matters, both religious liberty and authentic faith suffer. Our constitutional framework has served our nation well by protecting people of all faiths and those of no faith alike.

I respectfully urge the Department of Justice to preserve the longstanding constitutional principle of church-state separation and to reject any recommendation that could weaken the protections of religious liberty guaranteed to every American.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of these concerns.

Respectfully,

Tina Hanson

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Gary Coull <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment -Chapter 14-Gary Coull

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:52:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

This report by the Freedom of Religion Council, is as important to the truth of our Founding Fathers original intent for our nation as the first 3 words our the preamble to the constitution "We The People".-

After establishing the organization of our governments workings, the founders soon established the "Bill of Rights" contained in the first 10 amendments to the original document.

All 10 amendments were important but the freedom of religion was so important, that the first 16 words of "Article 1" are dedicated to this issue; Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of Religion i.e. a national religion like the church of England, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, regarding an individual's chosen religion.

Nowhere in this text is there a reference to the separation of church from State, in fact the very opposite was intended.

The letter from President Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist of Connecticut was an exact assurance of Amendment 1 that the government was prohibited from creating a national religion.

Unfortunately in 1947 Judge Hugo Black in the Everson case perverted the meaning of the founding fathers by using the language from the Jefferson letter to mean there was a wall preventing the church from involvement in government, rather than Jeffersons true meaning, there was a wall between government establishing the fore-mentioned National Religion.

Ever since the Everson case, Judge Black's misinterpretation has been used to remove religion from every public display and presentation.

It is time for us to return to the Founding Fathers original intent in Amendment 1 of the bill of rights and eliminate the barrier that has kept sound christian doctrine out of all areas of our Federal, State and Local governments.

Respectfully submitted by;
Gary Coull

From: Hergine <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Personal Commentary on the Relationship Between Civil Authority and Religious Authority in Light of Biblical Principles

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 15:57:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

Introduction

To the attention of the members of the Commission and the relevant authorities

I hereby express my firm opposition to the report on religious freedom recently submitted to the White House.

This document, far from being a bulwark for freedom, enshrines an institutional drift that threatens the integrity of individual conscience.

The Holy Scriptures teach us that the spiritual realm is inviolable by human power. Any attempt to associate the power of the State with religious promotion constitutes, in essence, a usurpation of Divine sovereignty over the human heart.

I. The Sovereign Distinction of Christ

The teaching of Christ provides the cornerstone for any healthy relationship between State and religion:

"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)

This statement, far from being a mere evasion, defines the irreducible limits of two distinct jurisdictions. By recognizing that "Caesar"—that is, civil authority—has its prerogatives for the administration of public affairs, Christ establishes a boundary. However, by affirming that "God" possesses His own domain, He places faith, conscience, and worship beyond the reach of temporal power.

To institutionalize faith within the State apparatus is to demand that we render unto Caesar that which, by nature, belongs to God. It is an encroachment that corrupts the very nature of faith: it ceases to be a voluntary movement of the soul and becomes a product of government management.

II. The Distinct Nature of the Two Domains

Scripture establishes an insurmountable line of demarcation between the temporal and the sacred. While the civil magistrate has the duty to maintain order and promote the common good in the earthly sphere, they can in no way claim to govern the inner life of citizens.

As the prophet Zechariah points out, it is "not by might, nor by power," but by the Spirit of God that spiritual work is accomplished (Zechariah 4:6). The State, in seeking to institutionalize religion, substitutes political coercion for internal conviction, thereby corrupting the very nature of faith.

III. The Perils of State Instrumentalization

History, an implacable witness, instructs us on the devastation caused by the fusion of the sword and the censer.

Let us recall the Edict of Fontainebleau of 1685, which, under the guise of religious unity imposed by civil power, resulted in the exile and ruin of upright consciences.

This interference, by violating the principle of freedom of conscience, has shown that any rapprochement between the political office and religious authority carries within it the seeds of spiritual tyranny. When Caesar assumes the right to codify religion, they do not protect citizens; they invariably end up marginalizing dissidents.

IV. The Incompatibility of Current Structures

The proposed report, coupled with the continued existence of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the Commission on Religious Freedom, is the symptom of a confusion of roles detrimental to civil peace:

A Confusion of Competencies: By creating government entities dedicated to "faith," the State assumes the role of a spiritual judge and mediator that does not belong to it.

The Threat of Partiality: These structures, under the pretext of protecting religious freedom, actually foster a form of institutional religiosity, compromising the equality of citizens before the law.

V. Solemn Appeal

In view of these biblical and historical principles, I formally demand:

The immediate abandonment of the report submitted to the White House, as it cannot constitute a valid basis for reflection for a free society.

The complete and immediate dissolution of the Commission on Religious Freedom.

The abolition of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, as well as any other structure whose function is to link, directly or indirectly, civil authority to religious bodies.

Conclusion

True religious freedom, as defined in the Scriptures, requires the unimpeachable neutrality of civil authority.

The respect due to the Creator commands that we do not mix the authority of the world with that of the Kingdom.

I call upon you, therefore, to return to the fundamentals of a sound separation of powers and to dismantle these bodies which, by their very existence, harm the freedom of conscience of all.

Thank you for your profound attention !!!

VERSION FRANÇAISE

Commentaire personnel concernant les rapports entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité religieuse selon les Saintes Écritures

À l'attention des membres de la Commission et des autorités concernées

Introduction

Par la présente, je porte à votre connaissance ma vive opposition au projet de rapport relatif à la liberté religieuse, récemment soumis à la Maison-Blanche.

Ce document, loin d'être un rempart pour la liberté, consacre une dérive institutionnelle qui menace l'intégrité de la conscience individuelle.

Les Saintes Écritures nous enseignent que le domaine spirituel est inviolable par le pouvoir humain. Toute tentative d'associer la puissance de l'État à la promotion religieuse constitue, par essence, une usurpation de la souveraineté divine sur le cœur de l'homme.

I. La distinction souveraine du Christ

L'enseignement du Christ pose la pierre angulaire de toute relation saine entre l'État et la religion :

« Rendez donc à César ce qui est à César, et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu. » (Matthieu 22:21)

Cette parole, loin d'être une simple formule d'évitement, définit les limites irréductibles de deux juridictions. En reconnaissant que « César » — c'est-à-dire l'autorité politique — a ses prérogatives pour la gestion du bien public, le Christ établit une frontière. Cependant, en affirmant que « Dieu » possède son domaine propre, il place la foi, la conscience et l'adoration hors de portée du pouvoir temporel.

Institutionnaliser la foi au sein de l'appareil d'État, c'est exiger que l'on rende à César ce qui, par nature, appartient à Dieu. Il s'agit d'un empiètement qui corrompt la nature même de la foi : elle cesse d'être un élan volontaire de l'âme pour devenir un produit de la gestion gouvernementale.

II. La nature distincte des deux domaines

L'Écriture établit une ligne de démarcation indépassable entre le temporel et le sacré. Alors que le magistrat civil a pour fonction de maintenir l'ordre et de promouvoir le bien commun dans la sphère terrestre, il ne peut en aucun cas prétendre régenter la vie intérieure des citoyens.

Comme le souligne le prophète Zacharie, ce n'est « ni par la force, ni par la puissance », mais par l'Esprit de Dieu que l'œuvre spirituelle s'accomplit (Zacharie 4:6). L'État, en cherchant à institutionnaliser la religion, substitue la contrainte politique à la conviction intérieure, corrompant ainsi la nature même de la foi.

III. Les périls de l'instrumentalisation étatique

L'histoire, témoin implacable, nous instruit sur les ravages causés par la fusion du glaive et de l'encensoir.

Rappelons l'édit de Fontainebleau de 1685, qui, sous couvert d'unité religieuse imposée par le pouvoir civil, a engendré l'exil et la ruine de consciences droites.

Cette ingérence, en violant le principe de la liberté de conscience, a montré que tout rapprochement entre le bureau politique et l'autorité religieuse porte en lui les germes d'une tyrannie spirituelle. Lorsque César s'arroge le droit de codifier la religion, il ne protège pas les citoyens ; il finit invariablement par marginaliser les dissidents.

IV. L'incompatibilité des structures actuelles

Le projet de rapport, couplé à l'existence persistante du Bureau de la foi de la Maison-Blanche et de la Commission pour la liberté religieuse, est le symptôme d'une confusion des rôles préjudiciable à la paix civile :

Une confusion de compétences : En créant des entités gouvernementales dédiées à la « foi », l'État s'octroie un rôle de juge et de médiateur spirituel qui ne lui appartient pas.

La menace de la partialité : Ces structures, sous prétexte de protéger la liberté religieuse, favorisent en réalité une forme de religiosité institutionnelle, compromettant l'égalité des citoyens devant la loi.

V. Appel solennel

Au regard de ces principes bibliques et historiques, je demande formellement :

L'abandon immédiat du projet de rapport soumis à la Maison-Blanche, lequel ne peut constituer une base de réflexion valide pour une société libre.

La dissolution complète et sans délai de la Commission pour la liberté religieuse.

La suppression du Bureau de la foi de la Maison-Blanche ainsi que de toute autre structure dont la fonction est de lier, directement ou indirectement, l'autorité civile à des instances religieuses.

Conclusion

La liberté religieuse, telle que définie dans les Écritures, exige une neutralité irréprochable de l'autorité civile. Le respect dû au Créateur commande de ne pas mélanger l'autorité du monde avec celle du Royaume.

Je vous appelle, en conséquence, à revenir aux fondamentaux d'une saine distinction des pouvoirs et à démanteler ces organes qui, par leur existence, nuisent à la liberté de conscience de tous.

Merci de votre profonde attention !!!

From: Margaret Iuculano <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Cc: Samuel Lucas <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] CEA Religious Liberty Commission Comments

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:02:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Religious_Liberty_Commission_July_2026_Comments.pdf

Inline-Images: image.png

Please see attached comments from CEA.

Thank you -

Gratefully,

Margaret Iuculano

President

[Christian Employers Alliance \(CEA\)](#)

[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED] (cell) |



CEA

Christian Employers Alliance



The Center for BIBLICAL BUSINESS

The Voice of America's Leading Christian CEOs

Comments of the Christian Employers Alliance

Regarding the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – APPENDIX B / CHAPTER 13 – CHRISTIAN EMPLOYERS ALLIANCE

Chairman Dan Patrick and Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

On behalf of the Christian Employers Alliance ("CEA"), thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

CEA is a national association of Christian employers committed to protecting religious liberty in the workplace and helping employers faithfully integrate their sincerely held religious beliefs into the operation of their businesses. We appreciate President Donald J. Trump for establishing this Commission and commend Chairman Dan Patrick, Vice Chairman Dr. Ben Carson, the Commissioners, Advisory Board members, and staff for producing one of the most comprehensive modern examinations of religious liberty in America.

The Commission's report appropriately recognizes that religious liberty is America's First Freedom and that the free exercise of religion strengthens families, charitable organizations, education, healthcare, military readiness, civic engagement, and our constitutional system of government. We strongly support both the report and its overall direction.

The comments below are offered in that same spirit. CEA respectfully hopes they will assist the Commission in strengthening the final report by expanding its discussion of religious liberty in the marketplace and by providing additional recommendations that federal agencies may find helpful during implementation.

General Observation

One of the report's greatest strengths is its recognition that religious liberty extends well beyond houses of worship into nearly every aspect of American life.



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The report thoughtfully examines religious liberty in education, healthcare, the military, faith-based institutions, charitable organizations, and the public square.

CEA respectfully believes the final report could be strengthened by further recognizing the unique role that Christian employers play within American civil society.

Executive Order 14291 specifically identifies employers and employees among the areas for Commission consideration. While the report addresses workplace issues, the recommendations concerning employers and the private sector are comparatively brief when viewed alongside the extensive recommendations addressing schools, healthcare, military service, and faith-based institutions.

For millions of Americans, work is itself an expression of vocation, stewardship, and religious conviction. Christian employers seek to honor their faith not only through personal worship but through the way they conduct business, care for employees, serve customers, and contribute to their communities.

Recognizing this dimension of religious liberty would further strengthen the report.

CEA's Perspective

CEA respectfully offers these recommendations based upon years of working with Christian employers navigating questions of religious liberty, federal regulation, and public policy.

Our experience suggests that many conflicts arise not because employers seek special treatment, but because statutes, regulations, or agency guidance are interpreted in ways that unnecessarily burden sincerely held religious beliefs.

We have also observed that one of the greatest challenges facing employers is not necessarily the absence of constitutional protections, but the practical difficulty of asserting those protections. Lengthy investigations, regulatory uncertainty, and prolonged litigation can discourage employers from exercising rights already protected by the Constitution and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

For that reason, CEA strongly supports the Commission's emphasis on proactive executive action, agency guidance, education, and regulatory reform. Clear administrative guidance



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and consistent enforcement can prevent many conflicts before litigation becomes necessary.

Recommendation 1

Expand the Discussion of Religious Liberty in the Marketplace

CEA respectfully recommends expanding Chapter 13 to more fully recognize that businesses may also serve as communities through which Americans faithfully exercise religion.

Faith-driven employers often integrate sincerely held religious beliefs into:

- employee benefits
- charitable giving
- ethical business practices
- workplace culture
- corporate governance
- community service
- stewardship of business resources

The report rightly recognizes churches, schools, charities, and ministries as institutions through which Americans exercise religion. We respectfully suggest that faith-driven businesses likewise deserve express recognition.

Recommendation 2

Expand Appendix B - Private Sector Recommendations

CEA respectfully recommends expanding the Private Sector recommendations in Appendix B to include additional agency-specific recommendations that mirror the level of detail provided elsewhere in the report.



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Department of Justice

Consider establishing a Marketplace Religious Liberty Initiative to coordinate federal policy affecting employers, businesses, ministries, and nonprofit organizations.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Consider issuing comprehensive employer guidance addressing:

- religious accommodations
- workplace religious expression
- compelled speech
- sincerely held religious beliefs
- faith-based hiring where permitted by law
- Religious Freedom Restoration Act considerations

Department of Labor

Consider reviewing regulations and guidance affecting religious employers, including:

- accommodation requirements
- compliance guidance
- contractor obligations
- investigative procedures
- workplace policies

Department of Health and Human Services

Consider clarifying conscience protections applicable to employer-sponsored health plans and reviewing regulations that may unnecessarily burden sincerely held religious beliefs.



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Department of Treasury / Internal Revenue Service

Consider reviewing regulations and administrative guidance affecting churches, ministries, religious nonprofits, faith-based schools, and faith-driven employers to ensure consistent, viewpoint-neutral administration.

Small Business Administration

Consider developing educational resources explaining religious liberty protections available to America's small business community.

Recommendation 3

Marketplace "Know Your Rights"

CEA strongly supports Recommendation Two.

We respectfully suggest that employers also be included among the audiences receiving "Know Your Rights" educational materials.

Such guidance could address:

- Title VII religious protections
- RFRA
- EEOC procedures
- HHS conscience protections
- available federal resources
- complaint procedures

Educational resources of this nature could prevent misunderstandings before they develop into legal disputes.



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Recommendation 4

Encourage Administrative Safe Harbors

CEA respectfully encourages the Commission to consider recommending that federal agencies develop:

- advisory opinion procedures
- voluntary compliance pathways
- religious liberty safe harbors
- mediation opportunities
- pre-enforcement review processes

These tools could reduce unnecessary litigation while providing greater certainty for both regulated entities and federal agencies.

Recommendation 5

Government-wide Religious Liberty Regulatory Review

CEA respectfully recommends consideration of an additional recommendation encouraging every federal agency to conduct a comprehensive review of regulations, guidance documents, enforcement policies, grant conditions, and administrative practices that may unnecessarily burden religious exercise.

Such a review could help ensure consistency with:

- the Religious Freedom Restoration Act;
- Executive Order 14291;
- recent Supreme Court precedent; and
- the Commission's final recommendations.



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Appendix A

Suggested Executive Actions During the First 180 Days

Department of Justice

- Coordinate religious liberty policy across federal agencies.
- Update RFRA guidance for federal agencies.
- Expand outreach regarding religious liberty protections.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

- Publish employer guidance.
- Develop "Know Your Rights" resources.
- Review existing guidance for consistency with recent Supreme Court decisions.

Department of Labor

- Review regulations affecting religious employers.
- Clarify accommodation guidance.
- Review contractor policies.

Department of Health and Human Services

- Review conscience protections.
- Clarify employer rights regarding health-plan design.

Department of Treasury / Internal Revenue Service

- Review administrative guidance affecting religious organizations.
- Ensure viewpoint-neutral administration.

Small Business Administration

- Publish educational materials for faith-driven small businesses.

Office of Personnel Management



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- Review federal employee religious accommodation guidance.
- Expand training for agency human resources professionals.

Conclusion

The Christian Employers Alliance applauds the Commission for producing a thoughtful, well-researched, and timely report addressing one of our nation's most fundamental constitutional freedoms.

CEA respectfully believes the report would be further strengthened by expanding its discussion of the unique role employers play in the exercise of religion and by providing additional practical recommendations to assist federal agencies in implementing the Commission's vision.

Faith-driven employers contribute immeasurably to American society by creating jobs, serving communities, supporting charitable work, and providing opportunities for millions of Americans to integrate faith and work. Protecting their ability to operate according to sincerely held religious beliefs strengthens not only religious liberty but also the broader institutions of civil society that sustain our nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and for your dedicated service to protecting and advancing America's First Freedom.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Iuculano

President

Christian Employers Alliance

From: Edward Mccollum <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] President Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:07:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. The literal would's separation of church and state are not in Constitution...the principle is.

"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."

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: Alison McLeod <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Alison McLeod

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:08:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please keep the wall of separation between church and state to protect our religious freedom.

Sincerely,

Alison McLeod
Wildwood, Georgia



Virus-free. www.avast.com

From: Juan Hernandez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Separation of Church and State- Gail Harris

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:09:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious Liberty Commission:

I would like to see church and state kept separate. The Bible says to render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and render to God the things that belong to God. When those two things get combined there is danger of being forced into something that we do not agree with.

I believe in liberty of religion or lack thereof for everyone, not just the Christian.

Please do not dismantle the separation between church and state.

Respectfully,

Gail Harris

From: Banco de Fomento Angola <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Separation of Church and State- Harriette Blaine

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:09:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to you to ask for reconsideration of the recommendations in your draft report that was released June 2026. Separation of Church and State is addressed in The First Amendment under The Establishment Clause and The Free Exercise Clause, and is also supported by the letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association, confirming the intent of this.

I object to government funding religious activities, religious education and religious clubs on public campuses. I also object to the Johnson Amendment being repealed. I request that the Johnson Amendment be enforced.

Government money leads to political corruption, political favors, and government control. It opens the door to having to answer to the government instead of answering to my faith, and the removal of my religious liberty that I am so thankful to have. History has shown us when we do not keep Church and State separate, favoritism happens, and liberty gets lost.

From: Sharone Bond <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:12:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep the separation of church from state. If there is no separation persecution will follow. It has always happened throughout history. Read world history. This is fact not fiction.

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: sam small <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty response

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:18:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty should remain as is. Freedom to practice what one believes. As well as conscience of choice on vaccine mandates.

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT: - Objecting to the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission – Edward Netzel

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:24:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission:

I submit this public comment to object to the Draft Report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. Religious liberty is one of the nation's most important constitutional commitments. It protects every person's right to believe, worship, speak, assemble, and live according to conscience. But that liberty is not strengthened when government favors religion over nonreligion, one faith over another, or religious institutions over the equal rights of the public. It is strengthened when government remains neutral among faiths and protects the freedom of conscience of all people.

The Draft Report appears to weaken, minimize, and in practical effect dismantle the constitutional principle often described as the separation of church and state. By reframing that separation as an obstacle rather than a safeguard, the Draft Report risks turning religious liberty into religious preference. That approach would harm religious minorities, nonreligious Americans, public-school students, public employees, taxpayers, and faith communities themselves.

The First Amendment contains two complementary protections: government may not establish religion, and government may not prohibit the free exercise of religion. These clauses work together. The Establishment Clause prevents government from coercing religious observance, funding or promoting religious doctrine, or placing official power behind particular religious beliefs. The Free Exercise Clause ensures that individuals and communities may practice their faith without unfair government interference. Treating church-state separation as hostile to religion misunderstands this balance.

Church-state separation is not anti-religious. It is the reason religious pluralism has been able to flourish in the United States. It protects Baptists, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, humanists, atheists, agnostics, and all others from government-imposed orthodoxy. It also protects houses of worship from political capture and from the corrosive pressure that follows when government money, government authority, or partisan political power becomes entangled with religious mission.

I am especially concerned that the Draft Report appears to recommend or encourage policies that would expand public funding for religious institutions, increase religious activity in public schools and government settings, broaden exemptions in ways that may burden third parties, and reduce safeguards against partisan political activity by tax-exempt religious organizations. These recommendations do not merely accommodate religious exercise; they risk using public power to advance religion and to privilege some religious viewpoints over others.

Public schools deserve particular care. Students are legally required to attend school, are especially vulnerable to pressure from teachers and administrators, and come from families with many different beliefs. Government-sponsored religious messages, religious displays, or religious exercises in schools can make students feel like outsiders in their own classrooms. Protecting a student's right to pray privately, wear religious clothing, or form voluntary religious clubs is very different from allowing the state to promote religion through school officials or public resources.

I also object to any recommendation that would weaken restrictions on partisan political activity by tax-exempt houses of worship. Houses of worship should remain free to preach, teach, advocate on moral

issues, serve their communities, and speak prophetically. But inviting direct candidate endorsements from tax-subsidized religious institutions would threaten both electoral integrity and the independence of faith communities. It would also pressure religious leaders and congregants to align spiritual life with partisan political machinery.

Religious accommodations are important, but they must be applied carefully and fairly. Exemptions should not become a license to deny equal access to public services, discriminate against others, disregard neutral health and safety rules, or impose religious costs on people who do not share the claimant's beliefs. A true commitment to religious liberty must protect the conscience of the person seeking accommodation and the rights and dignity of those affected by it.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Commission substantially revise the Draft Report before finalizing it. The final report should affirm that church-state separation is a constitutional safeguard, not a threat; recognize the religious diversity of the United States; protect nonreligious Americans equally; avoid recommendations that use public funds or public institutions to promote religion; preserve safeguards against partisan politicization of houses of worship; and ensure that religious accommodations do not impose material harms on third parties.

The Commission should also correct any historical framing that suggests the United States has a single religious identity or that religious liberty depends on government partnership with religion. The American constitutional tradition is more complex and more inclusive than that. It rests on the principle that government must not decide which beliefs are favored, which communities are most American, or which forms of conscience deserve protection.

The best protection for religious liberty is a government that belongs equally to everyone. Separation of church and state protects believers and nonbelievers alike. It prevents coercion, preserves pluralism, and keeps faith free from government control. I urge the Commission to reject recommendations that would blur or dismantle that separation and instead issue a final report that defends religious freedom as a universal right, not a government-backed privilege for favored religious viewpoints.

Thank you for considering this comment.

Sincerely,

Edward Netzel

Gallatin, Tennessee

From: Miriam Wolcott <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:25:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

P

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,

Miriam Wolcott from Georgia

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Vira Armstrong <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Response.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:26:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Greetings to : Chair Dan Goeb Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Benjamin Solomon Carson, and all other members of the Religious Liberty Commission.

I have been following the Church and State discussions and movements in the United States for many years now especially since the statement by Congresswoman Lauren Boebert and the subsequent repetition of responses by others in her sphere of influence and higher, which are in full agreement with the current trajectory of events.

I became interested in this topic as I was studying the History of Protestantism by James Aitken Wylie and The History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century by Jean Henri Merle D'Aubigne.

Although I am fully aware that the Protestant Reformation to many - like Reading Books is dead - it did not begin with Martin Luther neither did it end with his 95 Theses nailed to the door of the church at Wittenburg on the 31st of October 1517.

Yet his protest in word and song as in the Hymn entitled "A Mighty Fortress" continues to ring true as does that of James Russell Lowell in the Hymn entitled "Once to Every Man and Nation".

Martin Luther on Galatians wrote the following . . .

God alone can create and preserve faith in us. God creates faith in us through the Word. He increases, strengthens and confirms faith in us through His word. -

I had been researching the alliance between a former bishop of Rome and a former president of the United States who joined forces to combat communism.

This was of great interest to me because I was discharged from the military after 6 1/2 years in October 1983 and became concerned because of the connection I saw between this alliance and the discrete inroads being made in the erosion of the barrier between Church and State and as I understand it from Book 5 of Baird's Religion in America . . .

It is ... impossible for the magistrate to adjudge the right of preference among various sects that profess the Christian faith, without erecting a claim to infallibility, which would lead us back to Rome.—Baird's "Religion in America," Book 5, chap. 3, par. 11.

In an age when reading is becoming a lost discipline and History a relic of the past, we need men and women in places of influence who can see the leaf hidden in the forest as in an episode of Ironside in 1967 and can discern the signs of the times as written by a descendant of Peregrine White - James Springer White in 1853 and can see where we are in the History of Planet Earth - finally, for just such a time as this we need women and men who are like the children of Issachar- for all those who are inclined to read - study and apply the Word of God to their own lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your Final Report.

Miss Vira A. Armstrong, RN, BSN, MPH, Faith Community Nurse Certified.

Exodus One Midwife Institute for Civil Governance Literacy in the Home and Family.

PII

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get Outlook for Android

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Chapter 14 - Karen Martin

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:27:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Religious Liberty Commission

I definitely support the Commission on all Opportunities to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans.
Thank you, President Trump and the Commission!!!

Warm regards,
Karen Martin

From: sam small <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Religious Liberty response update

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:29:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Religious Liberty should remain as is. Separation between church and state, Freedom to practice what one believes. As well as conscience of choice on vaccine mandates.

> On Jul 11, 2026, at 3:19 PM, sam small <[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

>

> Religious Liberty should remain as is. Freedom to practice what one believes. As well as conscience of choice on vaccine mandates.

From: elitegamerbob <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:30:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission.

I am writing concerning the joining of church and state. I am strongly against this union, let us not forget that the whole reason why America was created was to escape the Religious intolerance caused by church and state union. Whenever church and state are combined it is no longer a nation under God but a nation under the church. No one should be forced to worship God through the dictates of another person or group of people. As a protestant nation or individual we are to cry "The Bible And The Bible Alone", if the state joins with a church and the church does not hold to this cry, then we can only expect Religious intolerance or even the Dark Ages once again.

Respectfully Brian

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Chris Michael <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Religious Liberty Commission Recommendations

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:34:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Department of Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recommendations the Religious Liberty Commission submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026.[1] I am mindful of the Commission's labors, and there is much in its twelve recommendations I support. I write, however, to register my concerns with the Commission's 1st and 9th recommendations, and with what I view as an insufficient accounting, in the Commission's report, of the Founders' warnings about the union of church and state and of the historical record on that subject.

The Commission 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 public release of the report on June 26, Commission Chair Dan Patrick stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution" and has "no constitutional basis," adding that any public official who invokes the phrase should "point out exactly where you have violated the Constitution, because you have not." [3]

As a citizen and student of history, and as a Christian, I am concerned that this view of the Establishment Clause may prove influential in the Department's forthcoming guidance. James Madison—the principal author of the Establishment Clause and, as "Father of the Constitution," its foremost interpreter—wrote plainly 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." Madison, in other words, understood the separation of church and state to be embedded in the constitutional structure he helped design. I respectfully urge the Department to weigh that authority heavily as it considers the Commission's recommendation.

The Founders were keenly aware of the persecution of Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in the colonies—the ear-croppings, whippings, imprisonments, and hangings carried out in Massachusetts and elsewhere. In Europe, the record is equally stark. William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into English, not by atheists but by a church allied with the state. That same union of church and state suppressed the press, banned the translation of Scripture, forced Tyndale into exile, and ultimately took his life.

I ask the Department to weigh this history as it drafts public guidance. William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, was repeatedly jailed in England for his faith; Pennsylvania became a haven from religious persecutors, not from atheists. Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, was ordered arrested for arguing that civil magistrates could not enforce religious duties. Obadiah Holmes—a five-times-great-grandfather of Abraham Lincoln—was publicly whipped in Massachusetts for the "crime" of religious dissent, at the hands of fellow Christians who rejected any separation between church and state.

I am concerned that the Commission 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 Commission 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. I 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] I have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of combating misinformation, also.

Nor was the Roman Church alone. I ask the Department to remember the execution of Michael Servetus in Calvin's Geneva—a killing carried out by a union of church and state against a religious dissenter—as it considers public statements today that would move America toward a similar arrangement.

