

Report and Analysis on Religious Freedom Measures Impacting Prayer and Faith in America (2017 Version)

**Legislation
Proclamations
Talking Points
Notes
Fact Sheets**

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY MEASURES THAT RELATE TO PRAYER AND
FREE EXERCISE MODEL ACTS PROCLAMATIONS RESOLUTION
ANALYSIS AND TALKING POINTS LEGISLATION FACT SHEETS

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Forward

This report is the 2017 version of religious liberty measures that relate to prayer and faith in America. Following distribution of last year's version of this report, entitled "An Historical Report and Analysis of Religious Liberty Measures That Impact Prayer and Faith in America" ("Historical Report"), CPCF tracked approximately 33 separate pieces of legislation passed in the 2017 terms of the various state legislatures that were favorable to prayer and the free exercise of religion in our country. That compares to only six passed during 2016, by our count.

The purpose of this report is to give you, as legislators, the benefit of good work done by others and model legislation on various related topics for your consideration and potential use. We have expanded the analysis and "talking points" in many areas and have attempted to make this version more user-friendly. But, like the Historical Report, this report reflects the collective wisdom and experience of individual legislators and legal teams who have worked with various pieces of legislation, as well as groups who have or will support such legislation, and the strategic analysis of many organizations, teams, and individuals who have studied these measures. This is not an exhaustive collection of model acts, resolutions, and proclamations on the topic, but it addresses most areas of recent interest.

The following principles apply to all of the measures and should be considered early on:

1. Nothing is more important than learning to tell a story that shows why the legislation is needed. While the text of legislation is critical, it can become sterile without painting a picture of "why" it says it. Remember to tell the story! Tell it often, and tell it well. When you have limited time, tell the story and let the legislation speak for itself.
2. Never forget that you often communicate more with your actions than your words. Tone and temperament are vital.
3. The name matters. For example, "Protecting Religious Freedom in Private Homes Act" is not nearly as powerful as the "Home Privacy Protection Act."
4. Do not let the "perfect" be the enemy of the "good."

The Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation does not advocate for or against any piece of legislation. That decision must be made by individual legislators. If we can provide you with any additional information, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you for serving your country and protecting our First Amendment rights.

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Overview of Religious Liberty Measures for States

Historically, Republicans and Democrats agreed that religious liberty is a central American principle that should be protected, but over the past decade this conviction has weakened and come under increasing attack. It is tempting to look to the federal government for solutions to this threat, but under our system of federalism states can and must play a crucial role in protecting religious freedom.

This report presents religious liberty laws, resolutions, and proclamations that are often modeled on those that have been proposed or passed in different states over the past few years. The model measures are divided into three categories based on predicted strength of opposition. Please note that this does not mean that items in Category 1 are more important than those in Category 2, and so forth. In fact, measures in Category 3 would likely have the greatest immediate positive impact for religious liberty, but recent history suggests they will receive the stiffest and best-organized opposition.

Religious liberty conditions differ from state to state, so legislators usually consider which of the measures they believe will have the best chance of passing in their state and which will do the most good. In some states, it may be most effective to convert a model law into a regulation, a constitutional amendment, or a resolution. These measures provide only general language/subjects that have been used across the country as a starting point for drafting state-specific legislation.

Having said this, in some situations identified below, introducing a bill can have very positive effects, even if the bill is not ultimately passed. It is critical to think strategically. Part of that effort is not to let those who want to run roughshod over religious liberty dictate the terms of the discussion, but to be ready to engage them with facts and figures and research that challenge their assumptions, as Americans United For Life has done well over the last decade in the abortion rights area (which this report does not directly cover). To this end, new this year are model public policy resolutions that rely heavily on the research that demonstrates the deleterious physical and mental health effects of same-sex intercourse and gender identity “transformation” (found in Category#3).

Category #1: Legislation Regarding Our Country's Religious Heritage

Measures in Category #1 mainly recognize the place of Christian principles in our nation's history and heritage. They deal broadly with our national motto, history, and civics, including their Judeo-Christian dimensions. They are likely to receive the least opposition, but the opposition they do receive will likely include charges that:

- Legislators should spend their time on more important things.
- This legislation is not necessary.
- The sponsor of this legislation just wants to fight culture wars and divide people.

These types of attacks normally come from opposing legislators, pundits, and editorial boards, but they do not have much impact in the legislative process because they do not garner much organized outside opposition.

Despite arguments that this type of legislation is not needed, measures such as the “In God We Trust” bill can have enormous impact. Even if it does not become law, it can still provide the basis to shore up later support for other governmental entities to support religious displays. For example, the U.S. House passed “In God We Trust” legislation in November 2011; even though it never passed the Senate nor

was signed into law by the president, it still had a significant ripple effect on subsequent measures, policies, and agency actions.

The remaining measures promote religious liberty by informing students and the general public about America's historic commitment to constitutional government and protecting basic rights—including religious liberty. Furthermore, they can also attract potential allies from organizations that are not necessarily religious but which feel that we no longer teach accurate history and that the lack of this teaching is having an adverse impact on the citizenry.

The measures in Category #1 include:

1. National Motto Display Act
2. Civic Literacy Act
3. Religion in Legal History Act
4. Bible Literacy Act

Category #2: Resolutions and Proclamations Recognizing the Importance of Religious History and Freedom

The measures in Category #2 focus more on our country's Judeo-Christian heritage. They will receive the same attacks as the first category, with the additional charge that advocates are being divisive because they are favoring Christianity or Judaism over other religions. Yet, these opposition arguments often do not play well among members of the general public and are not usually detrimental in elections.

Even if these proposed bills/resolutions do not pass, sometimes making opponents take a recorded vote against them is a victory in and of itself. For such measures, a vote is a win, regardless of whether the bill passes or is defeated.

The measures in this category are crafted as proclamations, but they are often crafted as resolutions. Even though proclamations and resolutions are largely symbolic, they can still be used for positive purposes. For example, the passage of a proclamation or resolution will likely be seen by citizens of faith as an encouraging victory. And resolutions and proclamations can also be used for educational purposes—to be distributed to schools and teachers, or churches and pastors, encouraging them to observe the call in the measure or to educate their groups about its content and purpose.

Most legislatures are accustomed to passing proclamations and resolutions for virtually anything, and advocates in most states can point to proclamations honoring Women's History, Irish-American Heritage, Jewish-American Heritage, Gay and Lesbian History, and so forth. If proclamations and resolutions recognizing these groups are appropriate, it would seem reasonable to honor America's Christian (or Judeo-Christian) heritage in the same way. So in this category are various proclamations pertaining to the importance of the heritage and also of religious freedom. If any legislator opposes this, it will be helpful to get him or her on record against this heritage and freedom. Passage of such proclamations and resolutions can also potentially be useful for building support for specific legislation in category 3.

Measures in Category #2 include:

1. Proclamation Recognizing Religious Freedom Day
2. Proclamation Recognizing Christian Heritage Week

3. Proclamation Recognizing the Importance of the Bible in History
4. Proclamation Recognizing the Year of the Bible
5. Proclamation Recognizing Christmas Day

Category #3: Religious Liberty Protection Legislation

The measures in category #3 include legislation that protects the ability of citizens to speak and act upon their religious convictions. These measures will have the greatest immediate impact on protecting religious liberties, but some of them also are the most hotly contested.

We begin this category with three model resolutions to define public policies of the state in favor of biblical values concerning marriage and sexuality. These provisions are supported by multiple facts about the enormous costs of homosexual intercourse and gender confusion, mainly from federal and state survey information readily accessible. These types of provisions can help change the terms of the debate, whether or not the provisions are passed.

The same likely is less true of the other measures collected in this category. After the Supreme Court declared the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) to be unconstitutional with respect to state legislation, about half of the states passed their own RFRA. At first, these bills were supported by both Democrats and Republicans, but this has changed over the past decade. States without RFRA should consider passing them if feasible, but it may be more profitable to focus on narrowly crafted legislation in this category that protects small business owners, government employees, health care providers, pastors, adoption agencies, and so on from being forced to choose between their religious convictions and their vocations.

Please be aware that opposition to the measures in this category will often be well-organized and well-financed, and the arguments made are more dangerous because they will often play the same inside and outside the statehouse. More care must be taken to avoid bringing this legislation to a vote unless the vote can be won. A defeated measure can often hurt more than help and will put allies and leadership in a difficult position.

Measures in this category are divided into three subcategories, and include: **[must be conformed to each state's format]**

Public Policy Resolutions

1. Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Intimate Sexual Relations Only Between Married, Heterosexual Couples
2. Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Reliance on and Maintenance of Birth Gender
3. Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Adoption by Intact Heterosexual, Marriage-based Families

Protection for Professionals and Individuals

1. Marriage Tolerance Act (a/k/a/ First Amendment Defense Act)
2. Preserving Religious Freedom Act (a/k/a/ Religious Freedom Restoration Act or "State RFRA")
3. Child Protection Act
4. Clergy Protection Act
5. Licensed Professional Civil Rights Act

Protection for Teachers and Students

1. Student Prayer Certification Act
2. Teacher Protection Act
3. Preserving Religious Freedom in School Act

Stylistic Notes

Because this report contains model bills intended for all jurisdictions, certain stylistic conventions used in the model acts may not be appropriate for your State. Therefore, you will need to adjust some bills to fit your State's common practice. The following are some examples:

1. Whether your State or Commonwealth (hereinafter "State") has requirements or conventions relating to titles of bills and other introductory material. Certain of the model bills use a generic "An act relating to . . ." paragraph as introductory material, while others do not. This must be added if your State requires it. We have not included the "Be it enacted . . ." or similar phraseology that some States commonly use, so this should be added if needed.
2. Whether and how the model act will be included in your State's code. The language in these model acts assumes a freestanding act.
3. Whether your State usually, always, or never includes "Whereas" or purpose clauses at the beginning of its bills. The model acts do not use the "Whereas" phraseology, and some will have purpose clauses and some not. When including such clauses, take care with them. Courts typically look at legislative history when adjudicating challenges to legislation. Although committee hearings and floor debate are routinely examined, "Whereas" or purpose clauses are given even more weight, as they are part of the enactment itself.
4. Whether you will need to address repealing or amending existing code provisions or whether you can simply introduce this proposed bill independently. In some States, simply including language such as "any statutes previously enacted notwithstanding . . ." or the like, may suffice in addressing prior inconsistent statutes. The language in some model acts addresses repeal or amendment, but some model acts do not, and therefore must be added if appropriate in your particular circumstance.
5. Whether the bill will or can go into effect immediately upon passage, whether this depends on certain circumstances, whether an automatic delay applies, or whether a specific date must be stated. The model bills sometimes include an effective date provision, which is common in some States but not in others. Other model acts do not contain a provision addressing its effective date and must be added if desired. Typically, the model acts state that the law will go into effect immediately.

6. Whether your State has rules or conventions regarding the amount of material contained in sections, sub-sections, etc. The model acts will contain logical divisions which may need to be adjusted for your State. Internal cross-references will also need to be altered if the subdivisions suggested are altered and/or if references to existing statutes are required.

Final Thoughts

1. Before filing any piece of religious liberty legislation from any category, evaluate the probability of success and identify the goal: Is it passage? To educate fellow legislators and the public on an issue? To get opponents on a recorded vote? To change the terms of the discussion?
2. Don't hesitate to push legislation where the goal is to stimulate debate and get a vote, as long as the defeat of that legislation would not have a lasting detrimental impact.
3. If the goal of a measure is passage, and if its defeat would have a lasting and detrimental impact, do not file the measure unless you have committee votes lined up and support groups ready to mobilize.
4. Remember that success builds success. There is nothing wrong with starting small and letting victories build to greater success through incremental steps and measures.
5. We stand with you and support your efforts in prayer and with resources. These resources include lawyers trained in the Constitution who can help you to draft legislative language and to defend the bills if challenged. We are also developing a databank of experts to testify on behalf of the bills.

May God bless you richly as you work to protect our first freedom—religious liberty with its rights of religious conscience and free exercise.

Category #1 - Legislation Regarding Our Country's Religious Heritage

The measures in this category recognize that religion, and particularly our Judeo-Christian heritage, have played a large part in the founding and history of this country. To this end, it is important for our citizenry, including especially young students, to be educated about those topics. Without that education, we are sorely lacking in appreciation and understanding of the principles on which this country was based.

We emphasize that this is not an attempt at proselytization. It is only an attempt to redress what has become a serious shortfall in many educational systems by ignoring this critical aspect of our country's intellectual history and underpinnings. Without this education in the basic religious dimension of our history and civics, our citizens are not as able to assess and act on the various public policy concerns that we all face now and will face in the future.

National Motto Display Act

An act providing for display of the National Motto, "In God We Trust," in public buildings and on license plates.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be known as the National Motto Display Act.

Section 2. Display of National Motto in Public Buildings

- (a) The National Motto of the United States, "In God We Trust," shall be prominently displayed in a conspicuous place in all public elementary and secondary school classrooms and libraries in this State, in all public colleges and universities in this State, and in each government building or facility in this State.
- (b) The display must be easily readable and on a durable poster or framed copy of at least [specify dimensions, e.g., 11 inches by 14 inches] and must include a true and correct representation of the American flag centered under the National Motto.
- (c) Responsibility for implementing this requirement rests with the superintendents of the public schools in this State and the appropriate administrative officials of the various institutions and agencies of this State.
- (d) Definitions.
 - (i) "Government building or facility" means any building or facility in this State that is maintained or operated by state funds.
 - (ii) "Classroom" means any room that is used for instruction.

Section 3. Funding for Display of National Motto in Public Buildings

The copies or posters authorized under section 2 of this act shall either be donated or shall be purchased solely with funds made available through voluntary contributions to the local school boards, the State, or the [appropriate State agency].

Section 4. Display of National Motto on License Plates

- (a) An owner or lessee of a motor vehicle who has been issued, or is entitled to be issued, a registration plate, may elect in the alternative for the issuance of a registration plate that is designed in a manner to have engraved or embossed on it the language "In God We Trust," as provided in subsection (b).
- (b) Beginning [date], the [appropriate government official] shall cause to be issued registration plates issued or reissued pursuant to this section that display the language "In God We Trust" if requested pursuant to subsection (a).

NOTES

Other States have adopted legislation similar to this model. For example:

- Arkansas enacted legislation in 2017, HB 1980, authorizing display of the National Motto in public buildings and public schools, if the display items are donated or paid for entirely by private voluntary donations. <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2017/2017R/Acts/Act911.pdf>
- Tennessee enacted legislation in 2017, SB 1355, permitting owners or lessees to request addition of the National Motto to newly issued license plates. <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/110/Amend/SA0447.pdf>
- West Virginia enacted legislation in 2017, HB 2180, permitting vanity plates with the National Motto displayed. http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Status/bills_text.cfm?billdoc=HB2180%20SUB%20ENR.htm&yr=2017&sesstype=RS&i=2180
- Utah enacted legislation in 2016, HB 127 making “In God We Trust” a standard option that motorists may select. <https://le.utah.gov/~2016/bills/static/HB0127.html>
- In its 2013-2014 legislative session, Pennsylvania authorized an “In God We Trust” license plate, SB 1187, as an option that motorists may select (for a fee). <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2014&sessInd=0&act=109>

TALKING POINTS

- In 2011, the House of Representatives reaffirmed “In God We Trust” as our National Motto by a landslide bipartisan vote of 396 to 9 and encouraged its display in public buildings throughout America. This congressional reaffirmation solidifies the foundation set by the Founding Fathers, who established this nation on the belief that we have certain inalienable rights that are endowed by our Creator.
- On July 30, 1956, President Eisenhower signed into law a congressional joint resolution making “In God We Trust” our National Motto. More than just a motto, though, it is our country’s foundation and an important part of our identity as Americans.
- In God We Trust has been referenced by our Presidents, written on our money since 1864, and “In God is our trust” is in the fourth verse of our National Anthem. God is acknowledged in our Pledge of Allegiance and has been the source of America’s hope since its founding.
- This legislative measure preserves and reinforces what our country has recognized for years, that our National Motto, which neither recognizes any specific religion nor establishes any individual or corporate requirement related thereto, may and should continue to be freely displayed as an acknowledgement of our country’s history and founding principles. Although some may object to legislation on this topic because they are offended by references to God, the model legislation does not require their assent to the National Motto or that they take any particular action that might reasonably be construed as assent. The incidental contact they may have with respect to the National Motto (e.g., using U.S. currency, entering a public building, seeing a license plate in front of them in traffic) is not a substantial burden.

Civic Literacy Act

An act providing for instruction in the content and meaning of the documents that form the foundation of our country's Constitutional Republic.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Civic Literacy Act.

Section 2. Legislative Findings

- (a) Basic civic literacy is required for an effective and responsible citizenry.
- (b) Civic literacy includes familiarity with and understanding of the major principles in this country's foundational and historical documents and subsequent development of those basic principles that are the basis of this country's representative form of limited government.
- (c) The period of secondary education is a critical time for teaching and developing civic literacy.

Section 3. American Heritage Education

- (a) Local boards of education shall require during the high school years the teaching of the nation's founding and related documents, which shall include the major principles in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and its amendments, and representative readings from *The Federalist Papers* so as to understand America's representative form of limited government, liberties secured in the Bill of Rights, federalism, and other basic principles that are essential to the stability and endurance our Constitutional Republic.
- (b) Local boards of education shall require that high school students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nation's founding and related documents in order to receive a certificate or diploma of graduation from high school.
- (c) Local boards of education shall include among the requirements for graduation from high school a passing grade in all courses that include primary instruction in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and its amendments, and representative readings from *The Federalist Papers* so as to understand America's representative form of limited government, liberties secured in the Bill of Rights, federalism, and other basic principles that are essential to the stability and endurance our Constitutional Republic.
- (d) Local boards of education shall allow and may encourage any public school teacher or administrator to read or post in a public school building, classroom, or event, excerpts or portions of writings, documents, and records that reflect the history of the United States, including, but not limited to, (i) the preamble to the Constitution of this State; (ii) the Declaration of Independence; (iii) the United States Constitution; (iv) the Mayflower Compact; (v) the Northwest Ordinance; (vi) George Washington's Farewell Address; (vii) the Emancipation Proclamation; (viii) the Gettysburg Address; (ix) the National Motto; (x) the National Anthem; (xi) the Pledge of Allegiance; and (xii) the writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the Founding Fathers and Presidents of the United States.

- (e) No state official or entity may limit or restrain instruction in American or state history or heritage based on religious references in documents, writings, speeches, proclamations, or other historic records.
- (f) The State Board of Education shall require that any high school level curriculum-based tests developed and administered statewide include questions related to the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and its amendments, and representative readings from *The Federalist Papers* so as to demonstrate understanding of America's representative form of limited government, liberties secured in the Bill of Rights, federalism, and other basic principles that are essential to the stability and endurance our Constitutional Republic.
- (g) The [appropriate State agency] and the local boards of education, as appropriate, shall establish curriculum content and provide for teacher training to ensure that the intent and provisions of this section are carried out.
- (h) The [appropriate State agency] shall report [annually, biennially] to the [legislature, or appropriate committee/subcommittee], in both qualitative terms and quantitative measures, what has been achieved with respect to implementing the requirements of this act and achieving the stated goal of ensuring students know and understand the fundamental principles that are the foundation of our Constitutional Republic.

Notes

States that have adopted legislation similar to this model include:

- North Carolina has enacted civic literacy legislation (N.C. Gen Stat section 115C-81.(g)).
http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_115c/gs_115c-81.html
- California enacted legislation requiring the Instructional Quality Commission to ensure historical documents (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Federalist Papers) are included in the history-social science framework when revising that framework as required by law (California Education Code, section 33540.(b) (4)-(6)).
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=33540.&lawCode=EDC
- A civic literacy bill, HB 5665, was introduced in the Rhode Island legislature in 2017, but was tabled for further study.
<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText17/HouseText17/H5665.pdf>
- In 2016, South Carolina passed the Founding Principles Act, which reinforces Code Section 59-29-120. <http://dailysignal.com/2016/06/17/this-new-law-ensures-south-carolina-students-will-study-the-founding-documents/>

Talking Points

- ☐ This legislation recognizes the importance of basic civic literacy for an effective and responsible citizenry. This includes familiarity with and understanding of the major principles in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and its amendments, and representative readings from *The Federalist Papers*, and other foundational and historical documents to promote understanding of America's representative form of limited government, liberties secured in the Bill of Rights, federalism, and other basic principles that are essential to the stability and endurance of our Constitutional Republic.
- ☐ The next generation, to have any hope of maintaining their heritage of liberty and self-government, must understand important historical documents that represent the moral, philosophical, traditional, and political foundations on which our nation was built.
- The American form of government is based on core principles related to the inherent dignity and freedom of individuals, balanced by what is necessary to promote the common welfare of the governed. To fully grasp the importance of these founding principles (and why they should be defended), it is necessary to understand their source and how the Framers of our government understood and were motivated by these principles, such as “unalienable rights” endowed by a Creator.
- ☐ Government is designed to secure our rights, but it is difficult to maintain and safeguard these rights without understanding the documents upon which these rights are based.

Religion in Legal History Act

An act providing for display of religious documents that have been instrumental in the development of law in the United States and this State.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be known as the Religion in Legal History Act.

Section 2. Legislative Findings

- (a) There is a need to educate and inform the public as to the history and background of the law of the United States and this State.
- (b) Religious history plays an important role in the background of the history and background of the law of the United States and this State.
- (c) The role of religion in the constitutional history of both the United States and this State is acknowledged by historians.
- (d) A basic knowledge of American legal history is important to the formation of civic virtue in our society.
- (e) The courts have provided vital direction on how to approach the display of historical documents consistently with constitutional protections.
- (f) This State now endorses a uniform, sound, distinct, and appropriate presentation of the story of the role of religion in the constitutional history of the United States and this State, which may be publicly displayed in court houses and other state and local buildings throughout this State.

Section 3. Public Displays of Religious History Affecting the Law

Public displays with acknowledged religious history may include, but shall not be limited to, the items in this section.

- (a) The Mayflower Compact, written and adopted in 1620.
- (b) The Declaration of Independence, adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776.
- (c) Articles I through VI of the Northwest Ordinance enacted by Congress on July 13, 1787.
- (d) Washington's Farewell Address, published September 26, 1796.

Section 4. Context of Public Displays

Public displays set forth in section 3 of this act shall be accompanied by a document entitled "Context for Acknowledging America's Religious History," which shall read as follows:

-
- (a) Some documents stand out as pivotal in the religious history of the legal systems of the United States and this State, among which are the Mayflower Compact, The Declaration of Independence as a legal precursor for the United States Constitution, and the Northwest Ordinance, which was the first congressional act legally prohibiting slavery. It is hoped that their study and relation to each other and the history of our State and America will foster an understanding of the role that religion has played in the legal history of the United States and this State and prompt further public and private study.
 - (b) American law, constitutionalism, and political theory have deep roots in religion. American ideals about liberty, freedom, equality, legal responsibility, and codes of law, to mention a few, have roots and underpinnings in religion and biblical literacy.

