



State of Faith, Family & Freedom Address

Delivered by Tony Perkins

February 6, 2023

Ladies and gentlemen, special and honored guests, good evening, and welcome to Family Research Council here in Washington, DC. I can say the state of faith, family, and freedom is already stronger simply because you're here.

Tomorrow night, about a mile from where we are gathered, President Joe Biden will deliver his State of the Union Address to a joint session of Congress.

You may have noticed that the State of the Union addresses are trending longer. It must be something about this city; people talk a lot here. But I want to assure you that I will be finished in time for you to hear President Biden's speech tomorrow night.

It is safe to say that our messages will differ on some key points.

Tonight, among our many guests joining us are pastors from 19 different states. This afternoon, I introduced these pastors to several members of Congress who are standing for faith, family, and freedom. We were hosted by my Louisiana colleague, Steve Scalise, the Majority Leader in the House. We met in the [Lincoln Room](#), which is located just outside the House chamber. The room served as the [House post office](#) when Abraham Lincoln was serving in the House, but he used it as a place to huddle with colleagues to plot their way forward.

While we were there in the Lincoln Room, I thought about just how significant the divide is in our nation today. We've not been this divided since Abraham Lincoln's day. I thought of Mr. Lincoln's ["House Divided" speech](#) that he gave in 1858. He was speaking to the bitter division of the nation over slavery when he [quoted the Bible](#), saying:

A house divided against itself cannot stand.

I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.

[FRC.org/address](https://www.frc.org/address)

I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

It will become all one thing, or all the other.

Just a few short years later, Lincoln was the president—of a divided nation. But as important as unity was, he would not surrender the truth of our American charter, which states:

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.

Lasting unity cannot be forged around a lie, no matter how intense the flame of tribulation. Unity, as President Lincoln stood for, must be founded upon the truth.

Two weeks ago, in a [speech](#) celebrating the 50th anniversary of the now-overturned *Roe v. Wade* decision, Vice President Kamala Harris said this:

America is a promise ... It is a promise of freedom and liberty—not for some, but for all. A promise we made in the Declaration of Independence that we are each endowed with the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

I don't know if you noticed, but something was missing from Harris' remarks, and based on this administration's track record, I am sure it was not an innocent oversight. In fact, given the hostility toward religious freedom and biblical truth that we've seen from this administration, it is no surprise that the vice president would intentionally erase the Creator as the one who endowed us with certain unalienable rights. Because if these rights came from God, the government has no right to touch them, let alone take them.

And in another feat of editorial gymnastics, Vice President Harris completely leaped over the first fundamental, unalienable right—life.

Tonight, let us appeal to our Creator, and let us celebrate the right to life.

But tomorrow night, President Biden is likely to say that he and his administration have stood up for “reproductive rights” and so-called “diversity, equity, and inclusion” in public life. We, in

turn, are grieved that abortion, aided by abortion drugs, is on the rise again. In 2020, 53 percent of the over 900,000 abortions in the United States were chemical abortions.

Seeing an opportunity to expand that number even further, the Biden administration's Food and Drug Administration has passed a new rule that could turn your neighborhood pharmacy into an abortion facility. The new rule violates the clear text of federal law by allowing abortion pills to be sent through the mail.

The president is likely to tout his administration's focus on public education, where test scores have plummeted but gender confusion among adolescents has tragically skyrocketed.

I am certain there will be at least one place of semi-agreement. President Biden is fond of saying America is at an inflection point. It's at more than an inflection point—it is at a crossroads, a place of choosing.

Why do I say that? Haven't we had deep social conflict for more than a generation? Wasn't [school prayer](#) struck down in 1962? Didn't *Roe v. Wade* slam America like a hurricane half a century ago?

Isn't 2023 just the next phase in the culture wars?

I wish that were true. Just chalk this up to one more election cycle, where we work, we pray, and we hope for the best outcome.