The consequences of fusing civil and religious power are not confined to history. In Iran today, a Guardian Council of clerics reviews all legislation and vets candidates for office against its own interpretation of religious law, and the state's morality police have enforced religious codes of dress and conduct on the population. Dissent from that official religious orthodoxy has been met with imprisonment and, in some cases, death. I ask the Department to weigh that example as well: it illustrates, in the present day, precisely the danger the Framers sought to foreclose by separating civil from religious authority.

I therefore respectfully ask: what guidance can the Department respectfully give on "the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state" if that guidance proceeds from a Commission whose Chair has stated the phrase has no constitutional basis at all, without fuller engagement with the historical reasons the Founders enshrined disestablishment in the First Amendment?

Thomas Jefferson, in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, is often cited for the phrase "wall of separation between Church & State,"[5] but the fuller passage is instructive. Jefferson wrote that, believing "religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God," he viewed "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." [6] Jefferson was referring to Congress—the same body the Constitution bars from uniting church and state.

Madison likewise warned that "it is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties" and that "the free men of America... saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle." [7]

Finally, I respectfully oppose the Commission's recommendation that the Johnson Amendment be repealed. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I take seriously His teaching to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" [8]—a teaching that itself draws a line between civil and religious authority. Keeping that line intact protects both. Madison observed that "the number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State." [9] Repeal of the Johnson Amendment risks reversing that dynamic: congregations and candidates trading endorsements for legislative favor, to the detriment of both religion and government. John Adams made a similar point in 1765, writing that the union of canon and feudal law—church power fused with civil power—produced the worst form of government yet devised. [10]

I respectfully request that the Department decline to adopt Recommendations 1 and 9 of the Commission, and that it instead convene a public hearing—with written and oral submissions from the public—to more fully examine the history and purpose of church-state separation in America. I would enthusiastically support such a hearing.

Respectfully,

Chris

Notes

1. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, "President Trump's Religious Liberty Commission Delivers Historic Report Draft," June 26, 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>.
2. Ibid. (Emphasis added.)
3. Remarks of Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, Oval Office, June 26, 2026, as reported in "The internet fact-checked Dan Patrick's latest church-and-state remarks," Houston Chronicle (via Yahoo News), <https://www.yahoo.com/news/politics/articles/internet-fact-checked-dan-patricks-153224927.html>.
4. See, e.g., reporting on Pope Francis's calls for expanded platform moderation of online speech, <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation>.
5. Thomas Jefferson, Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, January 1, 1802, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>.
6. Ibid.
7. James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments (1785).
8. Matthew 22:21.
9. James Madison, Letter to Robert Walsh, March 2, 1819.
10. John Adams, A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law (1765), Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>.

From: Bailey Guy <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [CHAPTER 9 HEALTHCARE CONSCIENCE] – [Bailey Long].

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:41:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am submitting this comment to emphasize the importance of protecting religious liberty within our healthcare system.

During my pregnancy, my son received a prenatal diagnosis indicating he was positive for Trisomy 13. From that point forward, my husband and I were repeatedly encouraged to consider abortion, even after we clearly communicated that terminating the pregnancy was not consistent with our deeply held religious beliefs and was not an option we were willing to pursue.

Rather than having our convictions respected, we often felt that our values were treated as obstacles rather than legitimate moral and religious commitments deserving of accommodation and support. At a time when we needed compassionate care, information, and encouragement, we instead experienced pressure to make a decision that violated our conscience.

Our experience highlighted the need for healthcare environments where religious beliefs are respected and where families can receive care from providers whose practices align with their moral convictions. Healthcare policy should protect the ability of medical professionals and institutions to practice according to their sincerely held religious beliefs, while also ensuring that patients who share those beliefs have meaningful access to care that respects their values.

Religious liberty in healthcare is not only about protecting providers; it is also about protecting patients and families. Parents facing difficult prenatal diagnoses should be able to receive compassionate, high-quality medical care without feeling pressured to abandon their faith or compromise their convictions. A truly pluralistic healthcare system should make room for families who choose to continue a pregnancy despite serious diagnoses and should support providers who are committed to caring for those families.

I urge the Commission to continue strengthening protections for religious liberty in healthcare so that families like mine can receive care that respects both our medical needs and our deeply held religious beliefs.

From: Frank and Associates <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Religious Liberty Recommendations

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:42:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Gracias por la oportunidad de proporcionar comentarios sobre las recomendaciones del Comité de Libertad Religiosa presentadas al presidente Donald J. Trump el 26 de junio de 2026. Si bien somos conscientes del trabajo del Comité, que resultó en las 12 recomendaciones publicadas el 26 de junio, algunas de las cuales estamos de acuerdo, escribimos para expresar nuestras preocupaciones y objeciones a la primera y novena recomendaciones del Comité [1] y su consideración obviamente insuficiente de las advertencias de los Padres Fundadores de los peligros de una unión de iglesia y estado o las muchas lecciones de la historia con respecto a las mismas.

El Comité recomendó que el Departamento de Justicia "emita una guía para aclarar la correcta comprensión de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la iglesia y el estado". [2] En la publicación formal de las recomendaciones del Comité el mismo día, el presidente del Comité, Dan Patrick, declaró públicamente que "la separación de la iglesia y el estado no está en la constitución" y que la frase "no tiene base constitucional". [3]

Como ciudadanos y estudiantes de historia, y como cristianos, no estamos alarmados para que la visión defectuosa e inconstitucional del Presidente del Comité de la llamada "comprensión adecuada de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la iglesia y el estado" resulte influyente o peor, instructiva, para el Departamento de Justicia. Si la opinión del Comité sobre el llamado "entendido adecuado" de la Cláusula de Establecimiento es la misma que la de su Presidente, es evidente que su comprensión no es adecuada, sino más bien inapropiada.

El Padre Fundador, "Padre de la Constitución", y cuarto Presidente de los Estados Unidos, James Madison, contradijo la afirmación del presidente Dan Patrick de que la separación de la iglesia y el estado no está en la Constitución. Madison declaró que "Fuertemente vigilado como lo es la separación entre la religión y el gobierno en la Constitución de los Estados Unidos, el peligro de invasión por parte de los órganos eclesiásticos, puede ilustrarse con precedentes ya proporcionados en su corta historia". Según James Madison, la separación de la iglesia y el estado está en la Constitución. En cuanto a si James Madison, que es el autor principal de la Cláusula de Establecimiento, o Dan Patrick, es la mayor autoridad en este tema, creemos que no es difícil que las personas de mentalidad razonable lo determinen.

Ciertamente, todos los Padres Fundadores eran conscientes de la persecución de los bautistas, cuáqueros, judíos y otros en algunas de las colonias. Habían visto de primera mano los cultivos de orejas, azotes, encarcelamientos y ahorcamientos en Massachusetts y otras colonias.

En Europa, la persecución de los mártires está bien documentada. Hoy damos por sentada la Biblia, pero olvidamos que William Tyndale fue ejecutado por traducir la Biblia al inglés, no por ateos, sino por fanáticos religiosos. Fue una unión de la iglesia y el estado la que suprimió el discurso y la libertad de prensa en Inglaterra. Fue una unión de la iglesia y el estado la que prohibió el trabajo de traducción de la Biblia, lo que cambió el mundo. Fue una unión de la iglesia y el estado lo que requirió su vuelo a Europa. Fue una unión de la iglesia y el estado lo que lo mató.

Solicitamos respetuosamente que el Departamento de Justicia, al considerar la cuestión de la orientación pública de la separación de la iglesia y el estado, considere la historia de William Penn, fundador de Pensilvania y antiguo padre fundador, que fue encarcelado repetidamente por su fe

religiosa en Inglaterra. La Colonia de Pensilvania se convirtió en un refugio, no de los perseguidores ateos, sino de los perseguidores religiosos que no creían en la separación de la iglesia y el estado. Lo mismo ocurre con Roger Williams, fundador de la colonia de Rhode Island, a quien se le ordenó arrestar por declarar que el magistrado civil no puede hacer cumplir la primera tabla del Decálogo. Pedimos que el Comité tenga en cuenta la brutal azotea pública del cinco veces bisabuelo del presidente Abraham Lincoln, Obadiah Holmes, en la colonia de Massachusetts, por el "crimen" de disidencia religiosa. Obadiah Holmes no fue azotado por los ateos. Fue azotado por puritanos intolerantes que no creían en la separación de la iglesia y el estado. Solicitamos respetuosamente que el Departamento de Justicia considere esta historia en la emisión de una guía pública sobre el tema.

Nos preocupa que el Comité no tenga en cuenta el impacto de la separación de la iglesia y el estado en los otros derechos codificados en la Primera Enmienda. La libertad de expresión y la libertad de prensa, por ejemplo, deben su florecimiento en el mundo moderno en gran parte a la separación de la iglesia y el estado en Estados Unidos. Antes de las protecciones en la Primera Enmienda, la Iglesia Católica Romana mantuvo durante siglos una lista de libros prohibidos llamada Index Librorum Prohibitorum. Los libros estaban sujetos a confiscación, y la posesión de ellos resultó en el castigo del propietario.

Desafortunadamente, el Comité no menciona la censura en este contexto de Galileo y Kepler, Kant y Locke, John Milton y Maimonides, John Stuart Mill y Jeremy Bentham, David Hume y Edward Gibbon, y muchos otros, todos a instancias del Papado Romano, que es en sí mismo una unión de iglesia y estado. La libertad de expresión en el mundo occidental es el legado de aquellos que arriesgaron la ira de una iglesia y un estado unificados, a menudo a costa de sus vidas. También pedimos que el Departamento de Justicia considere los repetidos llamamientos modernos del poder papal hoy en día para la censura de Internet y la supresión de la libertad de expresión, contrariamente a la Primera Enmienda. [4] No tenemos ninguna duda de que la censura de Galileo, Kepler, Milton y otros también fue procesada bajo la justificación de la censura de la desinformación.

La Iglesia Romana tampoco estaba sola en esta persecución. Le pediríamos al Departamento de Justicia, en su formulación de la guía pública sobre la separación de la iglesia y el estado, que recuerde las persecuciones religiosas llevadas a cabo a instancias de Juan Calvino en Ginebra contra disidentes religiosos como Miguel Serveto, que pagó con su vida por sus escritos y enseñanzas. Servetus fue ejecutado por una unión de la iglesia y el estado. Nos preocupan las declaraciones públicas de aquellos que crearían un sistema así en Estados Unidos. [5]

Por lo tanto, respetuosamente preguntamos, ¿qué orientación adecuada puede el Departamento de Justicia esperar dar al público sobre la "comprensión adecuada de la Cláusula de Establecimiento y la separación de la iglesia y el estado" si está dirigida en su objeto por un Comité y un Presidente del Comité, que ha descuidado analizar más completamente las razones de la separación de la iglesia y el estado, o las razones por las que los Estados Unidos codificaron el desestablecimiento de la iglesia y el estado en la Primera Enmienda en primera instancia?

La referencia al muro de separación entre la iglesia y el estado no solo la menciona el presidente Thomas Jefferson en la carta a los Bautistas de Danbury, que, por supuesto, lo es. [6] Lo que a menudo se deja fuera de la narrativa es que Jefferson dijo que él personalmente creía que el principio de la separación de la iglesia y el estado está codificado en la Constitución. Allí, Jefferson escribió: "Creyendo contigo que la religión es un asunto que se encuentra únicamente entre el Hombre y su Dios, que no debe rendir cuentas a nadie más por su fe o su adoración, que los poderes legítimos del gobierno llegan solo a las acciones, y no a las opiniones, contemplo con reverencia soberana ese acto de todo el pueblo estadounidense que declaró que su legislatura no debería 'hacer ninguna ley que respete un establecimiento de religión, o que prohíba el libre ejercicio de la misma', construyendo así un muro de separación entre la Iglesia y el Estado". [7]

James Madison escribió: "Es apropiado tomar la alarma en el primer experimento sobre nuestras libertades. Nosotros sostenemos que estos celos prudentes son el primer deber de los ciudadanos y una de las características más nobles de la Revolución tardía. Los hombres libres de América no esperaron hasta que el poder usurpado se fortaleciera por el ejercicio y enredó la cuestión en precedentes. Vieron todas las consecuencias en el principio, y evitaron las consecuencias negando el principio. Nosotros veneramos esta lección demasiado pronto como para olvidarla". [8]

Por último, nos oponemos a la recomendación del Comité de que se elimine la Enmienda Johnson. Como seguidores de Jesucristo, somos conscientes de las palabras de Nuestro Señor de que "devolvimos a César lo que es César, y a Dios las cosas que son de Dios". [9] Jesucristo estableció el principio de la separación de la iglesia y el estado y enseñó que lo que pertenece a Dios no puede ser rendido a César. La aplicación de esta enseñanza es que los religiosos, ambiciosos por el poder civil, y los políticos, ambiciosos por su respaldo, deben mantenerse separados en el sistema político estadounidense, como lo requiere la Constitución. La unión de la iglesia y el estado resulta en la corrupción de ambos, un resultado que ninguno debería desear, y ninguno puede permitirse.

Madison declaró que "El número, la industria y la moralidad del Sacerdocio, y la devoción del pueblo han aumentado manifiestamente por la separación total de la Iglesia del Estado". [10] Y tenía razón. Si se elimina la Enmienda Johnson, los religionistas que quieren poder civil se quejarán públicamente y prometerán sus votos y dólares congregacionales a cambio de favores políticos, y los políticos sin duda estarán demasiado ansiosos por corresponder en forma de legislación que los religiosos desean, siempre que ayuden en sus intentos de obtener cargos.

En su tratado anónimo publicado en la Gaceta de Boston, John Adams, más tarde el segundo presidente de los Estados Unidos, escribió que el derecho canónico era una forma tiránica de gobierno, al igual que lo era el derecho feudal, pero que la peor de todas las formas de gobierno era una unión de los dos. [11] Y fue Madison quien declaró que "En el Sistema Papal, el Gobierno y la Religión están consolidados de una manera, y se encuentra que es el peor de los Gobiernos".

Por lo tanto, solicitamos respetuosamente que el Departamento de Justicia no adopte las recomendaciones 1 y 9 del Comité y que adopte la recomendación 1 del Comité para que convoque una audiencia pública, con presentaciones escritas y orales del público, para estudiar de manera más exhaustiva la cuestión de la separación de la iglesia y el estado en la historia, y en la historia estadounidense en particular, un estudio que apoyaríamos con entusiasmo.

Seguimos siendo, sinceramente suyos,

Francisco Franquiz Sr
Lake Placid Florida

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From: Steven Carlsen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Report by religious liberty commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:43:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Benjamin Franklin said in a 1780 letter: "When a religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its Professors are oblig'd to call for the help of Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."

Historically, when a particular religion is supported by the state (civil government), it uses that support to oppress all other religions that have any differing opinions.

Therefore, I request that the commission withdraw its recommendations, and leave the status quo in effect.

Thank you, Steven Carlsen.

From: "J. E. Nash" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – [Chapter 2] – [Religious Liberty and the American Story].

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:51:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern:

I am concerned about the final report that is, in part, attacking the separation of church and state. We need to defend this critically important constitutional principle. We need to have free Religious Liberty, to worship as each one chooses. The government should not have authority to tell me what to believe, or how to worship.

Thank you,

Jan Nash

From: Dustin H <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:51:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and state is vital to the fundamentals of freedom. World History has made this very clear.

Respectfully,

Concerned USA citizen

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From: Robert Magyar <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 16:57:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Firefox.pdf

To Whom it may concern,

The ideas and concepts which are embedded in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report appear to be noble and honorable but will lead down a path that is not clearly seen today by those endorsing this report. These ideas and concepts will be so molded by others of sinister minds to use the state to persecute those of a different religion and or not like minded as them welding the power.

Thus I disagree fully with the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Report!

Robert Magyar

[REDACTED] PII

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Adventistische Schriften über: "Religious Freedom Constitution USA"

Answer

In the Constitution of the United States, the natural right to religious freedom was enshrined as a constitutional principle that separates the government from any ecclesiastical interference or control. The Constitution delegates no powers over religious matters to the federal government, thereby protecting freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state. According to Adventist belief, especially as expressed by Alonzo T. Jones, this separation is in harmony with the will of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, historically there have been attempts, through judicial interpretations or Sunday laws, to impose a religious identity on the state, which contradicts the original spirit of the Constitution. True religious freedom therefore means the right to serve or not serve according to one's own

conviction, completely free from governmental coercion.

The Constitutional Separation of Church and State

»And so the people of the United States have expressed in the supreme law of the land that the government of the United States is free and independent of any ecclesiastical or religious affiliation, interference, or control, and should be so by right of law.«

 1 - Alonzo Trevier Jones, The Union of Church and State in the United States (UCS 17.2)

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»Thus the natural right of humanity to freedom from governmental interference or regulation in religious matters was made a constitutional right under the government of the United States.«

 2 - Alonzo Trevier Jones, The Union of Church and State in the United States (UCS 17.1)

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»Since the Constitution of the United States transferred no power regarding religion... it inevitably follows that the government has no power, authority, or jurisdiction in, over, or

concerning the subject of religion: and therefore the Supreme Court of the United States had no authority or right to declare the American people a "religious people" or this nation a "Christian nation"...«

 3 - Alonzo Trevier Jones, The Union of Church and State in the United States (UCS 74.6)

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»As American citizens we invoke the expressly declared constitutional right to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of individual conscience, completely free and exempt from any governmental affiliation, interference, or control.«

 4 - Alonzo Trevier Jones, The Union of Church and State in the United States (UCS 78.3)

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»These cases clearly demonstrate that, according to the spirit of God, religion and earthly government should be entirely separate. Consequently, the Constitution of the United States is in harmony with the will of God expressed in the Scripture of truth regarding the subject of religion and state.«



5

- Alonzo Trevier Jones, The Two Republics, or Rome and the United States of America (TTR 681.2)



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»It seems that everyone should be glad for the opportunity to proclaim to the whole world the glory of a nation under whose protection all people can live completely untroubled, fully enjoying their religious rights and freedom, to worship or not worship according to the dictates of their own conscience.«



6

- Alonzo Trevier Jones, The Two Republics, or Rome and the United States of America (TTR 699.1)



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Separation of Church and State USA
Freedom of Conscience Constitutional Law
Alonzo T. Jones Religious Freedom



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In der adventistischen Prophetie wird das zweihörnige Tier aus Offenbarung 13 mit...

Original Sources (English)

- 1  The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 17.2 

"And thus have the people of the United States expressed in the supreme law of the land their will that the Government of the United States is, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT OF ALL ECCLESIASTICAL OR RELIGIOUS CONNECTION, INTERFERENCE OR CONTROL."

 Translate

ParaId: 2008.98 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 17.2 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

- 2  The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 17.1 

"Thus the natural right of mankind to freedom from governmental interference or dictation in matters of religion was made a constitutional right under the Government of the United States."

 Translate

ParaId: 2008.97 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 17.1 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

3 The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 74.4

"No power in, or over, or concerning religion has been delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor has such power been prohibited by it to the States."

 Favorit

 Translate

ParalId: 2008.419 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 74.4 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

3 The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 74.6

"As no power concerning religion has been delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States; as all power and jurisdiction in matters of religion has been reserved exclusively to the States or to the people; it follows inevitably that the Government has no power or authority or jurisdiction in, over, or concerning the subject of religion: and that therefore the Supreme Court of the United States had no authority or right to declare the American people "a religious people," or this nation "a Christian nation," nor had Congress any right to establish or require the recognition or observance of the "Chris Sabbath.""

 Translate

ParalId: 2008.421 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 74.6 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

5 The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 7.1

"This is precisely the view that was taken, and the use that was made, of the Declaration as soon as it was published to the world. For no sooner was the Declaration published abroad than the Presbytery of Hanover, in Virginia, openly took its stand with the new and independent nation, and, with the Baptists and Quakers, addressed to the General Assembly of Virginia a Memorial, from which we extract the following passages, as particularly pertinent to the matter here to be considered:—"

 Favorit

 Translate

ParalId: 2008.42 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 7.1 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

6 The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 15.1

"Such is the origin and the history of the establishment of religious freedom as a natural right in the United States; for these principles, in many cases in these very words, have found a place in all the Constitutions of the several States of the American Union."

 Favorit

 Translate

ParalId: 2008.81 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 15.1 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

7 The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 31.5

""Even the Constitution of the United States, which is sup-posed to have little touch upon the private life of the individual, contains in the First Amendment a declaration common to the Constitutions of all the States, as follows: 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.' And also provides that the Executive shall have ten days (Sundays excepted) within which to determine whether he will approve or veto a bill. [And here is a sly recognition of Sunday observance as constitutional] There is no dissonance in these declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all, having one meaning; they affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation. These are not individual sayings, declarations of private persons; they are organic utterances; they speak the voice of the entire people.""

 Favorit

 Translate

ParalId: 2008.171 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 31.5 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

4 The Union of Church and State in the United S... | UCS 78.3

"As American citizens, we appeal on the ground of the specifically declared constitutional right to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of the individual conscience, totally free and exempt from all governmental connection, interference, or control."

 Translate

Paraid: 2008.445 **BookId:** 2008 **RefCode:** UCS 78.3 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

6 The Two Republics, or Rome and the United Sta... | TTR 699.1 

"IT would seem that all people in the United States would be glad of the opportunity to rejoice evermore that by its supreme law this nation is pledged to religious freedom. It would seem that everybody ought to be glad of the opportunity to herald to all the world the fame of a nation under whose protection all people might dwell wholly unmolested in the full enjoyment of religious rights and the liberty to worship or not to worship according to the dictates of their own consciences."

 Translate

Paraid: 1249.3399 **BookId:** 1249 **RefCode:** TTR 699.1

Author: Alonzo Trevier Jones

5 The Two Republics, or Rome and the United Sta... | TTR 681.2 

"These cases show plainly that, according to the mind of God, religion and earthly government are to be entirely separated. It follows, therefore, that the Constitution of the United States is in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the Scriptures of truth, upon the subject of religion and the State."

 Translate

Paraid: 1249.3309 **BookId:** 1249 **RefCode:** TTR 681.2

Author: Alonzo Trevier Jones

11 The National Sunday Law [SL27] | NSLS27 97.2 

""SECTION 1. No State shall ever make or maintain any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

☆ Favorit 🌐 Translate

ParalId: 1167.661 **BookId:** 1167 **RefCode:** NSLS27 97.2 **Author:** Alonzo Trevier Jones

12 The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise an... | GSAM 451.2 ▾

"Our opponents have said persecution can never come in this country, because the Constitution of the United States declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." And, in addition to this, the "Bill of Rights" of most of the States forbids religious legislation. In the face of these protestations our people have continued to proclaim the message of warning and the needful preparation to meet the conflict."

☆ Favorit 🌐 Translate

ParalId: 1140.3019 **BookId:** 1140 **RefCode:** GSAM 451.2
Author: John Norton Loughborough

📄 Questions

☆ Favorites

The historical identity of

The historical identity of Melchizedek is defined in Adventist writings primarily as...

@EGW Vision 3h ago

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Status Active

May children see their parents

The provided documents contain no explicit statement regarding whether children ma...

@EGW Vision 5h ago

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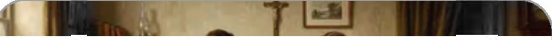
Status Active

Public ▼

Delete

Public ▼

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What does the Bible say about conflict with siblings and the

The Bible and the spirit of prophecy emphasize that there must be no conflict among...

@EGW Vision 6h ago

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Status Active

Public ▼

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What is said about the character of the twelve tribe

The scriptures describe the character of those who are symbolically portrayed as the...

@EGW Vision 9h ago

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Status Active

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Delete

Name

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E-Mail (Optional)

Ihre E-Mail-Adresse

Betreff

Betreff auswählen



Nachricht

Ihre Nachricht an uns...

Nachricht senden

Stephan Krol

Founder of EGW Vision



Why I built EGW Vision

Hello, I am Stephan Krol. I started this Ellen White website to make the writings of Ellen G. White and the Adventist pioneers easier to access for everyone.

EGW Vision helps you find topics, statements, and quotes faster, especially when many original sources are not yet fully available in your language. The tool searches semantically, groups relevant content by topic, and presents matching results as clearly as possible in your language.

My hope is that this tool supports personal Bible study, strengthens trust in the original sources, and helps more people discover the message of these writings with clarity, depth, and joy.

 **Telegram Info Kanal**

 Schlachter Hörbibel

 Biblekiss.de

 Ellen White Hörbücher

Telegram Info Kanal

Mein Telegram Kanal
(wenig updates)

[Zum Projekt](#)



EGW Vision

From: Melanie Graves <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty/Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:11:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I would like to express my concern about the possibilities of replacing the wall of separation of church and state with the idea of a bridge. I feel they need to be separated because in the past when government gets involved in church business, it creates conflict for a person to be free to follow their conscience. It has given one church power over another and taking freedom away from the other church to practice their religion as they see fit.

Our country was founded on religious freedom. People came here to be free to practice their religion as their conscience dictated and not what a king or a pope dictated. If we don't keep them separated, I fear history will repeat itself and that legislation could be passed "for the good of many at the expense of a few." That is not what America is about. We support freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom in practice of religion.

Let's keep America free.

Sincerely,

Melanie Graves
Dunlap, Tennessee

From: Stephen Ralph MD <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: Stephen Ralph MD <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:30:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Commission members,

Thomas Jefferson and many founding fathers were extremely spiritual men, probably people with deeper faith than any of us- that was never the point.

Despite their deep spiritual faith, that faith should not spill over into government legislation. Many of the settlers of the colonies escaped with their lives from oppressive governments.

Very Spiritual men with more faith than us campaigned that religion, although foundational for our salvation, has No Place in Legislative halls. Invite President Trump to your next Prayer Meeting and explain how one listens for direction from the Holy Spirit. Ben Carson should remember his heritage, if he is honest. The truth is plain to see.

Thomas Jefferson:

" I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."

Stephen Ralph

[REDACTED]

PII

PII

From: JoAn deFosse <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:31:40 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the commission:

I am of the opinion that our founding fathers did indeed believe in the separation of church and state. Roger Williams as far back as 1644 espoused the separation of church and state. James Madison, instrumental in the drafting of our Constitution, believed in a separation of religion from government. Our Bill of Rights grants us freedom of religion. I shudder to think of the future ramifications of no separation of church and state. In my ancestry I have a Christopher Choate who fled England and went to Holland before coming to the colonies to be able to exercise religious freedom of conscience.

Please reconsider taking away this VERY important wall.

Respectfully,

Joan Fos RN, MEd. (Retired)

[REDACTED] PII

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Stacy Williams <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please Keep Church and State Separate!

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:34:48 -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 were NOT separate.

So PLEASE, keep church and state completely separate.

Thank you,

Stacy W.
Phoenix, AZ

From: Veronica Johnsen <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Separation of church and State- Veronica Johnsen

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:36:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as a citizen to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

In my study of history I find there are serious issues with combining Church and State. For instance the centuries of intolerance we read of leading to loss of not just religious freedom but secular freedoms as well. The RLC has served very misleading information in its report please revisit and revise to keep our nation free from Tyranny.

Sincerely,

Veronica Johnsen

From: pat <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:36:59 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please maintain separation of church and state.

We rely of being able to worship how and when we believe. I want you to worship how and when YOU want. Revelation says at some point, this freedom will be removed, and government will persecute those who don't all worship the same.

We don't want money snuck into politics through a church.

Thank you

Karen Butterfield

From: "Apryl W. R. Donovan" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Apryl Donovan

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:37:12 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled and disappointed to read in your recently released report 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 to stifle religion. It was built by wise men that studied history and knew what happens when church and state join hands. The results are always disastrous. These men also had the foresight to realize the importance of FREEDOM, including freedom of religion, freedom of speech and liberty of conscience.

Separation isn't a secular idea; our founding fathers believed in a higher power, and while many were not Christians, they understood the importance of forming a secular government that would not interfere with anyone's religious beliefs and would allow each person the freedom to follow his own conscience, to believe, speak and worship without interference.

A few days ago I spent the day with some students at Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson. It is a beautiful place and we learn so much every time we visit. The guides and the historical actor-interpreter that portrays Mr. Jefferson always remind guests of the three things Jefferson wanted to be remembered for, and these are engraved on his tombstone:

--

Author of the Declaration of American Independence;

Author of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and

Father of the University of Virginia.

--

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. Please keep the wall. It protects the church far more than it constrains it and it's how we keep both of them free.