Section 5. Funding and Production of Historical Documents, Display

- (a) The documents and displays authorized in section 3 of this act shall either be donated or shall be purchased solely with funds made available through voluntary contributions to the [appropriate State organization].
- (b) The [appropriate State organization] shall, upon request, prepare and distribute to state offices, clerks of court and judges, and the local governing authorities in the State copies of the documents set forth in section 3 suitable for framing and display, upon receipt of donated documents or voluntarily contributed funds to pay for the actual cost of the preparation and delivery of the documents.
- (c) Each State office, clerk of court, judge, and local governing authority is authorized to post the documents for display provided by the [appropriate State official] in a visible public location, along with other historical documents.
- (d) Nothing herein shall prohibit the State or local governing officers, judges, or clerks of court from reprinting the documents in section 3 above or accepting a donation of already printed documents for display in public buildings.

Notes

- ☐ Other States have adopted legislation similar to this model. For example:
- In 2006, Louisiana enacted SB 476.
<http://legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=402951>
 - In 2006, Kentucky enacted HB 277 related to display of historic religious items on public property.
<http://apps.sos.ky.gov/Executive/Journal/execjournalimages/2006-Reg-HB-0277-443.pdf>
- The Mayflower Compact includes, *inter alia*, this text: “Having undertaken for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together in a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”
Full text of the Compact: <https://www.plimoth.org/learn/just-kids/homework-help/mayflower-and-mayflower-compact#mayflower%20compact>
 - The Declaration of Independence includes, *inter alia*, this text: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...”
Full text of the Declaration:
<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=2&page=transcript>
 - Articles I through VI of the Northwest Ordinance, which prohibited slavery in the new territories, included this text: “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind...”
The full text of the Ordinance is found here:
<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=8&page=transcript>
 - Washington’s Farewell Address includes, *inter alia*, this text: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

“It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?”

Full text of the address: <http://www.ushistory.org/documents/farewelladdress.htm>

Talking Points

- ☐ Citizens should understand these important historical documents, which present the philosophical, traditional, and political foundation upon which our nation is built.
- ☐ Our form of government is based on core principles related to the inherent dignity and freedom of individuals, balanced by what is necessary to promote the common welfare of the governed. To fully grasp the importance of these founding principles (and why they should be defended), it is necessary for the citizens of this State to have ready access to the documents that informed the framers of our government as they developed the founding documents that underlie our constitutional government, as well as to the founding documents themselves.
- ☐ These legislative measures ensure the needful and appropriate public display of replicas and representations of our founding documents, along with other documents that were the source and inspiration of our founding principles, or are therein explained or exemplified; regardless of whether such other documents be political, religious, philosophical, contractual, or mere proclamations.
- ☐ Government is designed to secure our rights, but it is difficult to maintain and safeguard these rights without understanding the documents upon which these rights are based.
- ☐ Per section 5 in the model legislation, no expenditure of state funds is required to implement this legislation.

Bible Literacy Act

An act relating to public school elective courses in the history and literature of the Old and New Testaments eras.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be known as the Bible Literacy Act.

Section 2. Elective Courses in History and Literature of the Old and New Testament Eras

- (a) A school district shall offer to students in grades nine or above an elective course in the history and literature of the Old Testament era and an elective course in the history and literature of the New Testament era.
- (b) The purpose of a course under this section is to:
 - a. Teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry, and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory, and public policy; and
 - b. Familiarize students with, as applicable:
 - (i) the contents of the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) or New Testament;
 - (ii) the history of the Old or New Testament;
 - (iii) the literary style and structure of the Old or New Testament; and
 - (iv) the influence of the Old or New Testament on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture.
- (c) [Insert this section if relevant: Notwithstanding [relevant statutory reference(s)], respectively, for a course under this section, the [relevant State government organization] may not:
 - a. identify the essential knowledge and skills; or
 - b. adopt textbooks under [relevant statutory reference].]
- (d) The book or collection of books commonly known as the Old and New Testaments shall be used as the basic textbook for a course in the history and literature of the Old or New Testament era. In addition to the basic textbooks, students may be assigned a range of reading materials for the courses, including selections from secular historical and cultural works and selections from religious and cultural traditions other than the Judeo-Christian tradition.
- (e) A course under this section must familiarize students with, as applicable:
 - a. the contents of the Old or New Testament;
 - b. the literary style and structure of the Old or New Testament;
 - c. the customs, cultures, and religions of the peoples and societies recorded in the Old or New Testament;
 - d. the history and geography of the times and places referred to in the Old or New Testament;
 - e. the influence of the Old or New Testament on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture.
 - f. the methods and tools of writing during the period when the Old or New Testament was written;
 - g. the means by which the Old or New Testament book was preserved;
 - h. the languages in which the Old or New Testament book was written; and
 - i. the historical and cultural events that led to the translation of the Old or New Testament book into English.

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- (f) The [title of relevant local school organization] of a school district may recommend a version of the Old or New Testament to be used in a course offered by the district under this section, except that:
- a. the teacher of the course may not be required to adopt the board's recommendation and may use the recommended version or another version; and
 - b. a student may not be required to use a specific version as the sole text of the Old or New Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different version of the Old or New Testament from that recommended by the [title of relevant local school organization] or chosen by the teacher.
- (g) A course offered under this section:
- a. must be taught in an objective and non-proselytizing manner that does not attempt to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of the Judeo-Christian biblical materials or the truth or falsity of texts from other religious or cultural traditions other than the Judeo-Christian tradition;
 - b. may not include teaching that favors a religious doctrine or a sectarian interpretation of the Old or New Testament or of texts from other religious or cultural traditions other than the Judeo-Christian tradition;
 - c. may not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs; and
 - d. shall follow applicable law and all federal and state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course under this section shall not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility toward, any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. The [relevant State organization], in complying with this section, shall not violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, this State's Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United States Department of Education or the [relevant State organization].
- (h) The [title of relevant local school organization] of a school district shall determine the qualifications, assignment, and training of teachers of a course under this section, except that:
- a. the teacher must be certified as provided by [relevant statutory reference], unless an exception to that requirement exists under [relevant statutory reference]; and
 - b. the board may not assign a person to teach a course under this section based in whole or in part on any religious test, profession of faith or lack of faith, prior or present religious affiliation or lack of affiliation, or criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of beliefs about the Old or New Testament.
- (i) For the purpose of awarding credit for high school graduation, a school district shall grant [desired amount] academic elective credit for satisfactory completion of a course in the history and literature of the Old Testament era and [desired amount] academic elective credit for satisfactory completion of a course in the history and literature of the New Testament era. This subsection applies only to a course that is taught in strict compliance with this section.
- (j) The [title of relevant local school organization] of a school district may, as it determines appropriate, monitor the content and teaching of a course offered under this section.
- (k) This section does not limit the authority of the [title of relevant local school organization] of a school district to offer a course regarding the Old Testament or the New Testament that does not comply with this section, except that the district may not spend state funds distributed under this title in connection with a course that does not meet the requirements of this section.
- (l) This section does not prohibit the [title of relevant local school organization] of a school district from offering an elective course based on the books of a religion or society other than one with Judeo-
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Christian traditions. In determining whether to offer such a course, the board may consider various factors including student and parent demand for such a course and the impact such books have had on history and culture. In order for such a course to qualify for award of academic elective credit and for use of state funds, it must be in strict compliance with the requirements of this section, except that the books of a religion or society other than one with Judeo-Christian traditions are substituted in place of the Old or New Testament.

Section 3. Guidance for Implementation

No later than [date], the [appropriate State government organization] shall develop and issue guidance for local school districts on the implementation of this act.

Section 4. Effective Date of Requirement

- (a) A school district shall offer a course in the history and literature of the Old Testament era and a course in the history and literature of the New Testament era that comply with [appropriate statutory reference], as added by this act, beginning with the first school year beginning at least one year after this act becomes effective.
- (b) A school district shall offer a course in the history and literature of another non-Judeo-Christian tradition book era as the need for such a course is determined by the school district.

Notes

In 2007, Texas enacted SB 1287.

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/Search/DocViewer.aspx?ID=80RHB012875B&QueryText=%22Old+Testament%22&DocType=B>

In 2017, Kentucky enacted HB 128.

<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recorddocuments/bill/17RS/HB128/bill.pdf>.

In 2006, Georgia passed SB 79.

<http://www.newsweek.com/see-you-bible-class-107495>

<http://onlineathens.com/local-news/2011-10-22/less-interest-bible-classes>

Talking Points

- The American form of government is based on core principles related to the inherent dignity and freedom of individuals, balanced by what is necessary to promote the common welfare of the governed. To fully grasp the importance of these founding principles (and why they should be defended), it is necessary to understand their source and how the Framers of our government understood and were motivated by these principles, such as “unalienable rights” endowed by a Creator.
- Regardless of one’s views regarding the truth or untruth of the Bible, it cannot be disputed that it was one of the most widely read and widely quoted books used by leaders in the formation and history of our government. To not discuss it or understand it would make it extremely difficult to understand the history of our nation. Justice Tom C. Clark, writing for the Court in *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 225 (1963) stated this well: “[I]t might well be said that one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities.”
- Literary references to the Bible are numerous and widespread. For example, one cannot understand many allusions of Shakespeare without have a basic appreciation of the Bible, much less Dante’s work or Milton’s. A grasp of the Bible’s content and literary style is a critical element in understanding and appreciating literature written in English and other languages.
- ☐ Provision is made for elective courses that focus on the religious literature of non-Judeo-Christian religions and traditions, in recognition of the increasing diversity of our population and communities and to help students understand the respective contributions of religions and traditions.
- ☐ In 1988, Donald Lutz, a Louisiana State University professor, conducted a study to determine who most influenced the thinking of the Founding Fathers. He gathered documents that the Founders wrote to examine who was quoted most by them as authoritative sources that influenced their political philosophy. Of the 15,000 documents reviewed, Professor Lutz was able to isolate 3,154 direct quotes made by the Founders. The persons most quoted were Baron Charles Montesquieu,

followed by Sir William Blackstone and John Locke. However, the chart developed by Lutz reveals that the Founders cited the Bible four times more often than Montesquieu or Blackstone and twelve times more often than Locke. This means that biblical references accounted for 34 percent of the total.

Category #2 - Resolutions and Proclamations Recognizing the Importance of Religious History and Freedom

The model texts on the following pages are drawn from proclamations or resolutions adopted by the U.S. Congress and various States . For each topic, the source of the model text is noted following the list of items.

We have not presented this material in what some States use as an official format (e.g., the introductory "WHEREAS..." is omitted), assuming that those using this document are best able to conform it to their State's preferred format. Instead, we have taken the substance of the proclamations and presented it as a list of items from which users can choose in crafting a proclamation or resolution that meets their goals. We have augmented these lists in a few instances, and in others we have edited language in a way that we think is likely to generate more support for adoption, without diluting the core meaning of the proclamation or resolution. Of course, the items listed are not meant to be exhaustive, but merely suggestions about what might be included based on others' efforts.

Items for Inclusion in a Proclamation Recognizing Religious Freedom Day

United States democracy is rooted in the fundamental truth that all people are created equal, endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The freedom of conscience was highly valued by:

- (1) Individuals seeking religious freedom who settled in the American colonies;
- (2) The Founders of the United States; and
- (3) Thomas Jefferson, who wrote in his letter to the Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church at New London, Connecticut, dated February 4, 1809: “No provision in our Constitution ought to be dearer to man than that which protects the rights of conscience against the enterprizes of the civil authority.”

The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was:

- (1) Drafted by Thomas Jefferson, who considered the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom to be one of his greatest achievements;
- (2) Enacted on January 16, 1786; and
- (3) The forerunner to the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States protects:

- (1) The right of individuals to express freely and peacefully act on their religious beliefs and
- (2) Individuals from coercion to profess or act on a religious belief to which they do not adhere.

Thomas Jefferson wrote—

- (1) In 1798, that each right encompassed in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is dependent on the other rights described in that Amendment, “thereby guarding in the same sentence, and under the same words, the freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press: insomuch, that whatever violated either, throws down the sanctuary which covers the others;” and
- (2) In 1822, that the constitutional freedom of religion is “the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights.”

Individuals who have studied United States democracy from an international perspective, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, have noted that religion plays a central role in preserving the United States Government, because religion provides the moral base required for democracy to succeed.

After quoting George Mason’s statement from the Virginia Declaration of Rights that “all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience,” President Franklin D. Roosevelt went on to state, “In the conflict of policies and of political systems, which the world today witnesses, the United States has held forth for its own guidance and for the guidance of other nations, if they will accept it, this great torch of liberty of human thought, liberty of human conscience. We will never lower it.” (1935 speech delivered at the University of Notre Dame)

Religious freedom “has been integral to the preservation and development of the United States,” and “the free exercise of religion goes hand in hand with the preservation of our other rights,” as expressed by President George H. W. Bush in his Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 1993. “[O]ur laws and institutions should not impede or hinder but rather should protect and preserve fundamental religious liberties,” as expressed by President William Clinton in his remarks accompanying the signing (11/16/93) of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 2000bb et seq.).

We “continue to proclaim the fundamental right of all peoples to believe and worship according to their own conscience, to affirm their beliefs openly and freely, and to practice their faith without fear or intimidation,” as expressed by President Clinton in his Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 1998.

Section 2(a)(1) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401(a)) states these findings by the Congress.

- (1) “The right to freedom of religion undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States.”
- (2) Religious freedom was established by the Founders of the United States “in law, as a fundamental right and as a pillar of our Nation.”
- (3) “From its birth to this day, the United States has prized this legacy of religious freedom and honored this heritage by standing for religious freedom and offering refuge to those suffering religious persecution.”

“Freedom of religion is a fundamental human right that must be upheld by every nation and guaranteed by every government,” as expressed by President Clinton in his presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 1999.

“Religious faith has inspired many of our fellow citizens to help build a better Nation” in which “people of faith continue to wage a determined campaign to meet needs and fight suffering,” as expressed by President George W. Bush in his Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 2003.

The principle of religious freedom “has guided our Nation forward” and “is a universal human right to be protected here at home and across the globe,” as expressed by President Barack Obama in his Presidential proclamations on Religious Freedom Day in 2011 and 2013, respectively.

In *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, 134 S. Ct. 1811 (2014), the United States Supreme Court affirmed that “people of many faiths may be united in a community of tolerance and devotion.”

For countless people of the United States, faith is an integral part of every aspect of daily life and is not limited to their homes, houses of worship, or doctrinal creeds.

The role of religion in United States society and public life has a long and robust tradition.

Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED and AFFIRMED that this State:

- (1) On Religious Freedom Day on January 16, [year], honors the [xxx] anniversary of the enactment of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom; and
- (2) Affirms that—

(A) For individuals of any faith and individuals of no faith, religious freedom includes the right of an individual to live, work, associate, and worship in accordance with the beliefs of the individual;

(B) All people of the [state] can be unified in supporting religious freedom, regardless of differing individual beliefs, because religious freedom is a fundamental human right; and

(C) “[T]he American people will remain forever unshackled in matters of faith,” as expressed by President Obama in his Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 2012.

Note

Most of the preceding items are taken from the 2017 Congressional Proclamation for Religious Freedom Day. The list illustrates the long and continuous history of recognizing and protecting religious freedom in our country, but is certainly not exclusive.

Items for Inclusion in a Proclamation Recognizing Christian Heritage Week

Religious faith was not only important in official American life during the periods of discovery, exploration, colonization, and growth, but has also been acknowledged and incorporated into all three branches of American Federal Government from their very beginning.

This nation was founded on principles of religious freedom, and our Founding Fathers sought God, his blessings, and guidance as they established these United States of America as a free and independent nation.

The first act of America's first Congress in 1774 was to ask a minister to open with prayer and to lead Congress in the reading of four chapters of the Bible.

The Liberty Bell was named for the Biblical inscription from Leviticus 25:10, which passage of scripture is emblazoned around it: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land, to all the inhabitants thereof."

In 1782, Congress pursued a plan to print a Bible that would be "a neat edition of the Holy Scriptures for the use of schools" and therefore approved the production of the first English language Bible printed in America that contained the congressional endorsement that "the United States in Congress assembled ... recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States."

Benjamin Franklin, at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, stated, "It is impossible to build an empire without our Father's aid. I believe the sacred writings which say that 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it'" (quoting Psalm 127:1). He also declared, "God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? ... Without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence, wrote, "God who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the Gift of God?"

James Madison, father of the United States Constitution, advocated "the diffusion of the light of Christianity in our nation" in his Memorial and Remonstrance.

Patrick Henry quoted Proverbs 14:34 for our nation: "Righteousness alone can exalt a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."

George Mason, in his Virginia Declaration of Rights, forerunner of our federal Bill of Rights, affirmed, "That it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love and charity towards each other."

John Jay, an author of *The Federalist Papers* and first Chief Justice of the United States, urged, "The most effectual means of securing the continuance of our civil and religious liberties is always to remember with reverence and gratitude the Source from which they flow."

These and many other truly great men and women of America, giants in the structuring of American history, were statesmen of caliber and integrity who did not hesitate to express their faith.

The Christian heritage of our nation is recognized in the writings and accomplishments of such renowned individuals as Christopher Columbus, William Bradford, George Washington, John and Abigail Adams, James Madison, Patrick Henry, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and countless others, as well as in the constitutions of the several sovereign States and in innumerable public documents.

In 1853, the United States Senate declared that the Founding Fathers "had no fear or jealousy of religion itself, nor did they wish to see us an irreligious people [T]hey did not intend to spread over all the public authorities and the whole public action of the nation the dead and revolting spectacle of atheistical apathy."

Beginning in 1904 and continuing for the next half-century, the Federal Government printed and distributed *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* for the use of Members of Congress.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt not only led the nation in a six-minute prayer during D-Day on June 6, 1944, but he also declared, "If we will not prepare to give all that we have and all that we are to preserve Christian civilization in our land, we shall go to destruction."

President John F. Kennedy declared, "The rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God."

Every other President has similarly recognized the role of God and religious faith in the public life of America.

The history of Christian faith and tradition of our people is reflected in countless practices of the institutions and officials of our government, such as prayer and Scripture reading preceding each and every session of Congress, from its inception until this day.

All sessions of the United States Supreme Court begin with the Court's Marshal announcing, "God save the United States and this honorable court."

Numerous others of the most important American government leaders, institutions, monuments, buildings, and landmarks both openly acknowledge and incorporate religious words, symbols, and imagery into official venues.

The importance of our Christian heritage to the institutions, values, and vision of our nation is immeasurable, and teaching our children about the spiritual values of our historical Christian heritage will help them understand and appreciate our nation's history.

It is fitting to recognize the Pilgrims' First Thanksgiving as a special time and reason for celebrating our families, health, love, and friendship, as well as acknowledging our nation's Christian heritage.

The constitutions of each of the 50 States, either in the preamble or body, explicitly recognize or express gratitude to God.

The Preamble to the Constitution of this State states that “[appropriate quote, e.g.: “Since through Divine Providence we enjoy the blessings of civil, political and religious liberty, we, the people of [State]...reaffirm our faith in and constant reliance upon God...”.]”

For many of this State’s citizens, public school days once began with a daily Pledge of Allegiance, prayer, and Bible reading.

[If relevant: The state song(s), [TBA] and [TBA], contain the lyrics, “[TBA]” and “[TBA].”]

The influence of Christianity in this State is evident by her many churches and Christian charities, ministries, missions, and schools; her cherished Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving holiday seasons; and a willingness of this State’s residents to love their neighbor as themselves.

RESOLVED, That the [legislative body] affirm the rich spiritual and diverse religious history of our nation from its founding to the current day; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the [legislative body] rejects, in the strongest possible terms, any effort to remove, obscure, or purposely omit such history from our nation's public buildings and educational resources.

Note

The items for this model proclamation were drawn from proclamations in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and West Virginia. Those and other state proclamations may be found at <http://www.achw.org/html/twgovs.html>.

Items for Inclusion in Recognizing the Importance of the Bible in History

Johann Gutenberg, the man who changed the world with the invention of the printing press and who has been honored as the “Man of the Millennium,” chose the Bible as the first book to be printed.

The Bible is perennially the best-selling book, with over five billion copies distributed during the past millennium.

The Bible has been translated, in whole or in part, into 3,223 different languages.

Surveys report that nine out of ten Americans have Bibles in their homes.

Many of the greatest works of literature, art, and music in the past millennium, such as those of Bunyan, Milton, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Eliot, Lewis, Tolkien, Solzhenitsyn, Michelangelo, Raphael, da Vinci, Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi, were inspired by the Bible.

The earliest public education law in America (1642) was based on the importance of each student knowing the Bible in order to avoid the civil atrocities that had beset Europe. That law declared, “It being the chief project of that Old Deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times ... It is therefore ordered ... [that] after the Lord hath increased [the settlement] to the number of fifty householders, [they] shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all children ... to write and read.”

The first literacy laws in America were enacted to protect citizens from tyrannical government through a knowledge of the Bible, laws such as that of Connecticut in 1690, which declared, “Observing that ... there are many persons unable to read the English tongue and thereby incapable to read the Holy Word of God or the good laws of this Colony ... it is ordered that all parents and masters shall cause their respective children and servants, as they are capable, to be taught to read distinctly the English tongue.”

Our earliest constitutions, compacts, charters, and laws, such as the Mayflower Compact, the Colony of Virginia’s Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall, etc., the Pilgrim’s Book of General Laws, the Charter of Rhode Island, the Frame of Government of Pennsylvania, and the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, and various of the original state constitutions reflect the central role of the Bible in shaping America’s civil institutions.

John Locke’s First and Second Treatises on Civil Government (which cited the Scriptures over 1,700 times in explaining the proper foundations for civil government) was a primary source for the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and was quoted throughout the Declaration.

During the Founding Era (1760-1805), the Bible was heavily relied upon in the formation of our founding documents, with 34 percent of the quotes in the political writings of our Founding Fathers being taken from the Bible.

President and Founding Father, John Adams, declared, "Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited.... What a Utopia, what a Paradise would this region be!"

Signer of the Constitution James McHenry declared that "the Holy Scriptures ... can alone secure to society, order and peace, and to our courts of justice and constitutions of government, purity, stability, and usefulness Bibles are strong entrenchments. Where they abound, man cannot pursue wicked courses."

John Jay, coauthor of *The Federalist Papers* and the first Chief Justice of the United States, declared, "The Bible is the best of all books, for it ... teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next."

Founding Father Patrick Henry declared, "[The Bible] is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed."

Founding Father and leading American educator Noah Webster declared, "All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible"; and he further declared, "The Bible is the chief moral cause of all that is good and the best corrector of all that is evil in human society."

Founding Father and signer of the Declaration of Independence Benjamin Rush, a leading humanitarian and reformer of his day, declared that it is in studying the Bible that man becomes both "humanized and civilized."

President John Quincy Adams declared, "[T]he Bible ... is, of all books in the world, that which contributes most to make man good, wise, and happy.... I have myself, for many years, made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year."

