



# State of the Family Address

Remarks as Prepared

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January 11, 2016

Good evening and welcome to the Family Research Council headquarters in Washington, D.C. Thank you for joining us for this 2016 State of the Family address.

Nearly a year ago we gathered in this same place on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The timing was fitting, because that national holiday honors civil rights and testifies to the importance of religion in American life. On that occasion we sought to remind Americans, as Dr. King did so powerfully through his words and deeds, that through the power of faith we aim to “transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.”

Last year’s address came at a time of great anxiety for our nation. We knew the challenges that lay ahead. 2015 would bring a momentous decision on the constitutionality of marriage.

As we prepared for this event one year ago, Islamic extremists mounted a devastating attack on the editorial offices of Charlie Hebdo and, days later, killed four French Jews at a kosher supermarket in Paris – attacks that only foreshadowed the wave of terrorism to come, which just weeks ago hit American soil in California.

What came to pass in 2015 has challenged us to the core.

- The Supreme Court dismissed the natural and universal meaning of marriage as a violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and an assault on human “dignity.”
- The national debt soared above \$18 trillion. This translates into a personal debt of over \$58,000 for every man, woman, and child in America.
- Under Obamacare, millions of Americans are now dependent on government subsidies for their health care insurance. The president’s lack of faith in market-based reform has created more reliance on government among Americans who need opportunity, not another government-funded program. A majority of the health care co-ops collapsed, saddled with unsustainable debt.
- The suffering of persecuted Christians – some 100 million worldwide – continued to grow. Meanwhile, the Obama administration continued to drag its feet, refusing bipartisan calls to label ISIS’ murderous actions as nothing less than “genocide.”
- In November I traveled with a group of fellow Americans to the Golan Heights and observed Israel’s defensive strikes against the movement of Iranian war materials across Syria to Hezbollah. Iran is stepping up its provocations on the eve of receiving billions of dollars in previously frozen funds released by President Obama’s reckless nuclear deal.
- Meanwhile, the Obama administration once again showcased its misguided priorities, when they threatened to withhold federal funds if an Illinois high school did not open the girls’ locker room and sports teams to a boy who now believes he is a girl.

- And last month, Aaron and Melissa Klein, the courageous couple who joined us in this very room last year, were compelled to pay over \$136,000 to two women for whom they could not in good conscience use their talent to create a wedding cake.

However, in the midst of the sobering summary of 2015, there were many positive signs – and countless acts of courage that should inspire us to make 2016 a turning point for our nation.

We have hope knowing that God is the Lord of the universe and the One in Whose hand lies the destiny of all peoples and nations. Our faith compels us to Stand for God’s unchanging truths, and when we do our lives tell a compelling story to our fellow citizens that there is, in fact, a better way.

In addition to our faith, we still have our freedom. We must use that freedom to choose the good and the true. That, after all, is the purpose of freedom.

And many are doing just that – using their God-given and constitutionally-assured liberty to stand for faith, family, and freedom. We have seen several heroes arise in the last year and we are honored to have some of them join us tonight.

While the marriage decision was a devastating *principled* loss for us all, it was a very *personal* loss for Kentucky Clerk of Court, Kim Davis. Clerk Davis became the face of the opposition when she refused to sanction same-sex marriages by allowing her name to appear on marriage licenses. Kim stood strong to the point of spending time in the local jail until Mat Staver and our friends at Liberty Counsel successfully argued for her release.

She has since received a religious accommodation by an Executive Order from the newly elected Governor, Matt Bevin, who by the way, made religious liberty a central theme for his successful campaign for governor. Kim stood up courageously against the power of the state and the ACLU and she, along with religious liberty in Kentucky prevailed! Well done, Kim. We are glad you are with us tonight.

In November, after a nearly 18 month effort, voters in the nation's 4<sup>th</sup> largest city rose up against an ordinance that would have provided special rights *to some* based upon their sexual behavior and identity at the expense of others. The final vote in Houston was an overwhelming rejection of Mayor Parker's imposed ordinance, with 61 percent voting in opposition – a landslide and sign of where Americans stand on this nonsense.

Tonight we are honored to have with us Pastor Hernan Castaño, the director of Hispanic church development for the Houston Area Pastors Council. Pastor Castaño, you were called one of “the Houston 5,” because your sermons were subpoenaed by the city's mayor.

This shows just how out of touch the political elite really are. You don't need a subpoena to get a sermon. There are thousands of pastors that would love for politicians to read their sermons.

But this was not about sermons, nor biblical interpretations, this was about political intimidation, which has no place in our Republic. You rightly resisted this tyrannical overreach of government. We were proud to stand with you and other pastors in Houston as was evidenced at the I Stand Sunday event, and your fellow citizens stood with you this past November 3rd.

We're honored to welcome you tonight to Family Research Council.

We are also honored to have with us Pastor Charles Flowers, Senior Pastor of Faith Outreach Ministries International in San Antonio, Texas.