There are a number of other issues of concern in the report but I will mention just one. It is the singling out of one religion for special government protection over another/others. I believe that the government should show complete neutrality in the it's relationship with religion, here in the United States of America and in other countries.

I will close with one of Thomas Jefferson's quotes that seems quite relevant.

"our particular principles of religion are a subject of accountability to our god alone. I enquire after no man's and trouble none with mine; nor is it given to us in this life to know whether yours or mine, our friend's or our foe's, are exactly the right."

[Thomas Jefferson to Miles King, September 26, 1814](#)

Respectfully,

Apryl Donovan
Virginia

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: Nadelle Fournier <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE - NADELLE ROSEBRUGH

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:38:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and the Department of Justice:

This public comment is submitted to respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider its recommendations regarding the Establishment Clause, specifically its proposal to reinterpret or weaken the separation of church and state.

True religious liberty in the United States requires an absolute separation between religious institutions and civil government to protect the rights of all citizens, including both believers and non-believers.

To fully understand the foundational principles of American religious liberty, one must reflect on the pivotal debates of the late 19th century, specifically around 1893. During that period, there were heavy efforts to legislate religious observances—most notably through Sunday rest laws and proposals to embed specific sectarian tenets into the machinery of government.

As historian and religious liberty advocate A.T. Jones detailed in his seminal work, *The Two Republics*, history demonstrates that whenever civil authority attempts to enforce religious obligations, it inevitably leads to persecution and the erosion of conscience. Jones thoroughly documented that the founders intentionally established a strict separation of church and state not to relegate religion to the margins, but to prevent the state from becoming a tool for religious majorities and to safeguard the sanctity of individual conscience against government intrusion.

The draft report suggests that the "wall of separation" metaphor is utilized as a weapon against religious Americans. However, history reveals it is the very mechanism that protects religious minorities, ensures pluralism, and keeps faith free from state control. The moment the government begins deciding which religious practices are prioritized in public institutions or which sectarian groups receive state favor, the fundamental equality of American citizenship is compromised.

The current movement to entangle the state with religious interests parallels the constitutional crisis of the 1890s, when Congress faced heavy pressure to legislate religious observances and Sunday laws. During this period, religious liberty advocates like A.T. Jones forcefully testified against the state overstepping its bounds in matters of conscience. In his seminal 1893 work, *The Third Angel's Message*, Jones chronicled how the true American ideal of religious liberty—which prohibits government intervention in ecclesiastical affairs—preserves both the state and the purity of faith. He maintained that state-sponsored religion inevitably leads to coercion and the suppression of minority rights. History demonstrates that whenever the government assumes jurisdiction over religious doctrine or observance, the state becomes an engine of persecution.

Many modern scholarships continue to affirm that the separation of church and state is not a legal error, but rather the foundational safeguard of our pluralistic society. Any and all attempts to reframe the Establishment Clause to favor government promotion of religion ultimately erode individual liberty.

When the federal government involves itself in endorsing particular religious expressions, funding faith-based institutions, or attempting to regulate the "spiritual fitness" of its citizens, it violates the core premise of the First Amendment.

In conclusion, religious liberty is a natural right grounded in the freedom of conscience. It is not a privilege to be dispensed, interpreted, or enforced by the civil government. The proposed Department of Justice guidance advising the President to instruct agencies on a narrower, state-aligned understanding of the Establishment Clause threatens to dismantle this delicate constitutional architecture.

Therefore, I urge the Department of Justice to abandon recommendations that would undermine the wall of separation between church and state.

Protecting the rights of all citizens—including those of minority faiths and the non-religious—requires that the government refrain from favoring, financing, or otherwise endorsing any religious doctrine.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadelle Rosebrugh
Michigan, USA

From: JosephC <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separate Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:41:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I disagree with your stance that seeks to obliterate the guidelines our forefathers sought to bring about: freedom from religion.

Leave the Johnson Amendment alone. It will split churches and bring down America in the long run. Why? It's like my boss asking me if I went to church this weekend. That's none of his business.

I also object to your wanting to take my tax dollars to fund religious non-profit activities, fund religious education, and religious clubs on public campuses. If they can't stand on their own, then they deserve to fail.

Some want to put prayer back in school. May I remind you that prayer was taken out of the home before it was taken out of school? When was the last time you gathered YOUR family together for morning and evening worship?

But prayer in schools is not the issue. The issue really is when prayers are said in school, who will write the prayers, your church or theirs? In Jesus' name, or Allah's name, or Buddha's, or whoever's? See my point? Or will the compromising continue and the prayer be watered down to impotency?

Do you know who was first to enact prayer in schools and what the result was?

Adolph Hitler. Under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, whose son he was. (See 'The Secret History of the Jesuits' chapter 5, 'The Gestapo and the 'Company of Jesus' pg 163)

Spiritual issues are to be left to the spiritual leaders with enough sense to know what's best for the flock, not those misguided men in our legislatures with political agendas.

Joseph R. Cooper
Stone Mountain, Georgia

From: Karin Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom Comment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:42:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please
implement them.

Sincerely,

Karin Smith

From: Lisa Laffoon <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] First amendment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:46:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Fellow Citizen:

I'm writing as a concerned American citizen that our first amendment rights concerning separation of church and state might be altered or changed.

I am a practicing Christian with grave concerns that the wall of separation of church and state maybe collapsing which will most definitely lead to religious persecution of any minority practicing believer.

This grand constitutional right concerning church and state separation has been a safeguard against tyranny since it was founded.

Anytime the State has given power to the church it has resulted in persecution. The Dark Ages is the best example that I can think of. What a horrible time when the church used the power of the state to murder millions of people in the name of religion and even after that time period those people that fled to America at its very beginning again used the power of the state to persecute those with different beliefs. It's written in history, so let us learn from the past so these things are not repeated.

God desires sincere worship from the heart not forced days of rest. It is the lack of power in Christianity that leads church leaders to lean on the arm of the state to do her bidding. Laws mandating and enforcing the first four commandments of the Great Decalogue should have nothing to do with any freedom loving country. They are contrary to the loving heart of God who gives individuals freedom to worship Him or not. If our country repudiates the first amendment and begins forcing religious laws that tell us when we are allowed to worship God or even forcing unbelievers to "worship" God then we will have stepped back into the Dark Ages, but I fear far worse will come of it.

I pray that each individual that has power to influence this issue will use it on the side of God and religious freedom. Keep separation of church and state and each individual's right to worship God from their own conscience and not from another's.

Sincerely,

Lisa Laffoon

Sent from my iPhone

From: Bobby Durham <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:47:46 -0400

Importance: Normal

I object to any and all attempts to weaken or dismantle the separation of church and state.

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Faith Makes Things Possible Not Easy <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidents commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:49:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please!

To whom it may concern,

I feel we should keep church and state separate.

Our country sets the standard that many countries follow, we have a HUGE responsibility to not only the American citizens, but to people around the world.

under our current administration we have it great, but for the leaders that follow this could lead down a rabbit hole that could end up very bad. The separation of Church and State is what founded this country

I agree with the Pillar of Freedoms response please implement them

Sincerely

Tammie Keller

From: Patrick Gaul <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious "Liberty" Commission? No way!

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:52:07 -0400

Importance: Normal

Church State Separation is at the core of the American experience! To even think of saying otherwise is unconscionable! Get real! The England that we declared our independence from was a state run church, with the king as the head of both! Are your commissioners completely ignorant or slavishly indoctrinated!

Religious "Liberty" Commission? That's a joke right? How can a commission even consider the possibility of endorsing the option of liberty for one religion over another (or no religion).

Unbelievable that anybody at the Department of Justice can be so brainwashed!

Follow the money! That's all they care about!

Patrick Gaul

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: Fran Klein <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:54:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir,

I would like to have my voice heard and it includes my daughter, son-in-law and 14 year old grandson.

I want to maintain separation of church and state. That is in the constitution in the First Amendment where it reads, “ Congress shall make no law respecting and establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”

If there is no separation between church and state, it means we do not have freedom. The government has no business being involved in religion. We should never have the government decide or make laws on anything of religious matters by telling us what to believe, who to believe, when do worship, where to worship and more.

Please keep our freedom in matters of religion and freedom of conscience.

Thank you so much,

Frances A Klein

Phoenix AZ

From: Matt McMearty <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom & Separation of church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:56:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to voice my concern about the direction and messaging of the Religious Liberty Commission.

The Founders were overwhelmingly Protestant along with Deists and a few other persuasions from philosophical and religious perspectives that voted for the wording of the religion clauses of the third proposed amendment of the original 12 amendments, which amendment is now the First one in the Bill of Rights.

It was Christians who voted the religion clauses. They voted down all phraseology in both house debates that tried to limit the scope of the Establishment Clause in terms of establishing a “church” by law. They list every time the word “church” was amended into the wording. This means they wanted to prevent the arm of legislation from establishing something more than a church.

James Madison gave the rationale as to why the religion clauses were necessary because the people were concerned that a church or two or three churches combine together to establish a religion (read it as some form of agreed upon Christianity). That was the concern about the plethora of Christian sects that existed at that time. Thus, Christians were afraid of a church establishment, an establishment of Christianity based on what they shared in common, or, by implication, any establishing of religion in general that would favor one aspect of religion over another, because they knew the history of Christianity and religion determining laws and policies in the West.

Thus, they settled on using the word “religion” in limiting the legislative power of Congress, not church, not Christianity, but religion in all that word encompasses. It was mostly Bible believing Christians in the two houses that did this.

The Religious Liberty Commission’s assertions that the separation of church and state is not in explicit wording in the Constitution is true, yet on that same explicit lack argument, neither are the phrasings “religious liberty” or “religious freedom”. Separation of church and state is there in a jurisdictional sense where the federal government has its jurisdiction, institutional religions have their jurisdiction(s), and the conscience is a jurisdiction shared by God and the individual, which the state is limited from legislating or crossing the boundary of either institutional religious jurisdiction, or the personal jurisdiction of conscience.

By asserting that the Constitution does not have the separation of church and state—Jefferson was the first to articulate in a concise picture what is in the Religion Clauses using the wall metaphor, while Madison later employed the metaphor of a line of separation not always distinct—the RLC has opened the door to uniting church and state by removing the metaphor’s symbolic extent of separation of jurisdictions and the powers of those jurisdictions..

I do not understand the separation of church and state to call for antagonism to religion as some secularists employ it to carry out their hostilities to religion. I understand it as a respect for both church and state. The Founders had a high view of respect for religion as they did for individual conscience. That respect for separation is from men who were mostly Christian. Christians, not secularists, or the non-religious, or the atheists, created the separation of church and state in the Religion Clauses. Some if not many of those same men who voted for this may have had a view where the colonies that became states allowed for states to legislate in matters of religion and religious freedom. The separation of church and state in the federal level prevented the national government from defining and/or imposing upon the states neither any extent of religious freedom nor the extent of religious establishments. The states did not delegate matters of religion and religious freedom to the federal government.

Thus, you cannot in one breath say the states are free from federal legal intrusions into state freedoms of religion and in another breath assert the government is free to legislate in matters of religion, at least in matters of favoring by law a form of generalised Christianity. Both situations illustrate the broad limitations on the federal government’s separation of

powers.

By asserting there is no separation of church and state, what you have left is Christians deciding what is allowed and what is not allowed by the government. They are the one's determining what the Religion Clauses are about once a Christian vision is embedded into the operations of government. In doing this, you are fulfilling what James Madison said the people feared the establishment of a church or 2-3 combine and establish a religion. For the Founders, Christianity enmeshed in government law and operations was the threat. How much more so today when Christians of various churches and faith-based organizations combine together to envision a Christian-favored form of government? It is not the Muslims or the atheists who were and are the greatest threat, but Christians themselves thinking only they know how religious freedom is defined, which by the religion clauses constitutes an oxymoronic contradiction of the spiritually blind leading the blind into destroying the government it wishes to save for God.

In meeting the supposed threats of secularists, atheists, and Muslims, all of which are minorities in this country, the Commission is inserting Christian-favored rationales and doing the very thing they think the others would do. All, including politically aligned Christians in both parties, are a threat to our religious freedoms.

I am a fundamental Bible believing, born again Christian who loves the separation of church and state. I don't want Christians to mold government just as much as I don't want atheists, non-religious secularists, and Muslims to mold government. The Constitution does not call for any form of religious or secular ideology to guide government. All are welcome to sit as equals in government and none are to be favored.

I am sincerely yours,

Matthew F. McMearty
M.Div.; M.Ch-St

Sent from my iPhone

From: Gabriele Duarte <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] To the Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 17:57:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Will you please consider the following words.

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 a citizens and students of history, and as a Christian, I am 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, I 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.

I respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee 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.

I am 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, I respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." [7]

James Madison wrote, "It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it." [8]

Lastly, I object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord's words that we "render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God's." [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that "The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people 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."

I respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

I remain, Yours truly,

Gabriele Duarte

Sent from my iPad

From: Bernard Weston <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:03:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them.

From: "Dale Northrop, Jr." <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Dale Northrop, Jr.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:06:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Good Afternoon Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I believe in separation of church and state, and object to the commission's findings regarding this matter.

I recently dug deep into the history of religious liberty and separation between church and state due to the current political climate. What really concerns me is the fact that there are several quotes from the founding fathers of America which build a solid foundation of separation between church and state, but currently there have been multiple individuals who claim this separation is a myth. These quotes do not only come from Thomas Jefferson, but also from James Madison, George Washington, and John Adams. I have put some examples below:

“We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no man’s right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance.”
(Madison, 1785)

“Every man, conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.”
(Washington, 1789)

“The United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”
(Adams & Tripoli Treaty, 1797)

“Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God... 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, 1802)

This belief that seems to have been shared by multiple of the most important men in the history of the United States came from baptist ministers, who got it from Roger Williams the founder of Rhode Island. This Protestant preacher first coined the term, "separation between church and state," because of religious persecution that had been happening to those who did not abide by the puritan rules imposed on the colonies. He saw that this persecution was carried about in the same manner as other religious persecution had been in the past. Babylon and Rome are two pagan nations that carried out widespread religious persecution. Examples of religious persecution over the middle ages are numerous: the Catholic Church burning people alive for not holding their religious views, the Church of England drowning Anabaptists, and the aforementioned Puritan persecution in the colonies. The United States itself has even partaken in persecuting individuals based on their religious beliefs as seen in the 1880s when Seventh-day Adventists were thrown into prison for believing that the Seventh Day is the Sabbath Day of the Lord our God (Exodus 20:10). One principle can be derived from every historical case of religious persecution: when the church unites with the state, religious liberty is not only threatened but dissolved.

The reason I am taking the time to make this public comment is because I have concerns about the report on the separation between church and state which I will list below:

1. I do not believe the government should be funding religious non-profit activities. This is because when government power and money backs a certain religion, this sends a message to the other religions that there is a silent state religion. What I mean by "silent state religion" is that the religion backed by the state is not openly stated, but the effects are seen through deterioration of non-government backed religious activities and promotion through funding of other ones. This does not indicate religious freedom, but religious coercion.
2. I do not believe the government should be funding religious education, nor religious activities or clubs on campuses. This is because again, when the government starts backing a certain religion then that sends a silent message that anyone else will be viewed unfavorably.
3. I do not believe the Johnson Amendment should be repealed. If this were to happen, politicians would be incentivised to take up a certain religion, or to make back door deals with churches due to religious organizations tax-exempt status. Certain churches could get more money because of backing politicians, and politicians could use religion as a method of manipulation. This would not only be unethical, but would be a step in the direction of setting up a silent state religion. I also request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced rather than being ignored.
4. I believe the government should be completely neutral towards all religions. The promotion of any one religion over another completely goes against religious freedom, and has been seen in the United States ever since I was born. For years this religion that was promoted was Atheism, which has no creed and worships no god, but for all intents and purposes has the building blocks of a religion (mythology, ideology, philosophy). We have seen the effects on society that this bias has brought, and I believe any religious bias (whether toward Atheism, Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, etc.) has the potential to degrade society due to the enforcement of going against one's conscience that will inevitably occur.
5. History has shown that the United States itself is not immune to religious persecution. This primarily can be seen in the 1800s persecution of Seventh-day Adventists (sources include U.S. Senate, National Sunday-Law Hearings, 1888; Chattanooga Daily Times, July 12, 1887; U.S. Senate Committee on Education & Labor, National Sunday-Law Hearings, Dec. 1888). However, as I had mentioned in the previous objection, a modern example is how Atheism has pushed its ideology onto society in recent years and Christianity has been persecuted as a result.

Therefore, I believe separation of church and state needs to be upheld, because even if it is dissolved with good intentions in mind, history has proven that a bridge between church and state provides too many opportunities for corruption to develop in both government and religious organizations which are associated.

I, as an interested citizen, hope this comment helps keep the church and state separate and religion free.

Thank you,

-Dale Northrop, Jr.

From: Doug Young <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - The Path Forward - Glenn Young

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:06:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

I concur with The Path Forward, Chapter 14.

I suggest a statement of exception for any 'religion' that espouses and/or promotes seditious ideology that is contrary to the U.S. Constitution and our established legal system.

Any groups that attempt to create exclusive religious enclaves within the borders of our country should not be granted any possible course of action whatsoever to infringe upon the rights of others through coercion and/or oppression. Nor should they be given special rights for large public gatherings or marches impeding the normal course of citizen's rights in public areas. Nor should they be allowed to govern themselves separately by any system of laws contrary to, or not aligned with those of the US government.

Sent from my iPad

From: moniquerenee <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Monique Hawkins

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:10:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm reaching out to you as a concerned 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 politics, inevitably, things can become corrupt with churches answering/adhering to politicians instead of to God.

All one has to do is to look at history to see what occurs when church and state are not separate; inevitably, persecution/intolerance develops. 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 land of the free; a place where people of all faiths can worship freely.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Monique Hawkins

Why do I use Proton Mail? Because Big brother is monitoring, tracking, and recording everything you do online and without your consent. Hotmail, Google Mail, Yahoo, and any unsecure email should be dropped. The only way to secure emails for both sender and receiver is with Proton Mail. Get it today.

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: Dale Joles <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recent decision regarding the separation of church and state.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:11:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sir or Ma'am,

I am writing to express my strong objections to the recent decision stating that the constitution does not support the separation of church and state.

This decision overlooks key historical and legal precedents that have long protected religious freedom and maintained a clear boundary between government institutions and religious practices. A strict adherence to the separation of church and state is essential to ensuring that citizens of all faith backgrounds, as well as non-religious individuals, are treated equally under the law.

I write to respectfully express my profound disagreement with the assertion that the United States Constitution does not establish a meaningful separation between church and state. Such a position is inconsistent with the text of the First Amendment, the intent of its principal architects, and the long American tradition of safeguarding liberty of conscience through the institutional separation of civil and ecclesiastical authority.

The First Amendment declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These twin protections were designed to secure religious liberty by preventing government from exercising authority over matters of faith. The Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause are not competing principles; rather, they work together to ensure that religion remains free from governmental control and also critically that government remains free from sectarian domination.

Thomas Jefferson articulated this principle in his famous 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. Referring to the First Amendment, Jefferson wrote that the American people had built "a wall of separation between Church & State." Contrary to modern efforts to dismiss this phrase as a mere metaphor without constitutional significance, Jefferson's statement reflected a principle already embedded in American constitutional thought. The purpose of the wall was not hostility toward religion but protection of religion from governmental interference and protection of government from sectarian control.

James Madison, often called the "Father of the Constitution," observed throughout history that alliances between religious institutions and civil power had damaged both. In his later writings, he noted that ecclesiastical establishments had produced "pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; and in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution." His conclusion was clear: the purity of religion and the freedom of government are best preserved when neither exercises authority over the other.

The same principles were vigorously defended a century later by Alonzo T. Jones during the national debate over the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill of 1888. In his testimony and subsequent writings, Jones emphasized that Christ himself distinguished between civil and religious authority when He declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Jones interpreted this teaching as establishing a permanent distinction between the jurisdiction of government and the jurisdiction of religion. Civil government may regulate matters affecting public order and the equal rights of citizens, but it may not direct worship, compel religious observance, or favor one set of religious convictions over another.

The constitutional structure adopted by the Founders reflects precisely this distinction. The federal government was granted no power over religion. Article VI forbids religious tests for public office. The First Amendment

prohibits laws respecting an establishment of religion. Together, these provisions reject the European and ultimately Roman Catholic model of government-supported religion and establish a framework in which faith flourishes through persuasion rather than coercion.

Historically in the late 19th century, when the National Reform Movement was also advocating similar ideas in the United States, there were individuals of my own faith who were placed in Chain Gangs in Tennessee for no other reason than they labored on a common working day (sunday) and rested as God commands on the 7th day of the week. It is deeply concerning to me to see Christian Nationalists calling for blue laws and Sunday legislation once again as part of the same movement involved in tearing down and renouncing separation of church and state.

Those who deny the existence of a constitutional separation between church and state often argue that religion influenced the moral outlook of many of the Founders. That observation is undoubtedly true. Yet it does not follow that the Founders intended religious institutions to wield civil authority or that they intended government to exercise authority over religion. The historical record demonstrates the opposite. Jefferson, Madison, and many others believed that religion is most secure when it is independent of governmental power.

The wall of separation between church and state is therefore not a modern invention, nor a judicial distortion of the Constitution. It is a concise description of a principle deeply rooted in the First Amendment, articulated by Jefferson, defended by Madison, and reaffirmed by later advocates of religious liberty such as Alonzo T. Jones. The purpose of this separation is not to exclude religion from public life, but to prevent the use of governmental power to advance, enforce, privilege, or suppress religious belief.

For these reasons, I urge the Commission to reject any interpretation of the Constitution that diminishes the separation of church and state. The preservation of religious liberty depends upon maintaining the distinction between civil authority and matters of conscience. That distinction is not only a constitutional necessity, a Christian and Biblical one, but also one of the greatest achievements of the American experiment in liberty.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my perspective on this important matter.

Best regards,

Dale Joles

From: Sylvia Boyne <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:11:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Public comment - Presidential Religious Liberty Commission - Sylvia M Boyne

Dear members of the commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns.

When Jesus was presented with a Roman coin, he made a plain statement, render to Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. God has given Caesar the responsibility of managing the secular government, while God oversees His church, His faithful followers. To take away this distinction will give Government the opportunity to take over God's role of

guiding His Church. History has shown us that only evil comes from decisions like the one you are purporting to make.

From: Debbie Ashton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pillar of Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:12:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's response to you and agree that religious freedom is very important and that church and state should remain separate. People should be able to choose what their belief is and not be forced into a one-world religion.

I also agree that the true Ten Commandments in the Bible are the only Ten Commandments that should be used.

Debbie Crussell-Ashton

From: Bruce Cameron <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] A Magnificent Document

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:21:09 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: image001.jpg

Thank you for the draft report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty. It is a magnificent document. For 50 years I have been litigating religious liberty and First Amendment cases in the employment context. For almost 20 years I have been teaching Employment Discrimination and am the co-author of a law school textbook on the subject. Having read all the recommendations, I agree with them. What a blessing they will be to the citizens and the nation if they are incorporated into the law. If that happens, it will mean that my textbook will need to be updated.

Blessings,

Bruce N. Cameron

[Bruce N. Cameron](#)

Reed Larson Professor of Labor Law

Regent University School of Law

Law School: [REDACTED] PII; Foundation: [REDACTED] PII
[REDACTED] PII

Admitted: Massachusetts, District of Columbia and Georgia only.

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From: Charlotte Huenergardt <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State-Charlotte Huenergardt

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:25:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of the religious liberty commission:

I am writing as a resident of the beautiful state of Florida, and frankly I am quite

alarmed and dismayed at the persistent recommendations to unite church and state.

I truly believe that this will be the death knell of religious Liberty as we have known

it in our wonderful country of these United States of America. We have been a united nation

because of our freedoms. We have reveled in the freedom of not being worried or

concerned regarding how, when, or where we worshiped God. Church and state

must remain separate for the good of all.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Huenergardt

Orlando, Florida

From: Rebecca Burmester <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:29:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

Separation of church and state is incredibly important and it strengthens both.

From: Marcia Trott <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - [PRESIDENTIAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION- MARCIA TROTT]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:31:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I understand by reading the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission that they are currently making an effort to weaken and dismantle the separation of church and state. This email is meant to address that issue for my ancestry boarded the Mayflower and sailed to the Americas to establish a country where freedom to believe and live what they believed. The early for fathers of America thoughtfully and tirelessly wrote the Declaration of Independence to establish America as a nation that provided all humans to have innate, unalienable rights. I fully object to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities and requstdt that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.

Thank you for considering my input concerning this issue.
Sincerely, Marcia Trott, Inman, SC.

From: "L.A. Pluth" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment: Separation of church and State L.A.Pluth, Minnesota

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:33:15 -0400

Importance: Normal

The separation of church and State should remain just that- separate.

Was not this country founded on this very ideal of Religious liberty?

Each one of us has the freedom to choose where we worship and when we worship.

Just as God created us with free will and the freedom to choose, it should so remain within this country.

Please reconsider these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Lisa Pluth, Minnesota

From: alan harmon <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State / My Concerns

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:33:37 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attached are my concerns about the church and state separation. Please read.

Thank you,

Alan Harmon,

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:34:11 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully submit this request to urge the Commission to defend the historic principles of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. I oppose any recommendation to the Department of Justice or another government agency that would weaken these constitutional safeguards or encourage greater unity between religious institutions and civil government.

True religious liberty does not require the government to promote religion. It requires government to protect every person's right to worship according to conscience—or not to worship—without coercion, discrimination, or interference.

American history shows why this protection is necessary. During the colonial period, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and other religious minorities suffered fines, imprisonment, and discrimination because established churches enjoyed the support of the state. These abuses helped lead to the adoption of the First Amendment.

The experience of seventh-day Sabbath keepers, particularly Seventh-day Adventists, provides another warning. During the late nineteenth century, some were fined, imprisoned, and sentenced to chain-gang labor for performing ordinary work on Sunday after conscientiously observing Saturday as the biblical Sabbath. Their experience demonstrates that when government enforces religiously influenced observances, minority believers are often the first to suffer.

History repeatedly shows the danger of giving civil authority power over conscience. Whether through religious persecution, state-backed religious extremism, or atheistic governments that suppress faith, the result is the same: individual liberty is lost.

Government should protect public order, individual rights, and equal treatment under the law. Religious institutions should advance their beliefs through teaching, persuasion, and voluntary faith—not through civil power or coercion. Genuine religion does not need the state to compel belief or observance.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to reject any proposal that weakens the constitutional separation of church and state. Every church should remain free to proclaim its beliefs, and every citizen should remain free to accept or reject those beliefs without government pressure.

The lessons of history and the prophecies of Revelation are clear. When religious and civil power are united, intolerance and injustice follow. Please defend the First Amendment and preserve the religious liberty of every citizen.

A concerned child of

Christ - Chuck Briner

From: John Lance Hibberd <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reaction to RLC draft

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:34:22 -0400

Importance: Normal

I support the freedom of conscience to pursue and practice whatever religion is of your choice. That is the purpose and is assured us by the first amendment, and that can only continue to protect freedom of choice, if the idea of a separation of Church and State is maintained. Founding fathers like Roger Williams, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson knew that from the beginning, let us not forget it.

John Lance Hibberd

Director of personal ministries, Elizabethtown SDA Church

From: M Churchill-Wolverton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – M. Wolverton

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:35:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I was troubled to read that the Commission wants to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a "bridge." 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.

Consider the Dark Ages, the Inquisition, the Reformation, and why believers fled Europe to flee from religious persecution as examples.

Also, 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.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of to God — and that's bad for the church and the country alike. Separation isn't a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it's the reason religion has stayed strong here. Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Please don't build that bridge. Keep the wall that separates the church and the state. It protects the church far more than it constrains it.

Sincerely,
M. Wolverton
Scottsdale, AZ

From: Kirby & Dave <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty Commission/Resources - Kirby Ruland

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:36:57 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom It Concerns:

I didn't grow up in a Christian home, although it respected and upheld the nation's laws. I became an active member of the 1960's/70's "counter culture," who sneered at and broke any number of U.S. laws and socially accepted moral standards, as well as denying God's existence and authority by my life actions. Political dissent, social activism, and individual freedom of choice were basic to my identity. But even then, I *SUPPORTED* every citizen's right to hold -- and to openly express -- his own political, moral, and spiritual views ***without fear of reprisals or suppression*** by our government or social entities.