Speaker of the House Robert Winthrop declared, "Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or by a power without them; either by the Word of God or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible or by the bayonet."

President Andrew Jackson declared that the Bible "is the rock on which our Republic rests."

Daniel Webster, the great "Defender of the Constitution," declared, "[T]o the free and universal reading of the Bible ... men were much indebted for right views of civil liberty. The Bible is ... a book which teaches man his own individual responsibility, his own dignity, and his equality with his fellow man."

President Abraham Lincoln declared that the Bible "is the best gift God has given to men But for it, we could not know right from wrong."

At the first presidential inauguration, George Washington laid his hand on the Bible and took the oath of office as prescribed by the Constitution, adding the words "so help me God," after which he leaned over and reverently kissed the Bible.

Every United States president thereafter has taken the oath of office on the Bible, as have thousands of federal, state, and local officials entrusted to manage our governmental affairs.

The Bible has formed the basis of civil justice, being the book on which witnesses are sworn in courts of law.

The teachings in the Bible were the impetus behind the abolition of slavery and the birth of the Civil Rights movement, as evidenced by the lives of leaders such as Benjamin Rush, John Jay, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, William Jay, William Wilberforce, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others.

The teachings in the Bible inspired humanitarian movements such as worker protection; abolition; women's suffrage; child labor reform; the establishment of hospitals, orphanages, and programs for the care of the poor and the needy; prison reform; universal education and literacy; disaster relief; and so many other movements that have touched and elevated the lives of every American.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY [LEGISLATIVE BODY] that the members of this body recognize the Bible's influential role in our country's history and humanitarian progress throughout the world.

Note

This model proclamation is largely based on one from the Georgia House of Representatives.

Items for Inclusion in a State Proclamation Recognizing the Year of the Bible

The Bible, the word of God, has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people.

Deeply held religious convictions springing from the Bible led to the early settlement of our country.

Biblical teachings inspired concepts of civil government that are contained in our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

Many of our great national leaders, among them Presidents Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, and Reagan, paid tribute to the influence of the Bible in our country's development, as exemplified by the words of President Jackson that the Bible is "the rock on which our Republic rests."

The history of our country clearly illustrates the value of voluntarily applying the teachings of the Scriptures in the lives of individuals, families, and societies.

This nation now faces great challenges that will test it in ways it has never been tested before.

Renewing our knowledge of the salutary teachings of the Bible can strengthen us as a State, a nation, and a people.

Therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the [legislative body] declare [year] as the "Year of the Bible" in this State in recognition of both the formative influence of the Bible on our State and nation and our national and state need to study and apply its salutary teachings.

Note

This "Proclamation Recognizing the Year of the Bible" is based on one from the State of Pennsylvania.

Items for Inclusion in an Executive Proclamation Recognizing Christmas Day

Christmas is the Christian feast that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ as the savior of all throughout the world.

Traditionally, families throughout our great State gather together during Christmas holidays, enjoying many customs including choosing a Christmas tree, participating in Christmas pageants, singing and playing Christmas carols, and exchanging gifts.

Advent and Christmas traditions and symbols prevail throughout the holiday season, and by their presence they bring to mind dearly held Christian values and beliefs, including that in Jesus Christ all people are saved from sin and promised everlasting life.

The celebration of Christmas reminds men, women, and children across our State of the lessons Christ taught and exemplified, such as the importance of caring for others, giving sacrificially, and sharing with those in need in our neighborhoods, churches, schools, and communities.

While families and friends in this State gather this December to share meals, words of encouragement, and gifts, it is important to remember the deeper meaning of Christmas and Christ's life-changing message of God's love and his promise of salvation for all people who will trust in Him.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [governor's name], do hereby recognize December 25, [year], as CHRISTMAS DAY in this State, and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.

Note

This model is largely based on Virginia's "Proclamation Recognizing Christmas Day" dated December 25, 1999.

Category #3 (a) - Religious Liberty Protection Legislation – Public Policy Resolutions

These model acts are divided into three major categories. The first is model public policy resolutions. The second deals generally with religious liberty protections for professionals and other individuals. The third category deals with religious liberty in the elementary and secondary school context.

Public Policy Resolutions

The following public policy resolutions are organized somewhat differently than the other model acts. They rely on publicly available surveys and studies based on social science and medical care. To include all the supporting citations would unduly burden the model resolutions, but the citations are critical evidence on which the resolutions rely. Thus, the citations have been provided in a separate “Fact Sheet.”

We emphasize that the purpose of these resolutions is to avoid support for these public policies because they happen to coincide with “traditional” or “biblical” norms. Rather than find that justification compelling, courts have frequently found such justifications “unreasonable” or “irrational,” as they are not based on “reason” or “science.” These resolutions and the accompanying talking points and fact sheets show that traditional, biblical norms are also reasonable and rational in light of the available empirical evidence. Similarly, the compelling state interests identified are not tied to “traditional” or “biblical” morality or standards of conduct, but, rather, to measurable interests such as avoiding medical costs and the like.

While these resolutions may engender lively opposition, we believe it important to begin a public discourse on these important topics grounded in the language that the opponents themselves use. Moreover, it is important to recognize that, just because the Supreme Court has dictated that States must allow civil marriages between same-sex couples, States may still discourage that practice and encourage intimate sexual relations to take place only among a married man and woman. Indeed, as we set out, there are persuasive health and welfare reasons for States to do so. A helpful analogy in this respect is abortion, in which the Supreme Court has dictated that women have the right to abort their child in certain circumstances, but the States are not required to fund or otherwise support it.

The resolutions have been divided into three. They could be put together in any combination.

Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Intimate Sexual Relations Only Between Married, Heterosexual Couples

Section 1. Purpose

The issue of homosexual rights has been brought to the fore in recent years, particularly in the context of same-sex marriage. While recognizing the requirements of rulings of the United States Supreme Court, it is beneficial for the health and welfare of the inhabitants of this State to set out its public policy in regard to intimate sexual relations.

Section 2. Findings (Details Provided in Fact Sheet)

(a) The United States Supreme Court has held that, under the federal Constitution, States cannot deny civil marriage licenses to same-sex couples. [A]

(b) While respecting and implementing the ruling of the U. S. Supreme Court, the citizens of this State have determined, as stated in [law or State constitutional amendment], that marriage is between one man and one woman.

(c) The United States Supreme Court has upheld public policy of the United States as established by the United States Congress and of the various States that disfavors, without denying the right to, certain constitutionally guaranteed rights, such as abortion. [B]

(d) The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) have published comprehensive surveys on health issues related to same-sex intimate relationships, which document a higher incidence of serious disease among the population that is involved in such relationships, including:

- a. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the auto-immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) [C];
- b. Syphilis [D];
- c. Human papilloma virus [E];
- d. Hepatitis [F];
- e. Cancer [G]; and
- f. Amebiasis [H].

(e) The health care costs for HIV/AIDS and other illnesses that have been statistically proven to be related to intimate sexual relations other than by a man and a woman in a monogamous relationship are highly significant, estimated to be in the billions of dollars annually in our nation. These costs are borne by this State directly, by State residents indirectly through health insurance premiums and taxes, by private financial assistance organizations of this State, and by the patients residing in this State through out-of-pocket expenses. [I]

(f) The science concerning same-sex attraction and behavior is not settled, while the consequences associated with such behavior are well understood. [J]

Section 3. Compelling State Interests

This State has these compelling interests:

- (a) Maximizing the physical and mental health of its inhabitants;
- (b) Minimizing the costs of health care to its inhabitants and to the State itself for preventable health issues;
- (c) Preventing and minimizing diseases that are related to intimate sexual relations;
- (d) Informing its inhabitants of the health and other dangers relating to intimate sexual relations outside of a marriage between one man and one woman; and
- (e) Confirming the personhood of all individuals in this State and that such personhood is not dependent on their sexual preferences and conduct.

Section 4. State Goals

In furtherance of these compelling interests, the State has these goals:

- (a) Encouraging behavior that maximizes the probability that its citizens will enjoy good physical and mental health;
- (b) Promoting public health and minimizing preventable public health problems; and
- (c) Through behavior that promotes the good health of its citizenry, ensuring that the expenditure of its limited public funds for public health purposes targets those health issues that are not easily preventable.

Section 5. Resolution

NOW, THEREFORE, it is RESOLVED that the public policy of this State supports and encourages marriage between one man and one woman and the desirability that intimate sexual relations only take place between such couples.

Fact Sheet

A: The United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), decided that, under the federal constitution, States cannot deny civil marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

B: The United States Supreme Court has upheld public policy of the United States Congress and various States that disfavors (without denying the right to) abortion, even though the Court has found there to be a constitutional right to abortion. For example:

- In *Beal v. Doe*, 432 U.S. 438 (1977), the Court held that the federal Medicaid Act did not require that States fund elective first trimester abortions in this joint federal-state program.
- In *Maher v. Roe*, 432 U.S. 464 (1977), the Court upheld a state law that denied the use of Medicaid funds for elective first trimester abortions.
- In *Poelker v. Doe*, 432 U.S. 519 (1977), the Court upheld a city's refusal to pay for an elective first trimester abortion in its public hospital.
- In *Harris v. McRae*, 448 U.S. 297 (1980), the Court upheld the federal Hyde Amendment that denied public funding for medically necessary abortions unless required to save the life of the mother.
- In *Williams v. Zbarez*, 448 U.S. 358 (1980), the Court found constitutional a state law that prohibited the use of state funds for performing abortions except to save the life of the mother.
- In *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, 492 U.S. 490 (1989), the Court upheld a Missouri law that prohibited the use of public employees and facilities to perform or assist in the performance of abortions except when necessary to save the life of the mother.

C: *HIV infection and the rate of infection are most prevalent among men who have intimate sexual relations with men (MSM).*

- "Sexual risk behaviors account for most HIV infections in gay and bisexual men. Most gay and bisexual men acquire HIV through anal sex, which is the riskiest type of sex for getting or transmitting HIV." CDC, "HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men," www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html.
- "While CDC estimates that only 4 percent of men in the United States are MSM, the rate of new HIV diagnoses among MSM in the United States is more than 44 times that of other men (range: 522 – 989 per 100,000 MSM vs 12 per 100,000 other men)." CDC, "CDC Fact Sheet: HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men," www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html (citing Purcell D et al., "Estimating the population size of men who have sex with men in the U.S. to obtain HIV and syphilis rates," *The Open AIDS Journal* 2012; 6 (Suppl 1: M6): 114-123).

- Although “estimates showed that the annual number of new HIV infections was stable overall from 2006 through 2009” [ranging from 48,000 to 56,000],” CDC, “HIV Cost-effectiveness,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/prevention/ongoing/costeffectiveness/index.html, “[c]omparing 2008 to 2010, there was a 12 percent increase in the number of new infections among MSM. Among the youngest MSM---those aged 13-24---new infections increased 22 percent, from 7,200 infections in 2008 to 8,800 in 2010.” CDC, “CDC Fact Sheet: HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html.
- “Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) represent approximately 2% of the United States population, yet are the population most severely affected by HIV. In 2010, young gay and bisexual men (aged 13-24 years) accounted for 72% of new HIV infections among all persons aged 13 to 24, and 30% of new infections among all gay and bisexual men. At the end of 2011, an estimated 500,022 (57%) persons living with an HIV diagnosis in the United States were gay and bisexual men, or gay and bisexual men who also inject drugs.” CDC, “HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html.
- “In 2010, gay and bisexual men accounted for 63% of estimated new HIV infections in the United States and 78% of infections among all newly infected men.” CDC, “HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html.
- “In 2013, in the United States, gay and bisexual men accounted for 81% (30,689) of the 37,887 estimated HIV diagnoses among all males aged 13 years and older and 65% of the 47,352 estimated diagnoses among all persons receiving an HIV diagnosis that year.” CDC, “HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html.
- “In 2013, gay and bisexual men accounted for 55% of the estimated number of persons diagnosed with AIDS among all adults and adolescents in the United States.” CDC, “HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html.
- “By the end of 2011, an estimated 311,087 gay and bisexual men with AIDS had died in the United States since the beginning of the epidemic, representing 47% of all deaths of persons with AIDS.” CDC, “HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html.

D: Syphilis is increasing, especially among the gay and bisexual community.

- “In 2013, gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men accounted for 75% of primary and secondary syphilis cases in the United States.” CDC, “Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/std.htm.
- “Once nearly eliminated in the U.S., syphilis is increasing, especially among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM).” CDC, “CDC Fact Sheet: Syphilis & MSM...,” www.cdc.gov/std/Syphilis/STDFact-MSM-Syphilis.htm.
- “Between 2013 and 2014, the number of reported primary and secondary (P&S) cases increased by 15%. Most cases are among MSM. In 2014, 83% of the reported male P&S syphilis cases

where sex of sex partner was known were among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men.” CDC, “CDC Fact Sheet: Syphilis & MSM...,” www.cdc.gov/std/Syphilis/STDFact-MSM-Syphilis.htm.

- “Syphilis continues to increase among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. Recent outbreaks among MSM have been marked by high rates of HIV coinfection and high-risk sexual behaviors (such as sex without a condom, new or multiple partners, and substance abuse). Cases of ocular syphilis have also been reported among MSM. Ocular syphilis occurs when syphilis affects the eye and can lead to permanent blindness. Although the health problems caused by syphilis in adults are serious, it is also known that the genital sores caused by syphilis in adults also make it easier to get and give HIV infection sexually.” CDC, “CDC Fact Sheet: Syphilis & MSM...,” www.cdc.gov/std/Syphilis/STDFact-MSM-Syphilis.htm.
- “In the United States, people who get syphilis often also have HIV, or are more likely to get HIV in the future. This is because having a sore or break in the skin from an STD such as syphilis may allow HIV to more easily enter [an individual’s]... body. [Individuals]... may also be more likely to get HIV because the same behaviors and circumstances that put [them]... at risk for getting other STDs can also put [them]... at greater risk for getting HIV.” CDC, “CDC Fact Sheet: Syphilis & MSM...,” www.cdc.gov/std/Syphilis/STDFact-MSM-Syphilis.htm.

E: Human papilloma virus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States and is of particular concern in the MSM population.

- “HPV (Human papillomavirus), the most common STD [sexually transmitted disease] in the United States, is also a concern for gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. Some types of HPV can cause genital and anal warts and some can lead to the development of anal and oral cancers. . . . While condoms are effective, HPV and HSV [herpes simplex virus] can be spread by contact with the area around the genitals not protected by the condom. . . . Genital herpes, syphilis, and HPV are most often spread through genital skin-to-skin contact.” CDC, “Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/std.htm.
- “Men who receive anal sex are more likely to get anal HPV and develop anal cancer.” CDC, “CDC Fact Sheet: HPV and Men,” www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv-and-men.htm.
- “Men with weak immune systems (including those with HIV) who get infected with HPV are more likely to develop HPV-related health problems.” CDC, “CDC Fact Sheet: HPV and Men,” www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv-and-men.htm.

F: MSM populations are at higher risk of contracting various types of hepatitis.

- “Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men have a higher chance of getting viral hepatitis including Hepatitis A, B, and C, which are diseases that affect the liver. About 10% of new Hepatitis A and 20% of all new Hepatitis B infections in the United States are among gay and bisexual men.” CDC, “Viral Hepatitis,” www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/viral-hepatitis.htm. This is to be compared to the prevalence of homosexuality reported as follows: “Based on the 2013 NHIS [National Health Interview Survey] data, 96.6% of adults identified as straight, 1.6% identified as gay or lesbian, and 0.7% identified as bisexual. The remaining 1.1% of adults

identified as ‘something else,’ stated ‘I don’t know the answer,’ or refused to provide an answer.” Ward, BW, et al., “Sexual Orientation and Health Among U.S. Adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2013,” reported in CDC, *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 77 (July 15, 2014).

- “HCV [hepatitis C virus] is the most common chronic blood-borne infection in the United States, with an estimated 2.7 million persons living with chronic infection. HCV is not efficiently transmitted through sex. . . . However, data indicate that sexual transmission of HCV can occur, especially among persons with HIV infection. Increasing incidence of acute HCV infection among MSM with HIV infection has been reported in New York City and Boston, along with multiple European cities. . . . No vaccine for hepatitis C is available” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Emerging Issues,” www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/emerging.htm.

G: Certain types of cancer pose a higher risk for LGB [lesbian/gay/bisexual] populations.

- “LGB [lesbian/gay/bisexual] adults are more likely to have cancer,” with 6% of heterosexuals having cancer and 9% LGB. Cal. Health Interview Study, cited in Center for American Progress, “How to Close the LGBT Health Disparities Gap,” <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2009/12/21/7048/how-to-close-the-lgbt-health-disparities-gap/>.
- “Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men are 17 times more likely to get anal cancer than heterosexual men. Men who are HIV-positive are even more likely than those who do not have HIV to get anal cancer.” CDC, “Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/std.htm.
- “Infection with the human papilloma virus (HPV) increases the risk of anal cancer. HPV risk is increased by having anal sex and having many sex partners. Smoking also increases your risk for this cancer. Another risk factor is a weak immune system because of HIV infection or other factors.” American Cancer Society, “Cancer Facts for Gay and Bisexual Men,” www.cancer.org/healthy/findcancerearly/menshealth/cancer-facts-for-gay-and-bisexual-men.htm.
- “HPV infection isn’t cancer but can cause changes in the body that lead to cancer. HPV infections usually go away by themselves but having an HPV infection can cause certain kinds of cancer to develop. These include cervical cancer in women, penile cancer in men, and anal cancer in both women and men. HPV can also cause cancer in the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils (called oropharyngeal cancer). All of these cancers are caused by HPV infections that did not go away.” CDC, www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv-and-men.htm.

H: Amebiasis is not common in industrialized countries, but poses an emerging risk among MSM populations. “*Entamoeba histolytica* is a pathogenic amoeba that can cause invasive intestinal and extra-intestinal disease. The most frequent manifestations of invasive amebiasis are colitis and liver abscesses. Although *E. histolytica* is one of the most common parasitic infections worldwide, invasive disease remains uncommon in industrialized count[r]ies. Recent studies from Japan, Taiwan, and

Republic of Korea, areas where *E. histolytica* endemicity is generally low, suggest that amebiasis is an emerging parasitic infection that occurs exclusively in men who have sex with men (MSM). . . . In Japan, amebiasis has become endemic in MSM; symptomatic *E. histolytica* infection occurs almost exclusively in middle-aged MSM in the large cities of Japan. Similar findings are reported for MSM in Taiwan. More recently, a study from the Republic of Korea documented invasive amebiasis (amebic liver abscess) in HIV-infected MSM. To date, the emergence of *E. histolytica* infections in MSM seems to be limited to the Asia-Pacific region.” Stark, D, et al., “Invasive Amebiasis in Men Who Have Sex with Men, Australia,” *14 Emerging Infectious Diseases* 1141-1142 (July 2008), www.cdc.gov/eid.

I: The costs of treating HIV/AIDS infection, much of which is preventable, is significant.

- “In all, the total lifetime treatment cost for HIV based on new diagnoses in 2009 was estimated to be \$16.6 billion. . . . Note that the number of new diagnoses listed in this table [1] do not adjust for reporting delay, and thus are likely underestimated. . . . Life treatment cost per person = \$367,134 (in 2009 dollars).” CDC, “HIV Cost-effectiveness,” www.cdc.gov/hiv/prevention/ongoing/costeffectiveness/index.html (citing Schackman BR, Gebo, KA, Walensky RP, et al., “The lifetime cost of current human immune-deficiency virus care in the United States.” *Medical Care* 2006; 44: 990-997). A more recent estimate places the lifetime treatment cost for HIV at more than \$500,000 per person. (<http://www.healthline.com/health/hiv-aids/monthly-cost-treating-hiv#1>).
- These significant health care costs for HIV/AIDS are borne by a combination of government and private insurance, financial assistance organizations, and out-of-pocket payments. Irrespective of the payment source, these costs for treating a largely preventable disease are significant.

J: The reasons for same-sex attraction are not well understood, although the deleterious consequences associated with acting on such attraction have been extensively documented (see details above under items C-H).

- Professors Lawrence C. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh surveyed the social science studies published through 2015 concerning sexual orientation and summarized the results of those studies as follows:
 - The understanding of sexual orientation as an innate, biologically fixed property of human beings—the idea that people are “born that way”—is not supported by scientific evidence.
 - Although there is evidence that biological factors such as genes and hormones are associated with sexual behaviors and attractions, there are no compelling causal biological explanations for human sexual orientation. Although minor differences in the brain structures and brain activity between homosexual and heterosexual individuals have been identified by researchers, such neurobiological findings do not demonstrate whether these differences are innate or are the result of environmental and psychological factors.
 - Longitudinal studies of adolescents suggest that sexual orientation may be quite fluid over the life course for some people, with one study estimating that as many as 80% of male adolescents who report same-sex attractions no longer do so as adults (although

the extent to which this figure reflects actual changes in same-sex attractions and not just artifacts of the survey process has been contested by some researchers).

- Compared to heterosexuals, non-heterosexuals are about two to three times as likely to have experienced childhood sexual abuse.
Mayer & McHugh, "Sexuality and Gender," 50 *The New Atlantis* 7 (Fall 2016).
- Professors Meyer and McHugh surveyed the social science studies published through 2015 concerning sexuality, mental health outcomes, and social stress and summarized the results of those studies as follows:
 - Compared to the general population, non-heterosexual subpopulations are at an elevated risk for a variety of adverse health and mental health outcomes.
 - Members of the non-heterosexual population are estimated to have about 1.5 times higher risk of experiencing anxiety disorders than members of the heterosexual population, as well as roughly double the risk of depression, 1.5 times the risk of substance abuse, and nearly 2.5 times the risk of suicide.
 - Members of the transgender population are also at higher risk of a variety of mental health problems compared to members of the non-transgender population. Especially alarming, the rate of lifetime suicide attempts across all ages of transgender individuals is estimated at 41%, compared to under 5% in the overall U.S. population.
 - There is limited evidence that social stressors such as discrimination and stigma contribute to the elevated risk of poor mental health outcomes for non-heterosexual and transgender populations. More high-quality longitudinal studies are necessary for the "social stress model" to be a useful tool for understanding public health concerns.
Mayer & McHugh, "Sexuality and Gender," 50 *The New Atlantis* 8 (Fall 2016).
- The CDC reported on the largest study of high-school students in the United States undertaken to date as follows: "This pattern [of a higher incidence among minority sex students—self-identified LGB students having only same-sex sexual encounters] also was evident across the six sexual risk behaviors. [These behaviors are 'related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV infection.'] The prevalence of five of these behaviors was higher among gay, lesbian, and bisexual students than heterosexual students and the prevalence of four was higher among students who had sexual contact with only the same sex or with both sexes than students who had sexual contact with only the opposite sex."
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/ss/ss6509a1.htm>.

