Reciprocity and the Politics of Religious Liberty in the U.S.

Abstract: The legalization of same-sex marriage and the victory for religious freedom rights and exemptions for corporations in *Hobby Lobby v. Burwell* have triggered a new wave of conflict over the boundaries of religious freedom in the United States. This conflict has been both legal and political, but to date there has been little scholarly attention into how the politics of religious freedom advocacy might affect broad support for First Amendment protections. In this paper, I use longitudinal survey data, a survey experiment, and qualitative data to analyze two pressing (and related) questions about the state of religious freedom, with broad cultural implications: 1) as evangelicals see religious freedom under threat, can they be persuaded to support an inclusive right to religious liberty; and 2) does support for religious freedom for Muslims or Hindus help garner support for evangelical religious freedom claims? I find that, while there are some opportunities for evangelicals to support broad religious freedom rights, it is an uphill battle, but one they might want to take seriously as both Democrats and non-evangelicals are less opposed to religious exemptions to non-discrimination against LGBT individuals after reading about a Muslim or Hindu faith-based exemption. Thus, while fundamental rights have become strongly polarized in American politics, they are perhaps not hopelessly so.

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Religious freedom has become a flashpoint of contemporary cultural politics. In the process of the legalization of same-sex marriage, at first incrementally through various court decisions and some state-level legislation and ultimately with the U.S Supreme Court’s *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling in 2015, religious freedom, the “first freedom” became highly politicized. In response, conservatives in several states sought the passage of highly controversial religious freedom laws, called Religious Freedom Restoration Acts, modeled after legislation that had been passed without much controversy in the U.S. Congress and in many states fifteen years prior. As this developed, some media outlets and liberal activists began putting religious freedom in scare quotes in article headlines or adding the words “so called” prior the phrase religious freedom. The Donald Trump campaign and presidency has intensified debates over religious freedom. Religious freedom was a key theme of his campaign, and he has followed with a religious freedom executive order, though it was less broad than many activists had hoped, and a Religious Liberty Task Force. Many liberals, including liberal Christians, have criticized these efforts, and resounding theme has been the Right’s lack of reciprocity for minority religions, especially Islam. In doing so, many pointed to the Trump Administration’s travel ban on immigration from several majority-Muslim countries (the so-called Muslim Ban).

In the judicial realm, religious freedom has also become highly controversial of late. To be sure, there have been strong legal battles between those seeking to protect the separation of church and state on one side and those promoting the religious liberty of private actors on the other side for the past several decades. The legal and political intensity of these debates started to wake from a bit of a twenty-first century slumber, however, with the Supreme Court’s decision in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* to grant a closely held corporation religious freedom rights. The stakes are growing, as the courts are considering cases that clearly pit two fundamental right
holders against each other, often the religious freedom rights of small business operators against
the rights of political equality of same-sex couples. This was most evident in the recent term’s
*Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission,* which considered whether a state
public accommodations law can require a cake baker to make a custom cake for a same-sex
wedding against the baker’s sincerely held religious beliefs. In a June 2018 decision, the Court
largely punted on the merits, instead giving the baker a narrow legal victory by finding that the
Civil Rights Commission acted with animus toward the baker’s religious faith. The implications
are clear that the lines between religious freedom and non-discrimination will be drawn in future
cases.

With the Court’s decision in *Masterpiece* also comes an emphasis on reciprocity, though
the majority opinion focused its attention on the Left. The majority opinion made clear that
government actors and institutions must respect sincerely held religious beliefs, even those that
may contradict progressive non-discrimination values. If difference is not respected and in turn
becomes animus, then decisions against religious citizens or organizations can run afoul of
religious liberty rights.

As these examples show, reciprocity is central to religious freedom politics and policy—
on both the Right and the Left. Heretofore, however, there has been scant empirical work
analyzing the connections between religious freedom politics and reciprocity. In fact, there is
little work that connects how the public might react to varying elite advocacy activities regarding
religious freedom. To explicitly examine these facets, I present attitudes from two survey
experiments on support for Muslim and Hindu religious accommodations and the relationship
between varying elite support for these religious minorities and reciprocal support for
conservative Christian religious freedom—exemptions to LGBTQ non-discrimination policies—as well as religious freedom more generally.

**Literature Review**

*Reciprocity and Liberal Politics*

Reciprocity, though debated, is a central concern of contemporary liberalism and perhaps all moral codes. Alvin Gouldner defines it as “a pattern of mutually contingent exchange,” and it is at the core of John Rawls’s *Political Liberalism* (Rawls 2005). In the last half-century, the concept has been debated, discussed, revised by numerous political philosophers (see e.g., Becker 1986, Nussbaum 2006, Sangiovanni 2007, Buchanan 1990). (For an overview see: Hartley 2014).

A great deal of empirical scholarship has examined reciprocity. A common behavioral approach is to examine trust games that involve an exchange between players (Carlin and Love 2013, Fehr and Gächter 2000); others have examined biological characteristics (Bowles and Gintis 2004, Nowak and Sigmund 1998). Perhaps most commonly, investigations into political tolerance rely on presumptions of reciprocity when determining whether to support the extension of rights to other groups (Petersen et al. 2011, Sniderman et al. 1989). Typically these political tolerance evaluations are made by assessing either a fixed outgroup (e.g., atheists, communists, homosexuals) or a “least liked group” (for a comparison of approaches, see: Gibson 1992, 2013). Prior work suggests that individuals consider groups record on civil liberties when assessing their willingness to extend tolerance (Rohrschneider 1996, Petersen et al. 2011, Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982).
While this previous works indicates that people might be assessing an outgroup’s willingness to extend civil liberties to them when they are determine whether to tolerate their rights, direct empirical tests of reciprocity are needed to move beyond mere assertions. Experimental manipulations would be particularly helpful in drawing these conclusions. Moreover, one of the primary issue areas that is ripe for understanding reciprocity is religious freedom, as the issue is experience changing cultural norms, and groups on both the Left and Right are both advocating for reciprocity in some cases while denying it in others (for various reasons).

The mass responses to elite position-taking in religious freedom politics is also descriptively critical, as the Left and Right are in the process of staking out their positions. To date there has been very little empirical work that connects mass opinion to elite activity. Therefore, the politics of religious freedom are ideal for understanding a current, pressing issue, as well as the contours of reciprocity.

*The Public and Religious Freedom*

The import of religious liberty as a basic human right (codified in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the U.N. Universal Declaration of Rights, and other charters of rights and liberties) and its function as a centerpiece of the American experiment has kept it as a part of the lexicon. But it is religious freedom’s more recent entry into cultural controversies, both foreign and domestic, that have yielded increased scholarly and popular attention. The rise of religious liberty politics on the Right has generated new questions about common commitment to the principle. In particular, what is the status of reciprocity how the Right and Left process religious liberty claims. In what follows, I briefly sketch out prior scholarship on religious liberty politics,
identifying critical gaps in this line of research, such as the opinion dynamics of religious liberty, the relationship between elite activity and mass opinion, the question of reciprocity.