When the mayor and city council passed a non-discrimination ordinance forbidding any who objected to the LGBT agenda from serving in city government or contractors from doing business with the city, you called hundreds of pastors together to expose the truth of that ordinance. Because of your voice and leadership, Christians in San Antonio were awakened and a new mayor and city council members were elected.

The transformation has been remarkable. In fact, the city council has essentially stopped the advance of Planned Parenthood through zoning laws, and it is the mayor's desire to instead fund a church-based Pregnancy Resource Center.

Also, the new mayor now asks the pastors in San Antonio for their counsel and to pray for her at monthly gatherings. Thank you for standing and transforming San Antonio!

On the religious freedom front, last September brought a now familiar challenge, on this occasion to Bossier City, a school district in my home state of Louisiana.

When the Airline High School Principal Jason Rowland closed an email with the words, "God bless you," and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes proposed placing prayer boxes around their school, the district came under attack from the ACLU.

Fortunately, Principal Rowland contacted Mike Johnson, a Louisiana state representative and attorney with our allied organization, Freedom Guard. Mike offered free legal assistance to Jason and the school district to stand against the bullying of the ACLU. In response, the local community held a prayer rally which attracted over 4,000 concerned citizens in defense of religious freedom!

The school board found the ACLU's claims to be "without a factual or legal basis" and assured their commitment to protect the rights of all their students, including those who wish to engage in student led, student initiated religious expression.

We are delighted to have Principal Rowland and his wife with us tonight and applaud the courage they and their school board displayed, and we encourage other school officials to follow their example and resist this effort to destroy our first freedom.

Another bright light in 2015 is the way the fight for life intensified as America became a more pro-life nation. For example, in recent weeks, North Carolina enacted a new law holding abortionists accountable to the state's existing 20-week ban. This kind of accountability is encouraging and long-overdue. In the last five years, over 280 pro-life bills have been enacted at the state level.

This past year millions of Americans have had their stomachs turned, and their minds changed, by the appalling contents of the Planned Parenthood videos from the Center for Medical Progress. Pulling back the curtain of rhetoric that cloaks Planned Parenthood, the videos show the callous and inhumane treatment of unborn children and exposes the tactics used to deceive their mothers.

And while the president vetoed a measure last Friday that would have eliminated most federal tax dollars going to Planned Parenthood, rest assured we will not stop until this forced partnership between taxpayers and Planned Parenthood has ended.

We've also seen renewed commitments in our churches in this battle for the sanctity of human life. There are now more than 2,500 pregnancy care centers providing hope to women and their unborn children. And there are a growing number of ministries working to end the modern day slavery of human trafficking.

Desperate to preserve its power, the far Left now seeks to label all its critics as "extremists" or "haters" and aggressively seeks to silence all who oppose its agenda. But we should take heart even from this. Our opponents seek to limit our freedom of speech because they fear its power.

They seek to restrain the expression of our convictions because they are unsure of the truth of theirs.

The freedom of expression is the very essence of liberty.

But there can be no liberty at all in America without religious liberty!

In our hearts we know these things. Refugees from dozens of countries are not seeking daily entry into America because they are fleeing freedom of speech. They are not looking to escape homelands where there is too much freedom of religion. They are not looking for a land where the right to life does not matter. They are fleeing tyranny over their minds, bodies, and souls.

Here in America, the stirrings are less overt but equally troubling. Anger, resentment and fear appear to be among the prime political motivators. Do we understand why this is happening? The American Founders would. They put in place a form of representative self-government to distribute and balance the limited power that would belong to Washington. They designed a constitution that would keep most government power close to the people, and reserve much more power than that to the people themselves.

This structure would limit the concentration of power and restrain its exercise. But structure was not enough. It would fail if the people themselves did not practice restraint. They signed a declaration that says our rights come from our Creator and that government's duty is to protect them, not lessen or redefine them. And they believed that the best account of our personal and civic duties comes not from the whims of the political class but from the transcendent truths of Holy Scripture.

As America's 2<sup>nd</sup> President John Adams said, *"Our system of government was made for a moral and a religious people and is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."*

It is easy to see why we now sail such dangerous seas. Many of our nation's leading politicians and jurists believe that religion is a toxin in public life, something to be quarantined within the walls of our churches. They want our culture stripped of the guidance of faith, the centrality of family, and the liberties that are our divine birthright. Not only will it be impermissible to publicly acknowledge the God who made us, it will be unlawful to act on our deepest understanding of Him and His

commandments. Acting on conscience will be a bar to public service – a reason to be fined or fired.

As 2016 begins, can we be sure that this year of decision will be a year of recovery? Unfortunately, we cannot. We can only be sure that it will be a year of determination. In the battle over basic convictions, the sidelines are shrinking. The field of contention is growing wider and deeper. Once again as we face “times that try men’s souls,” we must determine whether we will be sunshine patriots or men and women for all seasons.

We have time tonight to sketch out only a few proposals that can help America head in the right direction again and restore the hope that once made America an evergreen nation. But they illustrate what “We, the People” must do.