Notes

Many States currently have constitutional or legislative statements that marriage is between one man and one woman. For example, Louisiana’s Constitution, Article XII (“General Provisions”), Section 15 (“Defense of Marriage”), provides, in part, “Marriage in the state of Louisiana shall consist only of the union of one man and one woman.” In addition, Louisiana’s Civil Code, Article 3520(b) (“Marriage”) provides, in part, “A purported marriage between persons of the same sex violates a strong public policy of the state of Louisiana” As stated above, *Obergefell* does not override these statements of public policy. However, in no State is the public policy expressly supported by social science research and health care statistics as provided in this draft resolution.

Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Reliance on and Maintenance of Birth Gender

Section 1. Purpose

The issue of transgender rights has been brought to the fore in recent years, particularly in the context of access to birth gender-specific facilities and in the context of funding for sex realignment medical procedures. This State recognizes the personhood of all its citizens and acknowledges the importance of promoting the health and social welfare of its citizenry. For these reasons, it is beneficial for the long-term well-being of the inhabitants of this State to set out its public policy in regard to birth gender.

Section 2. Findings (Details Provided in Fact Sheet)

- (a) Available scientific evidence does not support the assertion that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex. [A]
- (b) Most children who experience cross-gender identification do not continue to do so into adolescence or adulthood. [B]
- (c) Members of the transgender population are at significantly higher risk of a variety of mental health problems compared to members of the non-transgender population. [C]
- (d) There is only limited evidence that social stressors such as discrimination and stigma contribute to the elevated risk of poor mental health outcomes for transgender populations. [D]
- (e) Evidence from early studies indicates that transgendered female (biological males living as females) youth are at greater risk of being engaged in sex work and of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. [E]
- (f) The term “gender identity” has no fixed meaning and, by definition, is the product of an individual, subjective determination that may conflict with how the individual objectively appears to others. Because of its subjectivity, the term can be used by an individual in a temporally inconsistent manner. [F]

Section 3. Compelling State Interests

This State has these compelling interests:

- (a) Maximizing the physical and mental health of its inhabitants;
- (b) Minimizing the costs of health care to its inhabitants and to the State itself for avoidable health issues;
- (c) Informing its inhabitants of the health and other dangers relating to gender transformation actions; and
- (d) Confirming the personhood of all individuals in this State and that such personhood is not dependent on self-defined gender identity.

Section 4. State Goals

In furtherance of these compelling interests, the State has these goals:

- (a) Encouraging behavior that maximizes the probability that its citizens will enjoy good physical and mental health;

- (b) Promoting public health and minimizing avoidable public health problems;
- (c) Ensuring that the expenditure of its limited public funds for public health purposes targets those health issues that are not easily preventable; and
- (d) Ensuring that appropriate resources are available to assist individuals who are dealing with issues related to gender identity.

Section 5. Resolution

NOW, THEREFORE, it is RESOLVED that the public policy of this State supports and encourages maintenance of the birth gender of its citizens.

Fact Sheet

A: Professors Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh surveyed the social science studies published through 2015 concerning sexuality, mental health outcomes, and social stress. In their report, they noted the following:

- The hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex—that a person might be “a man trapped in a woman’s body” or “a woman trapped in a man’s body”—is not supported by scientific evidence.
- ☐ Studies comparing the brain structures of transgender and non-transgender individuals have demonstrated weak correlations between brain structure and cross-gender identification. These correlations do not provide any evidence for a neurobiological basis for cross-gender identification.

Mayer & McHugh, “Sexuality and Gender,” 50 *The New Atlantis* 8 (Fall 2016),
http://www.thenewatlantis.com/docLib/20160819_TNA50SexualityandGender.pdf.

B: In their survey of studies, cited above, Professors Mayer and McHugh noted the following:

- ☐ Children are a special case when addressing transgender issues. Only a minority of children who experience cross-gender identification will continue to do so into adolescence or adulthood; and
- ☐ There is little scientific evidence for the therapeutic value of interventions that delay puberty or modify the secondary sex characteristics of adolescents, although some children may have improved psychological well-being if they are encouraged and supported in their cross-gender identification. There is no evidence that all children who express gender-atypical thoughts or behavior should be encouraged to become transgender.
- In a *Wall Street Journal* opinion column by Dr. Paul R. McHugh, he noted further, “When children who reported transgender feelings were tracked without medical or surgical treatment at both Vanderbilt University and London’s Portman Clinic, 70%-80% of them spontaneously lost those feelings. Some 25% did have persisting feelings; what differentiates those individuals remains to be discerned.” (Originally published June 12, 2014, and updated on May 13, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>.)

C: In their survey of studies, cited in A above, Professors Mayer and McHugh noted the results of those studies included a finding that members of the transgender population are at higher risk of a variety of mental health problems compared to members of the non-transgender population. Especially alarming, the rate of lifetime suicide attempts across all ages of transgender individuals is estimated at 41%, compared to under 5% in the overall U.S. population.

In the same survey, Professors Mayer and McHugh reported that one study found that, compared to controls, sex-reassigned individuals were about five times more likely to attempt suicide and about 19 times more likely to die by suicide.

“A 2011 study at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden [was the result of a] . . . long-term study—up to 30 years—[which] followed 324 people who had sex-reassignment surgery. The study revealed that beginning about 10 years after having the surgery, the transgendered began to experience increasing mental difficulties. Most shockingly, their suicide mortality rose almost 20-fold above the comparable nontransgender population. This disturbing result has as yet no explanation but probably reflects the growing sense of isolation reported by the aging transgendered after surgery. The high suicide rate certainly challenges the surgery prescription.” (From the *Wall Street Journal* opinion column by Dr. McHugh, column cited above.)

In the article, “How to Close the LGBT Health Disparities Gap,” it was reported that “[t]ransgender adults are much more likely to have suicide ideation” (2% heterosexual; 5% gay; 50% transgender). www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2009/12/21/7048.

In the *Wall Street Journal* opinion column, cited above, Professor McHugh wrote, “[P]olicy makers and the media are doing no favors either to the public or the transgendered by treating their confusions as a right in need of defending rather than as a mental disorder that deserves understanding, treatment and prevention. This intensely felt sense of being transgendered constitutes a mental disorder in two respects. The first is that the idea of sex misalignment is simply mistaken—it does not correspond with physical reality. The second is that it can lead to grim psychological outcomes.”

D: There is limited evidence that social stressors such as discrimination and stigma contribute to the elevated risk of poor mental health outcomes for transgender populations. More high-quality longitudinal studies are necessary for the “social stress model” to be a useful tool for understanding public health concerns.

Mayer & McHugh, “Sexuality and Gender,” 50 *The New Atlantis* 8 (Fall 2016). http://www.thenewatlantis.com/docLib/20160819_TNA50SexualityandGender.pdf.

If social stressors were the sole factor, one would expect that the suicide ideation rates for homosexuals and transgenders would be closely related. However, as noted above, suicide ideation for those reporting as transgender was found to be 10 times that of those reporting as homosexual. www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2009/12/21/7048.

E: What little is known about transgendered youth suggests that biologically male persons living as females are often homeless and likely to be engaged in sex work. One report, using data from two studies, notes that 59-67% “of female transgendered young persons have engaged in sex work, and approximately 20% are HIV positive.” Approximately 33% of the study participants did not use sex protection during intercourse, “[r]ates of alcohol and substance use during sex were also high (40-50%) in this population.” (Note that the two studies relied on “convenience samples” from urban areas, so the results and conclusions are not robust.)

L. Kris Gowen, “The Sexual Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth,” at 24 (Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division), <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbSexualHealthDisparities.pdf>.

F: “The term [transgender] includes androgynous and gender queer people, drag queens and drag kings, transsexual people, and those who identify as bi-gendered, third gender or two spirit. ‘Gender identity’ refers to one’s inner sense of being female, male, or some other gender. . . . Indeed, when used to categorically describe a group of people, even all of the terms mentioned above may be insufficient . . . , [and] individuals may identify as any combination of gender identity referents simultaneously or identify differently in different contexts or communities.” *Self-Determination in a Gender Fundamentalist State: Toward Legal Liberation of Transgender Identities*, 12 Tex. J. on C.L. & C.R. 101, 103-04 (2006). See also *DeJohn v. Temple Univ.*, 537 F.3d 301, 381 & n.20 (3d Cir. 2008) (noting fluidity of the term *gender*.) An “identity” subject to changeable, subjective “individuality” untethered to time or objective biology is, by definition, subject to abuse.

G: "The American College of Pediatricians urges educators and legislators to reject all policies that condition children to accept as normal a life of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex. Facts – not ideology – determine reality." "Gender Ideology Harms Children," American College of Pediatricians, March 2016, updated September 2017, <https://www.acpeds.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/gender-ideology-harms-children> .

Resolution Establishing Public Policy Favoring Adoption by Intact Heterosexual, Marriage-based Families

Section 1. Purpose

The issue of what family structures are best suited to foster the most desirable childhood outcomes has been debated widely and is the subject of ongoing research. Although causal relationships cannot be drawn conclusively based on the current state of research, there are sufficient preliminary results to indicate a strong association between certain family structures and beneficial, publicly desirable childhood outcomes.

Recognizing the ongoing need for child placement, it is beneficial for the health and welfare of children in this State to set out the State's public policy in regard to family structures that promote favorable childhood outcomes.

Section 2. Findings (Details Provided in Fact Sheet)

- (a) It is in the best interest of children to be in a stable family environment. [A]
- (b) On a number of socially important outcomes, it has been observed that children raised in heterosexual, marriage-based, intact families tend to do better than children raised in other family structures. [B]
- (c) The most reliable current data suggest that the biologically intact, two-parent household remains an optimal setting for the long-term flourishing of children. [C]
- (d) Conclusions that there are little or no differences in childhood outcomes for children raised in various types of family structures are to date based on studies that have significant methodological flaws. [D]
- (e) There are data indicating that secondary education outcomes are less desirable for children from some types of non-traditional family structures in comparison with children of married, opposite sex couples. [E]
- (f) Certain family structures appear from the data to be significantly shorter-lived and less stable than other family structures. [F]
- (g) There is little known about childhood outcomes for some family structures, which suggests caution should be exercised in presuming there are generally no significant differences in the placement of children in non-traditional family structures. [G]
- (h) Faith-based placement agencies provide an important source of placement opportunities. [H]

Section 3. Compelling State Interests

This State has these compelling interests:

- (a) Maximizing the physical and mental health of its children;

(b) Promoting stable families in which children are safe and can be raised to realize their potential to become strong physically, mentally, and socially and able to contribute to society to the fullest extent of their abilities;

(c) Ensuring that children who need to be placed in homes other than with their biological parents are placed in an environment that ensures their safety and promotes their flourishing;

(d) Informing its citizens of the most recent and reliable data concerning the relative benefits and drawbacks to different types of family structures, insofar as family structure affects childhood outcomes; and

(e) Ensuring that as many qualified child placement agencies as possible are able to operate within the state, including faith based agencies that may have more stringent requirements for adoptive and foster parents than other non-faith based agencies.

Section 4. State Goals

In furtherance of these compelling interests, the State has these goals:

(a) Encouraging adoption and foster care placement practices that have the greatest potential for favorable childhood outcomes;

(b) Promoting public health and minimizing preventable public health problems;

(c) Ensuring, through behavior that promotes the most favorable childhood outcomes, that the children growing to adulthood in this State are physically, emotionally, and socially well-adjusted, thereby reducing the need for the State to use its limited public funds for remediating the physical, emotional, or social ills that may result from a difficult childhood; and

(d) Recognizing that the need for child placement exceeds the opportunities for placement, providing stable and safe placements for as many children as possible in need of such placements.

Section 5. Resolution

NOW, THEREFORE, it is RESOLVED that the public policy of this State supports and encourages the establishment and strengthening of intact biological families, the placement of children within family structures where there is marriage between one man and one woman, and the placement of children in safe and supportive non-institutional settings where they will receive the love and nurturing, in a stable environment, that enables them to flourish and realize their potential to the maximum practical extent.

FACT SHEET

A:

"...[E]very child has a mother and a father, and such kinship matters for kids. To be stably rooted in your married mother and father's household is to foster the greatest chance at lifelong flourishing. It's not necessary, of course. It just has the best odds.

"...[S]uch kinship ties are often broken, sometimes with intention (by mutual divorce, sperm donation, and some instances of surrogacy), sometimes by accident (as through the death of a parent), and sometimes by necessity (in the case of seeking protection from domestic violence), all through no fault of the child. A good society seeks to discourage broken kinship ties, and to struggle over how to manage those that are unavoidable. It does *not* respond by simply declaring biological bonds to be irrelevant or such brokenness only imagined.

"Nor should a good society support any political project that purports to *inject* new instability into children's lives by categorically stripping mothers and fathers of their rights as biological parents."

Mark Regnerus, "A Russian Lawmaker Is Misusing My Gay Parenting Study," *The Atlantic*, September 16, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/09/russian-lawmaker-misusing-my-gay-parenting-study/311054/>.

B:

Differences have been observed in the outcomes for children raised in "marriage-based intact families and children in cohabiting, divorced, step, and single-parent families..." The former tend to do better in a number of socially important outcomes that include "(a) health, mortality, and suicide risks, (b) drug and alcohol abuse, (c) criminality and incarceration, (d) intergenerational poverty, (e) education and/or labor force contribution, (f) early sexual activity and early childbearing, and (g) divorce rates as adults." (footnotes omitted) (Loren Marks, "Same-sex parenting and children's outcomes: A closer examination of the American psychological association's brief on lesbian and gay parenting," *Social Science Research* 41 (2012) 735.) <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X12000580>.

Summarizing the results of a study ("Emotional Problems among Children with Same-Sex Parents: Difference by Definition" https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2500537) published in the February 2015 issue of the *British Journal of Education, Society, and Behavioural Science*, these results were reported:

"[O]n eight out of twelve psychometric measures, the risk of clinical emotional problems, developmental problems, or use of mental health treatment services is nearly double among those with same-sex parents when contrasted with children of opposite-sex parents."

"The estimate of serious child emotional problems in children with same-sex parents is 17 percent, compared with 7 percent among opposite-sex parents, after adjusting for age, race, gender, and parent's education and income. Rates of ADHD were higher as well—15.5 compared to 7.1 percent. The same is true for learning disabilities: 14.1 vs. 8 percent." "The study's author, sociologist Paul Sullins, assessed a variety of different hypotheses about the differences, including comparative residential stability, experience of stigma or bullying, parental emotional problems (6.1 percent among same-sex parents vs. 3.4 percent among

opposite-sex ones), and biological attachment. Each of these factors predictably aggravated children's emotional health, but only the last of these—biological parentage—accounted for nearly all of the variation in emotional problems. While adopted children are at higher risk of emotional problems overall, being adopted did not account for the differences between children in same-sex and opposite-sex households. It's also worth noting that while being bullied clearly aggravates emotional health, there was *no difference* in self-reported experience of having been bullied between the children of same-sex and opposite-sex parents."

"[T]he study reveals... there is *no equivalent replacement* for the enduring gift to a child that a married biological mother and father offer. It's no guarantee of success. It's not always possible. But the odds of emotional struggle at least double without it."

"New Research on Same-Sex Households Reveals Kids Do Best With Mom and Dad," Mark Regnerus, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/02/14417/>.

C:

"[T]he science [of analyzing differences in outcomes for children raised in same-sex households] . . . remains young. Until much larger random samples can be drawn and evaluated, the probability-based evidence that exists . . . suggests that the biologically-intact two-parent household remains an optimal setting for the long-term flourishing of children."

"Parental same-sex relationships, family instability, and subsequent life outcomes for adult children: Answering critics of the new family structures study with additional analyses," Mark Regnerus, *Social Science Research* 41 (2012), 1377)

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/0595d1_4a70add65b7c4598a7a9bded1a041978.pdf.

D:

Conclusions that there are no significant differences in outcomes between children from same-sex households and opposite-sex households have relied to date on studies whose methodologies do not yield data that meet the statistical rigor expected to make "strong, generalizable assertions . . ."

Loren Marks, "Same-sex parenting and children's outcomes: A closer examination of the American psychological association's brief on lesbian and gay parenting," *Social Science Research* 41 (2012) 748, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1937762.

E:

A study using data from a large population-based sample from Canada "reveals that the children of gay and lesbian couples are only about 65 percent as likely to have graduated from high school as the children of married, opposite-sex couples."

"A Married Mom and Dad Really do Matter: New Evidence from Canada," Mark Regnerus (citing "High school graduation rates among children of same-sex households," Allen, D.W. *Rev Econ Household* (2013) 11: 635. doi:10.1007/s11150-013-9220-y), <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/10/10996/>.

F:

Reflecting on an article published in the *Atlantic* (“The Gay Guide to Wedded Bliss,” <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/06/the-gay-guide-to-wedded-bliss/309317/>), the author observes:

“[S]tudies have found ‘higher dissolution rates among [legally registered] same-sex couples’ in Scandinavia than among married heterosexual couples. This study, published in *Demography*, found that even though same-sex couples enter their legal unions at older ages—a marker related to greater relational stability—male same-sex marriages break up at twice the rate of heterosexual marriages.”

The break-up rate for lesbians “is a stunning 77 percent higher than that of same-sex male unions. When controlling for possible confounding factors, the ‘risk of divorce for female partnerships actually is more than twice that for male unions.’”

“Other research says the same thing about relationship dissolution rates. A study of two generations of British couples (one born in 1958, the other 1970) in same-sex cohabiting, opposite-sex cohabiting, and heterosexual marriage relationships found the same-sex relationships are dramatically more likely to break up than the opposite-sex cohabiting and married relationships. . . . There were no significant differences between the two generational cohorts, indicating that issues of social stigma and growing social acceptance had no meaningful effect.”

“Other studies . . . ‘find notable instability in lesbian homes, even those with children. The current National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study (NLLFS) found ‘a significant difference’ in family dissolution rates when comparing lesbian with mother-father headed families, 56 percent and 36 percent respectively.”

“Additional research by other scholars highlights a major comparative study between hetero and lesbian homes where, in the five-year period of the study, six of the fourteen lesbian mother-headed homes had broken up compared to only five of the thirty-eight mother-father headed homes. . . . Whatever the reason, lesbian relationships are dramatically more volatile, fragile, and short-lived than heterosexual couples, whether cohabiting or married.”

Glenn T. Stanton, “What We Can Learn from Same Sex Couples,” *First Things*, 5/31/13, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2013/05/what-we-can-learn-from-same-sex-couples>. Lesbian couples are more likely to separate and not remain in the same relationship. “A careful review of the literature suggests that more is known about the stability of lesbian parent relationships than previously suspected and that, on average, such relationships tend to be less stable than those of married heterosexual parents. Less is understood about the factors that may influence relationship stability for gay or lesbian parents, creating a critical need for additional research, especially with different demographic subgroups of lesbian and gay parents.”

Abstract, Walter R. Schumm, “Comparative Relationship Stability of Lesbian Mother and Heterosexual Mother Families: A Review of Evidence,” *Marriage & Family Review*, vol. 41, issue 8, 2010 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01494929.2010.543030>.

G:

In an article reviewing the quality of studies relied upon in a 2005 brief on lesbian and gay parenting prepared for and published by the American Psychological Association, the author reported that 59 published studies were cited in the APA's list of "Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children" (pp. 23–45). Of those 59, only eight specifically addressed the outcomes of children from gay fathers. Of those eight, four did not include a heterosexual comparison group. In three of the four remaining studies (with heterosexual comparison groups), the outcomes studied were:

- (1) "the value of children to . . . fathers" (Bigner and Jacobsen, 1989a, p.163);
- (2) "parenting behaviors of . . . fathers" (Bigner and Jacobsen, 1989b, p. 173); and
- (3) "problems" and "relationship with child" (Harris and Turner, 1986, pp. 107–8).

The first two studies "focused on fathers' reports of *fathers'* values and behaviors, not on children's outcomes—illustrating a recurring tendency in the same-sex parenting literature to focus on the parent rather than the child." The third study "addressed parent-child relationships, but . . . [that] study's male heterosexual comparison group was composed of two single fathers. Although several studies have examined aspects of gay fathers' lives, none of the studies comparing gay fathers and heterosexual comparison groups referenced in the APA Brief (pp. 23–45) appear to have specifically focused on children's developmental outcomes," with one exception that "found several significant differences between married families and homosexual families."

Loren Marks, "Same-sex parenting and children's outcomes: A closer examination of the American psychological association's brief on lesbian and gay parenting," *Social Science Research* 41 (2012), 739, 742, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1937762.

A study "of 6-to-17-year-old children of female same-sex households . . . claims: 'No differences were observed between household types on family relationships or any child outcomes.' Here's what the study actually signals (and it didn't take a PhD to see it): female same-sex parents report more anger, irritation, and comparative frustration with their (apparently misbehaving) children than do opposite-sex parents."

Mark Regnerus, "Media Gush over New Study, Only to Find Same-Sex Parents More Irritated with Their Children" (citing "Same-Sex and Different-Sex Parent Households and Child Health Outcomes: Findings from the National Survey of Children's Health," http://journals.lww.com/jrnldb/Abstract/2016/04000/Same_Sex_and_Different_Sex_Parent_Households_and.1.aspx), <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2016/04/16760/>.

A study ("Invisible Victims: Delayed Onset Depression among Adults with Same-Sex Parents," <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/drt/2016/2410392/>) "in the journal *Depression Research and Treatment* contributes to mounting evidence against the 'no differences' thesis about the children of same-sex households, mere months after media sources prematurely—and mistakenly—proclaimed the science settled.

"One of the most compelling aspects of this new study is that it is longitudinal, evaluating the same people over a long period of time. ...[I]ts data source—the National Longitudinal Study of

Adolescent Health—is one of the most impressive, thorough, and expensive survey research efforts still ongoing. This study is ... the first to come to different conclusions [than previous studies to make use of the “Add Health” data to test the “no differences” thesis], for several reasons. One of those is its longitudinal aspect. Some problems only emerge over time.

“. . . [T]he study’s author found that during adolescence the children of same-sex parents reported marginally *less* depression than the children of opposite-sex parents. But by the time the survey was in its fourth wave—when the kids had become young adults between the ages of 24 and 32—their experiences had reversed. Indeed, dramatically so: over half of the young-adult children of same-sex parents report ongoing depression, a surge of 33 percentage points (from 18 to 51 percent of the total). Meanwhile, depression among the young-adult children of opposite-sex parents had declined from 22 percent of them down to just under 20percent.”

The study notes other differences between children of same-sex parents and of opposite-sex children:

Over time, young-adult children of same-sex parents were more likely to be obese than their counterparts opposite-sex parents.

Although “fewer young-adult children of same-sex parents felt ‘distant from one or both parents’ as young adults than they did as teens, the levels are still sky-high at 73 percent (down from 93 percent during adolescence). Feelings of distance among the young-adult children of opposite-sex parents actually increased, but they started at a lower level (from 36 percent in adolescence to 44 percent in young adulthood).”

“[M]ore kids of same-sex parents said a parent or caregiver had ‘slapped, hit or kicked you,’ said ‘things that hurt your feelings or made you feel you were not wanted or loved...’” The author of the summary noted further that “it is not just stability that matters (though it most certainly does). It’s also about biology, love, sexual difference, and modeling.” The author also noted this conclusion from the study’s author: “Well-intentioned concern for revealing negative information about a stigmatized minority does not justify leaving children without support in an environment that may be problematic or dangerous for their dignity and security.”