Of late, as with culture war topics, the bulk of the scholarship on religious liberty in the U.S. has had a theoretical, normative, or legal bent. Some recent examples include parsing the legal meaning of religious freedom from the American founding (e.g., Munoz 2016) and how the concept can be applied to contemporary controversies (Brady 2015, Greenawalt 2016, Tebbe 2017). International politics too is being drawn into the culture war narrative of religious freedom, with a debate among scholars emerging about the virtue of international religious freedom, especially in light of religious violence (see e.g., Hurd 2015, Philpott and Shah 2017, Sullivan et al. 2015).

To the extent that public opinion research has been done on religious freedom, it tends to reflect the mobilization of Christian Right groups. White Christians tend to hold a growing view that religious freedom is threatened in America (Green 2016). In fact, evangelicals believe that they face higher levels of discrimination than Muslims in the U.S. (Green 2017), and Republicans see both whites and Christians facing more discrimination than blacks, immigrants, and others (Jones 2017). Related, many on the Right are particularly threatened by Muslims, much more so than other religious minorities (Karpowitz, Monson, and Patterson 2016). At the same time, evidence suggests that heightened culture war-type politics has increased antipathy toward conservative Christians among some (Adkins et al. 2013, Bolce and De Maio 1999, 2008) and has driven many away from a religious identification (Hout and Fischer 2002, Putnam and Campbell 2012, Djupe, Neiheisel, and Conger 2018).

While debates over religious liberty are on the rise, there has been surprisingly little recent public opinion scholarship on religious freedom attitudes. (For an earlier treatment of the
nuances of public attitudes regarding church-state relations, see Jelen and Wilcox ([1995])). This is in large part due to the lack of religious freedom questions in longitudinal social science surveys such as the General Social Survey and the American National Election Study. The dearth of public opinion research on religious liberty also speaks to how recently these issues have become polarized. In fact, in the 1990s, it was Democrats and religious minorities who championed religious freedom bills in response to the *Oregon v. Smith* (1990) decision. Now the tide has drastically turned.

Of the recent work, scholars have shown that Americans’ religious tolerance is growing and their religious networks are increasingly diverse, suggesting general support for the broad contours of religious freedom (Putnam and Campbell 2012). More specific to contemporary battles, other work has shown that Republican partisanship, certain issue positions, such as opposition to same-sex marriage, and political attentiveness increase feelings of threats to religious freedom (Goidel, Smentkowski, and Freeman 2016). Moreover, higher levels of authoritarianism are related to greater support for religious freedom and free exercise of religion (Castle 2017). An experimental piece suggested support for exemptions to public accommodations laws for sexual minorities are not driven by religious variables, suggesting to the authors that religious freedom is a cover for other types of discriminatory views (Powell, Schnabel, and Apgar 2017). Most of what we know about religious freedom politics, however, draws on data that are at least decade old, when white Christians’ cultural and political status was less threatened.

In a related stream of research, those who study religion, civil liberties, and constitutionalism have engaged with some of these democratic questions in the context of religious freedom legal advocacy. Of particular note is the growing emphasis on the use of rights
claims (see e.g., Bennett 2017, Lewis 2014, 2017), which has developed within the conservative legal movement (Decker 2016, Hollis-Brusky 2015, Teles 2010). For example, in the 2017-18 Supreme Court term, conservative Christian groups marshaled compelled speech arguments, which take a broad individual right to free speech, leading to success in two major cases—*Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* and *National Institute of Family Life Advocates v. Becerra*. As has become the recent trend, in these cases legal advocates on the Right combined free speech and religious freedom arguments with potent effects (see Lewis 2017). Related, conservative and libertarian advocates also used compelled speech arguments to strike down public unions requiring non-members paying “agency fees” in *Janus v. AFSCME*.

The legal successes of conservative rights claims are not made in isolation. The emergence of a rights-based advocacy strategy over the past two decades fits comfortably with a mass public that is amenable to rights arguments (see Djupe et al. 2014, Djupe, Lewis, and Jelen 2016, Lewis 2017), helping propel both legal and grassroots achievement (Lewis 2017). Rights claiming also clearly signals a group on the defensive.

What we know from the current state of the research on the cultural politics of religious liberty is who supports it the most, what types of traits lead people to feel most threatened, what are the advocacy approaches and networks behind domestic religious liberty. All of these are useful to our development of a complete picture of the politics of religious freedom in the United States, but they are detached inquiries and fail to capture the fluid and dynamic relationship of a contested culture war being fought on both sides, where each side is in the process of staking out their positions amidst changing political statuses and diverse messaging. Those changes in status are critical (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1989), especially because religious freedom politics are typically characterized by “religious hegemony” (Beaman 2003, Beyer 2003), in part because
religious freedom laws are often granted by strategic secular leaders (Gill 2007). Moreover, these inquiries have yet to consider the interplay between a heightened awareness of claiming religious freedom for oneself and also extending religious freedom to others (reciprocity).

Religious liberty politics are fluid and dynamic, making it ripe to study how various approaches might affect support for religious liberty rights and the politicization of the issue. In what follows, I will examine a series of inter-related questions which are central to the future of religious liberty politics: 1) what are the opportunities and constraints for the Right supporting inclusive, reciprocal religious liberty policy; 2) if the Right champions religious freedom for all, will it result in increased reciprocity for conservative Christian religious freedom claims on the right; and 3) will politicizing religious liberty on the Right lead to a backlash effect by those on the Left?

Current Debates in Conservative Christianity over Religious Liberty

On March 23, 2016, a host of religious non-profits, organizations, and schools appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court, being opposed by the Justice Department of the federal government. These religious groups, though represented ably by legal counsel, were headlined by the Little Sisters of the Poor, setting off a “David vs. Goliath” showdown with the Obama Administration in a case titled Zubik v. Burwell. The battle was over a requirement of the 2010 Affordable Care Act’s birth control mandate that employers, with some exceptions, provide contraceptives free of charge to their employees. Catholic organizations objected on religious principle to all contraceptives, while evangelical organizations objected to “emergency contraception” drugs such as the “morning-after” pill and the like, which they argue cause abortions. Following the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the Supreme Court’s Hobby Lobby ruling, a series of
accommodations were made for religious institutions, lessening their burden to provide drugs that violated their religious faith while still providing access to their employees. To many of the religious organizations, however, this was not good enough. They wanted a complete opt out, like many churches and very small non-profits (under 50 people) received, less they be entangled in moral culpability.