Nearly 50 years ago I committed my allegiance and life to Jesus Christ as my Lord, the sustainer of all creation, and the ultimate supreme authority over all peoples and governments. I am active in a church, well-read in Scripture, and strive to obey it as showing God's best path for my life ***and*** for the well-being of the world in general. I'm familiar with many other belief systems, and respect the right of their members to disagree with my views -- *in spite of firmly believing that **many policies derived from their beliefs** have very detrimental consequences for our culture's future.* Insofar as I am not ***penalized*** for openly sharing and practicing my Christian beliefs and principles -- and am not required to ***violate*** them by obeying laws contrary to them -- I'm committed to cooperating peacefully with any entity ***who's likewise willing to respect my rights and freedoms.***

Four times in the Declaration of Independence the signers either make direct reference to God, or refer to Him indirectly by terms well-understood in that era. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was placed first for a reason -- because the signers considered its content ***foundational*** to the Amendments that follow. ***Freedom from any governmentally mandated religious belief, or for government to interfere in the practice of one's religion,*** is also placed *FIRST* for a reason -- because it ***undergirds*** the following list of next-most-important rights in that same Amendment: Free Speech, Free Press, Freedom to Assemble Peaceably, and Freedom to *Petition the Government for Redress of Grievances.*

Today I am petitioning you, as an extension of the U.S. Government, to ***Redress a serious Grievance*** which U.S. leadership has permitted to exist for many decades -- the extremely poorly founded ***so-called "wall of separation" between religion and civil government.*** It's based on a single comment in a personal letter from Thomas Jefferson to a private person. It has no weight in law. Not only does it run *counter* to the plain tone and intent of the Declaration and Constitution, but its meaning has been twisted to express the *OPPOSITE* of the thought which Jefferson was addressing in the first place: ***Government isn't "free" from the general influence and teaching of religion,*** just as it isn't permitted to impose any specific religion upon its citizens.

There is ***NO IMPERMEABLE WALL*** "protecting" government and religion from influencing each other, ***as long as neither one negates or seriously obstructs the other one's rightful function!*** Government and religion *inform each other*, which is beneficial to both of them, as well as to the population. Government and religion are to pull together in harness, not undercut each other!

Unless someone presents a clear and convincing case as to ***how, and precisely where***, a particular religious action or religious speech violates the Constitution, then his accusation or challenge ***effectively violates the First Amendment by "prohibiting the free exercise of religion."*** For government automatically to assume that religious exercise is harmful rather than neutral or beneficial, shows extreme bias ***AGAINST*** adherents of that religion, and thus ***deprives them of rights specifically guaranteed*** in the very First Amendment!

Thank you for seriously considering ***dismantling, or more fairly interpreting, this pernicious and unConstitutional policy direction***. It has unjustly and needlessly pitted our countrymen against each other, and has prevented the citizenry as a whole from benefiting from one another's much-needed input. As ever, balance and the least restriction possible are best in keeping with the spirit of American freedom, and with the principled convictions expressed in our Founders' documents.

Yours sincerely,

Kirby Ruland

From: Brian Kelley <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State-Brian Kelley

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:37:21 -0400

Importance: Normal

We read that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." in the first amendment contained in the Bill of Rights. When we examine the history of Rome, they also implemented Sunday law legislation and not long afterwards, that once mighty civilization collapsed! God teaches the principle of "Free Will," in the Bible. God has made us with freedom of choice because God desires that each individual chooses to love him. Please consider that not long after the Roman Empire passed Sunday law legislation that once mightily civilization collapsed and was conquered by other peoples. This isn't conjecture, but instead, a historical fact. 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,
Brian Edward Kelley

From: Melvin Deans <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:37:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

I stand for Religious Liberty and do not want the government or state to join to the church. Let there be separation of church and state. Any time there is not church and state we have all kinds of problems. Melvin Deans

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Roger Poulin <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church in tate

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:38:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I believe that removing the separation of church and state would destroy religious liberty in the United States.

The Johnson amendment must be enforced to prevent religion from interfering with the state and vice versa. If that is removed there would be little in the way of a state sponsored religion. If there were a politicized religion what version of religion would that be? Evangelical, Lutheran, Baptist, Catholic, Atheism, Buddhism, Hindu, Islam? Who gets to decide? I believe government needs to remain completely neutral in relationship with religion.

People came to America from Europe in the 1600's and 1700's for the opportunity to freely practice their religion without state or state sanctioned church persecution. Please don't repeat the mistakes from history that Europe made. Keep the wall between religion and the state so people can worship as their conscience.

Keep religion out of the government, and vis-a-versa.

Best Regards,

Roger Poulin

[REDACTED] PII

From: Cindi Sears <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Draft Report - Cynthia Sears

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:38:54 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly oppose the recommendations in the draft report issued by the Religious Liberty Commission. The United States was founded on the principle of religious freedom for everyone—people of every faith, as well as agnostics, atheists, and those with no religious affiliation. The government's role is to protect each person's freedom of conscience, not to promote or favor any particular religion.

Our Constitution's Establishment Clause has long safeguarded both religious liberty and equal treatment under the law. Weakening the separation of church and state would undermine those protections and exclude millions of Americans whose beliefs differ from those favored by the government.

Please reject any recommendations that would entangle government with religion or erode the constitutional rights of all Americans.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Sears

From: Julie Farmer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Julie Caserta

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:39:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I'm writing as an America citizen to ask you to amend the recommendations in your report that would weaken the wall of separation of church and state — especially using government money to fund religious activities and repealing the Johnson Amendment. I'm adamantly opposed to these things.

When churches and religious organizations 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 in this great nation.

I'm requesting that you please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Julie Caserta
Ft Towson, OK

From: Brenr Blaney <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:39:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the committee,

I believe the separation of Church and State is very important. Always keep them separate. Never legislate religious observances. Thank You for hearing my voice!

Thank You,
Brent Blaney

From: Bruce Hatimbula <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Submission to the Commission on the Draft Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:41:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Submission_on_Draft_Religious_Liberty_Report.pdf

Dear Members,

Please find attached herewith a submission of the draft report on religious liberty for your consideration.

Regards,
Bruce hatimbula
Attorney at Law

BRUCE CHANGU JAMU HATIMBULA, SNR
ATTORNEY AT LAW - ZAMBIA

12th July, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

(Sent via email)

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

**Subject: Separation of Church and State and the International Significance of
the Draft Report – Bruce C.J Hatimbula, Snr**

I write from Zambia as a legal practitioner and as a person who appreciates the indispensable contribution that religion makes to individual character, family life, social welfare and national development. I support the Commission's efforts to protect individuals and religious institutions against discrimination, censorship, violence and unlawful governmental coercion.

I am, however, deeply concerned that significant parts of the Draft Report do not merely protect the free exercise of religion. They propose a reordering of the relationship between religion and government that risks weakening the constitutional distance necessary to preserve genuine religious liberty.

The Draft Report expressly rejects the "wall of separation" metaphor and proposes that religious liberty should instead operate as a "bridge between church and state." It asserts that church and state strengthen and support one another and recommends government action to promote that understanding. It also proposes the repeal of the Johnson Amendment, expanded access by faith-based institutions to public funding, public support for religious education, greater official accommodation of religious expression in government institutions and a coordinated governmental litigation programme directed toward particular conceptions of religious liberty.

Taken separately, some of these proposals may appear to advance equality. Taken together, however, they risk converting religious liberty from a constitutional shield protecting conscience into a governmental programme for supporting, financing and facilitating religion.

BRUCE CHANĠU JAMU HATIMBULA, SNR
ATTORNEY AT LAW - ZAMBIA

1. Separation protects religion; it does not suppress it

The Draft Report repeatedly treats separation of church and state as though it necessarily requires the exclusion of religious citizens from public life. That presents a false choice.

Constitutional separation does not mean that religious persons must abandon their beliefs before entering government employment, education, politics or public debate. Nor does it require hostility toward religious institutions. It means that the state must not exercise religious authority, determine religious truth, finance religious propagation, confer political privileges according to faith or use public power to favour one religious constituency over another.

The First Amendment contains both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause: Congress may neither establish religion nor prohibit its free exercise. These protections are complementary. Free exercise protects believers from governmental suppression, while non-establishment protects believers and non-believers from governmental religious alignment.

The Draft Report is therefore correct that religion should not be “exiled” from public life. But it does not follow that the proper response is to construct an institutional bridge between government and religion. The constitutional objective is not isolation, but **independence, neutrality and non-coercion**.

A bridge is not constitutionally neutral. Bridges carry influence in both directions. Government money, political patronage, regulatory expectations and partisan interests may enter religious institutions, while religious preferences may enter public administration. Once this occurs, churches and other faith communities may begin competing for grants, recognition and political access. Their independence can gradually become conditioned upon their relationship with the government of the day.

As the accompanying Guide correctly observes, the wall was not designed merely to restrain religion. It also protects religious institutions from political control, financial dependency and doctrinal interference.

2. The Draft Report relies upon an incomplete account of American constitutional history

The Draft Report is correct in the limited sense that the phrase “separation of church and state” does not appear verbatim in the First Amendment. But

constitutional principles are not invalid merely because the shorthand used to describe them does not appear word-for-word in the constitutional text.

Judicial independence, separation of powers and federalism also depend upon interpretation, structure, history and accumulated constitutional practice. The relevant question is therefore not whether the phrase “wall of separation” appears in the Constitution, but whether the principle accurately reflects the prohibition against government establishment and control of religion.

Thomas Jefferson’s letter to the Danbury Baptist Association was not written to suppress religion. It responded to a religious minority concerned that religious liberty might be treated as a favour granted by government rather than as an inherent right. The historical record indicates that Jefferson intended, among other things, to condemn an alliance between church and state and to explain why the duties of the federal presidency were temporal rather than ecclesiastical. ([The Library of Congress](#))

American history is admittedly more complicated than the statement that the United States was created through a complete and immediately realised separation of church and state. Some colonies and early states maintained religious establishments. Nevertheless, the American constitutional experiment progressively rejected national religious establishment and placed religious conscience beyond the ordinary control of government.

In that important sense, America is indeed a product of the struggle for disestablishment, freedom of conscience and the institutional separation of civil and ecclesiastical authority. Many who travelled to the American colonies did so because of religious persecution or restrictions produced by alliances between government and dominant churches. The First Amendment represented a decisive constitutional response: government would neither establish religion nor prohibit its free exercise. ([Education Updates](#))

The Draft Report should acknowledge this history in full rather than presenting separation principally as a twentieth-century judicial invention hostile to faith.

3. Repealing the Johnson Amendment risks transforming churches into partisan political machinery

The Draft Report recommends repeal of the Johnson Amendment on the ground that it allows government to regulate sermons and religious guidance.

Religious leaders should undoubtedly retain the freedom to teach moral doctrine, criticise government, address legislation and speak on matters of national importance. The concern arises when tax-exempt religious institutions are

permitted to endorse or oppose electoral candidates while retaining publicly subsidised status.

Tax exemption is not simply governmental non-interference. It represents a public fiscal benefit. Permitting tax-deductible funds to be channelled through churches for partisan campaigning could:

- make religious institutions attractive vehicles for undisclosed political financing;
- pressure clergy to align themselves with political parties or candidates;
- divide congregations along partisan lines;
- provide larger or politically connected denominations with disproportionate electoral influence; and
- expose churches to increased governmental investigation concerning campaign finance and tax compliance.

The result may be less religious independence, not more.

A better approach would be to preserve the distinction between robust moral and public-policy advocacy, which should be protected, and direct institutional participation in electoral campaigning. The Commission should recommend clearer safeguards for religious teaching rather than complete repeal of the restriction.

4. Public funding of religious institutions requires strict constitutional safeguards

The Draft Report recommends that faith-based institutions receive equal access to governmental funding without being required to surrender their religious identity. It also supports school-choice systems under which public funding follows children to religious schools.

Religious organizations provide substantial education, healthcare, humanitarian and social services. Their exclusion from generally available programmes merely because of their religious character may itself raise equality and free-exercise concerns. Nevertheless, the Report insufficiently distinguishes between:

1. funding a secular public service delivered by a religious organization; and
2. funding worship, religious instruction, proselytization or doctrinal formation.

Public money may legitimately purchase objectively defined services, such as food relief, shelter, medical treatment or education meeting national standards. But direct government financing of inherently religious activity raises different concerns.

BRUCE CHANĠU JAMU HATIMBULA, SNR
ATTORNEY AT LAW - ZAMBIA

Without effective separation of funds and functions:

- taxpayers may be compelled indirectly to finance religious beliefs they do not share;
- politically favored religions may receive greater access to state resources;
- smaller, unfamiliar or unpopular faiths may be disadvantaged;
- government officials may be forced to determine what constitutes legitimate religion;
- religious institutions may become financially dependent on public authorities; and
- conditions attached to funding may eventually influence doctrine, staffing and religious practice.

The Commission should therefore retain clear safeguards requiring voluntary participation, religious neutrality, transparent eligibility criteria, independent auditing and the separation of publicly funded services from worship, proselytization and sectarian instruction.

Equality in access to public programmes must not become public sponsorship of religion.

5. The education recommendations do not adequately distinguish private religious expression from state-endorsed religion

The Commission properly recognizes that students do not surrender their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate. A student may pray privately, wear religious symbols, discuss faith and participate in voluntary religious associations on the same terms as other student groups. Religious viewpoints should not be singled out for adverse treatment.

The constitutional difficulty arises when the Report moves from protecting student expression to encouraging broader governmental support for religious instruction, school prayer, publicly funded religious education and religious expression by teachers and officials occupying positions of authority.

In public schools, a teacher, coach or administrator does not exercise influence in precisely the same manner as an ordinary private citizen. Students, particularly young children, may reasonably perceive official religious activity as carrying the endorsement of the school. Social pressure may be coercive even where attendance is formally voluntary.

The Commission should therefore distinguish carefully between:

BRUCE CHANĠU JAMU HATIMBULA, SNR
ATTORNEY AT LAW - ZAMBIA

- personal and private religious expression;
- voluntary student-led activity;
- curricular study of religion;
- official school-sponsored worship;
- teacher-led religious activity; and
- public funding of denominational instruction.

Failure to preserve these distinctions risks allowing the majority faith of a particular locality to become the practical religion of its public schools.

The freedom of a Christian student to pray is inseparable from the freedom of a Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, traditional believer, atheist or other student not to participate. Religious liberty must protect both manifestation and refusal.

6. Government religious displays and official celebration may privilege dominant traditions

The Draft Report supports public religious imagery, official celebration of religion and expanded recognition of the country's religious heritage. While historical acknowledgment is not necessarily unconstitutional, official religious symbolism must be treated with caution.

A longstanding monument viewed in its historical context is different from a government intentionally adopting religious symbols to proclaim theological allegiance. A public authority that displays one faith's sacred texts, symbols or confessions may communicate that adherents of that faith are more authentically national than others.

The Draft Report's assertion that government may celebrate religion without establishing it requires clearer limiting principles. Otherwise, the state will inevitably have to decide:

- which religions deserve recognition;
- which texts or symbols are sufficiently historical;
- which beliefs are acceptable;
- which religious holidays merit official treatment; and
- when criticism of a religion becomes unlawful hostility.

Those are precisely the theological and doctrinal judgments that institutional separation helps the state avoid.

7. The Report risks selective rather than universal religious liberty

The Commission states that religious liberty is for every faith and for non-believers as well. That principle deserves unequivocal support. Yet the Report's composition, terminology, examples and recommendations may create the

impression that it primarily seeks to restore the influence of particular religious constituencies.

Religious liberty cannot depend upon whether a belief is popular, traditional or favored by the government. Its true test is the treatment accorded to unpopular minorities, unfamiliar religions, dissenters within religious communities and those who profess no religion.

The Commission's recommendations concerning antisemitism, for example, should vigorously address violence, intimidation and unlawful discrimination. However, the state must distinguish religious hatred from legitimate political criticism, including criticism of the policies of any foreign government. Otherwise, government may be drawn into deciding contested questions of religious identity, theology and political allegiance.

The Guide's account of the Commission's treatment of a former member illustrates the institutional problem: when religious expression becomes integrated into governmental activity, the state is eventually required to decide which religious expression is acceptable and which is intolerable.

A neutral state may punish threats, violence and discrimination without adjudicating religious doctrine.

8. Zambia demonstrates that religious identity and constitutional liberty require a careful balance

Zambia provides a useful comparative perspective. Its constitutional Preamble declares the Republic a Christian Nation while simultaneously upholding every person's freedom of conscience, belief and religion and recognizing Zambia's multi-religious and multicultural character. (parliament.gov.zm)

Article 19 gives substantive effect to that commitment. It protects freedom of thought and religion, the freedom to change one's religion, and the freedom individually or collectively, publicly or privately to manifest and propagate belief through worship, teaching, practice and observance. It also protects students from being compelled to receive religious instruction or participate in religious observances relating to a religion other than their own. (parliament.gov.zm)

This constitutional structure reflects an important principle: even in a country that acknowledges a Christian national identity, the state must preserve space between national religious heritage and the enforceable rights of individual conscience.

Zambia's experience also demonstrates the global influence of American constitutional thought. Concepts such as freedom of conscience, non-compulsion, equal citizenship and limits upon governmental religious authority have travelled across legal systems. The United States therefore bears a responsibility extending beyond its national borders.

When America strengthens the institutional separation of religious and civil authority, it provides constitutional support to religious minorities in countries where dominant religions seek governmental control. When America weakens that principle, governments elsewhere may invoke the change to justify public funding of dominant faiths, compulsory religious practices, partisan mobilization of churches and the exclusion of minority believers.

Accordingly, any narrowing of the distance between church and state in the United States may affect the understanding and practice of religious liberty worldwide.

9. The proposed enforcement structure could produce ideological government administration

The Report recommends religious-liberty task forces, reporting portals, strategic litigation, funding consequences for non-compliant institutions, executive guidance and the appointment of judges sympathetic to its understanding of religious liberty.

Some enforcement mechanisms may be appropriate where actual discrimination occurs. However, their cumulative use under an ideologically contested definition of religious liberty could create a centralized governmental programme favoring particular religious claims.

Of particular concern is the recommendation that federal judges be selected for their willingness to decide religious-liberty cases in a preferred manner. Judges should be appointed because of legal competence, integrity and fidelity to the Constitution not because they are expected to implement the religious policy of an administration.

Similarly, withholding federal funds from schools or other institutions should occur only under clearly defined legislation, with due process and neutral standards. It should not become leverage for compelling institutions to adopt the Executive's interpretation of complex constitutional questions.

10. The Executive Summary should disclose the Report's most consequential proposals

BRUCE CHANĠU JAMU HATIMBULA, SNR
ATTORNEY AT LAW - ZAMBIA

The Guide correctly notes that the Executive Summary does not adequately foreground some of the Report's most consequential recommendations, particularly the proposed repeal of the Johnson Amendment and the broader governmental funding of religious institutions and activities.

A report intended for public consultation should state its major proposals clearly and prominently. Recommendations affecting taxation, elections, public education, public financing and the constitutional relationship between religion and government should not be left principally to later chapters or appendices. Meaningful public participation requires full disclosure of the Report's intended legal and institutional consequences.

Recommended revisions

I respectfully urge the Commission to:

1. withdraw the "bridge between church and state" formulation and recognize institutional separation as a protection for both government and religion;
2. distinguish the constitutional inclusion of religious voices from governmental sponsorship of religious activity;
3. retain appropriate restrictions on partisan electoral campaigning by tax-exempt religious organizations while clarifying their freedom to teach, preach and advocate on public issues;
4. permit religious institutions to participate in neutral public-service programmes only where public funds are not used for worship, proselytization or sectarian instruction;
5. preserve the distinction between private religious expression and official religious endorsement in public schools and government institutions;
6. ensure that all recommendations protect minority faiths, dissenters and non-believers on exactly the same terms as dominant religious communities;
7. adopt neutral standards for addressing antisemitism and other religious hatred without treating legitimate political criticism as religious discrimination;
8. remove recommendations suggesting ideological criteria for judicial appointments;
9. ensure that enforcement mechanisms include due process, statutory authority and viewpoint-neutral standards; and
10. revise the Executive Summary to disclose clearly the proposals concerning the Johnson Amendment, public funding, religious education, government displays and the restructuring of church-state relations.

BRUCE CHANĠU JAMU HATIMBULA, SNR
ATTORNEY AT LAW - ZAMBIA

Conclusion

The Draft Report begins from a sound premise: religion is important, religious conscience deserves protection and believers should not be excluded from public life. Its central error is the assumption that religion will become freer as the institutional distance between church and state becomes narrower.

History suggests the opposite.

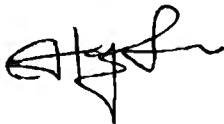
When government and religion become institutionally intertwined, government must eventually determine which religious organisations receive funding, which beliefs qualify for accommodation, which religious expression is acceptable, and which communities receive political recognition. Religion then risks becoming dependent upon state patronage, while the state risks becoming an arbiter of theology.

The separation of church and state is therefore not a wall against faith. It is a constitutional boundary against coercion, establishment, political capture and religious dependency. It allows religion to flourish through conviction rather than governmental preference.

America's commitment to this principle has influenced constitutional democracies far beyond its borders, including Zambia's protection of freedom of conscience under Article 19. Weakening that commitment would not be a purely domestic adjustment. It would send a message internationally that religious liberty can safely be combined with governmental sponsorship and political integration. In many countries, religious minorities would bear the consequences.

I respectfully request that the Commission revise the Draft Report so that it protects the free exercise of religion without weakening the constitutional separation that makes such freedom possible.

Sincerely,
Advocate of the High Court of Zambia



Bruce Changu Jamu Hatimbula, Snr
LLB, LLM
Attorney At Law



PII
F II

From: Jacqueline Harmon <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state/ my concerns

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:42:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear committee,

Please read attached my concerns regarding separation of church and state.

Thank you, Jacqueline Harmon

Sent from my iPad

From: Brent <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:42:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the committee,

Hear my voice. Keep a separation of church and state. Never pass laws to legislate religion.

Thanks

Brent Blaney

From: Jo Anne Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:46:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

I feel that I must warn about the steps this committee is taking. You state that separation of church and state is a MYTH. That is not true, my friends. North Carolina REFUSED to ratify the U.S. Constitution until the Articles were put in, Article I and VI. They were placed very prominently in our North Carolina State Constitution as well. The prohibition about establishing state religion IS the separation of church and state!

You see, here in North Carolina during the Colonial days, the Church of England was the state church. People were forced to pay taxes to support its clergy. There was despotism and cronyism. There was the Regulator's War, prior to the American Revolution. One principle complaint was the TAX FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE CLERGY.

The reason for the distaste for the Church of England was its prosecution of Anabaptists, Quakers, and Puritans. Often that was DEATH. My friends, do not repeat this mistake. Do not let a church control the state! Neither do we want the state controlling the church. Look at the Spanish Inquisition. Millions were tortured and DIED in "church" dungeons, because they didn't believe in infant baptism, didn't want idols in the church, and didn't agree with dogma not found in Scripture! All because a church controlled a state!

In Winston-Salem, noble Moravians fled from persecution and found refuge in America. Their leader, John Huss, was burned at the stake, by a well-known church, for preaching from the Bible. Tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into ENGLISH! Luther was condemned and if not kidnapped by a friend clandestinely, he no doubt would have met the same fate. All this was because a church controlled the state.

In Valdese, North Carolina we have the Waldensians. Whole villages were destroyed in Europe, property seized, children taken and "re-educated" by a well-known church that runs a state. Men, women, and children were killed in such numbers that Oliver Cromwell wrote about it in England. All because of differences in belief. All because a church controlled the state.

You are opening a Pandora's box. Revelation 13 tells us of an image to this beast, who wants to control WORSHIP. For God's people, it means persecution and a death decree. God will have to overrule in the affairs of men.

Do not become the Lamb-like beast who speaks no longer for Christ, the Lamb of God, but becomes the spokesman for the DRAGON!

Joanne Brown
Creston, North Carolina

From: Ronda Credille <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:48:05 -0400

Importance: Normal

Regarding the RLC report, I have the following comments:

The separation of church and state is good for both. It's a constitutional principle that explains how our religious liberty is protected by the First Amendment.

The Johnson Amendment protects houses of worship from partisan politicking and ensures fair play in our campaigns.

Public funds should go to public schools, not private schools.

Public schools should not be pushing sectarian faith, like forcing the posting of the Ten Commandments or pushing official prayer.

Ronda Credille

From: Victor Hays <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:50:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Sirs

Our country is only free because the church has not controlled the state in our past. The dark ages were the result of the union of church and state. The Bible itself calls it fornication for a church to join with the kings of the earth. The Johnson Amendment needs to remain in place or it will not be very long at all that freedom of conscience will no longer be.

Sincerely
Victor Hays

From: Mel Kimmel <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:51:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

I strongly believe that there should be a wall
of separation between Church & State.

I strongly disagree with the movement to tear down that wall. Given the history of the leading church
involved, they do not have a good track record of religious freedom.

Even the garden of Eden allowed for free choice.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Our country will suffer greatly if we go down this path. America's greatness is founded on Religious
Freedom ! The problem with this thinking is which Church gets to make the legislation that affects the
majority ? We need a republic not a religious dictatorship !

Sent from my U.S.Cellular© Smartphone

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Melvin Deans <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:51:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Anytime we have church and state combined there are problems.

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

On Sat, Jul 11, 2026 at 6:37 PM, Melvin Deans

<[REDACTED] PII > wrote:

I stand for Religious Liberty and do not want the government or state to join to the church. Let there be separation of church and state. Any time there is not church and state we have all kinds of problems. Melvin Deans

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Comcast <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Draft Report Feedback - Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:51:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and Department of Justice,

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to the recently published draft report by the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission. The recommendations within this report represent a **dangerous departure from the foundational American principle of the separation of church and state**.

The draft's attempt to diminish the Establishment Clause undermines the very mechanism that has protected true religious freedom in our nation for nearly 250 years. By suggesting policies that encourage state-sponsored religious displays in public institutions and recommending targeted federal litigation to back these measures, the report shifts government focus from protecting individual conscience to promoting state-favored religious practices.

A national framework devoid of specific religious authority is not hostile to faith; rather, it is the only system that allows faith to remain pure, vibrant, and completely independent of political control. When the boundary between civil authority and religious authority is erased, the tools of government inevitably **become instruments of religious coercion and exclusion**.

I urge the Commission to revise the final report to strictly **uphold the historical, legal separation of church and state, ensuring that the federal government remains a neutral protector of all citizens' freedom of conscience**, rather than an arbiter of religious doctrine.

Sincerely,

Betina DiDomenico

Nashville, TN

From: K T <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission's Report Response

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:52:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commission Members:

This email is a response to the Commission's report on Religious Liberty. It appears to me that the term Religious Liberty has been hijacked and redefined. Getting rid of, or even down playing, the wall that separates church and state paves a path that could very well lead to an attempt in bridging the two which is dangerous for all Americans...believers and non-believers alike. The attempt to blur this line raises all kinds of alarm bells for many.

The separation of church and state is a foundational American principle that protects both religious freedom and civil liberty. The Religious Liberty Commission's report advocates policies that would weaken this separation by encouraging greater cooperation between government and religious institutions.

As I have considered many conversations regarding this report, the following includes the main arguments and criticisms of the recommendations:

Main Arguments

- **Separation protects religion, not secularism.** The "wall of separation" was developed by religious believers, beginning with Roger Williams in Rhode Island, to shield churches from government interference and political corruption.
- **The Commission misrepresents history.** The report incorrectly portrays separation of church and state as a modern or Jeffersonian invention. This principle dates back to the 17th century, influenced the Founders, and was central to the adoption of the Constitution and First Amendment.
- **Historical support for separation was widespread.** Figures like Roger Williams, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, John Adams, Millard Fillmore, Ulysses S. Grant, James Garfield, Theodore Roosevelt, and Alexis de Tocqueville supported institutional separation while affirming the importance of religion in public life.
- **The report unfairly attacks Supreme Court precedent.** The Commission's criticism of Justice Hugo Black and the 1947 *Everson v. Board of Education* decision rely on personal attacks and historically inaccurate claims about philosophical influences.
- **Religious participation in public life is compatible with separation.** The article distinguishes between:
 - individuals bringing their religious convictions into public life (which it supports), and
 - government and churches exercising institutional power over one another (which it opposes).

Criticism of the Commission's Recommendations

- **Increasing government funding for religious organizations** would make churches dependent on government, invite political influence, and require the state to make religious judgments.
- **Supporting religious education with public funds** would force government to decide which religious doctrines and schools deserve support, undermining neutrality.