Reported by Mark Regnerus, “The Data on Children in Same-Sex Households Get More Depressing,” <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2016/06/17255/>.

H:

In “Adoption, Foster Care, and Conscience Protection” (http://www.heritage.org/marriage-and-family/report/adoption-foster-care-and-conscience-protection#_ftn11, 1/15/2014), the authors note:

In the United States, “there are more than 1,000 private, licensed foster care and adoption providers. . . . Many are faith-based organizations whose religious and moral beliefs motivate their care for some of the most vulnerable children in society.”

“The impact of these groups is significant. In 2007, of the roughly 76,000 unrelated domestic adoptions that occurred in the United States, more than 20,000 were handled by private providers. While public agencies continue to provide the largest number of domestic adoptions every year, the

work and success of private, often faith-based organizations help to increase the number of children who find permanent homes every year.”

“The value of faith-based communities and providers extends well beyond their ability to connect vulnerable children with loving homes or guide prospective families through the labyrinth of the foster care and adoption systems. In addition to offering legal, administrative, and material support to adoptive families and birth mothers, private and faith-based organizations often provide intangible—yet invaluable—spiritual, emotional, and relational support that large, bureaucratic state-run agencies are ill-equipped to offer.”

I:

Under well-settled principles of constitutional law, governmental entities cannot be hostile to religion. The Supreme Court recently underscored this in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017), when it overturned denial of an otherwise available public benefit on account of the potential recipient’s religious status. As stated in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 314 (1952), “[W]e find no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and to throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence.” In *Walz v. Tax Commission*, 397 U.S. 664, 689 (1970), the Court stated that religious organizations “uniquely contribute to the pluralism of American society by their religious activities.” This resolution makes explicit that this State honors the beneficial relationship between religious activity and the community at large, especially as it relates to serving some of the most vulnerable among us, our children.

Category #3 (b) - Religious Liberty Protection Legislation – Protection for Professionals and Individuals

Model Acts Dealing with Protection for the Free Exercise of Religion by Various Individuals and Organizations

The model acts in this portion of this report deal with protection of the free exercise of religion. The free exercise of religion is demonstrated both in speech and actions (e.g., prayer, wearing religious symbols) and refusal to participate in certain actions (e.g., refusal to cover abortions in health insurance, refusal to officiate or host a same-sex wedding). It is recognized that individuals and organizations can draw different lines as to what actions are and are not permitted by their sincerely held religious beliefs, but that it is the right of those individuals and organizations to come to a good faith belief about where that line is to be drawn, and then to be respected in that choice, is a fundamental freedom on which this country is founded.

Some of the model acts are broad in their application and some narrow in their focus. For that reason, they overlap to some extent. The full range of model acts is given here in recognition that, in some States, broader acts may be less likely to pass compared to narrower acts.

In the next subcategory (c), we have collected model acts related to schools, students, and teachers. While they also fit under the rubric of “protection of free exercise,” they are unique and plentiful enough to have their own subcategory. However, some provisions of the model acts listed in this subcategory would have application to students and teachers as well.

Marriage Tolerance Act (a/k/a/ First Amendment Defense Act)

An act to prohibit discriminatory action against a person who believes, speaks, or acts in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such marriage.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be known as the "Marriage Tolerance Act."

Section 2. Purpose

This act is intended to ensure that the First Amendment's protections for the free exercise of religion is statutorily enforced in (State) so that no legal ambiguity exists regarding the fact that all persons are free to believe, speak, or act upon their sincerely held religious beliefs that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such marriage, without fear of discrimination or adverse or discriminatory action initiated or enforced by any governmental entity.

Section 3. Findings

(1) The United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), ruled that a State government could not, consistently with the Federal Constitution, deny marriage to couples of the same sex who believed that their marriage would be legitimate and who requested it. At the same time, the Court recognized that individuals hold different religious views on this subject: "Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered. The same is true of those who oppose same-sex marriage for other reasons." *Id.* at 2607.

(2) The United States Supreme Court recognizes that the peaceful free exercise of religion is a fundamental human right. In *Everson v. Board of Education of Ewing*, 330 U. S. 1 (1947), the Supreme Court opinion declared that a State "cannot hamper its citizens in the free exercise of their own religion," which was recently reaffirmed in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017). The Court in *Trinity* further stated, "A law may not discriminate against 'some or all religious beliefs.' . . . Nor may a law regulate or outlaw conduct because it is religiously motivated," *id.* at 2021, quoting *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. Hialeah*, 508 U. S. 520, 532 (1993). The *Trinity* Court further restated from *Lukumi* that the "Free Exercise Clause protects against laws that 'impose[] special disabilities on the basis of . . . religious status.' 508 U. S., at 533," 137 S. Ct. at 2021; *see also Emplmt. Div., Dept. of Human Res. of Ore. v. Smith*, 494 U. S. 872, 877 (1990). Furthermore, the Court in *Trinity* noted that "the Free Exercise Clause protects against 'indirect coercion or penalties on the free exercise of religion, not just outright prohibitions,'" 137 S. Ct. at 2022, quoting *Lyng v. Nw. Indian Cemetery*, 485 U. S. 439, 450 (1988).

(3) Protecting religious freedom from government intrusion is a government interest of the highest order. Federal law requires that federal courts use strict scrutiny, the highest level of judicial review, in order to ensure suitable protection for free exercise claims. State legislation advances this interest by remedying, deterring, and preventing government interference with religious exercise in a way that complements the protections mandated by federal laws and the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

(4) Freedom of speech, as part of the First Amendment, is intrinsic to the free exercise of religion. The United States Supreme Court has noted that the two freedoms are interrelated: "Indeed, in Anglo-American history at least, government suppression of speech has so commonly been directed precisely at religious speech that a free-speech clause without religion would be Hamlet without the prince." *Capitol Square Review and Advisory Bd. v. Pinette*, 515 U. S. 753, at 760 (1995).

(5) Government cannot infringe on the "fundamental First Amendment rule that a speaker has the autonomy to choose the content of his own message and, conversely, to decide what not to say." *Hurley v. Irish Am. Gay Grp. of Boston*, 515 U.S. 557, 558 (1995). "Its point is simply the point of all speech protection, which is to shield just those choices of content that in someone's eyes are misguided, or even hurtful." *Id.* at 574. In *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 634 (1943), the Supreme Court determined that it was not within the valid power of the government "to force an American citizen publicly to profess any statement of belief, or to engage in any ceremony of assent to one." As the Court so ably stated, "If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein." *Id.* at 642. "[T]he First Amendment forbids the government to regulate speech in ways that favor some viewpoints or ideas at the expense of others." *Lamb's Chapel v. Ctr. Moriches Union Free Sch. Dist.*, 508 U. S. 384, 394 (1993), quoting *City Council of Los Angeles v. Taxpayers for Vincent*, 466 U.S. 789, 804 (1984). And the Supreme Court reiterated in *Matal v. Tam*, 137 S. Ct. 1744 (2017), "We have said time and again that 'the public expression of ideas may not be prohibited merely because the ideas are themselves offensive to some of their hearers.'" *Id.* at 1763, quoting *Street v. N.Y.*, 394 U. S. 576, 592 (1969).

(6) In a pluralistic society, in which people hold more than one view of marriage, the wisdom expressed in *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 634 (1943), is the best arbitrator of public differences. The purposes of the State and its citizens are best served by protecting individuals from government action and penalty solely because of their beliefs, speech, or actions with regard to the contentious issue of the appropriateness of same-sex marriage, without affecting the authority of the State to express its own views as to this issue, to encourage the actions that it believes best suit the best interests of the State and its inhabitants, and to discourage actions that it believes do not as long as those actions are not coercive.

Section 4. Definitions

As used in this act, the term:

- A. 'Discriminatory action' means any action that directly or indirectly adversely affects the person against whom the discriminatory action is taken, places the person in a worse position than the

person was in before the discriminatory action was taken, or is likely to deter a reasonable person from acting or refusing to act. It includes, but is not limited to, any action to:

- a. Alter in any way state tax treatment of an exemption from taxation under state law;
- b. Cause any tax, penalty, or payment to be assessed against a person or deny, delay, or revoke an exemption from taxation under state law;
- c. Disallow a deduction for state tax purposes of any charitable contribution made to or by a person;
- d. Deny, withhold, reduce, exclude, terminate, reprimand, censure, or otherwise make unavailable any government grant, contract, subcontract, cooperative agreement, loan, guarantee, license, certification, scholarship, accreditation, employment, or other similar position or status from or to a person;
- e. Deny, withhold, reduce, exclude, terminate, or otherwise make unavailable any public benefit from or to a person, including for purposes of this act admission to, equal treatment in, or eligibility for a degree from any educational program at any educational facility administered by a government; or
- f. Deny, withhold, reduce, exclude, terminate, condition, or otherwise make unavailable access to any speech forum (whether a traditional, limited, or nonpublic forum) administered by a government, including access to education facilities available for use by student or community organizations; or
- g. Enter into a contract that is inconsistent with, would in any way interfere with, or would in any way require a person to surrender voluntarily the rights protected by this section.

B. 'Government' means the State or any local subdivision of the State or public instrumentality or public corporate body created by or under authority of state law, including but not limited to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and every department, agency, board, bureau, office, commission, authority, or similar body thereof; municipalities; counties; school districts; special taxing districts; conservation districts; authorities; and any other State or local public instrumentality or corporation.

C. 'Person' means any individual, corporation, partnership, proprietorship, firm, enterprise, association, public or private organization of any character, or other legal entity.

D. 'Public benefit' means any grant, accreditation, certification, license, advantage, employment, access to public facility, or other benefit conferred in whole or in part by government.

Section 5. Prohibition and Enforcement

(a) Government shall not take any discriminatory action against a person wholly or partially on the basis that such person believes, speaks, or acts in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage.

(b) A person may assert a violation of this act as a claim or defense in a judicial, agency, or other proceeding and obtain special damages, a declaratory judgment, or

injunctive or other appropriate relief against a government.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an action under this act may be commenced, and relief may be granted, in a court of competent jurisdiction without regard to whether the person commencing the action has sought or exhausted available administrative remedies.

(d) The Attorney General may bring an action for a declaratory judgment or injunctive relief for any violation of this act.

(e) When an aggrieved person prevails in an action under this act, the court may award reasonable attorney's fees and expenses of litigation.

Section 6. Accreditation

For purposes of this act, government shall consider accredited, licensed, or certified any person who would have been accredited, licensed, or certified by a nongovernmental agency but for a determination by the agency against such person wholly or partially on the basis that the person believes, speaks, or acts in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage.

Section 7. Interpretation

(a) This act shall be construed in favor of a broad protection of free exercise of religious beliefs to the maximum extent permitted by the terms of this act, the United States Constitution, and the Constitution of this State. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, sexual orientation discrimination shall not be considered discrimination on the basis of sex, and the refusal to participate in or foster or service a same-sex marriage or intercourse shall not be considered to be sexual orientation discrimination in this State.

(b) Nothing in this act shall be construed to narrow the meaning or application of any other law of this State protecting free exercise of religion.

(c) If any part of this law is found unlawful, it shall be segregated from the whole and the remainder shall remain valid to the maximum lawful extent.

Section 8. Waiver of Sovereign Immunity

The defense of sovereign immunity is waived as to any claim, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party claim brought in the courts of this state by an aggrieved person seeking special damages, a declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, or reasonable attorney's fees and expenses of litigation against the state or any political subdivision thereof.

Section 9. Effective date

This act shall become effective upon its becoming law.

Section 10. Repeal of conflicting laws

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this act are repealed. To the extent of any conflict with another law of this State, this act shall have precedence unless the contrary is expressly stated in the conflicting law.

Notes

The model act does not include the following provisions that sometimes are points of contention:

1. Mississippi passed the “First Amendment Defense Act” on which this act is modeled. The constitutionality of the act was immediately challenged, and a federal district court in Mississippi enjoined enforcement of the act on the grounds that it did not also protect those who believe, speak, and act on their belief in favor of same-sex marriage, finding this to be a violation of equal protection. This ruling was defective because government is free to support and protect the exercise of religion without at the same time addressing opposing views (e.g., exemptions from taxes and the draft), and the district court’s ruling was reversed by the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit on the ground that the parties who brought the suit did not have standing to do so (not reaching the merits of the equal protection argument).

Some have suggested that the act be adapted to avoid an equal protection challenge. Such an alternative may also gain broader political acceptance of the legislation. However, we advise against that approach. The proponents of same-sex marriage may advance their views under the full protection of the First Amendment and the *Obergefell* ruling. This legislation is intended to specifically address, and only address, a person’s speech and actions arising from a sincerely held religious belief that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such marriage.

However, if the political and legislative situation is such that legislators do not have enough support to pass the recommended language, the following approach is a fall-back position. Primarily, anywhere the legislation currently states **“that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage,”** substitute the words “regarding lawful marriage in this State.”

Example:

(a) Government shall not take any discriminatory action against a person wholly or partially on the basis that such person believes, speaks, or acts in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief **that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage.**

changes to the following:

(a) Government shall not take any discriminatory action against a person wholly or partially on the basis that such person believes, speaks, or acts in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief regarding lawful marriage in this State.

We repeat, however, that we advise against this alternative. This language still carries a risk, even if slim, of being abused by an individual or group alleging that their same-sex marriage views are a “sincerely held religious belief.”

2. For similar reasons, we advise against adding protection for those who act only on the basis of “conscience.” The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects only the free exercise of

religion, and “conscience” provisions were advanced but rejected at the time of enactment partly because of the fear that the latter term was too open-ended and subject to abuse. However, we recognize that some States use the “conscience” formulation in their constitutions, and its inclusion may be appropriate in the act in some circumstances, depending on the individual State’s interpretation of that provision.

3. A provision regarding civil rights is not included, such as the following, “provided, however, no provision of this act may be construed to allow an organization to decline to provide a service or rent a facility on the basis of a person’s race, ethnicity, or national origin.” Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and/or the State’s civil rights act cover these types of situations, it is redundant to include such language. Thus, any arguments that a hotel could turn away an interracial couple or refuse to rent a ballroom for a Jewish wedding are bogus arguments. In addition, including such language invites the addition of “sexual orientation,” which would potentially make the act circular if wrongly construed by the judiciary and defeat its purpose.

4. No provision is included that excludes public officers or employees from protection or relief. For example, a probate judge who fails or refuses to perform his or her official duties, such as refusing to sign a marriage certificate for a same-sex couple on religious grounds, could still find relief under this legislation. However, some States may want to deal with the issue of government employees in a totally separate bill and exclude them in this one.

5. A provision that deals with hospitals and nursing homes is not included because the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services adopted regulations in 2011 that require these types of facilities participating in Medicaid and Medicare to allow patients to determine their own visitors. The regulation also prohibits discrimination with regard to visitors, including such factors as sexual orientation and gender identity. See 42 C.F.R. 482.13(h)(4).

6. A provision requiring a person to give 30 days written advance notice to a governmental entity prior to filing a free exercise claim has not been included, but has appeared in some similar legislative initiatives.

The following is a partial list of helpful resources:

Dawn Stefanowicz, “A Warning from Canada: Same-Sex Marriage Erodes Fundamental Rights,” The Witherspoon Institute, *The Public Discourse*, April 24, 2015, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/04/14899/>.

Ryan T. Anderson, “How Rich Corporate Elites Are Lobbying Lawmakers to Crush Marriage Advocates,” The Heritage Foundation, *Daily Signal*, July 29, 2015, <http://dailysignal.com/2015/07/29/how-rich-corporate-elites-are-lobbying-lawmakers-to-crush-marriage-advocates/>.

Emma Green, “How Will the U.S. Supreme Court’s Decision Affect Religious Liberty,” *The Atlantic*, June 26, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/how-will-the-us-supreme-courts-same-sex-marriage-decision-affect-religious-liberty/396986/>.

Opinion, "The New Intolerance," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-intolerance-1427760183>.

Jonathan V. Last, "You Will Be Assimilated," *The Weekly Standard*, June 22, 2015, Vol. 20, No. 39.

Talking Points

America's diverse culture requires public toleration of peaceful dissent and differences of opinion. Although the United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), created a legal duty for the States to allow and recognize same-sex couples to marry, the Supreme Court in that same decision recognized that many of its citizens will legitimately continue to refuse to accept same-sex marriage as valid, appropriate, or beneficial. Citizens should not fear losing their natural and constitutional freedoms simply because others have gained new rights. When the Supreme Court gave women the right to elective abortions, it did not simultaneously require that all doctors had to perform them, businesses had to celebrate them, governments had to fund them, and government schools had to teach children about them. Similarly, by creating minimal rights or restrictions on the States with respect to the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, the Supreme Court does not intend to dictate determinations of society's best practices for children and families or to limit differences of opinion on such matters. In fact, the legislative and executive branches of government can make findings and express their own viewpoints on such topics as abortion and same-sex marriage and, through their policies, enhance the chances that children will live productive, healthy lives and mature to be good citizens.

THE ISSUE:

- ☐ The Supreme Court in *Obergefell* took pains to point out that its decision requiring States to recognize same-sex marriage did not mean that all had to agree that such marriages are valid or beneficial to society or the participants: "Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered. The same is true of those who oppose same-sex marriage for other reasons." *Id.* at 2607.
- ☐ Nonetheless, in some recent instances, often relying on the decision in *Obergefell*, executive and judicial entities have elevated anti-discrimination statutes, including sexual orientation, to override the greater constitutional rights of citizens guaranteed in the First Amendment, including the freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly.
- ☐ Clear legislative boundaries are needed in this important area to assure civil discourse and an appropriate balancing of individual rights.

THE PROBLEM:

- ☐ The new legal status of same-sex marriage has been used to create a hostile environment for many Americans who hold to the ancient tradition of marriage as between one man and one woman. Many individuals have been fined, fired, put out of business, taken to court, or endured death threats simply for advocating that marriage is between a man and a woman and sexual relations are reserved for such a marriage or for simply refusing to offer services or facilities for same-sex

marriage ceremonies, despite freely servicing homosexuals and those in same-sex marriages. This refusal to participate in the same-sex marriage event is a refusal to be associated with that event, rather than the persons, and so is not sexual orientation discrimination. It is no different than a Jewish restaurateur refusing to service a Hamas gala fundraising for the destruction of the State of Israel.

- ❑ By the same token, those who hold opposite views should not be discriminated against for holding those views. For instance, a homosexual baker has a right not to bake a cake for a gathering organized to voice opposition to same-sex marriage.
- ❑ The First Amendment rights of Americans are being violated. Governmental entities are failing to respect that the free exercise of religion "implicates more than just freedom of belief. It means, too, the right to express those beliefs and to establish one's religious (or nonreligious) self-definition in the political, civic, and economic life of our larger community." *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, 134 S. Ct. 2751, 2785 (2014) (Kennedy, J., concurring).
- ❑ Some governmental entities demonstrate a hostility toward religion by using the coercive arm of government to force religious citizens and their organizations to do what their faith forbids or to prevent them from doing what their faith requires. Other States leave faith-based organizations vulnerable to legal action by failing to provide clarity regarding the rights of their citizens to freely exercise their sincerely held religious beliefs.

THE SOLUTION: LEGISLATION THAT PROVIDES LEGAL STABILITY, VALUES FREEDOM IN A DIVERSE CULTURE, AND RESPECTS THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION AND SPEECH BY ALL INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

- ❑ The act would prevent State and local governments from taking sides against individuals and organizations that believe, speak, or peacefully act upon their sincerely held religious beliefs that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such marriage.
- ❑ The act provides broad protections against discriminatory or adverse government actions directed toward such individuals and organizations, not only protecting them against frivolous lawsuits but against unfavorable treatment in tax policies, charitable fundraising, accreditation, licensing, contracts, cooperative agreements, scholarships, certifications, employment, government benefits, access to government facilities, educational programs, and the like.

EXAMPLES OF WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

- In Idaho, the city of Coeur d'Alene passed a city ordinance that prevented discrimination based on sexual preference. The city told local Christian ministers who objected to same-sex marriage that they would be required to perform same-sex weddings or face fines or jail time.
- In Georgia, Dr. Eric Walsh was offered a job by the Department of Public Health, only to have the department rescind the offer once they learned he was a lay preacher. After a two-year legal battle, The State of Georgia settled the claim rather than go to court. <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/state-regional-govt-politics/man-files-complaint-over-rescinded-job-offer/nhSpw/>. In a similar case, the City of Atlanta fired its Fire Chief for publicly expressing his religious beliefs. <http://www.redstate.com/2014/11/25/atlantas-fire-chief-suspended-for-publicly-professing-christian-beliefs/>.

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- A student, majoring in counseling at Augusta State College in Georgia, challenged the program's requirements that she complete "diversity sensitivity training" and other remediation assignments after instructors learned of her religious beliefs. She lost her case in the Eleventh Circuit and could not complete her program of study. <http://www.thefire.org/eleventh-circuit-rejects-court-order-for-keeton-graduate-student-seeking-to-prevent-expulsion/>.
 - The owners of Memories Pizza in Walkerton, a small town in Indiana, received death threats after remarking that they would decline to serve pizza at a same-sex wedding event. The situation escalated to the point that they considered closing their business for good. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/416311/rfra-now-more-ever-ian-tuttle/>.
 - In Oregon, business owners Aaron and Melissa Kline could no longer keep their doors open after charges of discrimination at their bakery when they declined to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. Their litigation continues. <http://dailysignal.com/2017/03/02/bakers-accused-of-hate-get-emotional-day-in-court/>.
 - Barronelle Stutzman, the owner of Arlene's Flowers, is facing a similar situation of ongoing litigation. After losing her appeal in the Washington State Supreme Court, she is now appealing to the United States Supreme Court, all due to exercising her religious conviction that she should not provide an arrangement of flowers for a same-sex wedding. <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/florist-takes-religious-liberty-case-to-us-supreme-court-44817/>.

Preserving Religious Freedom Act - (a/k/a Religious Freedom Restoration Act “State RFRA”)

An act to provide for the preservation of religious freedom; to provide for a short title; to provide for findings; to provide for definitions; to provide for penalties; to provide for the granting of relief; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Preserving Religious Freedom Act.”

Section 2. Purpose

This act is intended to ensure that this State applies at least the same level of religious liberty protections applied at the federal level in order to ensure that State and local governmental entities will not restrict a person’s free exercise rights more than the federal government. This act will:

(1) require application of the compelling interest test as set forth in *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963), and *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972), and guarantee its application in all cases in which free exercise of religion is substantially burdened; and

(2) provide a claim or defense to persons whose religious exercise is substantially burdened by government.

Section 3. Findings

(1) The Framers of the United States Constitution, recognizing free exercise of religion as an unalienable human right, secured its protection in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

(2) The Framers of the Constitution of this State similarly believed it fundamental to the rights and liberties of its citizens to protect their free exercise of religion, stating . . . [insert language and citation here].