As the case arrived at the Supreme Court, more than the technicalities of who is providing birth control to a handful of Catholic and evangelical organizations was on the line. In the *amicus curiae* briefs, major players in the area of religious freedom signaled a growing division, even hostility regarding the future of religious liberty litigation in America. A broad array of evangelical and Catholic advocates supported the religious non-profits in these cases, arguing for a broad right to religious freedom as protected by the First Amendment and the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act. These included the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), its seminaries, and mission agencies, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Assemblies of God, the Christian Missionary Alliance, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. The SBC’s brief, for example, linked abortion and religious liberty, arguing that “compel[ing] individuals to participate in what they believe to be an unjustified taking of life imposes a grievous burden on the exercise of their beliefs” (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary et al. 2016).

While evangelical and Catholic allies were joined in defense of a broad religious liberty rights, the Baptist Joint Committee (BJC), a mainline Protestant Baptist umbrella group who had long been at the forefront of religious liberty advocacy (especially for religious minorities) rejected this argument. In fact, not only did the BJC refrain from joining religious groups arguing for religious liberty, for the first time in the history of the organization it asked the Supreme
Court to reject the religious liberty arguments for the plaintiff when there was no Establishment Clause issue at stake. In a brief filed with constitutional scholar and University of Virginia Professor Douglas Laycock—a religious liberty expert and frequent Supreme Court filer—the BJC argued that there was no “substantial burden” to these religious non-profits’ free exercise rights. Further, their brief argued, “But religious liberty can be endangered by exaggerated claims and overreaching as well as by government intransigence and judicial under enforcement. Petitioners endanger religious liberty, both legally and politically” (Baptist Joint Commitee 2016).

In May 2016, the Supreme Court released a complicated per curiam (“by the Court”) opinion, which did not resolve any of the legal questions but granted a victory for the religious non-profits by exempting them from penalties. The opaque opinion set no precedent for future cases, ensuring a continued debate over the extent of religious liberty in American law and politics. In fact, the decision had fodder for both sides.

Nevertheless, the argument by the BJC and Laycock, that expanded religious freedom arguments are detrimental, are empirical at their root. What are the public effects of pushing the limits of religious freedom advocacy? On the one hand, the public is not very attentive to the minutia of Supreme Court cases, especially ones as complicated as Zubik v. Burwell. On the other, the compounding effects of politicizing religious freedom can gain public consciousness. At the same time, in other domains, political behavior research has shown that expanding the policy sphere can yield future policy success by “moving the bar” through a punctuated equilibrium process (see e.g., Baumgartner, Jones, and Mortensen 2014). Considering the potential backlash, should conservative religious freedom advocates be wary of over politicizing the right to religious freedom, or should they maintain an aggressive approach?
Related, the undertones of the BJC’s critique of evangelical religious freedom claims, going back several decades, is that many Christian Right groups use religious freedom as a way to try and preserve some favored majoritarian status in American culture—often deemed Christian nationalism (see e.g., Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018, Shortle and Gaddie 2015, Lieven 2012). This was evident in the Supreme Court’s 2017-18 term, where conservative Christians were heavily invested in Jack Phillips’ religious liberty accommodation from LGBTQ non-discrimination laws in *Masterpiece Cakeshop*, but many were not troubled by the denial of religious freedom to immigrants from several majority Muslim countries in the Trump travel ban case, *Trump v. Hawaii*. As the cases developed, several commentators noted the juxtaposition (Lewis 2018, Grant and Bailey 2018, Greenhouse 2018). Catholic, Christian, and Jewish advocates marshaled their opposition to the travel ban case, though the most prominent conservative Christian legal organizations supported the travel ban (Dallas 2018, Boorstein 2018).

So, as conservative Christians pursue a full-throated religious freedom strategy, is it going to be for all-comers, or only for themselves and as a way to promote America’s Christian heritage, or is it going to be a part of a broader strategy of protecting religious rights? To begin to investigate these questions about reciprocity and polarization, I start by analyzing public opinion on religious freedom, then considering a current controversy in evangelical politics, and finally presenting results from a survey experiment.

*The Big Picture via Public Opinion*

Issues of religious freedom and church-state relations have been prominent in conservative Christian politics since at least the mid-1960s, when the U.S. Supreme Court declared
government directed prayer and Bible reading in schools to be unconstitutional. Battles over the proper relationship between church and state have been central to the culture wars, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. But in the past two decades the Supreme Court has largely demurred its establishment clause doctrine in favor of expanded religious freedom (Lupu 1991), in large part due to religious freedom advocates (see e.g., Brown 2002). But now with the direct clashes between religious freedom rights and rights to equality, we have reached a new era of religious freedom politics.

In public opinion, much has been made of late, especially in the popular press, that conservative Christians see religious freedom as being threatened in America (Green 2016, 2017), and some social science scholarship has even investigated this (Goidel, Smentkowski, and Freeman 2016). (Democrats and other religious groups, by contrast, do not perceive these threats.) But longitudinally there are two themes in the public opinion of religious freedom politics for evangelicals: 1) there has been substantial growth in support for religious freedom of minorities in the past three decades; and 2) there has been a growing sense of threat to religious freedom. Most accounts have ignored the former, focusing on the latter.

There is little longitudinal data about religious freedom, but a couple different sources provide a picture of the evolution of evangelical views on religious freedom over time. The first is from the General Social Survey (GSS), which has asked since 1972 a battery of questions about whether atheists (or anti-religionists) should be able to speak in public, teach in colleges or universities, or have books in the library. Together, these three questions can be combined into a scale representing tolerance for atheists. Many have used this as a component of political tolerance (for an overview, see Gibson 2013), but it is also a measure of support for minority religious liberty because federal courts have considered the right to practice no-religion a core
part of the free exercise of religion. I used this scale from the GSS to investigate how
evangelicals and non-evangelicals have changed over time in their support of atheists, and by
extension religious freedom for minorities.\footnote{1 I categorized evangelicals following the approach of Steensland et al. (2000) as updated by Stetzer and Burge (2016).} For ease of interpretation, I scaled it from 0-1, with
higher values representing more tolerance.

Figure 1 presents the results for evangelicals and non-evangelicals from 1972-2016.
Throughout the period, non-evangelicals have higher levels of tolerance for atheists than non-
evangelicals, which is expected. Evangelicals, however, have had a substantial increase in their
level of tolerance, nearly doubling their tolerance for atheists since the late 1970s and early
1980s, closing much of the gap on non-evangelicals. While they had much more ground to make
up, their rates of growth have been greater.
While tolerance for religious (or non-religious) minorities has been growing among evangelicals, so too has a sense of threat. As previously discussed, many have shown these results in current polling. A collection of surveys of Southern Baptist clergy conducted every four years by political scientist Jim Guth of Furman University from 1988-2008 helps put this trend in perspective. In these surveys, clergy were asked if they thought religious freedom was being threatened in America. I have then supplemented these surveys with a smaller survey of evangelical clergy collected by Paul Djupe in 2014 that asked the same question, helping bring the longitudinal analysis into the period of present controversies. In all the surveys, clergy were
given a 1-5 scale of whether religious freedom was being threatened in America, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

In Figure 2, the picture is clear. Over the past 25 years, evangelicals have exponentially increased in their views that religious freedom is under threat, with the mean growing by almost an entire category on the 5-point scale. The sharpest increase appears to be over the past decade.