Among the most important of these is racial reconciliation. Along with my friend and co-laborer, Bishop Harry Jackson, who I welcome here this evening – this call, for racial reconciliation, has been central to the message of Family Research Council. Unlike some of the issues we face, I believe there *is* a broad middle ready and willing to work toward this goal. Sadly, the past few years have seen us beset by exploiters – political actors and billionaire “philanthropists” – who see in racial conflict a chance to advance their extreme political agendas. A fair reading of American history constantly reminds us of the reality of racism and its continuing legacy. But a fair reading of current events also shows the profound danger of exploiting the frustrations of the aggrieved and fueling disrespect for law enforcement.

It is long past time for our nation’s religious leaders to come together and show our political leaders a way forward.

Our blindness to the reality of the disintegration of the family and the dismissal of the role of our churches must also end. The promise of strong efforts these past seven years to restore fatherhood and re-establish family life in our poorest communities has faded completely. Instead, national policies have sown confusion about the very definition of family.



President Obama has extolled the virtues of fatherhood even as he has fought for same-sex marriage, in essence saying two same-gendered persons can parent as well as a mom and a dad. This contradictory message is more than disappointing – for children throughout the country it is devastating. It reduces mothers and fathers to genderless caregivers.

Our children deserve better – they deserve a mom and a dad. And we pay a price for this incoherent ideological campaign by havoc in our homes and blood in our streets.

That's why we have to re-empower American parents. The decisions of our courts on contraception for minors, abortion-on-demand, and redefining marriage have gravely weakened the family.

Religious liberty, both at home and abroad, must also be at center stage. The First Amendment Defense Act is a first and vital step. This measure should not be necessary in a nation governed by constitutional principles. But those principles have been severely weakened, and Congress has the responsibility as a co-equal branch to make the meaning of the First Amendment plain and potent again. FADA, as this bill is called, would cement protection of the free exercise of religious beliefs and moral convictions about marriage.

Family Research Council Action has joined with Heritage Action for America and the American Principles Project to sponsor a presidential pledge to support the First Amendment Defense Act. To date six candidates – Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Carly Fiorina, Mike Huckabee, Marco Rubio, and Rick Santorum – have pledged, if elected, to sign FADA if it is presented to them within the first 100 days in office. They understand the urgency of this cause.

Religious liberty in our military must continue to be defended. We cannot allow the freedom of religion, which our men and women are sworn to uphold, to be denied to them.

Our own Lt. General Jerry Boykin, who was forced to withdraw from a

West Point prayer breakfast because of pressure from atheist groups, knows only too well the difficulties of living out one's faith in our increasingly politically-correct military. He has led the charge in this area – an area in which we are now seeing even chaplains face opposition for their faith.

This past year, Americans came to the defense of Navy Chaplain Wes Modder, who was targeted by his superiors for simply counseling on marriage and sexuality from a biblical perspective.

We also saw the military court-martial Lance Corporal Monifa Sterling for refusing to take down Bible verses posted in her personal work area, and we are continuing to work with our good friends at Liberty Institute to ensure she prevails in her case.

Army Chaplain Joe Lawhorn is another chaplain who faced repercussions – merely for sharing how his faith strengthened him in the context of a discussion on suicide. The very purpose of military chaplains is to provide strength to our troops in the area of faith. If chaplains cannot speak of their faith, the situation is grave indeed.

Additionally, religious liberty must become a priority again within our foreign policy. The history of the last century is clear – totalitarians of every stripe have made the suppression of all religious freedom, or the liberty of some religions, the target of their regimes. Especially dangerous are those that feed on religious hatred. We must promote and defend religious liberty as a human right for those of all faiths to be able to live freely – wherever they are. Why? Because advocating for religious liberty lets the oppressed throughout the world know that they have a friend in America. And it sends a message to the terrorists and tyrants as well. That knowledge bears long-term fruit for our security – and is simply the right thing to do for a nation whose national motto is, “In God We Trust.”

Religious liberty implies a commitment to human dignity. It's for this reason and many more that our nation's alliance with Israel must be renewed at its roots. The dignity of a people so long oppressed and

persecuted merits America's concern and loyalty.

It is time once again for our government's rhetoric to be matched by a resolve to stand with the Jewish State in a way that is both practical and principled despite what the so-called "international community" might say.

Of course, none of the goals we've discussed this evening will be reached without sacrifice. We must work for our freedom as generations before us have done, sacrificing time, tears and treasure to win the day. The past year has shown us that we cannot and will not be permitted to separate ourselves and watch while contending cultures of life and death struggle for supremacy. Faith and reason, justice and mercy, compel our presence in our nation's hour of need.

Pray, organize, donate, speak to neighbors, proclaim our views boldly - we must do all of these things and, when the time comes in just 10 months, make what Dr. King called "that little walk to the voting booth." In all these things we must, as William Wilberforce reminded us in the heat of his fight, be "souls of prayer," asking God for His forgiveness for our heavy faults and His strength for our heavy tasks. And when we are done, may our children and our children's children know that as for us and our houses, we served the Lord.

Thank you for being with us. God bless you and goodnight.