(3) The United States Supreme Court recognizes that the peaceful free exercise of religion is a fundamental constitutional right. In *Everson v. Board of Education of Ewing*, 330 U. S. 1 (1947), the Supreme Court opinion declared that a State “cannot hamper its citizens in the free exercise of their own religion,” which was recently reaffirmed in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017). The Court in *Trinity* further stated, “A law may not discriminate against ‘some or all religious beliefs.’ . . . Nor may a law regulate or outlaw conduct because it is religiously motivated,” *id.* at 2021, quoting *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. Hialeah*, 508 U. S. 520, 532 (1993). The *Trinity* Court further restated from *Lukumi* that the “Free Exercise Clause protects against laws that ‘impose[] special disabilities on the basis of . . . religious status.’ 508 U. S., at 533,” 137 S. Ct. at 2021; see also *Smith*, 494 U. S. at 877. Furthermore, the Court in *Trinity* noted that “the Free Exercise Clause protects against ‘indirect coercion or penalties on the free exercise of religion, not just outright prohibitions,’” 137 S. Ct. at 2022, quoting *Lyng v. Nw. Indian Cemetery*, 485 U. S. 439, 450 (1988).

(4) Freedom of speech, as part of the First Amendment, is intrinsic to the free exercise of religion. The United States Supreme Court has noted that the two freedoms are interrelated: "Indeed, in Anglo-American history at least, government suppression of speech has so commonly been directed precisely at religious speech that a free-speech clause without religion would be Hamlet without the prince." *Capitol Square Review and Advisory Bd. v. Pinette*, 515 U. S. 753, 760 (1995). The free exercise of religion is often done communally, and so the freedom of assembly, another part of the First Amendment, also often complements the free exercise of religion and guarantees it.

(5) Laws, policies, and regulations that may be "neutral" toward religion on their face have the potential to burden religious exercise as surely as laws purposely intended to regulate or control the free exercise of religion.

(6) The burdening of the free exercise of religion by government is, in some instances, legitimate. However, to protect the free exercise of religion in this State, the appropriate standard of review for any government action that burdens the free exercise of religion is that government must not substantially burden the free exercise of religion without compelling justification and must use the least restrictive means to achieve its purpose.

(7) In *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), the U.S. Supreme Court held that a federal law that was neutral on its face only had to be rational to be upheld, even though it burdened the free exercise of religion.

(8) Congress understood the *Smith* decision to be a threat to religious liberty and passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), unanimously in the U.S. House of Representatives and almost unanimously in the U.S. Senate. RFRA restored the compelling interest test set forth in prior federal court rulings for striking a proper balance between religious liberty and competing governmental interests.

(9) In *City of Boerne v. Flores*, 521 U.S. 507(1997), the United States Supreme Court held that, to the extent that RFRA covered actions by the States, it infringed on the legislative powers reserved to the States under the Constitution of the United States, with the result that RFRA now is not applicable to other than federal government actions.

(10) Protecting religious freedom from government intrusion is a federal interest of the highest order. Federal law requires that federal courts use strict scrutiny, the highest level of judicial review, to ensure the greatest possible protection for free exercise claims. This interest is of no less importance in this State.

(11) Since the decision in *Boerne*, twenty-two States have enacted statutes to restore the protections of RFRA to the free exercise of religion with regard to the actions of state and local governments of those States.

Section 4. Definitions

The following definitions apply to this act:

- (1) "Demonstrates" means meets the burdens of going forward with the evidence and of persuasion.
- (2) "Free exercise of religion" means that all persons are free to believe, speak, or peacefully act upon their sincerely held religious beliefs, including, but not limited to, the right to speak or to act or to refuse to speak or to refuse to act in a manner that is substantially motivated by a sincerely held religious belief, whether or not the religious exercise is compulsory or central to a larger system of religious belief. The use, building, or conversion of real property for the purpose of the free exercise of religion shall be considered to be free exercise of religion of the person or entity that uses or intends to use the property for that purpose.
- (3) "Government" means the State or any local subdivision of the State or public instrumentality or public corporate body created by or under authority of state law, including but not limited to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and every department, agency, board, bureau, office, commission, authority, or similar body, thereof; municipalities; counties; school districts; special taxing districts; conservation districts; authorities; and any other State or local public instrumentality or corporation. Government action includes the enforcement of laws, rules, and regulations by government at the initiation of private individuals.
- (4) "Compelling governmental interest" means a governmental interest of the highest order that cannot otherwise be achieved without burdening the free exercise of religion of the person seeking relief under this act.

Section 5: Free Exercise of Religion Protected

- (a) Government shall not substantially burden a person's free exercise of religion, even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, unless it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person
 - (i) is essential to achieve a compelling governmental interest of the highest order and
 - (ii) is the least restrictive means of achieving that compelling governmental interest.
 - (b) If a person's free exercise of religion has been burdened in violation of this act, that person may assert that violation as a claim or defense in a judicial, agency, or other governmental proceeding and may obtain appropriate relief against a government.
 - (c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an action under this act may be commenced, and relief may be granted, in a court of competent jurisdiction without regard to whether the person commencing the action has sought or exhausted available administrative remedies.
 - (d) The Attorney General may, on behalf of the State, bring an action for a declaratory judgment or injunctive relief for any violation of this act.
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Section 6: Applicability

This act applies to all government actions and implementations thereof, whether statutory or otherwise, and whether adopted before or after the effective date of this law.

Section 7: Interpretation

- (a) This act shall be construed in favor of a broad protection of the free exercise of religion to the maximum extent permitted by the terms of this act, the United States Constitution, and the Constitution of this State.
- (b) When determining whether the free exercise of religion is substantially burdened under this act, that issue shall not be considered a question of law, but, instead, is to be considered a factual determination based on the subjective belief of the individual involved, and that the individual's belief should be considered determinative unless it is found to be in bad faith or insincere.
- (c) Nothing in this act shall be construed to narrow the meaning or application of any other law of this State protecting the free exercise of religion.

Section 8: Civil action

The defense of sovereign immunity is waived as to any claim, defense, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party claim brought in the courts of this State by an aggrieved person under this act seeking special damages, a declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, or reasonable attorney's fees and expenses of litigation against the State or any political subdivision thereof, all of which relief is authorized under this act. In any such case, the applicable provisions of this act shall control to the extent of any conflict with other provisions.

Section 9: Effective date

This act shall become effective upon its becoming law.

Section 10: Repeal of conflicting laws

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this act are repealed.

Notes

This act is modeled on what are generally called "State RFRA" acts. Examples of similar state laws passed since 1997 include the following:

Alabama

<http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/alison/codeofalabama/constitution/1901/CA-170364.htm>.

Florida

<http://laws.flrules.org/node/1022>.

Idaho

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/statutesrules/idstat/title73/t73ch4/sect73-402/>.

Illinois

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=2272&ChapterID=64>.

Kentucky

<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/statutes/statute.aspx?id=42395>.

Pennsylvania

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/US/PDF/2002/0/0214..PDF>.

Texas

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/CP/htm/CP.110.htm>.

Virginia

<http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title57/chapter1/section57-2.02/>.

All of these laws rely on the original federal statute, but some are more comprehensive in their legislative language than others. The original federal law can be found at <http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter21B&edition=prelim>.

Some materials of relevance are the following:

The Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops explains in its brief, "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty: A Statement on Religious Liberty," what is at stake.

www.usccb.org/issuesandaction/religiousliberty/upload/Our_First_Most_Cherished_Liberty.pdf.

Kim Colby, "A Perpetual Haven: Why the Religious Freedom Restoration Act Matters," *Public Discourse*, June 30, 2014, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/06/13391/>.

Sean Davis, "How RFRA Works, Explained in One Chart," *The Federalist*, April 1, 2015, <http://thefederalist.com/2015/04/01/how-rfra-works-explained-in-one-chart/>.

David Masci, Pew Research, "The Hobby Lobby Decision and the Future of Religious Liberty Rights," June 30, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/30/the-hobby-lobby-decision-and-the-future-of-religious-liberty-rights/>.

Wesley J. Smith, "Will Doctors Be Forced to Kill?" *First Things*, July 25, 2014, http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/07/will-doctors-be-forced-to-kill?utm_source=First+Things+Subscribers&utm_campaign=babef21d74-7_25_147_25_2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28bf775c26-babef21d74-172564633.

Baptist Joint Committee, "The Religious Freedom Restoration Act: 20 Years of protecting Our First Freedom," 2013, <http://bjconline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/RFRA-Book-FINAL.pdf>.

Jane Robbins, "Religious Liberty Bill Deserves Support," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 15, 2015, http://www.myajc.com/news/news/opinion/religious-liberty-bill-deserves-support/njpXf/?ecmp=ajc_social_twitter_2014_sfp#fb02b06d.3601613.73561.

Some other relevant resources are as follows:

U.S. House of Representatives, Judiciary Committee Hearing on Religious Liberty, June 10, 2014, Testimony of Kim Colby, Director, Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom. To read her testimony instead of watching the hearing, use the following link. <http://clsnet.org/document.doc?id=773>.

Video Links:

Part I - <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/48633118> After clicking the "play" arrow, move the slider on the bar to 1:30:45 because the hearing was delayed for an hour and a half.

Part II - <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/48637459>

A Briefing Before The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "Peaceful CoExistence: Reconciling Nondiscrimination Principles with Civil Liberties," September 2016, www.usccr.gov/pubs/Peaceful-Coexistence-09-07-16.PDF. (The majority report in this document graphically shows that many in government advocate the elevation of discrimination laws above the constitutional freedom of the free exercise of religion. The dissenting opinions offer powerful rebuttals.)

Some States, despite not having a "State RFRA," have applied the compelling interest/strict scrutiny level of review to burdens on the free exercise of religion via their own constitutions. In such instances, the need for this statute is not as great, although its passage would protect against the possibility that the courts of the State would change the adopt a less stringent standard of review, as the U.S. Supreme Court did in *Smith*.

Talking Points

The Federal Government provides the highest level of protection to the free exercise of religion as a fundamental human right of the first order. This same level of protection is not available for persons living in many States of this nation because some federal protections extend only to claims arising under the laws of the Federal Government. This legislation is intended to correct the inequalities of religious

liberty protections in this State so that all its citizens have the same protections for the peaceful free exercise of religion as they enjoy under federal law. This State and its political subdivisions will not be guilty of restricting a person's free exercise rights more than the Federal Government is allowed to do. The freedoms of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution will be strongly protected and preserved in this State.

THE ISSUE:

- ☐ When constitutional conflicts are brought before the courts in this State, there is currently no state legislation that requires the courts to provide the same deference to free exercise claims that is currently provided under federal law.
- ☐ Laws, policies, and regulations "neutral" toward religion have the potential to burden religious exercise as surely as laws purposely intended to regulate or control religious exercise.
- ☐ Protecting the free exercise of religion from government intrusion is a federal interest of the first order. Federal law requires that federal courts use strict scrutiny, the highest level of judicial review, in order to ensure the adequate protection of free exercise claims. State courts should do no less.

THE PROBLEM:

- ☐ Prior to 1990, the courts used the compelling interest/strict scrutiny test to resolve free exercise claims. However, in *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), the United States Supreme Court held that a federal law that was neutral on its face only had to be rational to be upheld, even though it burdened the free exercise of religion.
- ☐ Congress understood this threat to religious liberty created by the *Smith* case and passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA) to restore strict scrutiny, striking sensible balances between religious liberty and competing prior governmental interests.
- ☐ In *City of Boerne v. Flores*, 521 U.S. 507(1997), the Court held that RFRA only applied to actions of the Federal Government and could not be constitutionally applied to state and local governmental actions.
- ☐ Since that time, approximately 22 states have passed legislation requiring their courts to use the same standard as set out for federal government action in RFRA, and at least 11 other states have had RFRA-type protections applied through state court decisions. This State's legislative body needs to pass legislation to ensure that strict scrutiny is faithfully applied by our State courts in free exercise cases.
- ☐ This need has taken on increased urgency recently. Often relying on the decision in *Obergefell*, some executive and judicial entities have elevated anti-discrimination statutes, including sexual orientation, to override the greater constitutional rights of citizens guaranteed in the First Amendment, including the freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, in its 2016 majority report, "Peaceful CoExistence: Reconciling Nondiscrimination Principles with Civil Liberties," recommends exactly that.

THE SOLUTION: LEGISLATION THAT MAKES THE STATE AND FEDERAL LAW STANDARD TO PROTECT THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION CONSISTENT

- ☐ This legislation ensures that courts in this State would use the federal law standard of compelling interest/strict scrutiny for religious free exercise claims. This means that the test as set forth in *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963), and *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972), would be applied consistently with respect to state and local governmental actions, ensuring its application in all cases in which free exercise of religion is substantially burdened. This means that, whether state or local governmental actions substantially burden the free exercise of religion, the government must justify it with a compelling interest and must use the least restrictive practical means to accomplish its legitimate constitutional objective.
- The act does not protect against bad faith or insincere representations of a burden on free exercise. However, some courts have misapplied the federal RFRA with respect to the “substantial burden” analysis, making independent decisions as to whether or not a burden is “substantial” as a matter of law. This act makes clear that substantiality is a factual determination based on the subjective belief of the individual involved, rather than the judge’s own belief, and that the individual’s belief should be determinative unless it is found to be in bad faith or insincere.
- ☐ Legal clarity avoids unnecessary litigation. Litigation involving the free exercise of religion is often among the hardest fought, as fundamental principles are at stake. The State has a compelling interest to avoid such litigation and to protect religious liberty.
- The law clarifies that a person whose religious exercise is substantially burdened by government can make a claim or mount a defense against the government’s action and receive a declaration as to the legality of the government’s action in a timely way, whether or not damages are requested. Moreover, the Attorney General on behalf of the State can request such a declaration when an appropriate situation presents itself.
- This act enhances government’s transparency and accountability because it requires government officials to justify their unwillingness to accommodate citizens’ religious exercise.
- This act reinforces America’s commitments to limited government and pluralism. This State’s government is supposed to be a limited government that defers to its citizens’ religious liberty. In this act, the State recommits itself to the foundational principle that American citizens have the God-given right to live peaceably and undisturbed in accord with their religious beliefs.
- ☐ This act helps ensure healthy religious diversity in the State and reduces conflict along religious lines. Conflict becomes unnecessary when everyone’s religious liberty is protected.
- ☐ A growing body of international research shows a positive relationship between religious freedom and economic freedom. One recent study shows the connection between religious freedom and ten of the twelve pillars of global competitiveness measured by the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Index. Countries that protect religious freedom, in general, experience higher income, higher levels of education for women, better health outcomes, less armed conflict, less corruption, less harmful regulation, and (perhaps most important of all) other personal liberties

(such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, economic liberty, and freedom of travel) are more secure. (See Brian J. Grim, Greg Clark, and Robert Edward Snyder, "Is Religious Freedom Good for Business?: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis," 10 *Interdisciplinary J. of Research on Religion*, article 4, 2014, ISSN 1556-3723.)

EXAMPLES OF WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

- ☐ Home-based churches and Bible study groups that face eviction on unequal terms with large gatherings (like parties) could mount a free exercise claim under this legislation.
- ☐ Church ministries that help ex-prisoners or that feed the homeless have been confronted with local government bans on their activities. Under this legislation, these ministries would have a better defense for their religious liberty.
- Medical professionals with religious objections would have a defense against providing drugs or services that would facilitate abortions. For example, in Vermont, after the passage of an assisted suicide law, the Vermont Board of Medical Practice and Office of Professional Regulation interpreted the law to require doctors to counsel their patients about the assisted suicide option. Doctors who lodged objections due to their convictions of conscience or their Hippocratic oaths were still expected to follow the board's interpretation of the law. *Vermont All. for Ethical Healthcare, Inc. v. Hoser*, No. 5:16-CV-205, 2017 WL 1284815 (D. Vt. Apr. 5, 2017), *appeal dismissed sub nom. Vermont All. for Ethical Healthcare, Inc. v. van de Ven*, No. 17-1481, 2017 WL 3429397 (2d Cir. May 22, 2017). See, <http://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/case-details/vermont-alliance-for-ethical-healthcare-v.-hoser>.
- ☐ The federal RFRA allowed Hobby Lobby, a privately held company whose owners are opposed to abortion on the basis of sincere religious belief, to prevail in its free exercise claim against the Affordable Care Act's mandate that the company fund abortifacients for its employees. *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 134 S. Ct. 2751 (2014).
- ☐ Without a similar act, Washington State has basically compelled a family-owned drug store to shut down because it refuses to sell abortifacients. This pharmacy was targeted by Planned Parenthood for its refusal to carry Plan B abortifacients or to refer customers to pharmacies that did. Under political pressure, the Pharmacy Commission of Washington State issued regulations that essentially prohibited pharmacies from refusing to follow their religious beliefs in these ways. *Stormans, Inc. v. Wiesman*, 794 F.3d 1064 (9th Cir. 2015), *cert. denied*, 136 S. Ct. 2433 (2016). See, <https://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/case-details/stormans-v.-wiesman>.

Child Protection Act

An act relating to children and youth services, so as to ensure that licensed child-placing agencies with sincerely held religious beliefs may continue to provide services for children in connection with adoption and foster care according to their religious beliefs and to prohibit departmental discrimination or adverse actions due to the sincerely held religious beliefs of such licensed child-placing agencies.

Section 1. Title

This act is entitled the “Child Protection Act.”

Section 2. Purpose

This act is intended to ensure that all qualified child-placing agencies in this State are free to provide their services without impediment related to an agency’s free exercise of religion protected by the United States Constitution and this State’s Constitution. This act is not intended to limit or deny any person’s right to adopt a child or participate in foster care.

Section 3. Findings

The legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) When it is necessary for a child in this State to be placed with an adoptive or foster family, placing the child in a safe, loving, and supportive home is a paramount goal of this State.
- (b) As of the effective date of this act, there are approximately [xxx] licensed adoption and foster care agencies in this State that are authorized to participate in and assist families with adoption and foster parent placements of children.
- (c) Having as many possible qualified adoption and foster parent agencies in this State is a substantial benefit to the children of this State who are in need of these placement services and to all of the citizens of this State because the more qualified agencies taking part in this process, the greater the likelihood that permanent child placement can be achieved.
- (d) As of the effective date of this act, the adoption and foster care licensees of this State represent a broad spectrum of organizations and groups, some of which are faith-based and some of which are not faith-based.
- (e) Faith-based and non-faith-based child-placing agencies have a long and distinguished history of providing adoption and foster care services in this State.
- (f) Private child-placing agencies, including faith-based child-placing agencies, have the right to free exercise of religion under both the State and federal constitutions. Under well-settled principles of constitutional law, this right includes the freedom to abstain from conduct that conflicts with an agency’s sincerely held religious beliefs.

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- (g) Under well-settled principles of constitutional law, governmental entities cannot be hostile to religion. As the United States Supreme Court stated in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 314 (1952), "we find no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and to throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence." In *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017), the Supreme Court recently underscored this principle by overturning denial of an otherwise available public benefit on account of the potential recipient's religious status. Federal and State governments have long recognized the beneficial relationship between religious activity and the community at large, leading to its moral, mental, and social improvement. The Supreme Court has recognized that government grants tax exemptions to religious organizations "because they uniquely contribute to the pluralism of American society by their religious activities." *Walz v. Tax Commission of City of New York*, 397 U.S. 664, 689 (1970).
- (h) Children and families benefit greatly from the adoption and foster care services provided by faith-based and non-faith-based child-placing agencies. Ensuring that faith-based child placing agencies can continue to provide adoption and foster care services will benefit the children and families who receive publicly funded services.
- (i) There is no compelling reason to require a child-placing agency to violate its sincerely held religious beliefs in providing any service, since alternative access to the services is equally available.
- (j) Under well-established department contracting practices, a private child-placing agency does not receive public funding with respect to a particular child or particular individuals referred by the department unless that agency affirmatively accepts the referral.
- (k) Under well-settled principles of constitutional law distinguishing "private action" from "state action," a private child-placing agency does not engage in state action when the agency performs private adoption or direct placement services. Similarly, a private child-placing agency does not engage in state action relative to a referral for services under a contract with the department before the agency accepts the referral.
- (l) The identities of child-placing agencies in this State are well publicized and readily available to the public.

Section 4. Definitions

- (a) "Adverse action" means any action that directly or indirectly adversely affects the person or child-placing agency against whom the adverse action is taken, places the person or child-placing agency in a worse position than the person or child-placing agency was in before the adverse action was taken, or is likely to deter a reasonable person or child-placing agency from acting or refusing to act. It includes, but is not limited to:
- (i) denying a child-placing agency's application for funding;
 - (ii) refusing to renew the child-placing agency's funding;
 - (iii) canceling the child-placing agency's funding;
 - (iv) declining to enter into a contract with the child-placing agency;
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- (v) refusing to renew a contract with the child-placing agency;
- (vi) canceling a contract with the child-placing agency;
- (vii) declining to issue a license to the child-placing agency;
- (viii) refusing to renew the child-placing agency's license;
- (ix) canceling the child-placing agency's license;
- (x) taking an enforcement action against a child-placing agency;
- (xi) imposing, levying, or assessing a monetary fine, fee, penalty, damages, award, or injunction;
- (xii) discriminating against the child-placing agency in regard to participation in a government program;
- (xiii) taking any action that materially alters the terms or conditions of the child-placing agency's funding, contract, or license;
- (xiv) altering in any way the tax treatment of, or causing any tax, penalty, or payment to be assessed against, or denying, delaying, revoking, or otherwise making unavailable an exemption from taxation;
- (xv) disallowing, denying, or otherwise making unavailable a deduction for state tax purposes of any charitable contribution made to an organization; or
- (xvi) withholding any government benefit that is available to other child-placing agencies.

(b) "Child-placing agency" means an adoption or foster care agency that is licensed by the [State department responsible for such licensure and regulating child-placing agencies] to provide services.

(c) "Department" means [State department responsible for licensing and regulating child-placing agencies].

(d) "Person" includes natural and legal persons.

(e) "Private Services" includes any service that a child-placing agency provides, except foster care case management and adoption services provided under a contract with the department.

(f) "Public Services" includes foster care case management and adoption services provided under a contract with the department.

(g) "Services" includes but is not limited to performing, assisting, counseling, recommending, consenting to, referring, or participating in a placement in a foster home or for adoption.

Section 5. Private Placements

(a) Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs

To the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law, a child-placing agency shall not be required to provide any services if those services conflict with, or provide any services under circumstances that conflict with, the child-placing agency's sincerely held religious beliefs contained in a written policy, statement of faith, or other document adhered to by the child-placing agency.

(b) Non-prejudicial Effect on Provision of Services

If a child-placing agency declines to provide any services under subsection (a), the child-placing agency's decision does not limit the ability of another child-placing agency to provide those services.