Figure 2. Evangelical Clergy’s Views on Religious Freedom being Threatened in America. Clergy Data, 1988-2014.

How are these two longitudinal trends among evangelicals—growing tolerance for religious minorities (i.e., atheists) along with increased feelings of cultural threats to religious freedom—able to be sustained? And are they in tension with each other? One possibility is that growing diversity and socioeconomic status within evangelicalism may produce higher levels of tolerance, which has been shown to be increasing for other groups as well. And in fact,
multivariate models (not shown) corroborate this as the more educated, younger, and more urban evangelicals are more supportive of atheists. At the same time, preliminary models in the clergy data (also not shown) suggest that religious homogeneity in one’s state increases the feelings of religious freedom being under threat. In the future I hope to investigate the role of religious diversity more specifically, analyzing how religious diversity affects both religious tolerance and threat.

The confluence of these two longitudinal trends produces an important inflection point for evangelicalism. Will it leverage its feelings of threat and its growing tolerance for minorities to try and cement a minority status that includes building alliances with other religious minorities? Or will evangelicalism seek to use threat as a tool to mobilize toward more majoritarian ends? Conservative Christianity appears to be grappling with this question.

_Evangelicals and Religious Freedom for All_

As religious freedom has become increasingly politicized and increasingly a part of American cultural politics, a division has emerged among many conservatives. Is religious freedom inclusive or exclusive? Is it a new means to recapturing “Christian America” or is it a value commitment to pluralistic diversity? The prior section discussed the religious freedom of atheists, but since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the primary dividing lines have been about protecting the religious freedom of Muslims. This division has only grown more stark, as evangelicals have increasingly moved toward claiming religious freedom for themselves, while many tolerating the calls for the religious freedom of Muslims to be limited following the rise of ISIS and several international terror incidents from 2015-2017. Debates
within the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest evangelical denomination in the U.S., provide some insight into the politics of religious freedom within evangelicalism.

Southern Baptists in America have long been a denomination committed to religious liberty. It is a core value of this religious group, going back to the persecution they faced at the hands of established churches in colonial and revolutionary America (McLoughlin 1991, 1971). Even into the twentieth century, religious liberty was a central tenet of the Southern Baptist faith (Parry 1996, Hamburger 2002). (Pastors and seminarians were often trained to protect soul liberty and a free church in a free state.) By the end of the twentieth century, however, Baptists became divided over how best to promote religious liberty (Lewis 2011, Hankins 2002).

A decade after the September 11th terrorist attacks, the SBC was still not ready to defend religious liberty for all—especially Muslims. In late 2010, a Muslim group wanted to build an Islamic Cultural Center a few blocks from Ground Zero, the site of the terrorist attacks. Many were appalled, and in fact a Religious News Service poll suggested that 60 percent of the public disapproved with the center (Neroulias 2010). Several religious leaders commented on the matter, and religious freedom advocates tried to get typical religious freedom allies to show their support. Richard Land, the President of the SBC’s public policy arm, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) declined to support the Islamic Cultural Center. Instead, Land argued for a limited rights approach, stating: “The right to religious freedom doesn’t include the right to have a religious worship place wherever you want” (Wood 2010).

In part to show his support for the religious freedom rights of Muslims, Land did join the Interfaith Coalition on Mosques in September 2010. The Interfaith Coalition was founded by the liberal Anti-Defamation League to build support for Muslim groups who were having trouble getting houses of worship approved by zoning commissions and city councils. One prominent
denial was in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, less than an hour from SBC headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee.

In joining the Coalition, Land expressed that it was important to protect Muslims’ “legal rights under the First Amendment,” but this participation sparked outrage within the denomination. A month later, the ERLC was doing damage control with its constituents (Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission 2010), and in January he resigned from the Interfaith Coalition. Upon his resignation, he wrote: “While many Southern Baptists share my deep commitment to religious freedom and the right of Muslims to have places to worship, they also feel that a Southern Baptist denominational leader filing suit to allow individual mosques to be built is ‘a bridge too far’” (Hastings 2011). Though the importance of religious freedom was growing within evangelicalism in the early 2000s, and many saw religious freedom as being threatened, the largest evangelical denomination in America was reluctant to extend these religious freedom rights to an opponent. The denomination as a whole did not realize the potential quid pro quo relationship that rights extending might provide.

Less than a decade later, evangelicals have been starting to learn the importance of supporting an inclusive right to religious freedom, especially following their resounding cultural war defeats regarding same-sex marriage, LGBT rights, and the health care. These policies have pitted religious conscience against government regulation, triggering awareness of religious liberty. As evangelical cultural hegemony is under threat, evangelicals have become staunch supporters of religious liberty. While some groups have been more exclusively Christian in their approach (Bennett 2017), some evangelical leaders have been on the front lines of supporting religious liberty for all, trying to convince evangelicals that supporting the religious freedom for
others will help the status of their rights. Russell Moore, the new leader of the SBC’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, is chief among them, and it almost cost him his job.

In 2014, Moore led the Southern Baptists to join other evangelical and religious groups in advocating for the extending of broad religious liberty rights to a Muslim prisoner who wanted to grow a beard to practice his religious beliefs. When the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the prisoner’s favor in *Holt v. Hobbs*, Moore offered praise for the ruling. Moore declared, “Religious liberty isn’t a prize earned by those with the most political clout. Christians and others should be glad, especially in a time when the most basic liberties are routinely dismissed in many corners of our national debate” (Strode 2015).