This time, I believe something is different. This time, the conflicts are absolutely fundamental. This time, the conflict goes deeper and points to severe fractures in the fault lines of worldview—how we see the world, how we respond to the truth. No society can remain healthy—or survive long—with such fractures. Red lines are being crossed.

Our children are being openly and directly targeted without shame or mercy. Parents are being deceived by public school leaders who are secretly teaching schoolchildren it's normal, right, and even good for them to “be” the opposite sex from how God uniquely made them and formed them. Children are being taken to sex shows without parents' knowledge. This same agenda is forcing healthcare providers and insurers to participate in procedures that violate the Hippocratic Oath to “do no harm.”

Last July, the Biden administration announced that it would enforce Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act to [guarantee “non-discrimination”](#) in any federally supported health program regarding abortion and sex changes, including for minors. The Biden rule uses language on gender and identity with no basis in reality, not found in federal statutes, and that includes no exemption for religious, moral, or medical-ethical objections.

Meanwhile, at the local level, events that would have been unimaginable a decade ago are becoming commonplace. When I was young—not as long ago as it looks!—children would go on field trips to the planetarium or a petting zoo with parental permission. A school nurse would call home before so much as handing a child an aspirin.

Now, [public schools in Missouri](#) feel free to send middle-school students on a field trip to a drag show parents knew nothing about.

It gets worse. Schools in California and elsewhere now [encourage students](#) to question and change their “gender identity” while in school, citing district and state policy. Students are then allowed to use the bathroom and locker room of the opposite sex. Parents...are left in the dark.

In Loudoun County, Virginia, school officials even covered up a sexual assault in a girls’ restroom. The skirt-wearing male perpetrator was quietly transferred to a second school and committed another crime.

Planned Parenthood clinics across the country, flush with your federal tax dollars via the Biden administration, prescribe [puberty-blocking drugs](#) to young girls, who are flocking in record numbers to centers that advertise “gender-affirming” procedures that are actually life and soul-destroying tactics.

Individually, these practices are noxious to young people and their families. But consider what’s happening here. For a brief period in the debate over judicial imposition of same-sex marriage, some gay activists said all they wanted was a “live and let live” policy. They insisted opening the doors to certain sexual practices would not affect natural marriage and your family.

Now we know those arguments for the Trojan Horses they are. Even before this debate began, we saw the value of fidelity, the exclusive love of one man and one woman, as central to the common good. But now that core principle is under direct assault. The radical sexual agenda of

the progressive Left aims to thrust the reality of the two sexes aside and crush the parent/child relationship in its wake.

Even HBO talk show host Bill Maher is [upset](#) at this travesty. Likewise, same-sex marriage advocate Andrew Sullivan said recently on Bill Maher's show:

Why does a four-year-old come in, instead of teaching them the colors, you're telling them, "Pick your pronoun"? Where on earth did that come from? And who told us it was going to be imposed on children?

Well, with all due respect, Andrew, *we did*. And we wish we had been wrong. But when you reject the social and moral wisdom of millennia, a chasm opens beneath everything we hold dear.

And by the way, that includes no-fault divorce and the corrosion of traditional marriage. Men and women who pursue sex without consequences lead us to this dangerous place that is costing children their lives, their innocence, and their very bodies.

It only took a month for our warnings about the so-called Respect for Marriage Act to come to pass; the bill which took the Court-imposed redefinition of marriage and put it into federal statutes. We warned of how it would be used to target those who continue to believe in the biblical and natural composition of marriage.

On January 18, 19-year [Jacob Kersey](#), a police officer in Port Wentworth, Georgia, was bullied into resigning for posting a biblical reference to marriage on his personal Facebook page.

Is it time for despair about the state of faith, family, and freedom?

At his first inauguration, with seven states already departed from the Union, Abraham Lincoln said this in his [address to the nation](#):

Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way all our present difficulty.

Stark as the contrast is between the so-called progressives who place their trust in government and people of faith who trust in the Lord, I stand before you tonight with a strong measure of confidence and hope.

