



Focus on Religious Freedom

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"Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety" - Benjamin Franklin

Warning! Religious Freedom: What's at Stake If We Lose It

"Religious freedom is more than the 'freedom to worship' at a synagogue, church, or mosque. It means people shouldn't have to go against their core values and beliefs in order to conform to culture or government," wrote the Heritage Foundation, a public policy foundation. "Religious freedom protects a person's right to live, speak, and act according to their beliefs peacefully and publicly." ⁽¹⁾

Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito recently spoke about his concern that religious liberty is under threat in the United States and warned that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic was acting as a "stress test" for Constitutional liberties. He fears that religious liberty is emerging as a "disfavored" and "second tier" right. "The pandemic has obviously taken a heavy human toll...But what has it meant for the rule of law?" said Justice Alito. "The pandemic has resulted in previously unimaginable restrictions on individual liberty ... We have never before seen restrictions as severe, extensive, and prolonged as those experienced for most of 2020." ⁽²⁾

Justice Alito raised concerns about the closure of churches on Easter Sunday and the closure of synagogues during the Jewish holidays of Passover and Yom Kipper. "The covid crisis has served ... to highlight disturbing trends that were already present before the virus struck." ⁽³⁾ He said that cases the court hears today follow a trend of eroding religious liberty.

Justice Alito was critical of states restricting worship services and especially cited the Nevada case. "Take a quick look at the Constitution. You will see the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, which protects religious liberty. You will not find a craps clause or a blackjack clause or a slot machine clause. Nevada was unable to provide any plausible justification for treating casinos more favorably than houses of worship." ⁽⁴⁾

What's at stake? Heritage wrote, "Religious freedom prevents the cultural majority from using the power of the state to impose their beliefs on others. This protects everyone - religious and nonreligious alike - from the government becoming so powerful that it can tell people what to think and how to act. ... A government that intrudes on conscience will not hesitate to intrude on our other freedoms." ⁽⁵⁾

(heritage.org (1)(5); catholicnewsagency.com, 11/13/20(2)(3)(4); christianpost.com, 11/13/20; freedomforum.org, 11/17/20)

"Religious freedom is not only that of private thought or worship. It is the liberty to live, both privately and publicly, according to the ethical principles resulting from found truth."
- Pope Francis

"But a Constitution of government once changed from freedom, can never be restored. Liberty once lost is lost forever." - John Adams