Moore was not finished advocating for religious freedom rights of Muslims. In 2016, a diverse group of 20 religious and civil rights groups, including Moore’s ERLC, filed a brief with the federal district court in New Jersey supporting the religious freedom rights of a community of Muslims who had been repeatedly denied the ability to build a mosque in New Jersey despite complying with zoning requirements (The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty 2016). At an interfaith conversation on religious liberty, Moore discussed the case and expanded on the need to extend religious freedom rights to others. “We need to identify and see where others are receiving pressure and persecution and marginalization, and stand up for one another. When a city council in the Bible Belt attempts to bar a mosque, evangelicals need to stand against such government action” (Strode 2016). Moore was seeking to plot a new course for the SBC, and his comments were particularly controversial as Donald Trump, the Republican nominee for President, had made anti-Muslim statements during the 2016 Republican primary and called for a ban on Muslim refugees and immigrants following terrorist attacks (Johnson 2015). (Moore had been quite critical of Trump during the Republican primary campaign (Moore 2015).)
The next month, in June 2016, the ERLC’s support for the New Jersey mosque ignited controversy at the SBC’s annual convention in St. Louis, Missouri. (Again, Moore’s criticism of Trump is a subtext for the controversy.) A messenger from Arkansas motioned that “all Southern Baptist officials or offices who support the rights of Muslims to build Islamic mosques in the United States be immediately removed from their position within the Southern Baptist Convention.” A later motion asked the ERLC to remove its name from the amicus brief. Both motions were ruled out of order, exceeding the authority of messengers, but Moore later responded. He asserted, “What it means to be a Baptist is to support soul freedom for everybody,” receiving applause from the SBC audience. “Brothers and sisters, when you have a government that says ‘we can decide whether or not a house of worship can be constructed based upon the theological beliefs of that house of worship,’ then there are going to be Southern Baptist churches in San Francisco and New York and throughout the country that are not going to be able to build” (Gryboski 2016). Moore’s logic was clear. In addition to being morally correct, it is politically expedient to support religious freedom for others. With this defense, the SBC overwhelmingly supported the ERLC’s position supporting the mosque.

The story does not end here, however. The SBC’s move toward extending equal rights to Muslims has been far from perfect. While strides were made, extending religious freedom was not without pushback. Two steps forward and one step back (or perhaps one step forward and two steps back) seems to be the pattern. While Moore’s SBC entity (the ERLC) stood firm on defending the religious freedom rights of Muslims, the SBC’s international missions agency withdrew their support for the amicus brief in early 2017 after intense protest from some within the denomination (Zylstra 2017). While Moore stood firm, he too faced intense scrutiny for his support for Muslim religious liberty and his disparaging comments about Donald Trump (and by
association Trump’s supporters). A couple large SBC churches threatened to withhold funds from the denomination because of Moore, and in March 2017 *The Washington Post* reported that Moore might be on the verge of losing his job as head of the ERLC (Bailey 2017). Moore survived, in part because of his unwavering opposition to evangelicals’ primary moral concern—abortion—(Lewis 2017) as well as his willingness to listen to SBC concerns, and his strong support from younger Southern Baptists and evangelicals (Moody 2017). Moore clarified his statements and apologized for any mischaracterizations of Christians who supported Donald Trump during the Presidential Election, and he and the Executive Board issued a “Seeking Unity” statement (Toalston 2017).

Though Moore was nearly ousted from leading the SBC’s advocacy arm, in part for his religious liberty views, he has not backed down from his commitment to religious liberty or all. Rather, he continues to call the denomination (and evangelicalism) toward an inclusive pluralism. In July 2017, Moore penned an op-ed at the *Gospel Coalition* website, which is popular among young, conservative, and reformed evangelicals, titled “Religious Freedom is for Non-Christians Too.” In the piece, Moore provided theological and rational defenses for religious freedom for all, arguing that true religion must be free, the government should remain out of religious affairs, and importantly that if Christians restrict Muslims’ freedom it is only a matter of time before their freedom is restricted. “The idea that religious freedom should apply only to Christians, or only to religious groups that aren’t popular, is not only morally wrong; it’s self-defeating. A government that can tell you a mosque or synagogue cannot be built because it is a mosque or a synagogue is a government that, in the fullness of time, will tell an evangelical church it cannot be constructed because of our claims to the exclusivity of Christ” (Moore 2017).
While evangelicals strongly supported both Donald Trump and the proposed Muslim ban (and refused to oppose it as the Supreme Court case *Trump v. Hawaii* developed), conservative Christian advocates such as Moore, organizations including the Becket Fund and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, among others, have been increasingly active in defending religious liberty for non-Christians, both in word and in deed (Campbell 2017). But, as the *Trump v. Hawaii* case represents there remains much tension, even among those who are increasingly supportive of religious freedom for all.

*Implications of Extending Religious Freedom*

One of the primary arguments conservative Christian elites are making when advocating to their constituents about promoting religious freedom is that it is important to protect the religious freedom of others in order to establish an environment where Christians’ religious views are protected. In June 2017 and May 2018, I fielded two survey experiments with some political science colleagues that featured the refashioning of a religious freedom news story to investigate the empirical realities of these arguments, as well as arguments about whether the politicization of religious freedom might erode support public for the fundamental right. The first experiment focused on a Muslim religious freedom case, while the second used the same facts but applied them to a Hindu. Approximately 1,100 respondents completed the Muslim experiment and 1,250 completed the Hindu experiment, both using Qualtrics’s online panels that were gender and region balanced.

The survey framing experiments were developed primarily to try and understand if the general public is more receptive to evangelicals’ claims for religious freedom exemptions if they see evangelicals supporting Muslims’ on Hindus’ religious freedom exemptions. In the online
survey, all respondents were exposed to the same core news story about the religious minority group filing religious freedom claims against their employer. What varied was who supported the Muslim or Hindu individual and the rationales for support.

The comparison of the Muslim and Hindu scenarios provide similar religious freedom claims, as both are eastern, religious minorities. They differ, however, in the amount of threat, as conservatives and evangelicals, especially, show low levels of tolerance of Muslims, in part due to the connections between the Muslim faith and terrorism, which has been exacerbated by media accounts (see e.g., Karpowitz, Monson, and Patterson 2016).

We fashioned a news story of a legal case, mimicking a CBSNews online story. The story was titled “Muslim men fired for refusing to deliver alcohol” or “Hindu men fired for refusing to deliver alcohol,” and the facts the legal case come from a real religious freedom case in Illinois where two Muslim men were fired from their trucking jobs because they refused to deliver beer. (This case is from 2015, but in the survey we set it as an ongoing case in 2017 or 2018.) While the actual case has much detail, we presented respondents with the simple version. Two Muslims were fired for refusing to deliver alcohol. The trucking company said they were fired for refusing to perform their jobs, but the men claimed that their religious values would not allow them to assist others in consuming alcohol. In the Hindu case, we slightly altered the story so that the Hindu men were fired for refusing to deliver beef.

After two paragraphs presenting the facts of the case, we then presented a third paragraph where we instituted four experimental treatments (see Appendix). In the treatments, we varied who supported the religious freedom claims of the Muslim or Hindu truck drivers. In the first treatment, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), “a liberal legal advocacy group” is identified as supporting the men, saying “Religious freedom is a vital human and constitutional
right and companies must make good faith efforts to accommodate religious objectors before firing them.” I refer to this as the ACLU Treatment.