Americans are a patient and tolerant people, but we have seen the signposts on the road to perdition. We are ready to turn, and *we won't wait for Washington*.

Exhibit One is a victory most of us didn't believe we'd see in our lifetime.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* is a near-miracle.

Reversing the abortion decisions did not happen without social strife, but given the mortal stakes, it was accomplished by prayer and action—by grassroots dedication, debates and votes, the building of alternatives, and—for nearly 50 years—appeals to Heaven. That is the true Court in which our cries for justice are heard. And we are thankful to God for what He has done here.

The day after the *Dobbs* decision was officially released and *Roe v. Wade* was assigned to the dustbin of history, my phone rang. It was my oldest son David, now 25, married and a father to our only grandson, 16-month-old Hudson. David's whole life, like those of my other four children, has revolved around the sanctity of life. Whether it was passing pro-life laws as a legislator in Louisiana, preaching, teaching, or traveling, this has been their life. When I answered the phone that morning, he simply said, "Thanks, Dad. Now I understand."

My friends and fellow Americans, if we can accomplish this goal of protecting infant life with politicians, the media, and every square inch of the entertainment industry against us, where *can't* the cause of righteousness prevail?

But we must not – *and we will not* - wait for Washington.

Tonight, I see signs of that determination percolating throughout our land.

To some, it may seem like a small event, but the scene at Madison Square Garden two weeks ago was anything but that. The New York Rangers Hockey Club did something no other sports team had attempted. They refused to take to the ice in pregame warm-ups wearing rainbow colors regalia in honor of Pride Night at the arena.

This seemingly modest act of rebellion came roughly a week after Philadelphia Flyers defenseman Ivan Provorov refused to wear a rainbow jersey because of his Russian Orthodox faith. Who can doubt his conviction matches that of a great many other professional athletes?

It is time for these sad, symbolic displays to end. And it's vital that the travesty of biological males competing in women's sports halts as well. Men and women are equal—not interchangeable. Privacy and safety matter—and our laws and practices must reflect that.

The internal logic of this social mischief must be addressed. America is the land of the free. But each of the displays in dispute—the exhibitions and inappropriate books and shows—now have one thing in common: a captive audience.

Bring your child to an NBA game, and a drag show breaks out at halftime. Send your child to school to learn his or her ABCs, and the alphabet and numerals turn into LGBTQ and 57 “genders.”

We can discuss, debate, and argue these matters (because they do matter), but first: we must end the captivity.

And we can't wait for Washington.

The biggest story of the past five years is the uprising of parents and the surge in school choice. Parents have seen enough. Consider 14-year-old Sage and her family. This vulnerable girl from Appomattox County, Virginia, was victimized not only by a sexual predator in another state but worse by a school system that secretly “affirmed” her as male. She was rescued, but then a Maryland judge refused to return her to her parents in Virginia because he believed they would not affirm her in a male identity. Instead, he sent her to a boys' home, where she was attacked again, ran away, and was trafficked a second time. She finally returned to her loving and supportive family after a harrowing ordeal that started in part because of secrets kept from parents by a school.

Sage's mother is with us tonight because she wants to prevent other families from having this horrific experience.

And parents are saying, “No more.” Virginia Delegate Dave LaRock has introduced a bill to ensure schools, child protection agencies, and courts never act this way again.

I want to thank Congressman Bob Good of Virginia, who represents that district, for his leadership on so many of these issues on Capitol Hill. Congressman, thank you for being here.

In Bedford County, Virginia, and across America, parents are demanding and getting the right to review and challenge books in school curricula and school libraries. Liberal voices want to make such policies sound sinister. But the books in question are not works of science, art, or literature. Parents are not fighting Nobel Prize and National Book Award winners. They are sickened by pornographic works like *My Body is Growing*, a graphic sex guide its author says is for children ages four to eight.

