

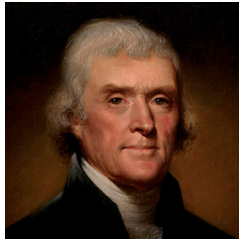
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SUNDAY

January 14, 2018 | For more info visit FRC.org



“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”
(Galatians 5:1a KJV)

On January 16, 1786, the Statute on Religious Freedom was enacted by the Virginia legislature and is the basis of Religious Freedom Day. Thomas Jefferson drafted the legislation, which ended the state-church in Virginia by freeing residents from paying taxes to support clergy of the favored denomination, and it protected the civil rights of people to express their religious beliefs without suffering discrimination. Jefferson considered it one of the three greatest achievements of his life.



Thomas Jefferson



Rev. Muhlenberg

Members of the first Federal Congress, who drafted the Bill of Rights in 1789, built on George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776 and Jefferson's Statute in establishing the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom. Interestingly, Rep. Frederick Muhlenberg, the Speaker of the House who oversaw the process in that chamber, was a Lutheran Pastor and his is one of two signatures on the Bill of Rights ratified by the states and added to the U.S. Constitution in 1791.

Today, our first freedom – the freedom to believe and live according to those beliefs – is as precious as ever to most Americans. It is also under fierce assault. From wedding vendors and T-shirt makers to public servants, educators, and members of the military, people are seeing their religious freedom eroded at a frightening pace. More and more Americans are realizing that if we don't use our freedom to defend our freedom, we may lose our freedom.



*Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran:
Fired for expressing his faith*

Thankfully, every U.S. president since 1993 has declared January 16th to be Religious Freedom Day, and calls upon Americans to observe this day through appropriate activities in homes, schools, and places of worship. So let us recognize this unique time to be grateful to God for our freedom of religion in America, an inalienable right granted by Him but also protected in our U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights. Let us stand firm in our liberty!

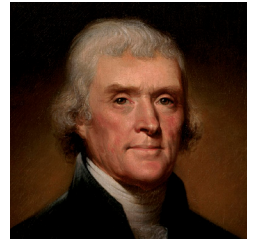
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Application Points | For more info visit FRC.org

1. PRAY FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TO BE VALUED IN PUBLIC LIFE

Scripture commands that we are to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Ask God to help leaders see that religious freedom is an unalienable right, a right that does not have to be forfeited when believers conduct business, engage in public speech, serve in office, or teach in public schools. Ask God to soften the hearts of judges, elected officials, and public servants to the plight of those who are being harassed because of their deeply held beliefs and strengthen their resolve to defend the religious freedom of all Americans.

“Be it enacted by the General Assembly, 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 opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.”

Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom
January 16, 1786

2. PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY IN SCHOOLS

Educators and administrators should celebrate Religious Freedom Day without fear. Gateways to Better Education has some excellent resources for educators. **Visit GTBE.org.**

3. PROMPT CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT TO PROTECT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN POLICY AND LAW:

Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.) and Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) have introduced the Free Speech Fairness Act which proposes to amend the Johnson Amendment to allow non-profits (i.e., pastors and churches) to engage in political speech and activities. This provision was added to the House tax reform package and needs to be maintained in a final House and Senate bill, and the sunset of 2024 needs to be removed. Rep. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.) and Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) sponsored the Child Welfare Provider Protection Act, which prevents faith-based adoption and foster-care agencies from being forced to affirm views of marriage that go against their beliefs. Congress must also pass the Federal Disaster Assistance Nonprofit Fairness Act of 2017 sponsored by Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) and Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) to ensure that FEMA does not discriminate against churches when providing loans to rebuild in the wake of major disasters. Contact your elected representatives and urge them to support religious freedom legislation. Call (202) 224-3121 for your U.S. Representative and Senators or visit FRC.org and click on “Contact Officials.”

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