In the second treatment, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), “the conservative Christian legal advocacy group” is identified as supporting the Muslim or Hindu men, making the exact same justification as the ACLU: “Religious freedom is a vital human and constitutional right and companies must make good faith efforts to accommodate religious objectors before firing them.” I refer to this as the ADF Treatment.

In the third treatment, Alliance Defending Freedom, “the conservative Christian legal advocacy group” is again identified as supporting the Muslim or Hindu men with the same statement as the first two treatments. But the third treatment then adds the following statement about ADF. “The group argued that the courts should protect people, ‘whether they are Muslims [or Hindus] refusing to deliver beer [or beef] or Christians refusing to bake cakes for same-sex weddings.’” I refer to this as the ADF-Marriage Treatment.

The fourth treatment was a content-control group, where the story ends by simply stating that “a federal court is set to decide the case in July,” which is how all the treatments end. I refer to this as the News Story Only Treatment. I also had a true Control Treatment, as one group was randomly assignment to skip the entire segment about the Muslim story, only receiving some follow-up questions.

Following the experiment, respondents are presented with two questions directly related to the prompts. First, “Regarding the story you just read, do you support the Muslim [or Hindu] truck driver and his ability to refuse to deliver beer because of his religious faith, or do you support the company?” Second, “Do you favor or oppose allowing a small business owner in
your state to refuse to provide products or services to gay or lesbian people, if doing so violates their religious beliefs?”

The design of this experiment allows me to examine whether the groups (liberal ACLU or conservative ADF) supporting the religious minorities’ religious freedom has any effect on support for religious accommodations for the employees. It also allows me to examine whether group support, especially conservative Christian support, as well as explicit mention of linking the Muslim and Hindu religious freedom question to Christian religious freedom claims regarding services related to same-sex weddings, support for exemptions.

*Religious Freedom Rights – Support for Muslim and Hindu Exemptions*

In general, respondents had low views of both the Muslim and Hindu men’s religious freedom claim, based on a 0-4 (strongly oppose to strongly support). In both scenarios, around a majority indicated that they supported the business more than the men (Muslim: 48 percent; Hindu: 52 percent), with only about a quarter supporting the men (Muslim: 28 percent; Hindu 24 percent). In fact, more people strongly opposed the religious freedom claim than supported it with any strength. Twenty-four percent are unsure in both scenarios, selecting a middle rating. The results are fairly consistent across treatments—more so for the Muslim scenario. The primary variation is in the ADF-Marriage Treatment, which increases both support and opposition to religious liberty by reducing uncertainty. By linking minorities’ right to religious freedom with a prominent culture war issue, it seems others are able to clarify their views.

There are clear partisan differences, as Figure 3 makes clear. Figure 3 presents predicted values (adjusted means) based on separate linear regression models with a few demographic controls for variables that did not randomize well. In general, while Democrats are still likely to oppose religious freedom for the Muslim or Hindu drivers, they are generally more supportive
than Republicans. In the surveys, 30-35 percent of Democrats support the minorities’ religious freedom and only 20-25 percent of Republicans doing the same. This gap does not appear to be a function of anti-Muslim bias, as Republicans generally rate the Muslim and Hindu claims similarly. Democrats, however, are more supportive of Muslim claims, perhaps because Muslims are more clearly seen as groups progressive should be allied with.

As for variation by treatments, Democrats are also more responsive when the only see the story or when the ACLU provides the message. When the conservative ADF supports the religious minority group, Democrats’ support drops, particularly for Hindus. While Democrats do not backlash against Muslims, even in the ADF-Marriage treatment, they do seem to backlash against Hindus who are supported by conservatives.

Figure 3. Linear Regression Models of Support for Muslim & Hindu Religious Freedom
Comparing two 76% confidence intervals, which approximates a $p=.10$ test.

Republicans also do not significantly alter their support for either religious minority. The mean Republican ratings are lowest when the ACLU supports the minority groups and it upticks somewhat when ADF is allied with the minority groups, though the differences are not statistically significant.

On the Right, the key differences are among the evangelicals, as shown in Figure 4. Average evangelical support for religious exemptions of these religious minorities is consistently higher than it is for Republicans, though never quite reaching statistical significance. The differences are especially noticeable when the ACLU supports the religious minorities ADF primes the same-sex marriage issue. It seems that evangelicals are less turned off by the ACLU supporting a religious group than average Republicans. For the ADF treatment, the prompt primes this legal organization as a “conservative Christian” organization and in the final prompt it makes clear overtures to Christians seeking religious freedom exemptions from civil rights regulations that forbid small businesses from denying services to same-sex weddings and related events. While evangelicals’ support for the religious liberty of Muslims and Hindus remains low (Muslims: 30 percent; Hindus: 25 percent), it is a bit better than Republicans (four to five percentage points higher) and slightly worse than Democrats (three percentage points). Evangelicals were also less likely to oppose the Muslims’ and Hindus’ religious freedom claim, about eight or nine percentage points less than typical Republicans.
Figure 4. Linear Regression Models of Republican and Evangelical Support for Muslim & Hindu Religious Freedom Exemptions. Qualtrics, 2017 & 2018. Comparing two 76% confidence intervals, which approximates a $p=.10$ test.

The prior results provide some evidence that religious freedom is becoming polarized, as Republicans and Democrats appear to alter their views about minority religious freedom when exposed to messages that conservative or liberal groups are supporting the cause. At the same time, results suggest that reciprocity arguments for minority religious freedom may help evangelicals be more supportive of religious freedom for all. Perhaps elite messages that the conservative Christians should promote religious freedom for all, because it is good for their on religious freedom claims can be effective at the mass level. But, if conservative Christians employ more inclusive religious freedom arguments, are those on the Left likely to respond by supporting their claims? Could exposure to rights claims for minority religions have an
extension effect to other domains? Could signals of political tolerance lead to increased tolerance for other groups’ religious liberty claims? Looking at responses to whether small businesses should be able to provide services to LGBT people if doing so violates their religious beliefs provides an opportunity to examine this.

Religious Freedom Extension – LGBT Exemptions

In general, most are not supportive of these religious freedom claims, with nearly 50 percent opposing in both surveys and only approximately 30 percent supporting a religious freedom claim. This is very similar to the level of support/opposition to Muslim and Hindu religious exemption claims discussed earlier. As one would expect, there are strong partisan and religious divides on this question, as only 15 percent of Democrats in the Muslim sample and 8 percent in the Hindu sample approve of religiously-based refusing service to LGBT individuals, while 49 percent of Republicans in both surveys do. Evangelical Protestants have similar views to Republicans with slightly over 50 percent approving of religious exemptions in both surveys. While the partisan and religious divisions are large on this issue, there may be room for public opinion change, because a substantial portion of the sample (16-18 percent of Democrats and 19-21 percent of Republicans and evangelicals) selected the middle “neither favor nor oppose category.”