The works are so offensive some school boards will not allow them to be read out loud—at adult board meetings.

Family Research Council is honored to have Christian and Amy Snead, parents from Bedford County, here tonight.

Christian and Amy are parents to four boys ranging in age from eight to 16. They have spent the past 15 years actively helping in their boys' schools, serving in church, and coaching and volunteering in local youth sports programs. In 2009, the Sneads opened a trucking company, which now employs 35 people. In the summer of 2021, God nudged their hearts to get more involved, and Amy started a chapter of Moms for Liberty in Bedford County. Christian has been the campaign manager for three local school board races, two of which were write-in candidates, who are all now elected members of the Board. They would love to share with you what they enjoy doing in their free time, but the truth is, they don't really have any! They are too busy making a difference! Christian and Amy, thanks for being here tonight.

Many of our schools have indeed crossed a red line. They not only defend exposing children to soft- and hardcore pornography, they cannot keep children safe from predators and other physical violence.

For decades, with the wisdom of parental love, moms and dads have sacrificed and homeschooled their children. That brave alternative continues to flourish, and I highly recommend it to parents. Churches are beginning to start their own schools and learning centers! And now, states and localities are responding with a wave of school choice policies.

This year, in 2023, more than two dozen states will be implementing school choice programs. The national teachers' unions' financial monopoly must end in every state.

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds has just signed into law what the *Des Moines Register* calls a “seismic” school choice plan that will allow parents to spend their share of state funds at the school of their choice. The cost is an estimated \$345 million in tax funds per year—a small price, but Iowans’ own money, to pay for freedom, excellence, and decency.

Last month, Utah Governor Spencer Cox signed into law HB 215, the Utah Fits All Scholarship program, which creates educational savings accounts in Utah, an idea pioneered at the federal level by Family Research Council and our allies.

I know there are teachers in the audience tonight. You are dedicated to the children in your care, and recent developments in education policy have harmed you, too. The same thing has happened in many other professions. We stand with you as you stand by serving others in silent witness to God’s goodness and love for each of us.

Montana has introduced the Youth Health Protection Act, which ensures minors are not subjected to gender transition procedures, including puberty-blocking drugs, cross-sex hormones, and radical surgeries. Again, the progressive Left is raising false alarms, but what we see are men and women reclaiming the integrity of their profession. A new coalition called the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine has formed.

No, we aren’t waiting for Washington anymore.

True, there is work that can only be done in the halls of government by our elected officials. We are excited by ideas like Sen. Marco Rubio’s Providing for Life Act. This measure recognizes the personal and financial challenges that often drive women to have an undesired abortion. One of its central features, a child tax credit, builds on work Family Research Council launched three decades ago.

Congress is set to act as well on protecting pregnancy resource centers and churches from increasingly common attacks—more than 400 churches over the past four years (as FRC has [documented](#)) and over 80 [pregnancy resource centers](#) since the *Dobbs* decision was leaked last year. Legislation advanced by pro-life Hill leaders Chris Smith and Mike Johnson will shore up protection for these important institutions.

We are grateful to have here tonight a real hero, Wendy Wright, vice chair of the board of the Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center, who has helped lead the fight for faith, family, and freedom for many years.

Their clinic was targeted and vandalized (with “Jane’s revenge” written on their building) merely for trying to help women. And like the vast majority of the other attacks, there have been no arrests.

Friends here in this room and across the nation, let us reclaim our freedom as Americans to proclaim our ideals and convictions. Let us resolve to pursue them in the public square with vigor and without fear.

Speaking at the dedication of Gettysburg National Cemetery in November of 1863, overlooking the battlefield of the bloodiest and most significant battle of the Civil War, President Lincoln closed his [brief remarks](#) with these words:

...that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Tonight, let us recognize and be emboldened that this is our government, and we, the people under the authority and direction of God, will determine the future of this nation.

We will not wait for Washington.

Join me as we pray for our nation.