- **Repealing the Johnson Amendment** (which restricts tax-exempt churches from endorsing political candidates) would politicize churches, encourage financial influence over congregations, and damage both religion and politics.

View on secularism

I agree with the Commission that aggressive secularism can become an ideology that marginalizes religion in public life. However, the proposed solution is different: instead of weakening church-state separation, rather by maintaining a firm institutional boundary best protects religious liberty against both secular overreach and religious domination.

Military exception

Military chaplaincies are a legitimate exception because deployed service members often cannot otherwise access religious services.

Conclusion

American history demonstrates that **religion flourishes when it is institutionally independent from government**. Citing historical examples such as Connecticut's disestablishment and Tocqueville's observations, that weakening the separation of church and state would ultimately harm both religion and democracy by encouraging political corruption, government control of religion, and conflicts among faiths.

Sincerely,

Kelly Thom

From: John Stroeh <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTERS 1, 3, 14 - JOHN STROEH

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:53:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

I'm John Stroeh, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, a small intergenerational, multiethnic, economically diverse congregation in urban Tacoma, WA, in many ways a microcosm of the demographics of our United States. Our church's vision is to be a diverse community of faith where all are welcome—a community that is Spirit-filled, compassionate, healthy, reconciled, and just. Our church has a ministry to provide affordable housing to families who are unable to afford housing in our gentrifying neighborhood and a weekly community meal with resources to support those who are struggling economically. It is out of this community and my commitment to lives out the values of Jesus in my personal and professional life that I share these comments on proposed changes to how the federal government handles religious liberty. As I look at the words, actions, and life of Jesus, I see a commitment to welcome and inclusivity, care for the most vulnerable, and a desire for equity and justice for all people.

I affirm the right of people and faith communities to determine their own beliefs and practices as long as this does not impinge on the rights of other people or bring harm or withhold valuable services to others outside their community. When religious communities are given permission by the US government to exclude vulnerable people from receiving basic services that support their dignity, health, safety, and well-being, I fervently disagree. I ask that this Commission rescind its recommendations in this report that allow publicly-funded religious shelters, foster agencies, and hospitals to refuse service to people while keeping public funding. We all pay taxes, and our government exists to support the common good, which does not mean excluding certain people from necessary public services based on religious beliefs.

Coming from a diverse community in which diverse leadership, perspectives, and gifts strengthen rather than weaken our community, I'm concerned that the make-up of this Commission is not diverse and balanced enough to make decisions that affect all religious communities and their constituents, including mainline Protestant congregations, of which I'm a part. I encourage this Commission to expand its membership to include a more diverse, balanced representation of the larger US religious community or its decisions will not be received with trust and its impact will be to further divide our already-divided country.

Thank you for your consideration.

Pastor John Stroeh
Peace Lutheran Church
Tacoma, WA [REDACTED] PII

From: Jobita Phillips <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] : The draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:54:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Response_to_Commission.pdf

To Whom it may concern:

I believe church and state should remain COMPLETELY SEPARATE. There's a reason our founding fathers had the wisdom to keep things separate. We are not a Christian nation and never should be.

I agree with PILLAR OF FREEDOM's comments (Attached). **Please implement them!**

Sincerely,

Jobita Phillips

An American citizen and Christian that believes that the church and state should remain separate and not combined at all.



PILLAR OF FREEDOM

Religious Liberty • Freedom of Conscience • Separation of Church and State

July 6, 2026

Via Electronic Mail to [REDACTED] PII

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and the members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

The separation of church and state is among America's greatest achievements, grounded in the Constitution and central to our freedom. The Religious Liberty Commission's report undermines this principle by proposing to replace the wall of separation between church and state with a bridge. The wall of separation was not a secular invention imposed upon religion — it was built by people of faith, to protect faith. Breaching that wall will set the churches against one another in competition for government money and favor, and set the church against the state as each seeks power over the other — eroding the very freedom the Commission claims to defend. The Commission has recommended increasing government funding of religious activities and recommended repealing the Johnson Amendment. Both of

these recommendations, if followed, will bring the corruption of the political process into the churches. In making its recommendations the Commission has relied upon a faulty retelling of our history.

The American Development of Separation of Church and State

The establishment of a wall of separation between the church and the state first appeared in the modern world in 1636 when Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island. The success of Roger Williams' experiment would later inspire the colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and to a lesser extent other colonies to roll back their religious legislation long before the Revolution of 1776. By 1790, all but three of the original 13 had disestablished their churches, and by 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, had disestablished its church as well. No state would ever enter the Union with an established church. The United States had learned from the colonies that liberty prospered better where church and state were separate. While the states themselves would take some time to extricate themselves from religious entanglements, the drafters and signers of the Constitution recognized the value of religious liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French statesman who toured the United States from 1831 to 1832, observed this about the cause of religion's power in America and how religion indirectly influenced the nation.

In order to learn more about [the separation of church and state], I questioned the faithful of all communions. ... To each of them I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts, and I discovered that they differed among themselves only on matters of detail: to a man, they assigned primary credit for the peaceful ascendancy of religion in their country to the complete separation of church and state. I state without hesitation that during my stay in America I met no one — not a single clergyman or layman — who did not agree with this statement.¹

¹Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 341.

The [clergy] are careful to remain aloof from public affairs and do not involve themselves in the machinations of the parties. Therefore, one cannot say that religion in the United States influences the laws or the specifics of political opinion, but it does shape mores, and it is by regulating the family that religion endeavors to regulate the state.²

The Commission itself recognizes “that religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength,” and that “preserving it will require vigilance, education, and renewed commitment from institutions and citizens alike.” Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty Draft Report at 13. The report then goes on to highlight a list of areas where religion and religious people are under attack. These areas of attack are fairly portrayed, and all people of faith should be concerned about the attack. America is in a culture war, and much of the battle is over values that are informed by religion. While the report does not go so far as to explicitly state that atheistic secularism is a religion, it certainly functions as one, and when the state supports secularism in its worst forms, the state is taking sides in the culture war against religion. This needs to stop.

The Commission’s Revisionist History of the American Experience

First, the Commission tells a false history of religious liberty in the colonies and in the early history of the nation. It completely ignores that the idea of building a wall of separation between the church and the state is a very old idea, which was fully enunciated in 1644 by Roger Williams. Report at 37. Next, they ignore the fact that Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware followed Rhode Island’s example by keeping a wall of separation between the church and the state. They also ignore that other colonies, seeing the freedom and success of the states which preserved the separation of church and state, repealed laws which supported their established churches in order to attract more immigrants. By 1776, the founding fathers concluded that separation of church and state had been a success, and while not using the phrase “separation of church and state,” drafted the concept into the Constitution. The inclu-

²Ibid. p. 336.

sion of separation of church and state, impressed upon James Madison by members of the Baptist church, united the Baptists and the members of other denominations to support the Constitution and ensure its adoption. Baptist support was contingent upon the addition of the First Amendment, which was speedily adopted after the adoption of the Constitution. Thus without separation of church and state, the Constitution would never have been adopted. Nevertheless, the Commission would have us believe that religious liberty did not exist in the states prior to the adoption of the Constitution, Report at 37, and that the concept of a wall of separation was the invention of Thomas Jefferson, and not central to the freedoms of our nation. They state that the idea of a wall of separation comes from a single letter, forgotten until the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947, completely omitting the rich history of both the phrase and the idea. Report at 42.

The metaphor of creating a wall of separation between the church and the state was first written by Roger Williams in a reply to John Cotton in 1644, and then reproduced and expanded upon in his *magnum opus*, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, published in London in the same year.³ Parliament banned the book. The metaphor was well known to the founding fathers, probably through the works of James Burgh, raised a Scottish Presbyterian who later became a devout Protestant dissenter. Thomas Jefferson's letter was not first quoted by the Supreme Court in 1947, but rather 68 years earlier in 1879 in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*. The Commission ignores a long line of Presidents who felt compelled to explicitly support the concept of a wall of separation. Besides Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, one of the primary drafters of the Constitution, said that there should be a "separation between religion and government,"⁴ and that religion flourished better without government patronage.⁵ George Washington's diplomats negotiated, and John Adams signed the Treaty

³Roger Williams, *Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered* (1644), in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 1, p. 108; the metaphor is reproduced and developed throughout *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Edward Bean Underhill (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1848), see, e.g., p. 435.

⁴ James Madison, "Detached Memoranda" (c. 1817), in Elizabeth Fleet, "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 534–568.

⁵ Madison's Letter to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822.

of Tripoli, which stated that “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”⁶ President Fillmore said that “Church and state should be separate, not only in form, but fact. Religion and politics should not be mingled.”⁷ President Grant said, “Keep the church and the state forever separate.”⁸ President Garfield said that it would be dangerous to use public funds for religious schools and that “The separation of the Church and the State in everything relating to taxation should be absolute.”⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt said there must be “complete severance of Church and State.”¹⁰

In attacking the Supreme Court decisions of the 1940s, the Commission resorts to two tactics that cannot survive scrutiny: a personal attack on Justice Hugo Black, and claims of philosophical influence that the timeline of history makes impossible. The Commission states “Even a few Supreme Court decisions seemed to track with this train of thought [defined earlier in the report as that of Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, and the belief that ‘God is dead’], culminating in a 1947 opinion [*Everson*], in which Justice Hugo Black, a former Ku Klux Klan member, repurposed a metaphor coined by Thomas Jefferson in an attempt to legitimize the new critical philosophy by placing it in the constitutional tradition. Specifically, the Supreme Court ruled on a series of decisions in which it used the ‘wall’ metaphor to regulate a child’s access to religious education and later to ban school prayer and public displays of religion (like the Ten Commandments).” Report at 41-42. Without any support for the notion that Justice Black wrote opinions in accordance with the anti-Catholic philosophies of the Klan, the Commission attempts to persuade the public that Justice Black was racist and that his opinions should be disregard-

⁶ Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, art. 11, signed Nov. 4, 1796; ratified by the U.S. Senate June 7, 1797; proclaimed by President John Adams June 10, 1797 (Barlow translation).

⁷ *The Ovation to Mr. Fillmore: Speeches of Mr. Fillmore*, 1856.

⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, Address to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 29, 1875.

⁹ James A. Garfield, Letter Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (to Hon. George F. Hoar), July 12, 1880.

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 361; the statement originated in T. Roosevelt’s 1915 public letter opposing public funding of sectarian schools in New York.

ed. This is an *ad hominem* attack commonly used in the highly charged political debates of today, but counterproductive to finding truth and establishing unity. It is only useful in persuading the uninformed. The suggestion that *Everson* “tracked” with Nietzsche, Foucault, Sartre, or later critical theory is historically implausible. Foucault’s major works postdated *Everson*, Sartre was never a source of American Establishment Clause doctrine, and the Court grounded its reasoning in American sources: Madison, Jefferson, disestablishment, and the First Amendment tradition. To attempt to smear the Supreme Court with Justice Black’s much earlier Klan membership and with Nietzsche, Foucault, and Sartre is disingenuous. While Justice Black held that the Constitution established a wall of separation between the church and the state, in the same decision, the decision attacked by the Commission, Justice Black held that government reimbursement for transportation to Catholic schools was constitutional. How ironic! The Commission faults Justice Black for anti-Catholic bias from his Klan past, yet the very decision it attacks is one in which he upheld government support benefiting Catholic school-children. And it faults him for following philosophies that no serious legal historian would argue influenced the Court’s reasoning.

The Commission correctly states that much of the hostility towards religion in America today is based upon a “broader cultural assumption that religious belief should remain invisible while secular ideologies enjoy full freedom to influence public institutions.” Report at 21. The Commission is correct to say, “People of faith should not be required to leave their religious convictions behind when entering the workplace, engaging in commerce, serving their communities, or participating in public debate,” and that “institutions should foster environments in which citizens with divergent convictions can work together while maintaining fidelity to conscience.” Report at 21. Nevertheless, the Report goes on to continually overstate the case by saying that the “wall of separation” ideology creates a wall between personal faith and public life. While this may be true when the idea of a wall of separation is misconstrued and weaponized by secular atheists, it is not true that the wall of separation erected by the Constitution and so often referred to by generations of leaders who have gone before us is a wall between personal faith and public life. The true wall of separation is between the state and the church. It is

there so that a person can freely exercise their personal faith and freely engage in the public sphere, without prejudice or persecution. To deny that there is complete separation of church and state in the Constitution, aka “the wall,” and to deny that the wall can serve a useful purpose in protecting individual freedom is un-American and counter to both our experience and the knowledge and intent of our forefathers. The wall of separation is not a wall between religious people and public life; it is a wall between ecclesiastical power and civil power, protecting both religion and civil freedom.

The Commission’s Objectionable Recommendations

Based upon the above arguments, the Commission recommends that the United States adopt its recommendation to post in the workplace, to teach our students, and to teach as many citizens as possible that the Constitution neither creates nor requires the separation of church and state, and that there should be no wall of separation between church and state. If this false ideology is embraced by the people, it will allow for many different “reforms,” and eventually be used to justify any oppressive religious legislation so long as it is for the good of the people or represents the will of the majority. This is a radical teaching that has the potential, over time, to roll back the freedoms we enjoy in this nation, and return us to the political conflicts and tyranny our forefathers came to America to escape. This is the underlying philosophical foundation of additional, objectionable recommendations that the Commission makes.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious philanthropic organizations. It bases its argument on the idea that in times of need, to separate the physical help from spiritual help is to deny the full scope of the help that the person in need requires. This may be true in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this is an argument to the church that wishes to provide those services to fund them internally, and not rely upon the state. For religion to rely upon state funding is for religion to take the role of an imposter, pretending to provide aid, when in fact it is the state that is making the aid possible. It also allows the religion that is relying upon government funding to use that funding as an

aid in indoctrination and evangelism, thus the government is not remaining neutral. The Commission argues that church members today must leave their religious beliefs at home to engage in humanitarian work. That should never be true for work that they do without the aid of the state, and should only be true to the extent the state is providing them assistance. This is for the protection of religion as much as it is for the state and its citizens. Anytime government money is available, a religion will modify its beliefs to adhere to the values of the government so that it can obtain funds. Public money always brings public control. Furthermore, different religions may claim fairness requires equal funding, even though they do not provide equal services. This certainly will devolve into a quagmire that the state would do well to avoid.

The Commission recommends that the United States support religious education. All the reasons against supporting religious philanthropy apply here, as well as additional reasons. The Commission argues correctly that the state benefits from a religious people. But the Commission errs in thinking the state can be involved in making people religious. In education, it is important what is taught. By supporting religious education, the state will be making decisions about what doctrines can be taught. This most commonly takes the form of accreditation. Many sectarian schools are not accredited for this reason. But it can go further. Will the state support a school whose religion teaches interracial marriage is a sin, or that women should not receive higher education? Will the state support a school that teaches polygamy? What about a school that doesn't teach many things, like the Amish? This puts the state into the business of determining what values are worth supporting and what values are not. Don't think that the decisions will only be required for that which may seem obvious to us today. Today the Commission is recommending that the Ten Commandments be posted in schools and courthouses. Which Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments of Exodus or Deuteronomy? One is more Jewish focused, one more focused on creation, both requiring the keeping of the seventh day, not the first day? Or maybe the Ten Commandments of a Roman Catholic catechism, which a Protestant will tell you dispenses with the law against graven images and a Catholic priest will tell you merely divides the commandments differently. Or maybe the state can just abbreviate the Ten Commandments, number

them like a Protestant, and hope everybody is happy. That is the solution in Texas. Texas is getting into the business of doctrine. A government that refuses to fund religious doctrine is not thereby endorsing secularism, rather, it is refusing to decide religious questions. That restraint is not hostility to religion; it is the condition under which religious communities remain free and prosperous.

The Commission has one more recommendation that has the potential to expand the breach in the wall of separation. The Commission recommends repealing the Johnson Amendment. The Johnson Amendment prohibits churches from engaging in partisan politics, specifically supporting a candidate for election. It does not prohibit the church from speaking on the issues of the day, or even telling its members how to vote regarding issues, such as abortion and the right to life. What would repealing the Amendment do? Churches would become fabulous non-profit vehicles to engage in political activities. Pastors are known to exhibit tremendous sway over their congregations. It is not hard to imagine the intense pressure that a pastor could feel to deliver his congregation's votes for money. It is not hard to imagine that wealthy and powerful interests might attempt to influence political causes through the churches. Combine that with a patronage system whereby the congregations could receive government grants based upon the Commission's other recommendations, and there is a recipe for disaster. What failing congregation won't make a little compromise for a little financial gain? As scripture says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV. As financial interests invade the churches, invariably the public will be able to smell hypocrisy, and any gains either the church or the state thinks may be had by their union will be lost. Only a dead, lifeless church on government life support will remain.

Today, the Johnson Amendment is already being dismantled by non-enforcement. In *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, the IRS and several religious plaintiffs proposed a settlement that would have substantially narrowed enforcement of the Johnson Amendment as applied to churches. This settlement was opposed by the Baptist Joint Committee and Americans United, two reputable religious liberty advocacy organizations, not secular humanists. A federal district court found that it lacked juris-

diction on March 31, 2026. The effort to remove the barrier between tax-exempt churches and partisan campaign activity is expected to continue. The Commission should reverse its recommendation for repealing the Johnson Amendment, and instead, recommend its enforcement.

The Commission Correctly Identifies a Peril, but Not the Solution

Commissioner Bishop Robert Barron made an important observation about secularism. He said, “[T]here’s a philosophical issue which is secularism proposing itself as some kind of neutral ground, but it’s not neutral ground. Secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system. It wants to dominate the whole of life and therefore to exclude religion [from the public square].” Report at 181. Commissioner Kelly Shackelford makes a particularly insightful comment that “the one thing a totalitarian regime will never allow is citizens who hold an allegiance to one higher than the government. So, whenever that type of power of coalescing comes together, the first flashpoint is always going to be religious freedom. And if you lose there, you will lose everything else. So, what we’re really dealing with here is the precipice of all our freedoms.” Report at 29. This should be particularly sobering when combined with the Commission’s observation that “contemporary progressive opposition to religious liberty ... seek[s] freedom for its own views but coercion of religious groups whose traditional beliefs conflict with current trends such as transgenderism.” Report at 35-36. The Commission is correct in urging the courts to view atheism and atheistic determinism as ideologically and functionally similar to religion. Just as secularism as an ideology is a totalizing system, religion, when granted power, tends toward the same result. Combining church and state together, financially or otherwise, will result in one or the other demanding power and control over the other. History has shown us that the stronger the bond between church and state, the more oppressed the society. The union of church and state is the recipe for the kind of totalitarian regime warned about by Commissioner Shackelford. This is not a new discovery. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams wrote, “Checks and Ballances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them, are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body.—Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as Soon as either

Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unballanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!”¹¹ The church and state should remain forever apart, neutral towards each other, and neutral towards secularism.

Finally, the country as a whole should not be swayed by arguments made for religion in the military. It is true, the military should be very careful not to support or oppose any religion, but it is also true that the military must be able to provide religious services to its members. The reason they must provide those services is that in the military, especially when deployed, there are no alternative means to obtain religious services. A service member deployed in a foreign land may not be able to go to the local Baptist, Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, or Mormon church, or synagogue or mosque, because they may not exist in the area, nor would it necessarily be safe to go off base to attend one.

Conclusion

Just before and after the Revolution, the disestablishment of the state churches was an important project of our founding fathers. It was not without controversy. The experience of it should not be lost upon us.

Reverend Lyman Beecher was a Congregationalist minister, one of the most influential evangelical preachers of the early 1800s, and a leader in the movement to maintain the established church of Connecticut. Before 1818, he argued for the need of an established church. He said, “So the democracy, as it rose, included nearly all the minor sects, besides the Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling tippling folk, infidels, and ruff-scuff generally, and made a dead set at us of the standing order.” He believed that an es-

¹¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 25 June 1813, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0202>. [Original source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 6, 11 March to 27 November 1813, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 226–229.]

tablished church was the only way to counteract these evil influences. In 1818, Connecticut voted to disestablish its church. Beecher described the experience. “For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to the state of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.” He went on to observe, “They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe buckles, and cocked hats, and golden-headed canes.”¹²

Tocqueville observed on his trip to America, “When I arrived in the United States, it was the country’s religious aspect that first captured my attention.”¹³ By speaking to Americans, he learned religion flourished *because* of the complete separation of church and state, not in spite of it. That is precisely the lesson the Commission would have the nation unlearn, or rather, learn again the hard way.

The Commission is wrong to treat separation of church and state as a modern innovation. In America, the separation of church and state formed the foundation of our dearest freedoms, supported by Baptists, dissenters, and citizens of every faith, vindicated by disestablishment, and praised by foreign observers as religion and freedom thrived together.

As Roger Williams warned, freedom of conscience must be defended: “Having bought truth dear, we must not sell it cheap, nor the least grain of it for the whole world, no not for the saving of souls, though our own most precious...”¹⁴

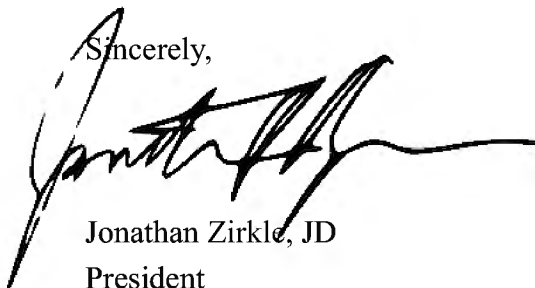
¹² *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, ed. Charles Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 1:344–345.

¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Library of America, 2004, p. 340.

¹⁴ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience*, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), p. 9.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully ask that the Commission revise its account of American history and withdraw or substantially modify its recommendations. America will do best to forever maintain a complete separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Zirkle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Zirkle, JD
President

From: Larry And Gladys Bazemore <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty committee

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:55:33 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am opposed to the making of a bridge between the government and religion. Government should stick to secular things and not involve itself in matters of religion . I believe in liberty of conscience, and when government involves itself in matters of religion, the minority is always persecuted. We have history to reveal what happens when religious organizations gain authority to enforce its doctrines upon society. Look at what happened during the Dark Ages and what the Roman church did to millions of Christians who chose to differ from her d octrines. Look at the early years in America, the persecution of those who did not adhere to the Puritians. Roger Williams, William Penn and others who did not hold to the faith of the Puritans, the Quakers or the Church of England. Wake up America. We are on dangerous ground of losing our liberty of conscience.

From: Mariel Higgins <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:55:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

As a life long  USA citizen, and a life long Protestant Christian, I kindly ask that Blue laws be not reinstated or legislated allowing for each and everyone in this beautiful land to practice their faith according to their conscience. It is of eternal consequence and importance that America does not dictate or trample on the individual religious practices of its citizens.

Thank you for you attention to this matter and may God Bless America ,

Mariel Higgins

From: Melvin Deans <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 18:59:58 -0400

Importance: Normal

I wish to express my deep concern about freedom of conscience, that every human being should be free to worship God as he sees fit on whatever day he sees fit (it's a personal matter between him and his God (or no God if he sees fit). The government should not dictate in matters of religion. That has caused much persecution in the past. The last 6 commandments are a matter for government to be concerned with, but the 1st 4 commandments are a matter between the individual and his God.

You can not really force people to be "Christian" any more than someone can force you to love them. Jesus NEVER used force. He sought to lead by example and encourage people to GIVE their hearts to Him. It is a very personal choice we all must make that should NEVER be coerced! by government or any one else. Betty Spencer Deans

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

From: Ibrahim Mkusa <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] FEEDBACK FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:10:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Department of Justice,

Thank you for an opportunity to provide feedback. I believe the destiny of the whole nation hangs on the balance by what the commission recommends. These recommendations will either start us on the road to national prosperity or national ruin. I'll be brief as I know your time is short, and highlight the recommendations that will lose God's favor with our Country and welcome catastrophic national ruin only equaled by the dark ages.

I'm strongly against the reinterpretation of church and state separation. Read the gospels from Matthew to John, and you will find no instance of our Lord Jesus seeking the support of the strong arm of the state. He are two scriptures i'd like to bring to the forefront for the committees's eyes:

And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." (John 18:36)

The state should never stand between man and His Maker. God never forces Himself upon people but counsels and recommends man to learn of Him, and after learning of Him to choose to offer free will worship to Him.

And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

And this principle is highlighted and enforced in the First amendment for our dear Constitution of the United States

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Solemn responsibility rests upon the commission. God is watching. His recording Angels are in your meetings to note down your influence for good or evil. Please prayerfully consider your individual responsibility to this.

In closing, I respectfully request the Department of Justice not adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee. Its adoption will only be injurious to our Nation bringing in National apostasy then total Ruin.

A fellow American Patriot and student of our dear Lord Jesus Christ,
Ibrahim S. Mkusa

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1:7)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

From: Estela Prestes <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment — State-Mandated Decalogue Displays Make Government the Arbiter of Sacred Law

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:12:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

The Ten Commandments in Schools (specific critique)

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I hold the Ten Commandments to be the sacred, binding law of God. It is precisely for that reason that I oppose the report's recommendation that the Department of Justice support litigation for state laws mandating their display in public schools.

First, the Decalogue's opening commandments concern duties owed to God alone — worship, reverence, the Sabbath. When the state posts and promotes these by force of law, it assumes authority over the first table of God's law, a jurisdiction no civil government possesses. As A. T. Jones argued before the United States Senate in 1888: "We deny, forever, the right of any civil government to legislate in anything that pertains to men's duty to God under the first four commandments." One of the section headings of his published argument says it in five words: "Only God Can Enforce the Decalogue."

Second, the state cannot post the Ten Commandments without first deciding religious questions: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions number and translate the commandments differently. A mandated display necessarily adopts one tradition's version, making the government an arbiter among faiths — the very evil the Establishment Clause forbids.

Third, coerced familiarity is not conversion. Children compelled to view sacred text as state-issued décor learn to regard it as ordinary, not holy. Scripture is honored by free hearts, homes, and churches — not by statute.

If the Commission wishes to strengthen the moral formation of children, let it champion parental rights, religious school choice, and robust free exercise — all without placing God's law under Caesar's seal.

Respectfully, Estela Santos

From: Jesus Bravo <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and state - Jesus Bravo

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:18:25 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice,

I am writing to formally express my vehement opposition to the policy changes proposed in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. The recommendations outlined represent a significant departure from the separation of church and state, a principle foundational to American democracy and religious freedom.

Specifically, I object to the following proposals:

- Dismantling the Separation of Church and State: Minimizing this constitutional boundary risks government overreach and threatens the rights of religious minorities and non-religious citizens.
- Repealing the Johnson Amendment: Allowing tax-exempt houses of worship to endorse political candidates risks politicizing religious institutions and compromising the electoral process.
- Taxpayer Funding for Faith-Based Programs: Disbursing public funds to religious institutions that may legally discriminate based on faith, gender, or sexual orientation is a violation of taxpayer conscience.
- Broadening Religious Exemptions: Expanding exemptions to allow individuals or government employees to opt out of public health mandates, civil rights laws, and standard educational curricula may compromise public safety and the common good.

True religious freedom requires that the government remain neutral, neither promoting nor penalizing any religion. By favoring specific religious viewpoints within federal policy, these recommendations may violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

I urge the Department of Justice and the Commission to reject this draft report and uphold the government's duty to protect a secular democracy where all citizens remain equal under the law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jesus Bravo
Surprise, AZ

From: Melinda Paluszewski <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State- Melinda Paluszewski

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:18:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice,

I am writing to formally express my vehement opposition to the policy changes proposed in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. The recommendations outlined represent a significant departure from the separation of church and state, a principle foundational to American democracy and religious freedom.

Specifically, I object to the following proposals:

- Dismantling the Separation of Church and State: Minimizing this constitutional boundary risks government overreach and threatens the rights of religious minorities and non-religious citizens.
- Repealing the Johnson Amendment: Allowing tax-exempt houses of worship to endorse political candidates risks politicizing religious institutions and compromising the electoral process.
- Taxpayer Funding for Faith-Based Programs: Disbursing public funds to religious institutions that may legally discriminate based on faith, gender, or sexual orientation is a violation of taxpayer conscience.
- Broadening Religious Exemptions: Expanding exemptions to allow individuals or government employees to opt out of public health mandates, civil rights laws, and standard educational curricula may compromise public safety and the common good.