(c) Prohibition of Adverse Action for Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs

To the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law, the State or a local unit of government shall not take an adverse action against a child-placing agency on the basis that the child-placing agency has declined or will decline to provide any services that conflict with, or provide any services under circumstances that conflict with, the child-placing agency's sincerely held religious beliefs, including those contained in a written policy, statement of faith, or other document adhered to by the child-placing agency.

(d) Compelling Interest and Non-retaliatory Intent for Adverse Action

In any adverse action taken by the State or local unit of government against a child-placing agency asserting a violation of its sincerely held religious belief adhered to by the child-placing agency, the State or local unit of government must prove, by clear and convincing evidence, that its action is warranted by a compelling interest, and that the adverse action is the least restrictive means to achieve the compelling interest.

Section 6. Placements Under Contract with the State

(a) Acceptance of Referral

If the department makes a referral to a child-placing agency for foster care case management or adoption services under a contract with the child-placing agency, the child-placing agency may decide not to accept the referral if the services would conflict with the child-placing agency's sincerely held religious beliefs. Before accepting a referral for services under a contract with the department, the child-placing agency has the sole discretion to decide whether to engage in activities and perform services related to that referral. The department shall not control the child-placing agency's decision whether to engage in those activities or perform those services. A governmental entity shall not enter into a contract that is inconsistent with, would in any way interfere with, or would in any way require a child-placing agency or organization to voluntarily surrender the rights recognized by this section. For purposes of this subsection, a child-placing agency accepts a referral by doing either of the following:

- (i) Submitting to the department a written agreement to perform the services related to the particular child or particular individuals whom the department referred to the child-placing agency.
- (ii) Engaging in any other activity that results in the department being obligated to pay the child-placing agency for the services related to the particular child or particular individuals whom the department referred to the child-placing agency.

(b) Prohibition of Adverse Action for Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs

The State or a local unit of government shall not take an adverse action against a child-placing agency on the basis that the child-placing agency has decided to accept or not accept a referral under subsection (a).

(c) **Compelling Interest and Non-retaliatory Intent for Adverse Action**

In any adverse action taken by the State or local unit of government against a child-placing agency asserting a violation of its sincerely held religious belief adhered to by the child-placing agency, the State or local unit of government must prove, by clear and convincing evidence, that its action is warranted by a compelling interest, and that the adverse action is the least restrictive means to achieve the compelling interest.

Section 7. Defense and Remedies for Violations

A child-placing agency may assert a violation of this act as a claim or defense against a governmental entity in any judicial or administrative proceeding. Any person or child-placing agency who successfully asserts a claim or defense pursuant to this act may recover the following:

- (i) declaratory relief;
- (ii) injunctive relief to prevent or remedy a violation of the provisions of this Act or the effects of that violation;
- (iii) compensatory damages for pecuniary and non-pecuniary losses;
- (iv) reasonable attorneys' fees and costs; or
- (v) any other appropriate relief.

The sovereign, governmental, and qualified immunities of any governmental entity are not otherwise waived by this subsection.

Section 8. Effect on Rights

- (a) This act may not be construed to allow a child-placing agency to deprive a minor of the rights, including the right to medical care, provided by [insert appropriate reference to Family Code, etc.].
- (b) This act may not be construed to prevent law enforcement officers from exercising duties imposed on the officers under the [insert appropriate reference to Family Code, Penal Code, etc.].

Section 9. Repeal of Conflicting Law

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this act are repealed.

Section 10. Effective Date

This act shall become effective upon it becoming law.

Notes

The model act borrows from several acts designed to strengthen and protect child placement options. Acts already on the books include these:

Alabama bill (HB 24), signed into law 5/3/17.

<https://legiscan.com/AL/text/HB24/2017>.

Michigan bill (HB 4188), signed into law 6/11/15.

<http://legislature.mi.gov/documents/2015-2016/publicact/htm/2015-PA-0053.htm>.

North Dakota statute, see page 3, section 50-12-07.1.

<http://www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t50c12.pdf>.

South Dakota bill (SB 149), signed into law 3/10/17.

<http://www.sdlegislature.gov/docs/legsession/2017/Bills/SB149P.htm>.

Texas bill (HB 3859), signed into law 6/15/17.

<http://www.legis.state.tx.us/search/DocViewer.aspx?ID=85RHB038595B&QueryText=foster%2bOR%2bplacement&DocType=B>.

Virginia bill (H 189), signed into law 4/9/12.

<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?121+ful+CHAP0690>.

The following articles on the topic are also helpful resources:

Diana Chandler, "Faith-Based Adoption Placement Protected in 5 States," *Baptist Press*, May 10, 2017,

<http://www.bpnews.net/48841/faithbased-adoption-placement-protected-in-5-states>.

Catholic News Agency, "U.S. Bishops Back Religious Freedom for Adoption, Foster Care Providers," April 12, 2017,

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/us-bishops-back-religious-freedom-for-adoption-foster-care-providers-14632/>.

Ryan Anderson and Sarah Torre, "Adoption, Foster Care, and Conscience Protection," Heritage Foundation, January 15, 2014,

<http://www.heritage.org/marriage-and-family/report/adoption-foster-care-and-conscience-protection>.

Paul A. Long, "Preserving the Religious Liberty of Faith-Based Child Placement Agencies," Michigan Catholic Conference, October 18, 2013,

<https://www.micatholic.org/advocacy/news-room/the-word-from-lansing/2013/faith-based-adoption-agencies/>.

The model act does not include the following provisions that are found in some of the state statutes linked to above.

- ☐ A requirement (found, for example, in section 14e.(4) of the Michigan act) that faith-based agencies give referrals, as some such agencies may have conscientious objections to doing so. This exclusion is especially important in States that do not have State RFRA that would arguably provide protection in such circumstances. (See *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 134 S. Ct. 2751 (2014), and *Zubik v. Burwell*, 136 S. Ct. 1557 (2016).)
- A provision (found, for example, in section 45.008.(f) of the Texas act) that an agency may not decline services for certain narrow purposes. (“Provided, however, no provision of this Act may be construed to allow a child placement agency to decline to provide a service on the basis of a person's race, ethnicity, or national origin.”)

Talking Points

This act is designed to strengthen child placement options in a pluralistic culture. States have longstanding partnerships with a diverse range of private agencies that work to find loving homes for children. Like-minded individuals, exercising their freedom of assembly, have historically formed voluntary organizations to care for vulnerable children long before government was involved. The principles of compassion, service, and mercy compel people from all socio-economic strata, diverse backgrounds, and religious persuasions throughout our pluralistic culture to care for children in their time of need.

THE ISSUE: VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN NEED OF SAFE, LOVING HOMES

- This State had over (xxx) children in the foster care system at the end 2016; but only (xxx) foster homes available. Of the children in foster care, at least (xxx) needed adoption, but only (xxx) were placed in permanent homes.
- In addition to the numbers provided above, many adoptions occur every year outside of the State's foster care system.
- Private agencies, according to their beliefs and mission statements, have long played a critical role in recruiting, training, and retaining adoptive and foster families.

THE PROBLEM: POTENTIAL LOSS OF CHILD-PLACING SERVICES BY FAITH-BASED AGENCIES

- ☐ In at least three States (Illinois, Massachusetts, and California) and Washington, D.C., faith-based child-placing agencies have shut down rather than compromise their sincerely held religious beliefs. Holding to the biblical view of the family, these agencies could not stay true to their missions and also comply with laws that required them to place children in homes that did not meet their religious qualifications.
- ☐ States are failing to respect the free exercise of religion in two ways. Some States demonstrate a hostility toward religion by using the coercive arm of government to force religious citizens and their organizations to do what their faith forbids or prevent them from doing what their

faith requires. Other States leave faith-based organizations vulnerable to law suits by failing to provide legal clarity regarding the free exercise rights of their sincerely held religious beliefs.

THE SOLUTION: LEGISLATION THAT PROVIDES LEGAL STABILITY, STRENGTHENS LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIPS, VALUES AUTHENTIC CHOICE IN A PLURALISTIC CULTURE, AND RESPECTS RELIGION

- ☐ Vulnerable children have the best chance of being placed in loving homes when many child-placing agencies are available to partner with the State. This legislation is designed, in part, to ensure the maximum number of qualified agencies are providing services within the State.
- Ensuring a diversity of private providers and their ability to operate according to their values—and with families who share those values—makes it more likely that the greatest possible number of children will become part of permanent, loving families.
- Protecting the conscience rights and religious liberty of private adoption and foster-placement providers takes nothing away from others. Indeed, not every private provider needs to perform every service—and state-run agencies can provide a complete array of services. A diverse range of provider options exist for anyone who is legally able and willing to adopt or provide foster care.
- Under well-settled principles of constitutional law, governmental entities cannot be hostile to religion. The Supreme Court recently underscored this in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017), when it overturned denial of an otherwise available public benefit on account of the potential recipient’s religious status. As the United States Supreme Court stated in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 314 (1952), “we find no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and to throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence.” In *Walz v. Tax Commission*, 397 U.S. 664, 689 (1970), the Court stated that religious organizations “uniquely contribute to the pluralism of American society by their religious activities.” This legislation ensures that this State honors the beneficial relationship between religious activity and the community at large, especially as it relates to serving the most vulnerable among us.

EXAMPLES OF WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

- ☐ Launched in 2008 by Focus on the Family, Wait No More hosts events that gather government leaders, churches, private adoption providers, and prospective adoptive parents to provide information and opportunities to begin the adoption process on site. The one-day events introduce prospective families to the hundreds of children waiting for adoption in their own communities and provide the tools, information, and network to encourage families to consider opening their homes and lives to vulnerable children. By 2014, Wait No More events had taken place in 14 States and with remarkable results -- 2,600 families had begun the adoption process from foster care. In Colorado alone, the number of children in foster care waiting for adoption was cut in half within just a couple of years due to ongoing efforts such as Wait No More and other faith-based collaborations.
- Pastor DeForest “Buster” Soaries and his congregation of the First Baptist Church at Lincoln Gardens in New Jersey began their foster care work (called “Harvest of Hope”) in response to the alarming number of newborns being left in local hospitals. Harvest of Hope partners with other churches to connect foster children to loving families, leading a statewide network of churches educating

prospective adoptive families. As of 2014, the organization outperformed government agencies in finding permanent homes for children and teens. Since it began, the program has recruited 385 foster families, placing a total of over 900 children in temporary foster care. Some 149 families have adopted 235 children.

- ❑ In Massachusetts, Boston Catholic Charities, as a state-licensed adoption provider, had to choose between being willing to place children with same-sex couples or remaining faithful to Catholic teaching that marriage is between one man and one woman and its conviction that children deserve to be raised by a married mother and father. The result? Catholic Charities of Boston chose to close, despite a successful record of placing more children in adoptive homes than any other state-licensed agency.
- ❑ What happened in Massachusetts also occurred in the District of Columbia, where D.C. Catholic Charities was forced to transfer its foster care and adoption program to other providers, and in Illinois, where the Evangelical Child and Family Agency was forced to transfer the cases of the foster children it had served for decades to different agencies.
- ❑ Some state officials have claimed that they have been able to absorb the number of needy children that otherwise would have been handled by private, faith-based organizations. While this absorption has been forced on those officials by the state policy, it certainly has not been a beneficial outcome, and it does not address any diminution of care of the children and increased delays in placement. Moreover, it does not afford parents and guardians a choice of a placement informed by their faith and sincerely held religious beliefs, to the great detriment of the children, their parents and guardians, and the desired pluralism of this State and our country.

Clergy Protection Act

An act relating to the protection of clergy and religious organizations for honoring a sincerely held religious belief relating to participation in a lawful marriage.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be entitled the Clergy Protection Act.

Section 2. Findings

(1) The United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), ruled that a State could not, consistently with the Federal Constitution, deny marriage to couples of the same sex who believed that their marriage would be legitimate and who requested it. At the same time, the Court recognized that individuals hold different religious views on this subject: "Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered. The same is true of those who oppose same-sex marriage for other reasons." *Id.* at 2607.

(2) The United States Supreme Court recognizes that the peaceful free exercise of religion is a fundamental human right. In *Everson v. Board of Education of Ewing*, 330 U. S. 1 (1947), the Supreme Court opinion declared that a State "cannot hamper its citizens in the free exercise of their own religion," which was recently reaffirmed in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017). The Court in *Trinity* further stated, "A law may not discriminate against 'some or all religious beliefs.' . . . Nor may a law regulate or outlaw conduct because it is religiously motivated," *Id.* at 2021, quoting *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. Hialeah*, 508 U. S. 520, 532 (1993). The *Trinity* Court further restated from *Lukumi* that the "Free Exercise Clause protects against laws that 'impose[] special disabilities on the basis of . . . religious status.' 508 U. S., at 533," 137 S. Ct. at 2021; *see also Emplmt. Div., Dept. of Human Res. of Ore. v. Smith*, 494 U. S. 872, 877 (1990). Furthermore, the Court in *Trinity* noted that "the Free Exercise Clause protects against 'indirect coercion or penalties on the free exercise of religion, not just outright prohibitions,'" 137 S. Ct. at 2022, quoting *Lyng v. Nw. Indian Cemetery*, 485 U. S. 439, 450 (1988).

(3) Protecting religious freedom from government intrusion is a government interest of the highest order. Federal law requires that federal courts use strict scrutiny, the highest level of judicial review, in order to ensure the greatest possible protection for free exercise claims. State legislation advances this interest by remedying, deterring, and preventing government interference with religious exercise in a way that complements the protections mandated by federal laws and the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

(4) Freedom of speech, as part of the First Amendment, is intrinsic to the free exercise of religion. The United States Supreme Court has noted that the two freedoms are interrelated: "Indeed, in Anglo-

American history at least, government suppression of speech has so commonly been directed precisely at religious speech that a free-speech clause without religion would be Hamlet without the prince." *Capitol Square Review and Advisory Bd. v. Pinette*, 515 U. S. 753, at 760 (1995).

(5) Government cannot infringe on the "fundamental First Amendment rule that a speaker has the autonomy to choose the content of his own message and, conversely, to decide what not to say." *Hurley v. Irish Am. Gay Grp. of Boston*, 515 U.S. 557, 558 (1995). "Its point is simply the point of all speech protection, which is to shield just those choices of content that in someone's eyes are misguided, or even hurtful." *Id.* at 574. In *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 634 (1943), the Supreme Court determined that it was not within the valid power of the government "to force an American citizen publicly to profess any statement of belief, or to engage in any ceremony of assent to one." As the Court so ably stated, "If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein." *Id.* at 642. "[T]he First Amendment forbids the government to regulate speech in ways that favor some viewpoints or ideas at the expense of others." *Lamb's Chapel v. Ctr. Moriches Union Free Sch. Dist.*, 508 U. S. 384, 394 (1993), quoting *City Council of Los Angeles v. Taxpayers for Vincent*, 466 U.S. 789, 804 (1984). And the Supreme Court reiterated in *Matal v. Tam*, 137 S. Ct. 1744 (2017), "We have said time and again that 'the public expression of ideas may not be prohibited merely because the ideas are themselves offensive to some of their hearers.'" *Id.* at 1763, quoting *Street v. N.Y.*, 394 U. S. 576, 592 (1969).

(6) In a pluralistic society, in which people hold more than one view of marriage, the wisdom expressed in *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 is the best arbitrator of public differences. The purposes of the State and its citizens are best served by protecting individuals from government action and penalty solely because of their beliefs, speech, or actions with regard to the contentious issue of the appropriateness of same-sex marriage, without affecting the authority of the State to express its own views as to this issue and to encourage the actions that it believes best suit the best interests of the State and its inhabitants and to discourage actions that it believes do not.

Section 3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for purposes of this act:

- (a) "Clergy" or "member of the clergy" means an individual who has been ordained or accredited as a spiritual advisor, counselor, or leader by any religious organization established on the basis of a community of faith and belief, doctrines, and practices of a religious character, or an individual reasonably believed so to be by the person consulting that individual.
- (b) "Religious organization" means a nonprofit organization that is any of the following:
 - (1) A house of worship, including but not limited to, a church, convention, denomination, congregation, association, diocese, conference, council, synagogue, mosque, or temple;
 - (2) A religious group, society, corporation, association, entity, partnership, order, preschool, school, institution of higher education, ministry, charity, social service provider, children's home, camp, retreat center, clinic, hospital or other health care facility, hospice, elder care facility, or crisis pregnancy center, whether or not connected to or affiliated with a church,

convention, denomination or other organization of churches, and associated counseling, courses, and teaching, where said organization holds itself out to the public in whole or in part as religious and its purposes and activities are in whole or in part religious; or

(3) Any clergy, religious leader, minister, officer, manager, employee, member, or volunteer of any entity described in paragraph (a) or (b) of this subdivision;

(c) “Sincerely held religious belief” means a religious belief, speech, or action motivated by that belief, whether or not the belief or action is compulsory or a central part or central requirement of the person’s religious belief.

(d) “Penalize or withhold benefits” as used in subsection 3(b) of this section means any adverse administrative, civil, or criminal action that directly or indirectly affects the religious organization, clergy, or person against whom the adverse action is taken, places the religious organization, clergy, or person in a worse position than before the adverse action was taken, or is likely to deter a reasonable action or inaction. It includes, but is not limited to: the following adverse actions taken by the State, local governmental entity, or any person acting under color of state or local law to:

(1) Alter the tax treatment of, or cause any tax, fine, or payment to be assessed against, to delay, revoke, or otherwise deny an exemption from taxation;

(2) Disallow or hinder a deduction for tax purposes of any charitable contribution;

(3) Withhold, reduce, exclude, terminate, or otherwise deny any accreditation, license, certificate, contract, grant, loan, guarantee, or insurance;

(4) Withhold, reduce, exclude, terminate, or otherwise deny any entitlement, social service benefit, health care benefit, or to alter or deny a custody award, foster home placement, or adoption;

(5) Deny access to meeting space, channels of communication, or other resources at an educational institution that is otherwise available to other student organizations, participation in charitable fundraising campaigns that are otherwise available to other charitable organizations, or access to minister at correctional institutions or other public facilities and property as is otherwise available to other nongovernmental organizations;

(6) Recognize or allow an administrative charge or civil claim;

(7) Require any mediation, sensitivity training, paperwork requirements, or otherwise create demands; or

(8) Restrict the right of persons and religious organizations covered by this act to limit employment, spousal benefits, the sale or rental of housing accommodations, admission, membership, leadership, or to otherwise give preference to persons who share the same sincerely held religious beliefs, including standards of conduct, or from taking such action as is calculated to promote the religious principles for which a congregation or organization is established or maintained.

(e) "Person" means an individual or a corporation, company, sole proprietorship, partnership, society, club, organization, agency, association, or any employee, agent, or volunteer of any of these entities.

Section 4. Protections of Clergy and Religious Organizations

- (a) A member of the clergy, a religious organization, an organization supervised or controlled by or in connection with a religious organization, or an individual employed by a religious organization may not be required to promote, perform, solemnize, or validate any marriage or provide services, accommodations, facilities, goods, or privileges for a purpose related to the solemnization, formation, or celebration of any marriage if the action would cause the person or religious organization to violate a sincerely held religious belief.
- (b) Any other statutes and regulations notwithstanding, a refusal to promote or to provide solemnization, validation, services, accommodations, facilities, goods, or privileges under subsection (a) of this section shall not serve as the basis for a civil or criminal cause of action or any other action by this State, an agency of this State, or a political subdivision of this State to penalize or withhold benefits or privileges, including tax exemptions or governmental contracts, grants, licenses, or anything else encompassed by the definition of "penalize or withhold benefits" in section 2(d) of this act from any protected religious organization or person.
- (c) Any other statutes and regulations notwithstanding, a refusal to provide services, accommodations, facilities, goods, or privileges under subsection (a) of this section shall not serve as the basis for a civil or agency action by or on behalf of a private person claiming discrimination.

Section 5. Similar Protections Afforded to Others

No person engaged in business in this State, whether located in-state or out-of-state, shall be required to provide any services, accommodations, facilities, goods, or privileges for a purpose related to the solemnization, formation, maintenance, dissolution, or celebration of any marriage if the action would cause the person to violate a sincerely held religious belief. The protections provided under section 4 of this act shall also be afforded to persons covered under this section.

Section 6. Severability

The provisions of this act are severable. If any part of this act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, that declaration shall not affect the part or parts that remain.

Section 7. Effective date

This act shall go into effect immediately upon its lawful enactment.

Notes

This model act provides similar protections that are also found in the Marriage Tolerance Act. However, this bill is not as broad in its application. The primary focus of this legislation is to protect those in the religious community. As a secondary goal, it aims to protect business owners who have sincerely held beliefs regarding marriage. However, this provision for business owners is not required if the State has an adequate “State-RFRA” law, as such a law should provide the same protections (and more), and it also overlaps with the model Marriage Tolerance Act (a version of which has only been enacted in Mississippi).

Sources: This language is modeled in part on Utah Code 1953 § 63G-20-101, et seq., and laws adopted by Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington State, as well as the District of Columbia. Conn. Gen. Stat. §§46b-22, 46b-35a; Del. Code Ann. tit. 13, §106; D.C. Code §46-406(c); Md. Code Ann., Note: Fam. Law §§ 2-201, 2-202, 2-406, 2012 Mary. Laws Ch. 2 (H.B. 438); Minn. Stat. Ann. §517.09; N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 457:37; N.Y. Dom. Rel. Law § 11(1); R.I. Gen. Laws Ann. §15.3-6.1; Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 18, § 5144(b); Wash. Rev. Code § 26.04.010.

The following are some helpful resources:

- Kirsten Andersen, “Catholic Couple Fined \$13,000 for Refusing to Host Same-sex 'Wedding' at Their Farm,” *LifeSite News*, August 20, 2014, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/catholic-couple-fined-13000-for-refusing-to-host-same-sex-wedding-at-their>.
- Kelly Harkness, “Fearing Another Lawsuit, Christian Business Owners Stopped Hosting All Weddings. Now their Business is Dead.” *The Daily Signal*, June 19, 2015, <http://dailysignal.com/2015/06/19/fearing-another-lawsuit-christian-business-owners-stopped-hosting-all-weddings-now-their-business-is-dead/>.
- Associated Press, “Same-sex Couple, Wedding Venue in Central Minnesota Settle Discrimination Case,” *Star Tribune*, August 22, 2014, <http://www.startribune.com/same-sex-couple-settle-dispute-with-minnesota-wedding-venue/272282461/http://www.kare11.com/news/business-sues-state-over-same-sex-laws/364295316>.
- David Unze, “Business Sues State Over Same-sex Laws,” *St. Cloud Times*, *KARE*, December 6, 2016, <http://www.kare11.com/news/business-sues-state-over-same-sex-laws/364295316>.
- Heather Hahn, “Gay Couple Files Complaint for Refusal of Wedding,” United Methodist Church, November 12, 2014, <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/gay-couple-files-complaint-for-refusal-of-wedding>.