Here, I am particularly interested in whether public opinion on religious freedom may be malleable across claimants – can one case teach about religious freedom in another, especially if one of your allies signal approval of the claim? The simplest way to test this is with a statistical model gauging the effect of each treatment (the variants of the story of the Muslim and Hindu truck drivers) on support for same-sex marriage exemptions. In this model, I have a true control
serving as a baseline level of support for religious exemptions to LGBTQ service requirements, as one group of respondents was randomly assignment to skip the Muslim treatment all together. I refer to this as the Control Treatment. I also control demographic variables that failed to randomize well: female and age in the Muslim survey and education, age, and income in the Hindu survey.

In the survey with the Muslim scenario, those who did not receive the Muslim Treatment were significantly more likely to oppose same-sex marriage exemptions, by about one-third of a category. At the same time, it appears that none of the specific treatments performed any better than the others, at least on the whole. Only getting the news story produced about the same effect as reading about ADF or the ACLU supporting the Muslims. There is a similar pattern for the survey with the Hindu Treatment. While the differences are not significantly different than the control, it is suggestive that the treatments improve support for exemptions from nondiscrimination laws, especially for those who received the ADF-SSM treatment. On the whole, it seems that merely thinking about religious exemptions in another context was enough to increase support for them in the LGBT context.

To investigate whether the specific religious freedom treatments had differential effects based on partisan or religious identity, I focus on interaction effects for identification with the Republican and Democratic Party, as well as self-identification as an evangelical Protestant. I again controlled for gender and age.

Figure 5 presents the results for party-identification for both the Muslim and Hindu Treatments, showing Democrats (hollow squares) and Republicans (solid circles). While Republicans seem to become more supportive of religious freedom exemptions after seeing the treatments, the statistically significant change occurs among Democrats. Exposure to any news
story about Muslims or Hindus reduces their opposition to allowing religious exemptions to providing services LGBT individuals. But the specific arguments make no substantive difference on their opinion. Perhaps seeing exemptions in another context makes Democrats think twice about the issue and moderate, where without the context they are more likely to toe the liberal party line.

![Figure 5](image_url)

Figure 5. Effect of Exposure to Arguments for Muslim & Hindu Religious Liberty Exemptions and Support for Same-Sex Marriage Exemptions by Party-ID. Qualtrics, 2017. Comparing two 76% confidence intervals, which approximates a \( p = .10 \) test.

The effect of the treatments is similar for non-evangelicals in Figure 6 as it is for Democrats in Figure 5—seeing any news story about Muslim or Hindu exemptions yields more favorability to the same-sex marriage exemptions. There are no statistically significant results for evangelicals, however. Their support remains steady across all treatments.
Figure 6. Effect of Exposure to Arguments for Muslim and Hindu Religious Liberty Exemptions and Support for Same-Sex Marriage Exemptions by Evangelical and Non-Evangelical. Qualtrics, 2017. Comparing two 76% confidence intervals, which approximates a $p=.10$ test.

**Status of Religious Freedom**

After asking respondents about their support for the Muslim or Hindu truck drivers and their opinion about religious exemptions to serving gays and lesbians, we then asked them to rank their highest priority constitutional rights from a list of six options: 1) right to free speech; 2) right to free press; 3) right to religious freedom; 4) right to be free from discrimination; 5) right to bear arms; and 6) right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. The right to free speech was ranked the highest, with a mean score of 1.91 (Muslim) and 1.90 (Hindu) on a 1-6 scale (with low numbers indicating a higher ranking). There was essentially no difference by party-id. The right to religious freedom ranked second at a distant mean of 3.19 (Muslim) and 3.39
(Hindu), though there were clear partisan differences. Republicans ranked religious freedom much higher with an average ranking of 2.87 (Muslim) and 3.05 (Hindu), while Democrats gave it an average ranking of 3.39 and 3.62, respectively.

Investigating the changes in ranking across the various treatments can provide some insight into how religious freedom for all advocacy affects support for the right (especially for conservatives), and it might also provide some evidence regarding whether there is a backlash against religious freedom if it is politicized. To analyze this, I again created a linear regression model, interacting the various treatments with both party-id and evangelical-id, while also controlling for the same demographic characteristics as the models above.

Figure 7 presents the results for evangelicals and non-evangelicals, and the results provide some insight into why inclusive religious freedom advocacy has proven so controversial for evangelicals over the past decade. Evangelicals in the control treatment rank religious freedom very highly, with a mean of about 2.2 in each scenario. Nevertheless, being exposed to the story about Muslim or Hindu religious freedom exemptions results in evangelicals ranking religious freedom less highly. And when the liberal ACLU defends religious liberty for Muslims and Hindus, there is a statistically significant decrease in support for the right (about 2.75). In fact, even the conservative ADF’s defense is nearly statistically significant in the Muslim Treatment. When the ADF mentions the connection to same-sex marriage support for religious liberty seems to improve, yet never reaching the level of support as the control (though it is within the confidence intervals).

These models suggest that religious freedom advocacy is a double-edged sword for conservative Christian advocates. While supporting religious freedom for all might buy some leeway from Democrats, and non-evangelicals, it comes with some internal costs and risks.
The ranking of rights also provides us with some more insight about the potential risks of over politicizing religious freedom. As in Figure 3, there are some, but no statistically significant signs of backlash against the most politicized statements. In the Hindu treatment, non-evangelicals are not different than the Control. But, ADF’s statement tying Muslim religious freedom to same-sex marriage suggests some backlash. When ADF defends Muslims, there was an uptick in non-evangelicals’ ranking of religious freedom, especially when ADF mentions the same-sex marriage exemptions. More importantly, however, there is no backlash effect among Democrats for either the Muslim or Hindu scenario.
Discussion & Conclusion

The implications of the experiment suggest that, in general, public support for religious exemptions for controversial groups—whether they be Muslims, Hindus, or conservative Christians—is difficult to obtain. The lack of support for the Muslim or Hindus exemptions, especially among Republicans and evangelicals, seems to provide further insight into why the evangelical division over religious freedom for all has been so difficult in the past decade. Even as evangelicals are shifting toward a minority cultural strategy by engaging rights talk and the courts, they are wary of building minority coalitions with those outside of their comfort zone.

There are some suggestions through the advocacy of figures like Russell Moore and the findings of the ADF-Marriage Treatment in Figure 4, that evangelicals can be receptive to arguments to religious liberty for all if framed as a way to vouchsafe their own religious liberty. Yet this course is seems fraught with uncertainty, as Moore likely knows too well. Even more, it may come at a cost, affecting how much the base values the right. Reciprocity seems to be difficult, though not impossible.