True religious freedom requires that the government remain neutral, neither promoting nor penalizing any religion. By favoring specific religious viewpoints within federal policy, these recommendations may violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

I urge the Department of Justice and the Commission to completely reject this draft report and uphold the government's duty to protect a secular democracy where ALL citizens remain equal under the law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melinda K. Paluszewski
Surprise, Arizona

From: Alvaro Souza <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Religious Liberty- Alvaro Souza

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:20:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I'm writing as a citizen and a Christian to ask you to reconsider the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state. My concern is for the future of religious liberty in the greatest country on earth.

America's enduring commitment to religious freedom has been built on protecting every person's right to worship according to conscience without government interference. This principle has enabled people of many faiths to live together peacefully while allowing religious communities to flourish independently.

As a Bible-believing observer of the seventh-day Sabbath, I write from the perspective of a religious minority whose history demonstrates the importance of these constitutional protections. In colonial America, Baptists, Quakers, Jews, seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and other minority faiths suffered discrimination, fines, and imprisonment because government favored established churches. These abuses helped inspire the adoption of the First Amendment.

The experience of Seventh-day Adventists in the late nineteenth century provides another important lesson. Adventists who honored the biblical Sabbath on Saturday were prosecuted under Sunday laws enacted by the religious majority. Some were fined, imprisoned, and even sentenced to chain gangs simply for following their religious convictions. Their experience illustrates that whenever civil authority is used to enforce religious observance, freedom of conscience is endangered, and religious minorities are often the first to suffer.

History consistently warns against allowing government to exercise authority over matters of faith. Whether through the medieval Inquisition, regimes that have justified oppression in the name of religion, or governments that suppressed religion under official atheism, the result has been the same: liberty of conscience has been denied.

Our constitutional system wisely assigns different roles to church and state. Government exists to protect individual rights and administer justice equally, while religious organizations fulfill their mission by teaching, persuading, and serving—not through governmental power. Both institutions function best when each remains within its proper sphere.

I therefore respectfully urge the Commission to uphold and strengthen the constitutional principles that protect religious liberty for all Americans. Government best serves both believers and nonbelievers when it neither advances nor inhibits religion but instead safeguards the equal right of every person to follow the dictates of conscience. Preserving this principle remains essential if our nation is to avoid repeating the religious intolerance and injustice that history has repeatedly shown accompany the union of religion and government.

Respectfully submitted,

Alvaro C. Souza

PII

Helena, Montana

From: Versa Mooney <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment regarding the Religious Liberty Commission Recommendations on Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:21:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: To_DOJ_Re_RLC.docx

Please see attached.

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Via EMAIL: [REDACTED] PII

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Religious Liberty Committee submitted to President Donald J. Trump on June 26, 2026. While we are mindful of the Committee's labors, which resulted in the 12 recommendations released June 26, certain of which we agree with, we write to voice our concerns and objections to the Committee's first and ninth recommendations [1] and its obviously insufficient consideration of the warnings of the Founding Fathers of the dangers of a union of church and state or the many lessons of history regarding same.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Justice "issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state." [2] At the formal release of the Committee's recommendations on the same day, Committee Chair Dan Patrick publicly stated that "the separation of church and state is not in the constitution" and that the phrase "has no constitutional basis." [3]

As citizens and students of history, and as Christians, we are alarmed lest the flawed and unconstitutional view of the Chair of the Committee of the so-called "proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state" prove influential or worse, instructive, to the Department of Justice. If the Committee's opinion of the so-called "proper understanding" of the Establishment Clause is the same as that of its Chair, it is apparent that its understanding is not proper, but rather improper.

Founding Father, "Father of the Constitution", and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, contradicted Chair Dan Patrick's claim that the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. Madison stated that "Strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Govt in the Constitution of the United States, the danger of encroachment by Ecclesiastical Bodies, may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history." According to James Madison, the separation of church and state is in the Constitution. As to whether James Madison, who is the principal author of the Establishment Clause, or Dan Patrick, is the greater authority on this subject, we think it not difficult for reasonably minded people to ascertain. Certainly, the Founding Fathers were all aware of the persecution of the Baptists, Quakers, Jews, and others in some of the colonies. They had seen firsthand the ear croppings, whippings, imprisonment, and hangings in Massachusetts and other colonies.

In Europe, the persecution of the martyrs is well documented. Today we take the Bible for granted but forget that William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into

the English language, not by atheists but by religious bigots. It was a union of church and state that suppressed speech and the freedom of the press in England. It was a union of church and state that prohibited the work of translation of the Bible, which changed the world. It was a union of church and state that necessitated his flight to Europe. It was a union of church and state that killed him.

We respectfully ask that the Department of Justice, in considering the issue of public guidance of the separation of church and state, consider the history of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania and early Founding Father, who was repeatedly jailed for his religious faith in England. The Pennsylvania Colony became a haven, not from atheist persecutors but from religious persecutors who did not believe in the separation of church and state. The same is true of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, who was ordered arrested for declaring that the civil magistrate cannot enforce the first table of the Decalogue. We ask that the Committee take into account the brutal public whipping of President Abraham Lincoln's five-time great-grandfather, Obadiah Holmes, in the Massachusetts colony, for the "crime" of religious dissent. Obadiah Holmes was not whipped by atheists. He was whipped by Puritan bigots who did not believe in the separation of church and state. We respectfully request that the Department of Justice consider this history in the issuance of public guidance on the subject.

We are concerned that the Committee neglected to take into account the impact of the separation of church and state on the other rights codified in the First Amendment. Free speech and freedom of the press, for example, owe their flourishing in the modern world in large part to the separation of church and state in America. Prior to the protections in the First Amendment, the Roman Catholic Church for centuries maintained a list of banned books called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. The books were subject to confiscation, and the possession of them resulted in the punishment of the owner.

Unfortunately, the Committee makes no mention of the censorship in this context of Galileo and Kepler, Kant and Locke, John Milton and Maimonides, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, and many others, all at the behest of the Roman Papacy, which is itself a union of church and state. Free speech in the Western world is the legacy of those who risked the wrath of a unified church and state, often at the cost of their lives. We would also ask that the Department of Justice consider the repeated modern calls from the papal power today for the censorship of the internet and the suppression of free speech, contrary to the First Amendment. [4] We have no doubt that the censorship of Galileo, Kepler, Milton, and others was prosecuted under the justification of the censorship of misinformation, also.

The Roman Church was not alone in this persecution, either. We would ask the Department of Justice in its formulation of public guidance on the separation of church

and state to remember the religious persecutions carried out at the behest of John Calvin in Geneva against religious dissenters such as Michael Servetus, who paid with his life for his writings and teachings. Servetus was executed by a union of church and state. We are concerned at the public statements of those who would create such a system in America. [5]

Therefore, we respectfully ask, what proper guidance can the Department of Justice hope to give to the public on the “proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state” if it is directed in its object by a Committee and a Committee Chair, who has neglected to more fully analyze the reasons for the separation of church and state, or the reasons why the United States codified the disestablishment of church and state in the First Amendment in the first instance?

The reference to the wall of separation between church and state is not only mentioned by President Thomas Jefferson in the letter to the Danbury Baptists, which, of course, it is. [6] What is often left out of the narrative is that Jefferson said that he personally believed that the principle of the separation of church and state is codified in the Constitution. Therein, Jefferson wrote: “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.” [7]

James Madison wrote, “It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much soon to forget it.” [8]

Lastly, we object to the recommendation of the Committee that the Johnson Amendment be removed. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are mindful of Our Lord’s words that we “render to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God the things that are God’s.” [9] Jesus Christ established the principle of the separation of church and state and taught that what belongs to God cannot be rendered to Caesar. The application of this teaching is that religionists, ambitious for civil power, and politicians, ambitious for their endorsement, are to be kept separate in the American system of politics, as the Constitution requires. The union of church and state results in the corruption of both, a result that neither should desire, and neither can afford.

Madison stated that “The number, the industry, and the morality of the Priesthood, & the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the Church from the State.” [10] And he was right. If the Johnson Amendment is removed, religionists who want civil power will publicly stump and promise their votes and congregational dollars in exchange for political favors, and the politicians will be doubtless all too eager to reciprocate in the form of legislation that the religionists desire, provided they will aid their attempts to gain office.

In his anonymous treatise published in the Boston Gazette, John Adams, later the second President of the United States, wrote that canon law was a tyrannical form of government, as was feudal law, but that the worst of all forms of governments was a union of the two. [11] And it was Madison who stated that, “In the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Governments.”

We respectfully request, therefore, that the Department of Justice not adopt recommendations 1 and 9 of the Committee and that it adopt recommendation 1 of the Committee that it convene a public hearing, with written and oral submissions from the public, to more comprehensively study the question of the separation of church and state in history, and in American history in particular, a study which we would enthusiastically support.

We remain, Yours truly,

Versa Mooney

[1] <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/president-trumps-religious-liberty-commission-delivers-historic-report-draft>

[2] Ibid, [Emphasis added].

[3] <https://www.chron.com/politics/article/dan-patrick-church-state-constitution-viral-22323383.php>

[4] <https://reclaimthenet.org/pope-francis-calls-on-social-media-platforms-to-censor-more-misinformation;>

[5] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8;](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUkMwIWYB8)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBiPIfx-UA>

[6] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>

[7] <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> – Jefferson here is clearly referring to Congress. That Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from making a union of church and state.

[8] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments

[9] Matthew 22:21

[10] James Madison, Letter to Robert Walsh, March 2, 1819.

[11] John Adams, *Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, 1765.
<https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA01dg2>

From: Shaneck Stubbs <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- separation of church and state. Arleen Stubbs

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:22:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

Here we find ourselves in a situation with our beloved country and The all powerful God of all universes.

Growing up in a proud military family where my father fought in WWII and my mother was a war bride, I saw first hand how state and religion did not work at all united. There must be total separation to keep us a free and peaceful nation.

With complete sincerity I plead that this new way of governance with no wall between church and state not be inactive.

My pray is that we and our children can live in this free country and worship from one's own heart and convictions and remain separate from all legislation and the affairs of the state.

'Bridge' sounds like it would make everything complete but my earnest request is please don't build this bridge, keep the wall between church and state.

Sincerely

Arleen M. Stubbs

West Union, SC

From: Melinda Paluszewski <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Melind Paluszewski

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:25:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice,

I am writing to formally express my vehement opposition to the policy changes proposed in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report. The recommendations outlined represent a significant departure from the separation of church and state, a principle foundational to American democracy and religious freedom.

Specifically, I object to the following proposals:

- Dismantling the Separation of Church and State: Minimizing this constitutional boundary risks government overreach and threatens the rights of religious minorities and non-religious citizens.
- Repealing the Johnson Amendment: Allowing tax-exempt houses of worship to endorse political candidates risks politicizing religious institutions and compromising the electoral process.
- Taxpayer Funding for Faith-Based Programs: Disbursing public funds to religious institutions that may legally discriminate based on faith, gender, or sexual orientation is a violation of taxpayer conscience.
- Broadening Religious Exemptions: Expanding exemptions to allow individuals or government employees to opt out of public health mandates, civil rights laws, and standard educational curricula may compromise public safety and the common good.

True religious freedom requires that the government remain neutral, neither promoting nor penalizing any religion. By favoring specific religious viewpoints within federal policy, these recommendations may violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

I urge the Department of Justice and the Commission to reject this draft report and uphold the government's duty to protect a secular democracy where all citizens remain equal under the law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melinda K. Paluszewski
Surprise, Arizona

From: clcammackjr <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom of Religion

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:27:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern,

I was very alarmed by your recently released report.

It is our most precious right to practice whatever faith in which we believe. In all your actions please keep this fact in mind. As stated in the first amendment of the United States Constitution.

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.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Linda Gilbert <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Linda Gilbert

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:28:07 -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, I feel 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,

Linda Gilbert

Scottsdale, Arizona [USA](#)

From: David Plaisted <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Cc: David Plaisted <[REDACTED] PII >, Anne Plaisted <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – David A. Plaisted

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:31:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

I agree with Pillar of Freedom's comments. Please implement them. Do not act as if the separation of church and state should be removed by the US Government.

From: Grace T <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Dissent on the Religious Liberty Commission Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:33:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

July 11, 2026

Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 5706
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Chair Patrick, Vice Chair Dr. Carson, and members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

The separation of church and state is a cornerstone of American freedom, rooted in the Constitution. The Commission's report raises important questions about the balance between religious liberty and government involvement.

The first amendment guarantees us the right to our religious beliefs without privileging one religion over another in state office. My parents came to America to avoid being harassed for their religion from their home country. To see one religion taking precedence over another is just as bad even if the majority see it as the one religion that our country was founded on. This is not true. Many of the 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 and preventing government overreach.

The Commission's recommendations on funding and the Johnson Amendment warrant careful consideration. How can we ensure religious freedom without entangling church and state? The impact on diverse communities and the role of education in promoting mutual understanding are also crucial.

Please consider our dissent before pursuing striking the phrase "separation between church and state" from public discourse.

Sincerely,
Grace L from California

From: " [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

To: " [REDACTED] PII " < [REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Jeffrey Sonnentag

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:35:35 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I (Jeffrey Sonnentag) am writing as a natural born citizen of the United States of America to ask you to reconsider (and ultimately modify) the recommendations in your report that would weaken the separation of church and state – especially those recommending use of government money to fund religious activities and repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

When churches take government money or step into partisan politics, the corruption of politics comes in with it (just look at labor unions). Churches end up competing (and bending over backwards) for funding and answering to politicians – and that is bad for church and country alike. Separation of church and state is not a secular idea; people of faith built it to protect faith, and it is the reason religion has stayed strong in this country.

Please keep church and state separate. That is how we keep both of them free.

The response of Pillar of Freedom (<https://pillaroffreedom.org/> - Jonathan Zirkle) is agreed with ENTIRELY

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13wd1AsF3m6STwD-v0ywpXFYnI-VRv8TF/view>).

The only emphasis not included strongly enough or with examples is that of UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES. There is some reference, but not nearly enough. When people making policies and directing/informing others above them (with greater influence) provide wrong and inaccurate information everything goes down hill (and FAST). Pay more attention to ACCURACY (100% accuracy!) and less on political objectives (or twisting things so that the uninformed are misguided in the direction you desire).

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Sonnentag
Loma Linda, California

From: Paul Koulakov <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep church and state separate

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:37:02 -0400

Importance: Normal

Brief comment:

What I do not want is the Federal Government to assist me in choosing who, where and how I worship or not worship. That should be strictly a personal choice.

We have been successful as a Free nation for over 250 years, and the protection from Government getting involved in personal choice has been good, please do not weaken the separation of church and state, but rather maintain the distance that has worked well.

Sincerely, Paul Koulakov
Former Nashville Metro Councilman 1987-1995

From: TAXES PRESTIGE ACCOUNTING <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:39:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

There should be no change in this area. The law that separates church and state should remain in its original form. People do have the right to choose where they worship and what their beliefs are.

From: Phillip Wright <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:41:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please help Americans to maintain freedom of worship. Separating this freedom from state or federal control is a basic freedom citizens should always have.

Thank you kindly.

From: "Grits&Politics" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Religious Liberty Commission - G. R. Strawser

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:43:17 -0400

Importance: Normal

As a humanist and a concerned citizen who cares deeply about American democracy and the freedom of religion and belief, I am submitting this comment to urge the Religious Liberty Commission to withdraw its June 26, 2026 draft report and abandon its recommendations.

Religious freedom in the United States rests on the principle that there is a separation between church and state. The Commission's composition and process was dominated overwhelmingly by extremist Christians, and the Commission sidelined the experiences of those with minority beliefs, reflecting exactly the favoritism the Establishment Clause was written to prevent.

Based on the rhetoric on display during hearings and the resulting proposed recommendations, it is clear that the Religious Liberty Commission is a tool of a Christian Nationalist movement seeking to use the federal government to privilege one narrow faith over all other beliefs.

If the Commission finalizes this report, it will not be protecting religious liberty: it will be dangerously undermining it. I urge the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety and to disband without further recommendations. Our government must recommit itself to the pluralistic, secular constitutional framework that protects the conscience of every American of all religions and beliefs.

From: Patricia Martinez <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:43:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

I believe in God the Bible and the Ten Commandments and I also believe in the separation of Church and State
God Bless you

From: Reva Kimmel <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:44:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

I do not agree with the efforts of some to tear down the wall of separation between Church & state. Our country was founded on these principles because of religious intolerance in Europe ! Now the very organization causing those issues then is seducing our country into religious intolerance by allowing her & her colleagues to bring this country into her control again.

Please wake up before this virus of the devil takes over the freedom that has made this country the beacon of freedom !

God guide & Bless this Country

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From: "Judith C. Guarin" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] YES - Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:47:44 -0400

Importance: Normal

We agree with the continuation of separation of church and state.

From: jtshep <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church State-Supreme Court

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:48:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

The commissioners must be reminded that the supreme court has ruled in favor of the establishment cause. Foundation of function oas charitable and faithful country. President Trump should be reminder of the jedo and Christians nation stands for him without the need of government intervention or regulations. Negativity produced by setting aside church-state separation, through legislation or executive order Would undermine our nation o greatest strength religious-liberty, freedom choice, worship and conscience. Is playing right into the hands of the socialist supporter biting at our republic. I pray that the Tradition we have held for 250years will not be the end of our nation. John Shepherd Religious liberty ministry [REDACTED] PII . PS I believe 5 to 6 million votes rest on this decision. God bless our nation.

Sent from my Galaxy

From: "Dr. James Said" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response to RLC document open for reply until 7/13/26

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:52:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

I have familiarized myself with the RLC Draft Report, and am also familiar with US history regarding the separation of church and state. It alarms and saddens me to see this crucial separation being blurred. Throughout history, even in ancient Israel and ancient Rome, the unification of church and state has always led to religious persecution against any religion that is not supported by the state. The history described in Revelation chapters 12, 13 and 17 clearly describes the devastating consequence of such a unification. It is also seen in Daniel chapter 11 with the three conflicts of the kings of the north and south. I am completing the writing of a series of books to be published by November 2026 that details this history with full scriptural evidence. I respectfully request that the Religious Liberty Commission not continue in its current direction which will lead to the destruction of this country as it did with ancient Israel at the time of Christ, and in ancient Rome to end its imperial rule. If allowed to continue, it will lead to the destruction of the American Republic as we know it. I fear this outcome and pray that the principles of civil and religious freedom be preserved in this country blessed of God.

Sincerely,

Dr. James Z. Said

From: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Bill Corrigan

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:55:27 -0400

Importance: Normal

It is my concern that the recommendations by the Religious Liberty Commission will be harmful to the intensions of the United States Constitution for religious liberty. Of concern is the

- 1. repeal of the Johnson Amendment allowing churches to be politicized;*
- 2. the funding of religious organizations such as education or religious clubs on public campuses*
- 3. setting the Jewish people and the State of Israel apart for special treatment.*

The stronger the bridge between church and State will degrade both the church and the State. History is undeniable that when government funds and/or politics are used to promote or restrict religious institutions, such as the Papal reign during the Middle Ages, that ultimately the government then becomes the arbitrator of what they interpret as right or wrong. Intolerance or coercion is the sure result.

Bill Corrigan

From: Juanita Johnson <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposal

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 19:56:42 -0400

Importance: Normal

Inline-Images: Resized_Resized_Resized_Resized_image000000003(1).jpeg

Sent from my iPhone



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Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – Draft Report
Recommendations – [Your Name]

To the Presidential Religious Liberty
Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice,

I am writing to express my vehement opposition
to the policy changes proposed in the
Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's
draft report.

The recommendations outlined in this report
represent a dangerous and unprecedented
assault on the separation of church and state.
This foundational principle has protected both
American democracy and religious freedom for
nearly 250 years.

Specifically, I strongly object to the following
proposals:

Ask anything



Home



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Notifications



Activity



From: Rene Lindstrom <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT-Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:01:26 -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,

Rene Lindstrom
Post Falls, Idaho

From: "Hackmann, Kent ([REDACTED])" <[REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Corrections to the Administration's view of religion in American history and life

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:05:08 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Committee Members,

I am 88, a vet, and hold a Ph.D. in history (University of Michigan). I am an Edmund Burke conservative in constitutional matters. I submit the views below as correctives to those held by the Trump administration.

- **Religious liberty emerged from the practical realities of sectarian conflict and vibrant pluralism, not from a monolithic Christian consensus.** The founding generation confronted a world marked by religious conflict and diversity. Protections for religious liberty developed in response to disagreement among denominations and competing spiritual traditions, not from a broadly shared Christian consensus.
- **The founders deliberately created a national government devoid of specific religious authority to preserve robust religious freedom in civil society.** While personal faith undoubtedly shaped individual founders, they chose to prohibit religious tests for office in Article VI and refused to assign any religious duties to the state. The Constitution established a secular framework that allowed religion to flourish independent of federal control.
- By recommending that the DOJ back strategic litigation to support state laws requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools (p. 80), **the report actively promotes state-sponsored religious favoritism.** Despite the long history of religious pluralism in the United States, this approach abandons secular neutrality and uses the machinery of the federal government to elevate one religious tradition over all others.
- **The report substitutes a flawed ideological narrative in place of rigorous historical scholarship, treating highly contested interpretations as settled historical fact.** For example, it unaccountably attributes the 20th-century legal separation of church and state on postmodern philosophers like Foucault and Nietzsche ("God is dead"), dismissing decades of Supreme Court decisions as a hostile "Berlin wall" designed to banish faith from public life (p. 42). Public institutions must acknowledge the complexity and pluralism at the core of American religious history.
- **The separation of church and state has historically not diminished the vibrancy and influence of religious beliefs on American life.** The report relies on a false and extreme dichotomy between an America that declares itself a Christian nation and one entirely hostile to faith. Historians and legal scholars have long noted that disestablishment and limits on government involvement in religion provide safeguards for religious vitality and liberty. Disestablishment did not diminish American religion—it liberated a vibrant array of religious traditions, providing space for these to flourish independent of government control.

Respectfully,

Kent

Kent Hackmann

[REDACTED]
PII

PII

From: Susan Miles <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State – Susan McGee

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:06:03 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,

I believe that The First Amendment exists to protect the people from the state. It protects religious liberty, it upholds the rule of law, speech, press and assembly.

It protects diverse beliefs and the right to worship, or not worship, according to conscience. It is the engine of democracy, the shield for individual liberty and the cornerstone of a society where all voices can contribute to the common good.

I object to the state funding non-profit religious activities. The church has funded these activities in the past and should continue to fund them going forward.

I object to the state funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.

I believe that the Johnson Amendment should remain enforce.

I object 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.

From: Noel James <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] church state relations

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:14:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am in support of the full seperation of State and Church.

From: Elizabeth Baynard <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - religious liberty commission report - Elizabeth Baynard

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:15:48 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPhone

I believe the removal of separation of church and state is a mistake that over time could result in exactly what many of the first Americans fled, leaving Europe to escape persecution from state religion. Please do not make this mistake and continue to recognize the separation of church and state.

From: Dave Oakley <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:19:34 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I am writing to urge the Commission to preserve a clear and meaningful separation between church and state. This principle protects both religious freedom and freedom of conscience by preventing government from favoring, funding, or influencing particular religious beliefs. As a person of faith, I believe churches are strongest when they remain independent of government money and partisan political power. Please revise the draft report so that its recommendations fully respect the constitutional separation of church and state.

Sincerely,

David Oakley

From: Raven <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Kristi Kaas

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:20:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Kristi Lynn Kaas

[REDACTED] PII

July 11, 2026

To the Members of the Religious Liberty Commission,
True religious freedom thrives only when the government remains neutral, which is why your recommendation to abolish the separation of church and state and the Johnson Amendment must be rejected. Abolishing these foundational protections would deeply damage both our democratic institutions and the integrity of faith communities.

The necessity of church-state separation

The constitutional separation of church and state is not a weapon against faith; it is the ultimate shield protecting it.

- Protection for minorities: Entangling government with religion inevitably forces the state to define "acceptable" faith, systematically disenfranchising minority religions and non-religious citizens.
- Corruption of religion: History demonstrates that when the church aligns with state power, faith becomes a tool for political coercion, compromising its spiritual integrity.
- Freedom of conscience: True liberty guarantees that citizens can worship, or choose not to worship, completely free from state-sponsored pressure or incentive.

The critical role of the Johnson Amendment

The Johnson Amendment protects the integrity of non-profit entities by preventing tax-exempt organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates.

- Sanctuary from politics: Houses of worship should remain sacred spaces for spiritual growth and community unity, rather than turning into hubs for partisan division.
- Dark money protection: Repealing the amendment would allow political donors to channel untraceable "dark money" through tax-exempt churches, mutating houses of worship into political action committees (PACs).
- Taxpayer neutrality: Tax-exempt status is a public subsidy; requiring taxpayers to indirectly fund partisan political campaigns run by churches fundamentally violates the principles of fair taxation.

True religious liberty means the state cannot dictate faith, and faith cannot hijack the state. We urge the Commission to withdraw these recommendations and uphold the constitutional frameworks that keep our nation both free and faithful.

Sincerely,
Kristi L Kaas

Sent from [Proton Mail](#) for iOS.

From: Julie Penner <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Julie Penner

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:21:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I agree with Piller of Freedom's comments and am writing as a concerned U.S. citizen. Please reconsider the recommendation in your report of weakening the separation of church and state.

History has born out the terrible persecution carried out when church and state unite. This country began as a haven for those persecuted for their religious convictions that differed from the state. Any bridge built to bring church and state together will only and inevitably do the same.

Sincerely,

Julie Penner
Chattanooga, Tennessee

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From: Dale Bidwell <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment-Separation of Church and State-Dale J. Bidwell

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:30:39 -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. I have personally lived outside of the USA, and observed first-hand the results when freedoms are removed and the separation of church and state is eliminated. Churches end up competing for funding and answering to politicians instead of 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 it's the reason religion has stayed strong here in America.

Please keep church and state separate. That's how we keep both of them free.

Sincerely,
Dale J. Bidwell
Ooltewah, TN

From: Doug Penner <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] "PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Doug Penner"
<PUBLIC COMMENT - PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Doug Penner

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:32:50 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

I agree with Piller of Freedom's comments and am writing as a concerned U.S. citizen. Please reconsider the recommendation in your report of weakening the separation of church and state.

History has born out the terrible persecution carried out when church and state unite. This country began as a haven for those persecuted for their religious convictions that differed from the state. Any bridge built to bring church and state together will only and inevitably do the same.

Sincerely,

Doug Penner
Chattanooga, Tennessee

From: Linda Giangregorio <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:33:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Massive danger to our religious liberties.
Keep church and state separate!

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Wayne Atwood <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State - Wayne and Isabelle Atwood

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:34:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

We are writing to you today not just as American citizens, but as a couple of deep faith. We believe in personal religious liberty because God has created us all equal. No individual should ever lose their God-given right to freedom of conscience simply because the government adopts or favors certain religious views.

As Seventh-day Adventists, the strict separation of church and state is deeply woven into our theology and history. We believe that true faith must be entirely voluntary. God Himself does not force worship; therefore, any attempt by the state to coerce the human conscience goes against the very character of God.

History provides harrowing examples of the freedoms lost when government and religion unite. When the sword of the state is wielded to enforce religious dogma, the Bible itself has tragically been weaponized to justify the coercion of conscience. During the Dark Ages, state-sponsored churches hunted down dissenters, resulting in the loss of free speech, the right to assemble, and even life itself. Even in early American history, before our constitutional protections were established, believers who observed the Sabbath differently or refused to conform to state-mandated doctrines were fined, whipped, and imprisoned. When religion relies on the government for power, it inevitably results in the persecution of minorities.

Because of this history, we are deeply alarmed by the Commission's recommendations that attempt to dismantle the constitutional boundaries between church and state. We specifically object to:

- **The repeal of the Johnson Amendment:** Removing this restriction will invite partisanship into the pulpit and deeply politicize America's churches.
- **The expansion of funding for religious organizations:** When houses of worship accept state funding for religious activities, they inevitably become beholden to political interests and bureaucratic strings, compromising their divine mission.

The constitutional boundary between church and state was not established to suppress faith, but rather to protect it from government interference. Uniting church and state inevitably forces the government to decide religious doctrine, which harms both faith and freedom. Please reconsider these recommendations. Keep church and state separate, as that is the only way to ensure both remain truly free.

Sincerely,

Wayne and Isabelle Atwood
Higdon, Alabama

From: MELISSA <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on the legislation

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:37:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Hi ,

I am a Christian American citizen and I am in total disagreement of not separating church and state. For hundreds of years this nation has upheld that stance and it has worked well. Now a few men who want to pass their own initiative is counteracting this God given right to practice as I choose without interference from the government, what are you gaining by combining these two entities. It is a dangerous proposition and I oppose it in all manner. Please consider my comment and take it into consideration. God bless you as you decide may he take the forefront in this decision.

