



Focus on Religious Freedom

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What is Religious Freedom and What's at Stake if We Lose It

Religious liberty is increasingly under attack by those who believe it cannot and should not coexist with our other freedoms. However, religious freedom is a God given, fundamental human right and American value enshrined in our Constitution and protected by the Bill of Rights.

Freedom of religion protects the conscience of all people since it allows us to think, express and act upon what we deeply believe. This freedom of conscience is critical to the health of a diverse society by allowing different faiths and beliefs to flourish. "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege; let them worship (or not) how, where, or what they may," said Church of Latter-day Saints leaders.⁽¹⁾

The American Founders understood the importance of religion for human, social, and political flourishing. That's why they styled religious freedom as the First Freedom and the foundation upon which all other freedoms are guaranteed and protected and without which the new Republic would fail.

"The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained." - George Washington, 1789

Americans supported the Founders' understanding of religious liberty when they overwhelmingly endorsed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the International Religious Freedom Act that were signed by President Bill Clinton in the 1990s.

However, a direct denial of conscience rights occurred on Sept. 8, 2016, when the chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued this statement: "(t)he phrases 'religious liberty' and 'religious freedom' (are) code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia (and) Christian supremacy ..."⁽²⁾

***"If we lose freedom here, there is no place to escape to.
This is the last stand on earth."*** - President Ronald Reagan

(inhofe.senate.gov, 9/16/20; newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org,(1); americancharter.org. 11/1/19(2); catholicvote.org, 5/6/21(3); providencemag.com, 6/15/20)

Happening Now: Citing Concerns for Children:

The Tennessee legislature passed a bill to ban public and charter schools from teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT). "CRT teaches that American democracy is a lie," said State Sen. Kelsey. "It teaches that the rule of law does not exist and is instead a series of power struggles among racial groups. It is harmful to our students and is antithetical to everything we stand for as Americans and as Tennesseans." ⁽³⁾

Shortened version follows below:



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