While reciprocity is difficult for conservatives, perhaps it would be worth the cost. The experiments also suggest, at least in part, that Moore and other conservative Christian religious freedom-for-all advocates are correct in their logic: defending religious freedom for all will help protect their own religious freedom. While Democrats are generally strongly opposed to religious exemptions to providing services to LGBT people (i.e., same-sex marriage service refusals), seeing a story about a Muslim or a Hindu religious exemption significantly reduces Democratic (and non-evangelical) opposition to religious exemptions in the same-sex marriage context. While these experiments do not show an added benefit of a conservative Christian organization like ADF supporting the religious minorities’ rights to religious freedom, the more
people are faced with a variety of religious accommodation the more open they seem to be to those claims. Thus, conservative Christians may want to “advertise” support for a variety of minority religious freedom protections, bundling their own protections with real advocacy for others.

There also seems to be an opportunity for conservative Christian elites like Moore to gain momentum with a religious freedom for all strategy. Evangelical tolerance for minorities’ religious freedom seems to have grown exponentially over the past four decades, as shown in the GSS results regarding tolerance for atheists, and this is especially true for younger, more educated, and more urban evangelicals. At the same time, evangelicals have to navigate fear. They seem to not only be afraid that they are losing a cultural position, but afraid of a particular religious group gaining ground—Muslims. While the Muslim-Christian conflict is plaguing the politics of religious liberty, it is surprising that Hindus fare equally as poorly, augmenting some prior work that emphasizes Muslims as the most feared group by the Right (Karpowitz, Monson, and Patterson 2016). This suggests that fear of terrorism is not the primary driver of reduced support; rather it seems to be fear of losing some type of Christian nationalism.

This paper is an entre into the politics of religious freedom. More research should be conducted to understand the dynamics of public opinion, the connections between elite messages and mass responses (especially among the religious), and the relationship between the politics of place (diversity/homogeneity) and heritage (family religiosity) and both religious threat and support for religious freedom. Employing a range of data and analyses could provide useful insight into a pressing cultural question, while also helping us understand how public commitments to rights are formulated. As the research on religious freedom develops, the dynamics of reciprocity should remain central.
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Appendix 1: Experimental Treatments

Muslims

Treatment 1: Story Only

Muslim men fired for refusing to deliver alcohol

PEORIA, IL -- On January 7, 2017, two Muslim men were fired from their trucking jobs because they refused to deliver alcohol. Islam forbids consuming alcohol, and the men claimed that their religious values would not allow them to assist others consume beer.

In April, the trucking company was sued, claiming that the men were fired because of their religious beliefs in violation of their rights to religious freedom in the First Amendment of the Constitution. The trucking company argued that the men were fired for not doing their job and the company is not required to provide special treatment for people's religious beliefs.

A federal court is set to decide the case in July.

Treatment 2: ACLU

Muslim men fired for refusing to deliver alcohol

PEORIA, IL -- On January 7, 2017, two Muslim men were fired from their trucking jobs because they refused to deliver alcohol. Islam forbids consuming alcohol, and the men claimed that their religious values would not allow them to assist others consume beer.

In April, the trucking company was sued, claiming that the men were fired because of their religious beliefs in violation of their rights to religious freedom in the First Amendment of the Constitution. The trucking company argued that the men were fired for not doing their job and the company is not required to provide special treatment for people's religious beliefs.

The case has garnered some attention from legal advocates. The American Civil Liberties Union, a liberal legal advocacy group, released a statement supporting the Muslim men: "Religious freedom is a vital human and constitutional right and companies must make good faith efforts to accommodate religious objectors before firing them." A federal court is set to decide the case in July.
Treatment 3: ADF

PEORIA, IL – On January 7, 2017, two Muslim men were fired from their trucking jobs because they refused to deliver alcohol. Islam forbids consuming alcohol, and the men claimed that their religious values would not allow them to assist others consume beer.

In April, the trucking company was sued, claiming that the men were fired because of their religious beliefs in violation of their right to religious freedom in the First Amendment of the Constitution. The trucking company argued that the men were fired for not doing their job and the company is not required to provide special treatment for people’s religious beliefs.

The case has garnered some attention from legal advocates. Alliance Defending Freedom, the conservative Christian legal advocacy group, released a statement supporting the Muslim men. “Religious freedom is a vital human and constitutional right and companies must make good faith efforts to accommodate religious objectors before firing them.” A federal court is set to decide the case in July.

Treatment 4: ADF – Marriage

Hindus

Treatment 1: Story Only
Hindu Truck Drivers Fired for Refusing to Deliver Beef

PEORIA, IL. — On January 7, 2018, two Hindu men were fired from their trucking jobs because they refused to deliver beef. Hinduism forbids consuming beef, and the men claimed that their religious values would not allow them to assist others consume hamburger meat.

In April, the trucking company was sued, claiming that the men were fired because of their religious beliefs in violation of their right to religious freedom in the First Amendment of the Constitution. The trucking company argued that the men were fired for not doing their job and the company is not required to provide special treatment for people’s religious beliefs.

A federal court is set to decide the case in July.

Treatment 2: ACLU

Hindu Truck Drivers Fired for Refusing to Deliver Beef

PEORIA, IL. — On January 7, 2018, two Hindu men were fired from their trucking jobs because they refused to deliver beef. Hinduism forbids consuming beef, and the men claimed that their religious values would not allow them to assist others consume hamburger meat.

In April, the trucking company was sued, claiming that the men were fired because of their religious beliefs in violation of their right to religious freedom in the First Amendment of the Constitution. The trucking company argued that the men were fired for not doing their job and the company is not required to provide special treatment for people’s religious beliefs.

The case has garnered some attention from legal advocates. The American Civil Liberties Union, a liberal legal advocacy group, released a statement supporting the Hindu men: “Religious freedom is a vital human and constitutional right and companies must make good faith efforts to accommodate religious objectors before firing them.” A federal court is set to decide the case in July.

Treatment 3: ADF
Hindu Truck Drivers Fired for Refusing to Deliver Beef

PEORIA, IL – On January 7, 2018, two Hindu men were fired from their trucking jobs because they refused to deliver beef. Hinduism forbids consuming beef, and the men claimed that their religious values would not allow them to assist others consume hamburger meat.

In April, the trucking company was sued, claiming that the men were fired because of their religious beliefs in violation of their right to religious freedom in the First Amendment of the Constitution. The trucking company argued that the men were fired for not doing their job and the company is not required to provide special treatment for people’s religious beliefs.

The case has garnered some attention from legal advocates. Alliance Defending Freedom, the conservative Christian legal advocacy group, released a statement supporting the Hindu men. “Religious freedom is a vital human and constitutional right and companies must make good faith efforts to accommodate religious objectors before firing them.” A federal court is set to decide the case in July.

Treatment 4: ADF – Marriage