*Yours truly,
M. Walker*

There is so much to be thankful for! 🌿🌿

From: Caran Gerard <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:42:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please DO NOT diminish the strength of the wall between church and state. It must not be weakened or bridged as any change would cause a breakdown of all religious freedoms.

Sent from my iPhone

From: sharon mohammed <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of church and state Sharon Brissett

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:43:52 -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 God— and that's bad for 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,

Sharon Brissett-Mohammed
Mount Vernon, New York

From: Gregg Wahlstrom <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty proposals

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:44:39 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear leaders;

I want to express my dismay at the proposals to change the status of religious liberty/separation of church and state in our country. It is hard to imagine that barely a week has passed since we all CELEBRATED 250 yrs as a new country founded on the ideas of freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. A large percentage of our founders came here to escape the inherent problems of having a church and the government intertwined. And now, after 250 years of success, someone thinks it is a good idea to change that?

As soon as government money starts flowing to churches, so comes the dictates. That affects 'approved' beliefs—that is NOT 'freedom of religion'. I do not want my tax money used by any or all churches to promote their specific beliefs. Why would you open the door to more NGO funding? I think that is how much of the "fraud" has taken place recently. That is partially how a lot of the illegal immigration took place under Biden. The government found NGO's (including churches) to help bring illegals into our country. DO NOT codify this type of activity. It will backfire!

Should the government have the authority to tell me how to worship, when to worship, where to worship? Or should the government be bound to please the Pope or any other religious leader? Keep Church and State separate! One's religion is personal, between man and God. No matter how good your intentions might be, it will never stay the same. Suppose in a few years down the road, we have a Muslim president who wants to funnel billions through Muslim organizations. Are you still OK with the idea??

I could say much more, but think deeply about this. History will teach you that every time the church and the state have worked together, the people suffer.

Keep the Johnson Amendment. Keep America and Americans FREE

Thank you for listening.

From: Pauline Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:48:30 -0400

Importance: Normal

Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT -- Draft Report Recommendations -- [Patricia Johnson]

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice,

I am writing to express my vehement opposition to the policy changes proposed in the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission's draft report.

The recommendations outlined in this report represent a dangerous and unprecedented assault on the separation of church and state. This foundational principle has protected both American democracy and religious freedom for nearly 250 years.

Specifically, I strongly object to the following proposals:

True religious freedom means the government neither promotes nor penalizes any religion. By systematically favoring specific religious viewpoints and weaving them into federal policy, these recommendations violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

I urge the Department of Justice and the Commission to reject this draft report in its entirety. The government must uphold its duty to protect a secular democracy where all citizens remain equal under the law, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

[Patricia Johnson]

[Detroit, Michigan]

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:51:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the White House Religious Liberty Commission,

I am very concerned as I see the freedom of the people of this nation and my freedom to worship the God of Heaven being decided by the men and women in Government leadership positions. They are ready to do something that God Himself will never do, and that is to use force (laws) to compel people to worship Him on Sunday.

The third chapter of the book of Daniel shows how God felt about forced worship and how He delivered the three Hebrew Youth who would not bow down to Worship the Image. The Bible speaks about a **decree** made by the King. That same word **decree** can be translated **mandate** as in Project 2025 **Mandate for Leadership**. After reading the thoughts of Jonathan Berry on page 589 on Sabbath rest my question is by whose authority would that day (the Sabbath) default to Sunday?. I would also be opposed to a law that would force people to worship God on His true Seventh Day Sabbath.

Thank you for allowing the people to respond in addressing this Issue
Jay Bowman
Cadwell Georgia

From: Tom Lamberton <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:52:13 -0400

Importance: Normal

Keep the wall . Between Church & State

From: Frank <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Separation of church and state - Frank Sierra

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:56:23 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear members of Religious Liberty Commission,

The true measure of religious liberty is not how well a government protects the majority faith, but how fiercely it guards the rights of all faiths—and of no faith at all. Recent attempts to use "Religious Freedom Acts" to weaken the wall of separation between church and state distort the very purpose of religious liberty. The founders of our nation did not design this separation to hostilely suppress religion, but to protect it from government interference and political corruption.

Our nation's foundational visionaries were explicitly clear that religious freedom must be universal. Thomas Jefferson, in his autobiography, reflected on the drafting of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom—the philosophical blueprint for our First Amendment. He noted that the legislature rejected an attempt to insert the words "Jesus Christ," stating that the law was meant to protect:

"...the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan, the Hindoo, and Infidel of every denomination."

James Madison, the primary architect of the Constitution, fiercely echoed this sentiment in his *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments*, warning that an alliance between government and religion serves only to corrupt both:

"Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects?"

To maintain this vital protection, we must uphold and strictly enforce the Johnson Amendment. Enacted in 1954, this law prohibits tax-exempt charitable organizations, including churches, from endorsing or opposing political candidates. Repealing or weakening it would be a profound mistake.

Churches must not become cogs in the machinery of partisan politics. When houses of worship transform into political action committees, the pulpit is degraded, faith is weaponized, and congregations are fractured by political controversies. Tax exemption is a privilege granted on the condition that an organization serves the common good of the community, not the narrow interests of a political party.

True religious freedom requires a level playing field. We must reject any legislation that seeks to dismantle the separation of church and state, and we must keep the Johnson Amendment firmly in place to protect the integrity of both our democracy and our faith communities.

Sincerely,
Frank Sierra

From: JUSTIN KRUEGER <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >, Mary Krueger <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 20:58:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear sirs,

It has come to my attention that you don't believe there is any wall of separation of church and state in our constitution. I agree with you that through words of first usage it is not in there. The Bible does not have the word trinity in it either. But the IDEA is there, just the same with separation of church and state in our constitution.

I'm sure with all the clergy on this board this is common knowledge, but lets review:

In the old testament Hebrew republic the judges were the civil rulers, and the Levites headed the church. Afterward with the Hebrew kings, there was also a separation of church of state--when doing the priestly work of sacrifice instead of waiting for Samuel the prophet; afterward king Saul was no longer the Lords anointed. Also King Uzziah, a godly king thought he should do church work as well as state work and the Lord struck him with leprosy.

In the gospels Jesus says "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" and "My kingdom is not of this world" ..

Separation of church and state is surly a concept of the Bible, and it's God.

Fast forward to the 1600's and settlement of the American colonies- the most lasting idea of that time is from Roger Williams: a separation of church and state. As defined in Rhode Island's royal charter.

Roger Williams learned this from the Baptists. Who learned it from The Anabaptists. Who learned through the shedding of blood in the Reformation.

Sirs, Gods royal law has 2 tables. #1 is for God's relationship to man, #2 is man's relationship to fellow man. Command 1-4 is for God to rule over only. Command 5-10 is for the state to rule over with civil laws. Our founders knew this-hence the relief of Moses sitting on a throne with his knee covering commands 1-4 on Washington DC reliefs. So even the masons understood this.

Sirs, you're doing a good work on the Vaxx issue and the public schools issue, but you must stay away from the wall of separation issue.

Our nation was founded like Israel of old. A nation without a king, and a church without a pope.
THE LAST THING THIS COUNTRY NEEDS IS AN AMERICAN PAPACY.

Regards,
Justin Krueger

From: D F <[REDACTED] PII >

To: <[REDACTED] PII >, <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Separation of Church and State - Daniel Flores

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:00:10 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission Members,

I am very concerned about the Commission's recommendation to tear down the current Wall of Separation between church and state in our beloved country. The Constitution may not mention there is a separation, but our history before America became an independent nation and the Constitution implies that there is. I am afraid that many Americans don't know the history of papal supremacy in Europe that lord over kings, emperors and the general populace for over 1200 years as history has labeled as the Dark Ages.

Our ancestors fled religious persecution to exercise their freedom of Conscience and worship God according to their study of the Holy scriptures. Government should not give any support whether that be financial or special privileges over minority religious groups that don't agree with the majority religious groups.

History has shown that when the church loses her spiritual focus of spreading the gospel to the whole world well as losing the power of the Holy Spirit it turns to the state to support her dogmas and institutions through the political power of the state, this ends up corrupting the church and the state. This is a dangerous direction to take. The scriptures are clear that the God of heaven does not approve of forcing the conscience through the force of the secular power. God desires that people choose for themselves whether they will worship and serve him out of a willing heart. That is why he died on the Cross so that we can be free to choose.

Please reconsider those recommendations in the report that will end America as a land of religious freedom.

Sincerely,

Daniel Flores

Eagle, Idaho

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

From: Brian McIntosh <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty-promote the separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:00:28 -0400

Importance: Normal

I know you want to begin to establish a national church, and or a white, Christian nationalist country.

Don't do it. It's a terrible idea.

Politicians are inherently corrupt and promote their own interests. To infect the churches with this political disease, will destroy the Christian church.

Passing religious laws will make non-believers, subject to the state as god, and frustrate and stifle the work of the Holy Spirit.

The only person, Sameerah Munshi, that was half way honest and sincere, resigned her seat, because she saw how Carrie Boller, had her own religious freedom attacked, when she was removed by Lt Gov Dan Patrick.

This commission cannot help being bigoted and partisan, so how can we trust people like this to ensure religious freedom for the entire nation, when they have already persecuted their fellow committee member for her religious beliefs?

We can't. This is really a stupid idea. The founders would be rolling over in their graves.

Sincerely,

Brian J McIntosh, MPA, (R), (CT), (VI) ARRT, USAF Veteran.

From: jverizon1986 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:07:24 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Commission,

My name is Joshua Voss. I agree that religion in general and Judeo-Christian beliefs in particular are and have been attacked and diminished. I also agree with the commission's stance that the ideology of separation of church and state have been misused both by religious and secular groups to mean an abolishment of any mention and display of any religious conviction from public life.

I commend the commission in recognizing the breach on the PRACTICE of religious freedom and the passion of its members.

However, I must express concern on whether the commission's desired course of action is constitutional and whether it opens the door for government to ESTABLISH religious practices.

It is true that the "wall of separation" has been misused and I believe this commission is dedicated to address that abuse but too often in the course of human history have we seen government agencies, even ones with noble intentions, be used to crush freedom while claiming to want to uphold it.

My concerns are 2-fold.

1. This commission does not have the authority to simply disregard and redefine past rulings of the Supreme Court no matter how much one disagrees with their rulings. If there are grievances that are legitimate and need to be addressed. The Supreme Court needs to be afforded an opportunity to address those grievances.

We have checks and balances in our government for a reason. They are to be observed at all times not just when it is convenient. To do otherwise would be to create a precedent that would undermine all that our Republic stands on.

2. This leads me to my second concern. The Bill of Rights exists because many of our Founders believed it afforded the Federal government far to vast and broad of power. This commission has spoken much on what government SHOULD be allowed and little on what should NOT be allowed. The weight of the former should not be considered at the expense of the latter.

If this commission is to create any policy, it must provide assurances that also LIMIT power not just grant it.

I again commend the commission for their willingness to address these concerns. Without righteous intention, there can be no righteous action but without righteous action, all righteous intention is rendered worthless.

The Founding Fathers made a great government not just by recognizing the potential for government power to do good but also its potential to do evil.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Joshua Wayne Voss,
Seymour, IN

July 11, 2026
Sent from my Galaxy

From: Gerald Brown <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:07:41 -0400

Importance: Normal

I just learned about the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission today. I am a strong believer in the God of creation and salvation. I am just as strong an advocate that government must not be involved in the support of religion. I know the courts have to be involved when the exercise of personal rights conflict with business, but government must not be involved beyond that. Government could and should promote the character traits God claims for Himself in Exodus 34:6-7 where He claims to be merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, even though forgiveness by itself doesn't change one's heart or character; and family dysfunction typically takes a few generations to get corrected. These traits consistently employed are the best and only antidote for hate.

I was 14 years the academic dean of a Bible school. I have spent the past 30 years of my life studying the oldest Greek manuscripts of the four Gospels to see what was written about the sequence of events of the cross of Jesus. From my study I can confirm that there are many ways that the Gospel record has been compromised to support pagan beliefs and practices. The most glaring of these is the story of when the women found the tomb of Jesus empty. The King James Version (KJV) states the women found the tomb empty on the first day of the week, which pastors and scholars claim is Sunday morning. This has become the most important piece of information in support of Sunday as the day of Christian worship and rest. The U.S. Constitution even makes an aside to this at Article I, Section 7, clause 2. However, that is fake doctrine! That is NOT what any of the oldest Greek manuscripts of the Gospels state. In the oldest Greek manuscripts, all four Gospels state that the women came to the empty tomb "early on the first after the Sabbath." The Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday evening and ends at sunset on Saturday evening. Scripture does not tell us the women arrived at the tomb on Sunday morning, but that they arrived on Saturday evening just after sunset! And Jesus was already risen! Which means Jesus was actually resurrected close to the end of the Sabbath. Sunday begins at midnight, so it wasn't Sunday yet at all. Sunday was still five to six hours away.

The translators of the KJV, all of whom were European gentiles who did not keep the Lord's sacred festivals and were steeped in the pagan mindset, cleverly substituted their own bias for worship into the story of the cross of Jesus in place of the facts of the real story as told by the authors of the Gospels. Other translations have followed that same false path, telling lies about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Upon further investigation, I've found many places throughout scripture where the translators have manipulated the text to make it reflect a pagan paradigm. This is the scandal and corruption of the ages no one has noticed! Christianity is modern day paganism.

Government must be extremely careful to avoid supporting lies, even if those lies have been established and promoted with the most pious vigor of religious leaders. I've written about many of the details of the sequence of the events related to the coronation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, and show that the popular understanding is not supported by the oldest Greek manuscripts. My book, [The Lord's Sabbaths and the Cross; How Christian Scholars have Mistranslated the Gospel Stories to Preserve Pagan Traditions](#) is available on Amazon.

Cordially,

Gerald Brown, EdD

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - Separation of Church and State -- Harley and Judith Brewer

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:08:43 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Commission:

American history tells us that our forefathers came to this new land to escape persecution for not following the state religion, yet when they formed a colony here, they persecuted those who didn't follow their religion. Thus, our own history and the example of conditions in countries today where there is no separation of church and state, illustrate the need to maintain this separation. We object to eliminating the current separation in the Constitution.

We also object to the government's funding of any religious activities. Taxpayers, who fund the government, represent many religious beliefs. Our tax money should not be used to fund any religious organizations. It would be impossible to fund all requests, and that would lead to the government's deciding which to fund and which to deny and could never be done equally or fairly. We each are responsible for funding our own religion's organizations, clubs, and education. Some religions are anathema to other religions, and while all are allowed to exist and operate, as long as they do not interfere with other citizen's rights, members of one religion should not wind up funding an opposing religion's activities. Tax exemption for a genuine religion seems acceptable, since no money is actually given to or dispersed by the government.

Separation of church and state does not mean that no religious mention can be made in a public situation. In public schools and in political places, such as in Congress, where different religions are represented, a few moments of silence before opening the session can give each member time to pray for guidance, as he or she chooses. If we abide by and enforce the religious clause of our Constitution as it currently stands, no one is harmed or ignored.

From: Stacy Guský <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Rel Liberty Commission

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:10:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

Removing the separation of church and state is detrimental to our freedoms that this country was founded on.

It will most importantly cause indoctrination of Americans, single out 1 religion, allow the government to force worship.
All these endanger our freedoms.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Johnna Ford <[REDACTED] PII >

To: [REDACTED] PII

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:10:51 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please keep the church and state separate. Religious liberty and freedom is what this country is based on. We want every person to have the freedom to worship God. Thank you

From: Samantha Webb <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - CHAPTER 14 - SAMANTHA WEBB

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:13:26 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern,

On principal, I am in favor of this document. There are a couple of points that should be made. The Founding Fathers were Christians. The famous quote from John Adams that 'Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people' is more precinct now than ever before. Secularism, Communism, Modernism, Feminism, and countless modern errors have eroded our nations moral and religious framework. Efforts should be made to renew the Christian Faith and ensure that our nation, its laws and its people live according to the natural law which is written in mans hearts. (1:Rom 2:15)

While our Founding Fathers did not implement religious liberty perfectly, (their persecution of Catholics cannot be questioned,) they successfully did what has largely never been done before. Since they were Christians though, living in the era in which they did, they would have known of the threat of Islam and defended the nation against it.

Allowing Religious Liberty does not mean allowing a religion to proselytize and take over public and private life which is based on hatred of the 'infidel' and whose aim is to rape, kill, or forcefully convert or enslave those not attached to it. Again, the Founding Fathers were Christians and wanted Christianity and morality based on Christianity and the Natural Law to inform and guide the laws of our nation and the lives of its citizens. They did not want Islam to be the guiding religion or even a guiding force in our nation.

If as you say in the summary we should 'live not by lies' it is time to unapologetically acknowledge the threat of Islam. As Bishop Athanasius Schneider straightforwardly and honestly explains, the religion of Islam does not worship the same God as Christians do. They worship a false god. As St Thomas Aquinas teaches, those who do not worship the one, true God, worship the devil.

Our nation can allow religious liberty without allowing anti-Christian, demon worshipping religions to take root in public and private life and to subvert the nation. They must be controlled and prevented from implementing Sharia law.

From: Joseph Marshall Cooper <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT regarding Report of The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:14:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing as a citizen of the United States of America to say in regard to the recent report of The Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty; that I am not in favor of removing the wall between church and state.

Specific objections and recommendation that I have are:

1. I object to funding religious non-profit activities.
2. I object to funding religious education and religious clubs on public campuses.
3. I object to repealing the Johnson Amendment, which restricts church's political activities.
4. I request that the Johnson Amendment be fully enforced.

Joe Cooper

From: H Davis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment, Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:14:26 -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,

Holly Davis

Priest River, ID

From: "Tyrone L. Greene" <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Maintain the Wall

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:15:01 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it May Concern,

As a Bible believing Christian and a student of history, I implore you to not be quick in "bridge building" ties but to maintain the historic wall between Government institutions and Religious institutions. In the same ignorant manner some folks undertake to further Communism, proclaiming they'll succeed, because all the previous failed attempts were done wrong, but that they will do it right. So likewise, from the history human societies, we can learn the failures of various civilizations due to combining Church with States which resulted in untold number of persecutions and deaths of those not favored by mutual commissions. Like Communism's track record, so to was that of the Dark Ages.

Please, let's not have another horrific version for our great Country and humanity.

Thank you for your consideration of this observation and request.

Respectfully yours,

Tyrone L. Greene
Florida

From: Alan Reinach <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:18:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

how dare you attack the separation of church and state! that is the best idea america ever gave to the world. The very best protection against government meddling with religious freedom

From: richard solis <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] separation of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:20:14 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern I strongly oppose doing away with church and state; it is one of our great constitutional pillars. As Jesus stated, render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. History tells us that Whenever church and state are bound together tyranny is the the end result . Our nation was founded by men and women who were trying to escape religious persecution. Why would we want to go back? WE will not be the same people we will be told what to think, what to do, what to say, what religion to join ect. Religious liberty is at stake.

From: Michelle Baule <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]" <[REDACTED] PII [REDACTED]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious Liberty and division of church and state

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:20:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the importance of preserving the constitutional principle of religious liberty in the United States.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides two equally important protections: it prohibits the government from establishing a religion while also protecting every individual's right to freely exercise their faith. It states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

These protections have served as the cornerstone of American liberty since our nation's founding. They ensure that no citizen is compelled to support, participate in, or adhere to any particular religion, while simultaneously safeguarding the freedom of every person to worship—or not worship—according to the dictates of their own conscience.

Although the phrase "separation of church and state" does not appear in the Constitution itself, the principle has long been recognized as a safeguard against government interference in matters of religion. This concept protects both religious institutions from government control and government from becoming an instrument of religious authority.

Our nation welcomes people of many faiths, as well as those of no religious affiliation. The Constitution provides equal protection to all, ensuring that government neither favors nor discriminates against any religion. Public officials, like all citizens, are free to hold and express their religious beliefs. However, when acting in their official capacity, they are obligated to uphold the Constitution and govern in a manner that respects the rights of every American.

Protecting religious liberty does not require removing religion from public life. Rather, it requires that the government remain neutral in matters of faith so that every individual may freely live according to their beliefs without coercion or preferential treatment by the state.

The enduring strength of our republic lies in its commitment to liberty of conscience. Preserving these constitutional principles ensures that Americans of every faith—and those with none—continue to enjoy the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Baule

From: sue garner <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:21:56 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Religious Liberty Committee

Our nation's founding fathers understood that faith and freedom are inseparable from each other. That is why the First Amendment remains the most effective protection of our Religious Liberty in the world. Authoritarianism is the greatest threat to our Religious Freedom. Our founding fathers came to America to escape religious persecution, so we cannot sign into repeating those mistakes that would force people to give up their Religious Rights! This would bring our great country to reunions and divide us into submission that brought our ancestors to flee to America! Please help me in keeping our home free from this unconstitutional law.

Sincerely,

Teresa Crow
Fort Wayne, Indiana

From: Wildrose1657 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT - SEPERATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:26:16 -0400

Importance: Normal

To Whom it may concern:

It is my express wish that the Religious Liberty Commission take note of my concerns of what is taking place with said committee concerning the history of our founding fathers and pioneers.

Firstly the people that fled Europe to cross the Atlantic(Puritans) fled Europe because church and state were united and were persecuting thus said individuals. They fled Europe so they could worship God by their own religious convictions an unalienable God given right. They didn't only flee Europe but when they established their own colonies here some brought the principle of church and state and started their own persecutions of individuals that didn't follow their own religious convictions. So we can see through out history that with no separation of church and state we see persecution happen every time. When we look at the papacy when it had church and state authority it warred on countries that dared to go against their dictates and man made dogmas.

With the founders of the original colonies such as Roger Williams, William Penn, their beliefs was, that is was important to keep church and state separated, and that is why their colonies flourished.

It is my hope and prayer that this committee will see fit that there should be no bridge built between church and state but keep that wall up high and standing.

Thank You for the opportunity to express my view and will to this committee.

Yours Truly
Claude L.

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: jverizon1986 <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Wall of Separation

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:26:29 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Commission,

My name is Joshua Voss. I agree that religion in general and Judeo-Christian beliefs in particular are and have been attacked and diminished. I also agree with the commission's stance that the ideology of separation of church and state have been misused both by religious and secular groups to mean an abolishment of any mention and display of any religious conviction from public life.

I commend the commission in recognizing the breach on the PRACTICE of religious freedom and the passion of its members.

However, I must express concern on whether the commission's desired course of action is constitutional and whether it opens the door for government to ESTABLISH religious practices.

It is true that the "wall of separation" has been misused and I believe this commission is dedicated to address that abuse but too often in the course of human history have we seen government agencies, even ones with noble intentions, be used to crush freedom while claiming to want to uphold it.

My concerns are 2-fold.

1. This commission does not have the authority to simply disregard and redefine past rulings of the Supreme Court no matter how much one disagrees with their rulings. If there are grievances that are legitimate and need to be addressed. The Supreme Court needs to be afforded an opportunity to address those grievances.

We have checks and balances in our government for a reason. They are to be observed at all times not just when it is convenient. To do otherwise would be to create a precedent that would undermine all that our Republic stands on.

2. This leads me to my second concern. The Bill of Rights exists because many of our Founders believed it afforded the Federal government far to vast and broad of power. This commission has spoken much on what government SHOULD be allowed and little on what should NOT be allowed. The weight of the former should not be considered at the expense of the latter.

If this commission is to create any policy, it must provide assurances that also LIMIT power not just grant it.

I again commend the commission for their willingness to address these concerns. Without righteous intention, there can be no righteous action but without righteous action, all righteous intention is rendered worthless.

The Founding Fathers made a great government not just by recognizing the potential for government power to do good but also its potential to do evil.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Joshua Wayne Voss

Sent from my Galaxy

From: Vincent Ybarra <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment- separation church and state - Vince Y.

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:30:02 -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. The God of Heaven never forces worship. He allows complete freedom of choice because that's what love does and that who God is. If you take away the freedom of choice for others to worship how they want we're doing exactly what king Nebuchadnezzar did, he forced worship. Let's learn from our ancestors mistakes, let's learn from the Lord and His character, He lets people choose Him or not, because love doesn't force its way in, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:20. He wants us to open the door for Him, He doesn't force His way in the door. We must do the same. Thank you for your time.

In Christ,
Vincent Y.
Wittmann, AZ

From: David Lohoff <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:31:20 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPad

I agree with Pilner Freedom comments.

From: David Lohoff <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Freedom

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:33:38 -0400

Importance: Normal

Sent from my iPad

I agree with Freedoms of Pillar comments, please implement them.

From: Cindy T <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:37:19 -0400

Importance: Normal

I am writing to express my concern about repealing the separation of church and state. The United States of America was founded by men who were escaping a tyrannical government and they wanted a place where they could be free in every area. Please keep the separation of church and state

From: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

To: "[REDACTED PII]" <[REDACTED PII]>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Church & State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:41:52 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I am not much with words ,but do want to express my deepest concerns about this sudden move to unite church and state.

First of all it is very concerning that the U.S government thinks that it should place itself between God and man! Our founding fathers placed this language in the first amendment to prevent what happened in the dark ages from happening here! 50 plus were labeled heretics and murdered for their faith because they were not in line with the Vatican or the state. This is extremely dangerous what is being attempted. The government cannot enforce it's morality on the people. That is taking the position of God Himself and is in error to do so. Finally, the church is betrothed to Christ and not to a civil government. Be careful in your decision because you will answer to the Almighty God if you make the wrong one!.

Respectfully,

Duane Brewer.

From: David Van Ornum <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:42:47 -0400

Importance: Normal

To whom it may concern,

I was hopeful that your commission would be faithful in protecting our religious freedom. Instead it has decided to endanger our religious freedoms in a way that cannot be reversed once we start down this path. Combining church and state has never been successful and has only, always caused many good people to suffer and even die for their faith. To think that we have advanced beyond the ability to become a persecuting power is naive or arrogant. It is my hope that you will reconsider and maintain the separation that is so vital to our religious freedom and our freedom to think and believe as our conscience leads.

David Van Ornum

[REDACTED] PII

[REDACTED] PII

From: William Real <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment- Chapter 1- William Real

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:49:32 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this public comment regarding the enduring importance of religious liberty in the United States.

I respectfully urge the Commission to reaffirm one of America's most important constitutional principles: that civil government must neither establish religion nor interfere with the free exercise of religion. This principle protects every citizen equally and remains one of the greatest safeguards of both religious liberty and constitutional government.

The First Amendment provides:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...."[1]

These two clauses—the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause—work together. One prevents government from establishing or favoring religion, while the other protects every person's right to worship, or not worship, according to the dictates of conscience.

Recently, some public officials have argued that the phrase "separation of church and state" carries no constitutional significance because Thomas Jefferson used those words in a personal letter rather than in the Constitution itself. While it is true that the phrase appears in Jefferson's January 1, 1802, letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, this criticism overlooks the purpose and context of that correspondence. The Danbury Baptists feared governmental interference with religion because they belonged to a minority denomination in Connecticut. Jefferson responded by explaining what he believed the First Amendment meant. He wrote:

"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God; that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship; that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."[2]

Contrary to some modern claims, Jefferson was not inventing a new constitutional doctrine. He was explaining his understanding of the First Amendment and affirming that

civil authority has jurisdiction over civil matters, while matters of conscience belong to God alone. This letter has since been cited repeatedly by the United States Supreme Court as an important historical source in understanding the Establishment Clause.[3]

Thomas Jefferson was not alone in this understanding. Article VI of the Constitution provides that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”[4] This provision was revolutionary for its time and ensured that citizenship and public service would never depend upon adherence to a particular religion or denomination.

Likewise, President George Washington emphasized that religious liberty belongs equally to every citizen. In his 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport, Rhode Island, he declared that the Government of the United States “gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.”[5] Washington’s vision was of a nation in which every citizen could live in safety regardless of religious affiliation.

James Madison, often called the “Father of the Constitution,” expressed the same principle in his 1785 “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments.” Madison argued that religion “can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.”[6] Because faith depends upon personal conviction, he concluded that it lies beyond the legitimate authority of civil government. Government may regulate civil conduct necessary for public order and safety, but it possesses neither the competence nor the constitutional authority to prescribe religious belief or worship.

History strongly supports the wisdom of these constitutional safeguards. Whenever civil government has united itself with religious authority, the result has too often been coercion instead of conscience. Throughout much of medieval Europe, the union of ecclesiastical and civil authority enabled religious persecution on a massive scale. Under various religious establishments, dissenters—including Waldenses, Hussites, Lollards, Anabaptists, Reformers, Jews, and others—were imprisoned, exiled, tortured, deprived of property, or executed because of their religious convictions.[7] The medieval and Spanish Inquisitions remain enduring examples of governments enforcing religious orthodoxy through civil power. Although historians continue to debate precise numbers of victims, there is broad scholarly agreement that these systems caused immense human suffering over centuries.[8]

These historical tragedies should not be used to condemn any modern religious body or today’s faithful adherents of any denomination. Rather, they remind us that concentrated religious and civil power has repeatedly produced oppression regardless of the institution involved. The lesson of history is not anti-religious; it is pro-liberty.

America’s constitutional framework sought to avoid repeating these mistakes. Many early settlers and later immigrants came to North America seeking greater freedom to practice their faith according to conscience. Although several colonies themselves maintained established churches and were not always models of religious tolerance, the Constitution

represented a remarkable national commitment to reject a federally established religion and to protect liberty of conscience for all people equally.[9]

The separation of church and state is therefore not a privilege granted to one religion, nor is it an expression of hostility toward religion. It protects Christians from governmental control of Christianity. It protects Jews from Christian establishment. It protects Muslims from religious discrimination. It protects Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and members of every other faith. It protects those with no religious affiliation. Most importantly, it protects the God-given freedom of conscience possessed by every human being.

Religious truth has never required governmental enforcement. Authentic faith cannot be compelled by legislation. Government may regulate conduct necessary for public order and safety, but it should never compel belief, prescribe worship, or grant one religion legal preference over another. Our constitutional order recognizes that the state is competent to govern civil affairs while religion addresses the moral and spiritual convictions of individuals. When each remains within its proper sphere, both civil liberty and religious liberty flourish.

For more than two centuries, this principle has served Americans of every faith and of no faith. It has allowed religious communities to thrive without governmental control while protecting minorities from the tyranny of the majority. As the Commission considers matters affecting religious liberty, I respectfully urge you to preserve and strengthen these constitutional protections. The separation of church and state is not a threat to religion. It is one of religion's greatest safeguards. It ensures that faith remains voluntary, conscience remains free, and government remains accountable to the Constitution rather than to any particular religious institution.

America's commitment to liberty of conscience remains one of its greatest strengths. I respectfully urge the Commission to preserve and defend that commitment for present and future generations.

Respectfully,

Mr. William Real

Footnotes

[1] U.S. Const. amend. I.

[2] Thomas Jefferson, Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association (Jan. 1, 1802), Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpost.html>.

[3] See, e.g., *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1, 16 (1947).

[4] U.S. Const. art. VI, cl. 3.

[5] George Washington, Letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island (Aug. 18, 1790), National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135>.

[6] James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments (1785), National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-08-02-0163>.

[7] See generally Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1789); and John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (1563), recognizing that modern historians evaluate some accounts critically.

[8] Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (4th ed. 2014).

[9] Thomas Jefferson, *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (1786); see also Leonard W. Levy, *The Establishment Clause: Religion and the First Amendment* (1986).

From: amaycock <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Preserving Religious Liberty Through the Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:50:45 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear religious liberty commission,

Thank you for sharing the draft report of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission.

Whether one refers to these centuries as the Dark Ages or the medieval period, history demonstrates a consistent lesson: when civil government possesses the authority to enforce religious belief or practice, both faith and freedom suffer. Genuine faith cannot be compelled by law; it must be the product of conscience.

America's Founders understood this lesson well. The First Amendment protects both the free exercise of religion and prohibits the establishment of a national religion. These two principles work together. The government protects the right of every individual to worship according to conscience—or not to worship at all—while refraining from favoring one denomination over another.

This separation has protected Christians, Jews, Muslims, and people of every faith tradition, as well as those with no religious affiliation. It has fostered one of the most religiously vibrant and diverse nations in history precisely because belief has remained free from government coercion.

As James Madison warned, the union of religion and civil power has historically produced “pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, and in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution.” Thomas Jefferson likewise argued that religious belief is a matter between each individual and God, beyond the proper authority of civil government.

I strongly support robust protections for religious liberty. At the same time, I urge the Commission to ensure that these protections never erode the constitutional principle separating church and state. History has repeatedly shown that once government acquires the power to favor one religion, future governments may use that same power to suppress others. The result has too often been persecution, violence, and the loss of the very freedoms our Constitution was designed to preserve.

Our nation has been remarkably successful because it protects religion without controlling it and protects government from becoming an instrument of religious authority. That

balance has safeguarded liberty for nearly 250 years and remains worth preserving.

Respectfully,

Alan Maycock

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: Its Prophetic <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] PUBLIC COMMENT – CHAPTER 1 – Kelvin Molina

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:50:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

To the Members of the Commission on Religious Liberty:

I am writing to you in my capacity as an observer to express my disagreement regarding the first point of your document, *"12 Opportunities to Strengthen Religious Liberty for All Americans."*

Although I was not born in, nor do I reside in, the United States, the scope of your statement refers to "All Americans." Nevertheless, I believe the impact of such policies transcends borders. It is a well-known fact that the political decisions of the United States affect the entire world, either in the short or long term. Consequently, I consider the matters set forth in your document to be an issue that directly concerns me, as well as the international community.

History is an exceptional teacher, and I perceive that, in the drafting of this document, it has been ignored entirely. As the wise Solomon said: "There is nothing new under the sun," or as the original text reads: *"That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been."*

That being said, it is necessary to understand that the proposal to negate the separation between Church and State is not only an error that will leave a deep mark on our current civilization, but it also represents a direct contradiction to the words of our Savior Jesus Christ: *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."*

It is a universal sentiment to reject falsehood, cruelty, corruption, depravity, and the distortion of the values that protect us and our families. However, any attempt to legislate faith—the how, when, and where one must worship God—will always have an outcome as certain as human error: persecution, chaos, and tyranny; precisely everything that, to my understanding, this great nation has historically opposed. It is a mistake to think that a practice that has failed at every opportunity, leaving horrendous consequences in its wake, can be established today without incurring the same errors of the past. All those who have sought to legislate conscience in history likely thought they would do it better than their predecessors.

While it is the duty of the State to legislate and enforce the laws that guarantee the safety of its citizens, it is not its prerogative to legislate their relationship with God, nor to dictate the autonomy of that spiritual connection. Divine judgment is the exclusive competence of the Almighty, not of man. Currently, our world faces problems of a strictly earthly and horizontal nature; yet, even such basic issues often elude the control of earthly authorities. How, then, can we presume to encompass the vertical plane and attempt to control that which belongs solely to the private realm between God and His creation?

To be truly "A Nation Under God," we must first humble ourselves before Him and not attempt to occupy His place. We must be faithful in the little things to be entrusted with much. Regrettably, I consider that this attitude of humility and dependence does not reflect the current state of this great nation, nor that of the world at large.

I hope my words may have an impact on your deliberations and that this topic might be reconsidered. Waiting on God is an attitude much closer to His will than trying to force that which He Himself has left to human free will: the decision to accept or reject Him. Ultimately, the consequence of our choice will determine our eternal destiny: to dwell in His presence or to remain eternally separated from Him and His glory.

Respectfully,

From: Brent Ringering <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "[REDACTED] PII" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:51:53 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Commission I was trouble to read that you are working to tear down the wall of separation of church and state. Our founding fathers put that in the constitution for a reason. I don't want the state to influence religion nor do I want religion to influence the state. I believe we should render unto the government the things that are the government's but render unto God the thing's that are God's. Past history has shown us what happens when the government enforces the dictates of the church. Religious freedom is what has made this country great. Please do not repeal the Johnson amendment.

Sincerely,
Brent Ringering
Lewiston Idaho

From: PHILLIP MILLER <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep separation of church and state!

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:54:36 -0400

Importance: Normal

Please President Trump if you truly believe that God is the one Who is in control of your life Please don't take down this wall between church and state.

If you destroy this wall you will take away God's control of His church and put it in the control of sinful men who will destroy what God has been in control of from the beginning of creation.

Do you truly believe that sinful men can do better than God Himself in the leading of His church?!

God is all powerful and all knowing. Who better to be in complete control of His church?!

President Trump please don't put yourself above God and take away this much needed wall between God's church and state.

President Trump I pray to God that He will lead you in this decision. Please pray about this matter and put God first and allow Him to continue to be in control of His church.

Thank you for allowing me to defend my God.

Your's Truly
Phillip A Miller

From: Judi Papendick <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Total Opposition to the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission Draft Report

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 21:58:49 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Members of the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission,

I am writing to submit my formal public comment expressing total opposition to the recommendations put forward in the June 2026 draft report. Rather than protecting true religious freedom, this document outlines an alarming blueprint to systematically break down the constitutional wall between church and state, while simultaneously narrowing the religious liberties of everyday Americans.

True religious freedom requires the government to remain strictly neutral. By attempting to elevate a singular, preferred religious viewpoint to a position of federal backing, this report actively undermines the First Amendment.

I urge the Commission to completely reject the following recommendations before a final report is issued:

1. The Subversion of the Johnson Amendment

The recommendation to eliminate or weaken the Johnson Amendment directly threatens the independence of both

our political system and our houses of worship. Allowing tax-exempt religious institutions to funnel money into political campaigns and endorse candidates turns sacred spaces into partisan tools. This narrows religious liberty by forcing churchgoers into politically divided congregations and inappropriately subsidizes political speech through tax-exempt dollars.

2. The Diversion of Public Funds to Religious Education

The report's push to expand federal voucher programs and direct public tax dollars to religious private schools is a direct violation of the Establishment Clause. Public funds must support public education, which serves all children equally. Forcing taxpayers to fund religious instruction—including schools whose doctrines they may fundamentally disagree with—is a severe infringement on individual freedom of conscience.

3. The Weaponization of "Conscience Protections" to Discriminate

The report seeks to radically expand "Free Exercise" rights for corporations, government-funded agencies, and healthcare providers at the direct expense of individual citizens.

- **In Healthcare:** Expanding medical refusal clauses allows providers to deny essential care to patients

based on religious dogma, compromising patient safety and autonomy.

- **In Social Services:** Allowing taxpayer-funded adoption and foster care agencies to reject qualified families based on sexual orientation or religion is state-sanctioned discrimination.
- **In the Workplace:** Broadening corporate religious rights allows private business owners to override federal labor protections, stripping employees of their reproductive healthcare benefits and civil rights.

4. The Exclusion of Minority Faiths and Non-Religious Americans

Religious liberty must be absolute and equal for all people. The draft report focuses almost exclusively on protecting majority Christian institutions while largely ignoring the documented rise of discrimination against Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist Americans, as well as the rapidly growing secular population. By favoring one religious tradition, the report inherently narrows the freedom of all others.

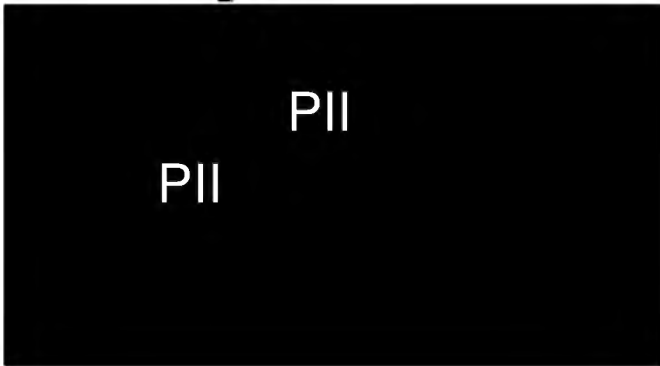
Conclusion

The recommendations in this report do not defend liberty; they attempt to create a dangerous union between church and state that historical precedent proves will lead to oppression, division, and the erosion of minority rights. I

demand that the Commission uphold the strict separation of church and state—the very framework that has allowed diverse religious expressions to thrive peacefully in America for over two centuries.

Sincerely,

Judi Papendick



From: Kathleen Smith <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Separation of Church and State

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:00:00 -0400

Importance: Normal

Dear Religious Liberty Commission,

I respectfully urge you to preserve the strongest possible protections for religious liberty and the separation of church and state.

Throughout history, people have suffered when governments assumed authority over matters of conscience and religious observance. Religious freedom is best protected when government remains neutral in questions of worship and belief, safeguarding the rights of all citizens rather than favoring particular religious practices. Our nation faces real moral and social challenges, but the solution is not to grant civil authorities power over religious observance. Governments can and should address harmful conduct through just laws, while leaving matters of faith to individual conscience.

I am especially concerned by proposals that would use civil authority to encourage, privilege, or compel religious observance, including laws that favor a particular day of worship. Religious liberty requires that government not decide which religious practices are correct or use legal pressure to promote them.

History demonstrates that the union of religious authority and civil power often leads to discrimination and persecution of those who hold different beliefs. Even when exemptions are offered, the underlying concern remains: once government claims authority to define and enforce religious observance, freedom of conscience is weakened.

True faith cannot be produced by coercion. Religious belief and worship must be matters of personal conviction, not legal compulsion. A free society protects the rights of all people—those of every faith and those of none—to live according to conscience without government interference.

I therefore respectfully ask that you oppose any law, policy, or interpretation that could allow government to favor, establish, or compel religious observance. Please continue to defend the principle that government protects freedom of conscience rather than directing it.

Religious liberty is not hostility toward religion; it is one of the strongest safeguards for religion in a free society. Our nation is strongest when it protects the rights of all people to worship—or not worship—according to conscience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kathleen Smith

From: Tom Homer <[REDACTED] PII >

To: "RLC (OASG)" <[REDACTED] PII >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Religious liberty comments

Date: Sat, 11 Jul 2026 22:01:55 -0400

Importance: Normal

Attachments: Document_(5).docx

Sent from my iPad

To the Presidential Religious Liberty Commission

Comments on purpose and function

Please do not fund religious organizations with government money. God is able to support those organizations worth supporting.

Psalms 50:10-12

10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Government support of religious organizations has always led to corruption and moral down fall.

Let men and organizations have their consciences be led by God not government officials that can withhold their funding if not in line with government policy which is fickle.

Jesus said:

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.

Jesus was put to death by the government because of the most influencing religion of his day.

Liberty of conscience is greater than the current understanding of religious liberty.

Persecution has always come thru the organization that is closest to the government in power.

We also have to recognize secularism is a religion, atheism is a religion, evolution is a religion, all of them take some level of faith to accept them. These should not have been supported and taken into our government to be forced into our education systems and our moral standards. Abortion and homosexuality, transgenderism all have gotten stronger by their support from the government. The American people never asked for these intrusions in our lives. Neither Has the rest of the world appreciated Hillary Clinton

and other state officials withholding funding unless these sovereign nations accept the US policy on these perverted lifestyles.

We need reformation and change but not to the detriment of more of our freedoms.

Just stick to minimal governance as necessary, stay out of the personnel lives of the people.

Faith is between the individual and God. In this the government has no place.

I attach a historical record for your enrichment of history from the book:

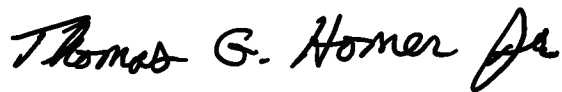
The Great Controversy chapter 16,

I would also recommend reading chapter 35

Liberty of conscience threatened

Sincerely,

Thomas G Homer Jr

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas G. Homer Jr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

"The Pilgrim Fathers"

The English reformers, while renouncing the doctrines of Romanism, had retained many of its forms. Thus though the authority and the creed of Rome were rejected, not a few of her customs and ceremonies were incorporated into the worship of the Church of England. It was claimed that these things were not matters of conscience; that though they were not commanded in Scripture, and hence were non-essential, yet not being forbidden, they were not intrinsically evil. Their observance tended to narrow the gulf

which separated the reformed churches from Rome, and it was urged that they would promote the acceptance of the Protestant faith by Romanists. – {GC88 289.1}

To the conservative and compromising, these arguments seemed conclusive. But there was another class that did not so judge. The fact that these customs tended to bridge the chasm between Rome and the Reformation, was in their view a conclusive argument against retaining them. They looked upon them as badges of the slavery from which they had been delivered, and to which they had no disposition to return. They reasoned that God has in his Word established the regulations governing his worship, and that men are not at liberty to add to these or to detract from them. The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what he had explicitly enjoined. – {GC88 289.2}

Many earnestly desired to return to the purity and simplicity which characterized the primitive church. They regarded many of the established customs of the English church as monuments of

idolatry, and they could not in conscience unite in her worship. But the church, being supported by the civil authority, would permit no dissent from her forms. Attendance upon her service was required by law, and unauthorized assemblies for religious worship were prohibited, under penalty of imprisonment, exile, and death. – {GC88 289.3}

At the opening of the seventeenth century the monarch who had just ascended the throne of England declared his determination to make the Puritans “conform, or harry them out of the land, or else worse.” Hunted, persecuted, and imprisoned, they could discern in the future no promise of better days, and many yielded to the conviction that for such as would serve God according to the dictates of their conscience, “England had ceased forever to be a habitable spot.” Some at last determined to seek refuge in Holland. Difficulties, losses, and imprisonment were encountered. Their purposes were thwarted, and they were betrayed into the hands of their enemies. But steadfast perseverance finally conquered, and they found shelter on the friendly shores of the Dutch Republic. – {GC88 290.1}

In their flight they had left their houses, their goods, and their means of livelihood. They were strangers in a strange land, among a people of different language and customs. They were forced to resort to new and untried occupations to earn their bread. Middle-aged men, who had spent their lives in tilling the soil, had now to learn mechanical trades. But they cheerfully accepted the situation, and lost no time in idleness or repining. Though often pinched with poverty, they thanked God for the blessings which were still granted them, and found their joy in unmolested spiritual communion. “They knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lifted up their eyes to Heaven, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits.” – {GC88 290.2}

In the midst of exile and hardship, their love and faith waxed strong. They trusted the Lord’s promises, and he did not fail them in time of need. His angels were by their side, to encourage and support them. And when God’s hand seemed pointing them across the sea, to a land where they might found for themselves a State, and leave to their children the precious heritage of religious liberty, they went forward, without

shrinking, in the path of Providence. – {GC88 290.3}

God had permitted trials to come upon his people to prepare them for the accomplishment of his gracious purpose toward them. The church had been brought low, that she might be exalted. God was about to display his power in her behalf, to give to the world another evidence that he will not forsake those who trust in him. He had overruled events to cause the wrath of Satan and the plots of evil men to advance his glory, and to bring his people to a place of security. Persecution and exile were opening the way to freedom. – {GC88 291.1}

When first constrained to separate from the English church, the Puritans had joined themselves together by a solemn covenant, as the Lord's free people, "to walk in all his ways, made known or to be made known to them." Here was the true spirit of reform, the vital principle of Protestantism. It was with this purpose that the Pilgrims departed from Holland to find a home in the New World. John Robinson, their pastor, who was providentially prevented from accompanying them, in his farewell address to the exiles said:— – {GC88 291.2}

“Brethren, we are now erelong to part asunder, and the Lord knoweth whether I shall live ever to see your faces more; but whether the Lord hath appointed that or not, I charge you before God and his blessed angels to follow me no farther than I have followed Christ. If God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as you ever were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am very confident that the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his Holy Word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go any farther than what Luther saw, and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their time, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received. – {GC88 291.3}

“Remember your church covenant, in which you have agreed to walk in all the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known unto you. Remember your promise and covenant with God and with one another, to receive whatever light and truth shall be made known to you from his written Word. But, withal, take heed, I beseech you, what you receive as truth. Examine it, consider it, compare it with other scriptures of truth before you receive it; for it is not possible that the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick antichristian darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.” – {GC88 292.1}

It was the desire for liberty of conscience that inspired the Pilgrims to brave the perils of the long journey across the sea, to endure the hardships and dangers of the wilderness, and with God’s blessing to lay, on the shores of America, the foundation of a mighty nation. Yet honest and God-fearing as they were, the Pilgrims did not yet comprehend the great principle of religious toleration. The freedom which they sacrificed so much to secure for themselves, they were not equally ready to grant to others. “Very few, even of the foremost

thinkers and moralists of the seventeenth century, had any just conception of that grand principle, the outgrowth of the New Testament, which acknowledges God as the sole judge of human faith.” The doctrine that God has committed to the church the right to control the conscience, and to define and punish heresy, is one of the most deeply rooted of papal errors. While the reformers rejected the creed of Rome, they were not entirely free from her spirit of intolerance. The dense darkness in which, through the long ages of her rule, popery had enveloped all Christendom, had not even yet been wholly dissipated. Said one of the leading ministers in the colony of Massachusetts Bay: “It was toleration that made the world antichristian; and the church never took harm by the punishment of heretics.” The regulation was adopted by the colonists, that only church-members should have a voice in the civil government. A kind of State church was formed, all the people being required to contribute to the support of the clergy, and the magistrates being authorized to suppress heresy. Thus the secular power was in the hands of the church. It was not

long before these measures led to the inevitable result—persecution. – {GC88 292.2}

Eleven years after the planting of the first colony, Roger Williams came to the New World. Like the early Pilgrims, he came to enjoy religious freedom; but unlike them, he saw—what so few in his time had yet seen—that this freedom was the inalienable right of all, whatever might be their creed. He was an earnest seeker for truth, with Robinson holding it impossible that all the light from God’s Word had yet been received. Williams “was the first person in modern Christendom to assert, in its plenitude, the doctrine of the liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law.” 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, and there can be no safety; for it is clear that if the magistrate has the power, he may decree one set of opinions or beliefs today and another tomorrow; as has been done in England by different kings and queens, and by the different popes and councils in the Roman

Church; so that belief would become a heap of confusion.” – {GC88 293.1}

Attendance at the services of the established church was required under a penalty of fine or imprisonment. “Williams reprobated the law; the worst statute of the English code was that which did but enforce attendance upon the parish church. To compel men to unite with those of a different creed, he regarded as an open violation of their natural rights; to drag to public worship the irreligious and the unwilling, seemed like requiring hypocrisy. ‘No one,’ he said, ‘should be forced to worship, or to maintain a worship, against his own consent.’ ‘What!’ exclaimed his antagonist, amazed at his tenets, ‘is not the laborer worthy of his hire?’ ‘Yes,’ replied he, ‘from those who hire him.’” – {GC88 294.1}

Roger Williams was respected and beloved as a faithful minister, a man of rare gifts, of unbending integrity and true benevolence; yet his steadfast denial of the right of civil magistrates to authority over the church, and his demand for religious liberty, could not be tolerated. The application of this new doctrine, it was urged, would “subvert the fundamental state and government of the country.” He was

sentenced to banishment from the colonies, and finally, to avoid arrest, he was forced to flee, amid the cold and storms of winter, into the unbroken forest. – {GC88 294.2}

“For fourteen weeks,” he says, “I was sorely tossed in a bitter season, not knowing what bread or bed did mean.” “But the ravens fed me in the wilderness;” and a hollow tree often served him for a shelter. Thus he continued his painful flight through the snow and the trackless forest, until he found refuge with an Indian tribe whose confidence and affection he had won while endeavoring to teach them the truths of the gospel. – {GC88 294.3}

Making his way at last, after months of change and wandering, to the shores of Narragansett Bay, he there laid the foundation of the first State of modern times that in the fullest sense recognized the right of religious freedom. The fundamental principle of Roger Williams’ colony, was “that every man should have the right to worship God according to the light of his 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 corner-stones of the American Republic. –
{GC88 294.4}

In that grand old document which our forefathers set forth as their bill of rights—the Declaration of Independence—they declared: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And the Constitution guarantees, in the most explicit terms, the inviolability of conscience: “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States.” “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” – {GC88 295.1}

“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.” – {GC88 295.2}

As the tidings spread through the countries of Europe, of a land where every man might enjoy the fruit of his own labor, and obey the convictions of his conscience, thousands flocked to the shores of the New World. Colonies rapidly multiplied. “Massachusetts, by special law, offered free welcome and aid, at the public cost, to Christians of any nationality who might fly beyond the Atlantic ‘to escape from wars or famine, or the oppression of their persecutors.’ Thus the fugitive and the down-trodden were, by statute, made the guests of the commonwealth.” In twenty years from the first landing at Plymouth, as many thousand Pilgrims were settled in New England. – {GC88 295.3}

To secure the object which they sought, “they were content to earn a bare subsistence by a life of frugality and toil. They asked nothing from the soil but the reasonable returns of their own labor. No golden vision threw a deceitful halo around their path.... They were content with the slow but steady progress of their social polity.

They patiently endured the privations of the wilderness, watering the tree of liberty with their tears, and with the sweat of their brow, till it took deep root in the land.” – {GC88 296.1}

The Bible was held as the foundation of faith, the source of wisdom, and the charter of liberty. Its principles were diligently taught in the home, in the school, and in the church, and its fruits were manifest in thrift, intelligence, purity, and temperance. One might be for years a dweller in the Puritan settlements, and not “see a drunkard, nor hear an oath, nor meet a beggar.” It was demonstrated that the principles of the Bible are the surest safeguards of national greatness. The feeble and isolated colonies grew to a confederation of powerful States, and the world marked with wonder the peace and prosperity of “a church without a **pope**, and a State without a **king**.” – {GC88 296.2}

But continually increasing numbers were attracted to the shores of America, actuated by motives widely different from those of the first Pilgrims. Though the primitive faith and purity exerted a widespread and moulding power, yet its influence became less and less as the numbers

increased of those who sought only worldly advantage. – {GC88 296.3}

The regulation adopted by the early colonists, of permitting only members of the church to vote or to hold office in the civil government, led to most pernicious results. This measure had been accepted as a means of preserving the purity of the State, but it resulted in the corruption of the church. A profession of religion being the condition of suffrage and office-holding, many, actuated solely by motives of worldly policy, united with the church, without a change of heart. Thus the churches came to consist, to a considerable extent, of unconverted persons; and even in the ministry were those who not only held errors of doctrine, but who were ignorant of the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Thus again was demonstrated the evil results, so often witnessed in the history of the church from the days of Constantine to the present, of attempting to build up the church by the aid of the State, of appealing to the secular power in support of the gospel of Him who declared, “My kingdom is not of this world.” [[John 18:36.](#)] The union of the church with the State, be the degree never so slight, while it may appear to bring the world

nearer to the church, does in reality but bring the church nearer to the world. – {GC88 296.4}

The great principle so nobly advocated by Robinson and Roger Williams, that truth is progressive, that Christians should stand ready to accept all the light which may shine from God's Holy Word, was lost sight by their descendants. The Protestant churches of America—and those of Europe as well—so highly favored in receiving the blessings of the Reformation, failed to press forward in the path of reform. Though a few faithful men arose, from time to time, to proclaim new truth, and expose long-cherished error, the majority, like the Jews in Christ's day, or the papists in the time of Luther, were content to believe as their fathers had believed, and to live as they had lived. Therefore religion again degenerated into formalism; and errors and superstitions which would have been cast aside had the church continued to walk in the light of God's Word, were retained and cherished. Thus the spirit inspired by the Reformation gradually died out, until there was almost as great need of reform in the Protestant churches as in the Roman Church in the time of Luther. There was the same

worldliness and spiritual stupor, a similar reverence for the opinions of men, and substitution of human theories for the teachings of God's Word. – {GC88 297.1}

The wide circulation of the Bible in the early part of the nineteenth century, and the great light thus shed upon the world, was not followed by a corresponding advance in knowledge of revealed truth, or in experimental religion. Satan could not, as in former ages, keep God's Word from the people; it had been placed within the reach of all; but in order still to accomplish his object, he led many to value it but lightly. Men neglected to search the Scriptures, and thus they continued to accept false interpretations, and to cherish doctrines which had no foundation in the Bible. – {GC88 298.1}

Seeing the failure of his efforts to crush out the truth by persecution, Satan had again resorted to the plan of compromise which led to the great apostasy and the formation of the Church of Rome. He had induced Christians to ally themselves, not now with pagans, but with those who by their devotion to the things of this world had proved themselves to be as truly idolaters as were the worshipers of graven images. And the

results of this union were no less pernicious now than in former ages; pride and extravagance were fostered under the guise of religion, and the churches became corrupted. Satan continued to pervert the doctrines of the Bible, and traditions that were to ruin millions were taking deep root. The church was upholding and defending these traditions, instead of contending for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” Thus were degraded the principles for which the reformers had done and suffered so much. – {GC88 298.2}