Talking Points

America's diverse culture requires public toleration of peaceful dissent and differences of opinion. Although the United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), created a legal duty for the States to allow and recognize same-sex marriages, the Supreme Court in that same decision recognized that many citizens will legitimately continue to refuse to accept same-sex marriage as valid, appropriate, or beneficial. Citizens should not fear losing their natural and constitutional freedoms simply because others have gained new rights. When the Supreme Court gave women the right to elective abortions, it did not simultaneously require that all doctors had to perform them, businesses had to celebrate them, governments had to fund them, and government schools had to teach children about them. Similarly, by creating minimal rights or restrictions on the States with respect to the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, the Supreme Court does not intend to dictate determinations of society's best practices for children and families or to limit differences of opinion on such matters. Furthermore, the Court has no intention of dictating to religious organizations and persons that they jettison sincerely held religious beliefs in favor of a secular definition of marriage.

THE ISSUE:

- ❑ Because the Supreme Court redefined marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, explicit protections are needed to protect clergy, congregations, religious organizations, and small businesses that provide goods and services for weddings from forced participation in marriage ceremonies that violate their sincerely held religious beliefs.
- ❑ The First Amendment's Free Exercise rights are being subjugated in various States to the Court decreed right to same-sex marriage.

The free exercise of religion "implicates more than just freedom of belief. It means, too, the right to express those beliefs and to establish one's religious (or nonreligious) self-definition in the political, civic, and economic life of our larger community." *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, 134 S. Ct. 2751, 2785 (2014) (Kennedy, J., concurring). Free exercise also includes the right to abstain from speech and participation in that which offends one's faith as upheld in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943). In his concurring opinion, Justice Murphy stated that "official compulsion to affirm what is contrary to one's religious beliefs is the antithesis of freedom of worship." *Id.* at 638.

THE PROBLEM:

- ❑ Only eleven States and the District of Columbia adopted same-sex marriage through legislation prior to the *Obergefell* ruling. These states, due to their legislative process, provided some protection for clergy and congregations as those States instituted same-sex marriage. The other 39 States had no such protections once *Obergefell's* ruling applied to the entire nation. Therefore, States which have not provided statutory clarity to protect clergy and religious organizations need to do so in order to prevent constant litigation in the courts.
- ❑ Such situations create expensive disruption for ministers, religious organizations, and business owners who must defend their free exercise rights in court. Government has a constitutional duty

to protect its citizens' First Amendment freedoms and prevent such legal harassment that interferes with their productivity in the community. Government also has a duty to ensure that its coercive power is not used in ways that infringe upon the peaceful religious speech and actions of its citizens and their organizations.

THE SOLUTION: LEGISLATION THAT VALUES FREEDOM FOR ALL IN A DIVERSE CULTURE, CLEAR STATUTORY LANGUAGE THAT DOES NOT ALLOW WIDE DISCRETION TO THE COURTS THUS REDUCING FRIVOLOUS LAWSUITS AND THE DISRUPTION OF PEOPLE'S LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

- ☐ This legislation specifically protects religious officials, congregations, and religious organizations, such as schools, colleges, hospitals, homeless shelters, and other religious charities, from state or local laws, including administrative regulations that would force them to violate their sincerely held religious beliefs regarding marriage. It protects individual congregants, who may be small business owners, from being forced to provide services or goods for wedding ceremonies or from being penalized in any way for their non-participation.
- This also protects religious programs, courses, retreats, workshops, and counseling which may offer pre-marital counseling, marriage workshops, family retreats, or educational courses on human sexuality. It protects religious organizations' rights to have policies that are consistent with their religious beliefs in the area of employment, spousal benefits, housing accommodations, admissions, membership, and leadership positions.
- ☐ Although there is overlap between this legislation and the Marriage Tolerance Act, this legislation proactively protects against any laws imposing direct requirements on clergy, congregations, and religious organizations. This legislation provides absolute assurance that they are protected against all government actions in the marriage context. Unfortunately, in the current climate, such explicit assurances are necessary.

EXAMPLES OF WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

- ☐ In Idaho, the city of Coeur d'Alene passed a city ordinance that prevented discrimination based on sexual preference. The city told local Christian ministers who objected to same-sex marriage that they would be required to perform same-sex weddings or face fines or jail time. www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/oct/20/idaho-citys-ordinance-tells-pastors-to-marry-gays/.
- ☐ In Oregon, business owners Aaron and Melissa Kline could no longer keep their doors open after charges of discrimination at their bakery when they declined to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. Their litigation continues. <http://dailysignal.com/2017/03/02/bakers-accused-of-hate-get-emotional-day-in-court/>.
- ☐ In Washington State, Barronelle Stutzman, the owner of Arlene's Flowers, is facing a similar situation of ongoing litigation. After losing her appeal in the State Supreme Court, she is now appealing to the United States Supreme Court, all due to exercising her religious conviction that she should not provide an arrangement of flowers for a same-sex wedding. <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/florist-takes-religious-liberty-case-to-us-supreme-court-44817/>.

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- In New Jersey, the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, affiliated with the United Methodist Church, declined to provide its facilities for a civil-union ceremony. However, due to the State's non-discrimination law, the association became the target of a lawsuit, *Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Ass'n of United Methodist Church v. Vespa–Papaleo*, 339 Fed. Appx. 232, 237–38 (3d Cir. 2009). Sadly, the association's religious liberty rights, as well as its property rights, were not protected by the court. <http://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/case-details/bernstein-v.-ocean-grove-camp-meeting-association>.
 - In Colorado, revised statute § 24-34-601(2)(a) is creating problems for business owners that object to using their services to promote same-sex marriage. Cases such as *303 Creative, LLC v. Elenis*, No. 16-cv-02372 (Dist. Colo. Sept. 1, 2017), and *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Inc. v. Col. Civil Rights Comm'n*, 370 P.3d 272 (Colo. App. 2015), are making their way through the courts, but, so far, the bankrupting fines levied on the small businesses have been upheld, despite the refusal to associate with and facilitate the message of a same-sex marriage not being sexual orientation discrimination. The United States Supreme Court will hear arguments in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case during the 2017-18 term that will determine if free exercise and free speech constitutional rights will prevail over the wrongful application of this state statute. <http://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/press-release-details/colorado-designer-may-appeal-ruling-that-won-t-let-her-challenge-law-forcing-her-to-promote-same-sex-weddings>.

Licensed Professional Civil Rights Act

An act prohibiting discrimination by any individual or organization against an applicant for, or a holder of, an occupational license, due to the professional's or potential professional's sincerely held religious beliefs.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be entitled the "Licensed Professionals Civil Rights Act."

Section 2. Findings

1. As of January 1, 2018, there are approximately XXX professions for which this State requires a person to obtain an occupational license, a process that regulates a significant portion of professions in this State;
2. The licensed professions in this State comprise a vibrant, diverse, and vitally important part of our State's economy;
3. This State maintains stringent standards for obtaining occupational licenses, and these standards, intended to protect the health and safety of the public, should not overly restrict economic or religious freedoms;
4. This State has a compelling interest in fostering a diverse group of licensed professionals to serve the needs of its residents, including by honoring the sincerely held religious beliefs of professionals and those who wish to become professionals and who would otherwise be prohibited or deterred from entering a chosen profession;
5. Licensing laws and regulations can become so burdensome or punitive as to deprive people of their property without due process and violate their First Amendment protections, *see Thomas v. Collins*, 323 U.S. 516, 530-531 (1945);
6. The United States Supreme Court "has repeatedly held that a governmental purpose to control or prevent activities constitutionally subject to state regulation may not be achieved by means which sweep unnecessarily broadly, and thereby invade the area of protected freedoms. . . . [T]he power to regulate must be so exercised as not, in attaining a permissible end, unduly to infringe the protected freedom. *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, [310 U. S. 296](#), [310 U. S. 304](#)." *NAACP v. Ala.*, 377 U.S. 288, 307 (1964);
7. Incidents over the last several years involving those in the licensed professions and studying to become a member of a licensed profession have penalized those individuals for holding true to their sincerely held religious beliefs; and
8. Such incidents show a hostility to religious belief and practice that is both unnecessary, lacking in tolerance, and counterproductive to this State's economy and culture.

Section 3. Definitions

- (a) “Penalty” means any administrative, disciplinary, civil, or criminal fine, rebuke, suspension or revocation of a license, prohibition on obtaining a license, hindrance to educational or training opportunities toward obtaining or maintaining a license, or any other adverse action whatsoever.
- (b) “Person” means any governmental or private individual, organization, or other entity resident in this State.
- (c) “Sincerely held religious belief” means a religious belief, speech, or action motivated by that belief, whether or not the belief, speech, or action is compulsory or a central part or central requirement of the person’s religious belief, provided that such sincerely held religious belief does not incite violence or have the reasonable expectation of resulting in serious physical harm to oneself or another person.

Section 4. Certain Actions Prohibited

A person may not take any action, including but not limited to adopting or implementing any rule, regulation, code of conduct, or policy, or impose any penalty that

- (1) limits an applicant’s ability to obtain a license or professional education based in whole or in part on a sincerely held religious belief of the applicant; or
- (2) burdens a license holder’s:
 - (A) free exercise of religion, regardless of whether the burden is the result of a rule generally applicable to all license holders;
 - (B) freedom of speech regarding a sincerely held religious belief; or
 - (C) freedom of assembly, such as membership in any religious professional organization or organization that holds certain religious beliefs, for example and illustration only, by requiring a person to provide a list of his associational memberships or contributions to any association or by censuring an individual for association with an organization that does not permit leadership to be held by practicing homosexuals.

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary, an educational institution or other organization may act consistently with its own sincerely held religious beliefs, including in the admission of applicants and regulation of its students or members.

Section 5. Administrative or Judicial Relief

- (a) A person may assert that a violation of section 3 of this act as a defense in an administrative hearing or as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding.

- (b) A person may bring an action for injunctive relief against a violation of section 3 of this act.

Section 6. Severability

The provisions of this act are severable. If any part of this act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, that declaration shall not affect the part or parts that remain.

Section 7. Effective date

This act shall go into effect immediately upon its lawful enactment.

Notes

In Tennessee, a very limited bill that began as an effort to protect the sincerely held religious beliefs of counselors was changed in its final language to “sincerely held principles.” Although such language is helpful to gain bipartisan support, there is not a dependable line of Supreme Court rulings that provide the same case law stability as those dealing with “sincerely held religious beliefs.” Nonetheless, such language may be more immune to court challenges. For further information see the 2016 history of HB 1840 and SB 1556 on the following Tennessee General Assembly page:

<http://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/Default.aspx?BillNumber=SB1556&ga=109>.

See also: <https://factn.org/portfolio-item/tn-senate-bill-1556-tn-house-bill-1840/>

To review legislation in other States dealing with the issue of professional licenses, visit the following Arizona and Texas legislative sites: <http://www.azleg.gov/ars/41/01493-04.htm> and <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/85R/billtext/pdf/SB00651I.pdf#navpanes=0>.

Helpful resources in this area include the following:

- Mary Alice Robbins, “Protecting Religious Beliefs Becomes Tense Issue in State Bar Sunset Bill Debate,” *Texas Lawyer*, May 16, 2017, <http://www.texaslawyer.com/id=1202786370973/Protecting-Religious-Beliefs-Becomes-Tense-Issue-in-State-Bar-Sunset-Bill-Debate?slreturn=20170812213728>
- Scott Shackford, Reason.com, “Lawsuit Aims to Force Catholic Hospitals Perform Transgender-Related Surgeries,” April 26, 2017, <https://www.google.com/amp/reason.com/blog/2017/04/26/lawsuit-aims-to-force-catholic-hospitals/amp>

Talking Points

THE ISSUE

Schools, boards, and associations empowered to act as the gatekeepers of many professions. They write regulations and policies which control professional practices, licensing, and individual professional conduct. They decide who may study to become a professional. At issue is whether the licensed professions will remain open to a full cross-section of this State’s citizens, including those who have sincere religious beliefs that oppose abortion, intimate relations between those of the same sex, and transgender operations.

THE PROBLEM

Incidents over the last several years have resulted in various professionals being censured or deprived of their chosen livelihoods, not because of poor service to their clients, but because of disagreements with or disapproval of their sincerely held religious beliefs, such as not believing it ethical to participate in or facilitate abortion or same-sex sexual intercourse or transgender operations. Aspiring professionals are also being turned away from schools and not being granted degrees because of their sincerely held

religious beliefs. This lack of tolerance not only runs counter to our State's commitment to tolerance and religious freedom, but it also is wholly unnecessary, harms the economy, and discourages qualified individuals from joining the professions. Some examples include the following:

- ② In Washington State, a pharmacy was targeted by Planned Parenthood for its refusal to carry Plan B abortifacients or to refer customers to pharmacies that did. Under political pressure, the Pharmacy Commission of Washington State issued regulations that essentially prohibited pharmacies from refusing to follow their religious beliefs in these ways. *Stormans, Inc. v. Wiesman*, 794 F.3d 1064 (9th Cir. 2015), *cert. denied*, 136 S. Ct. 2433 (2016). See, <https://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/case-details/stormans-v.-wiesman>.
- In Vermont, after the passage of an assisted suicide law, the Vermont Board of Medical Practice and Office of Professional Regulation interpreted the law to require doctors to counsel their patients about the assisted suicide option. Doctors who lodged objections due to their convictions of conscience or their Hippocratic oaths were still expected to follow the board's interpretation of the law. *Vermont All. for Ethical Healthcare, Inc. v. Hoser*, No. 5:16-CV-205, 2017 WL 1284815 (D. Vt. Apr. 5, 2017), *appeal dismissed sub nom. Vermont All. for Ethical Healthcare, Inc. v. van de Ven*, No. 17-1481, 2017 WL 3429397 (2d Cir. May 22, 2017). See, <http://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/case-details/vermont-alliance-for-ethical-healthcare-v.-hoser>.
- In Wyoming, the Wyoming Supreme Court upheld the determination of the Commission on Judicial Conduct and Ethics that a judge's refusal to officiate at same-sex marriages was judicial misconduct, despite that fact that officiating weddings is discretionary and judges can refuse to perform wedding ceremonies for a host of other reasons. *In re Neely*, 390 P.3d 728 (Wyo. 2017). See, <http://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/case-details/neely-v.-wyoming-commission-on-judicial-conduct-and-ethics>.
- In Tennessee, the American Counseling Association amended its ethics code to prohibit counselors from referring clients to other counselors based on their "personally held values." This language was a direct response to a religious liberty case, *Ward v. Polite*, 667 F.3d 727 (6th Cir. 2012) (see below) that held that a Christian counselor could refer a gay/lesbian client if the therapy sought required the counselor to affirm a same-sex relationship in violation of a counselor's sincerely held religious beliefs. <https://factn.org/portfolio-item/tn-senate-bill-1556-tn-house-bill-1840/>.
- ② The Christian Medical Association has documented systematic discrimination, often religious in nature, for medical professionals who seek to honor their pro-life convictions. <https://cmda.org/library/doclib/Real-life-conscience-stories-RevisedMay09.pdf>.
- A master's degree student finishing up her final requirements in a counseling program at Eastern Michigan University referred a potential client, upon religious grounds, to another

fellow counselor. Although the guidelines allowed referrals, the school review board in charge of the program expelled her for what they viewed as discrimination against a same-sex relationship. *Ward v. Polite*, 667 F.3d 727 (6th Cir. 2012). See <https://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/case-details/ward-v.-polite>.

- A student, majoring in counseling at Augusta State College in Georgia challenged the program's requirements that she complete "diversity sensitivity training" and other remediation assignments after instructors learned of her religious beliefs. She lost her case in the Eleventh Circuit and could not complete her program of study. *Keeton v. Anderson-Wiley*, 664 F.3d 865 (11th Cir. 2011). See <http://www.thefire.org/eleventh-circuit-rejects-court-order-for-keeton-graduate-student-seeking-to-prevent-expulsion/>.
- The American Bar Association in 2016, in an express attempt to "change the culture," has recommended to all the States, which largely follow the model rules crafted by the ABA, that they amend their rules of professional responsibility to define as unprofessional conduct any discrimination, broadly defined, against sexual orientation, marital status, and gender identity. To date, the Attorneys General of Texas, South Carolina, and Louisiana have all found the revised rule likely to violate the United States Constitution's freedoms of speech, free exercise of religion, and assembly/association and due process.

Another critical part of the problem is that many have lost sight of the central importance of religious liberty to a free, self-governing society and to its economic vitality. Historically, religious liberty has been a preeminent fundamental human right guaranteed to American citizens by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The protection for the "free exercise of religion" also recognizes that a religious person cannot separate her "religious" life from her "secular" life, as all of life must be religiously informed and one's profession is viewed as an exercise of religion by service to others.

- "The theory upon which our political institutions rest is, that all men have certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and that, in the pursuit of happiness, all avocations, all honors, all positions are alike open to everyone, and that in the protection of these rights all are equal before the law." *Cummings v. Mo.*, 71 U.S. 277, 321-322 (1867).
- "It requires no argument to show that the right to work for a living in the common occupations of the community is of the very essence of the personal freedom and opportunity that it was the purpose of the [Fourteenth] Amendment to secure." *Truax v. Raich*, 239 U.S. 33, 41 (1915).

Social science studies also demonstrate that, by protecting religious liberty, a society increases its chances of achieving a healthy economy. A growing body in international research shows a positive relationship between religious freedom and economic freedom. One recent study shows the connection between religious freedom and ten of the twelve pillars of global competitiveness measured by the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index. Countries that protect religious freedom, in general, experience higher income, higher levels of education for women, better health outcomes, less armed conflict, less corruption, less harmful regulation, and (perhaps most important of all) other personal liberties (such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, economic liberty, and freedom of travel) are more secure. See Brian J. Grim, Greg Clark, and Robert Edward Snyder, "Is

Religious Freedom Good for Business?: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis,” 10 *Interdisciplinary J. of Research on Religion*, article 4, 2014, ISSN 1556-3723.

THE SOLUTION: LEGISLATION THAT VALUES FREEDOM IN A DIVERSE CULTURE OF COMPETING VALUES AND REDUCES THE DISRUPTION OF PEOPLE’S LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

- ☐ This legislation helps ensure that licensing boards, schools, professional organizations, and others focus on their missions and do not improperly use their authority to coerce individuals to violate their sincerely held religious beliefs in exchange for the right to receive licenses or to continue in their chosen professions.
- This legislation helps prevents religious discrimination and increase tolerance and diversity in the professions, from the time a person seeks out the educational training, certificates, and education needed to become licensed in an occupation and throughout that professional’s career.
- ☐ If a professional still experiences religious discrimination related to the demands of those who license or regulate his profession, this legislation provides a judicial remedy.

Category #3 (c) - Religious Liberty Protection Legislation – Protecting Teachers and Students

Model Acts Protecting Students and Teachers in Their Free Exercise of Religion

In this final subsection of the Category #3 acts, we collect acts relating to the practice of religion in the schools and school boards of this country. This is a frequent battleground over the free exercise of religion by students, teachers, and administrators. It commonly involves prayer, but also many other expressions, such as wearing apparel with religious messaging and discussing topics from a religious perspective. Some federal protections are already in place, such as the Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. § 4071, but no comprehensive ones. Also, as indicated in the initial act in this series, federal law requires school districts to certify that they are in compliance with guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Education outlining religious freedom for students and teachers in the school setting.

Student Prayer Certification Act

An act providing for certain reporting and certifications by the State Board of Education and local school districts to comply with federal law.

Section 1. Short title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Student Prayer Certification Act.

Section 2. Legislative Findings

- (a) The United States Congress enacted legislation (codified at 20 U.S.C. 7904) that requires public elementary and secondary schools to certify that they have no policy that prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally protected prayer.
- (b) A local education agency (LEA) must provide this certification annually (by October 1) in writing to its State education agency (SEA). The U.S. Department of Education (the Department) has issued guidance that SEAs and LEAs are to use in meeting this requirement.
- (c) The Department can withhold federal funding for the public schools in the State if the requirements of 20 U.S.C. 7904 are not met.
- (d) This State has an interest in ensuring that the certification requirement is meant so that federal funding for public schools is not put at risk.

Section 3. Compliance with Annual Certification Requirements

To ensure that this State remains in compliance with this federal requirement and to ensure that the constitutionally protected right to prayer is unimpeded in the public schools, the [SEA] shall do the following:

- (a) Annually, by [date], remind [LEAs] of the requirement for such certification.
- (b) Biennially, by [date], report the following information to the [appropriate State legislative committee(s)]:
 - a. The process the [SEA] established for receiving the annually required [LEA] certification, including any certification form and State guidance for compliance.
 - b. In what form and where annual [LEA] certifications are maintained.
 - c. How the [SEA] responded to [LEAs] that did not provide the annual certification.
 - d. Whether the [SEA] has received complaints in the past two years that any [LEA(s)] are not in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education's guidance on this topic and how such complaints have been handled.
 - e. Whether the [SEA] has provided its annual certifications to the U.S. Department of Education.

Section 4. Effective Date

This act shall become effective on the first July 1 following its enactment so as to be implemented during the immediately following school year.

Notes

- ❑ Congress enacted legislation (codified at 20 U.S.C. 7904) that requires public elementary and secondary schools to certify that they have no policy that prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally protected prayer.
- ❑ A local education agency (LEA) must provide this certification annually (by October 1) in writing to its State education agency (SEA). The U.S. Department of Education (the Department) has issued guidance that SEAs and LEAs are to use in meeting this requirement.
 - Original letter from then-Secretary Paige is posted on the Department's website: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/religionandschools/letter_20030207.html
 - Department's Guidance is here: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/religionandschools/prayer_guidance.html (originally published in 68 Fed. Reg. 9646 (Feb. 28, 2003))
- ❑ The Department does not specify a particular form to be used by the LEA for this certification. Instead, the SEA is to determine the form it will require for such certification, as long as the certification is in writing and clearly states that the LEA has no such policy.
- ❑ Individual LEA certifications are not submitted to the Department, but are maintained by the SEA per its usual records retention policy.
- ❑ The SEA is required to send the Department annually (by November 1) a list of LEAs that have not filed the certification or against which complaints of noncompliance have been made to the SEA.
- ❑ The Department can bring enforcement actions (e.g., withholding funds) against LEAs that do not comply with this statutory mandate. The General Education Provisions Act (see 20 U.S.C. 1234c & d) authorizes the Department Secretary to bring enforcement actions against recipients of federal education funds that are not in compliance with the law.
- Hopefully, your State is already acting in compliance with this federal requirement, but some States have not been and have not set up any mechanism to ensure compliance. A sample letter to determine whether your State's school administrations are complying is provided here:

[date]

[Legislator's contact information]

Dear [SEA leader title]:

I write to inquire about [SEA's] procedures for complying with the requirements of 20 U.S.C. 7904 (section 8524 of the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA") of 2015) and related guidance from the U.S. Department of Education concerning annual certification by this State's local educational agencies (LEAs) that they have no policy that prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally

protected prayer in public schools. In particular, please provide information in response to the following questions:

- What process has [SEA] established for receiving the annually required LEA certification, including any certification form and State guidance for compliance?
- In what form and where are annual LEA certifications maintained?
- How does [SEA] respond to LEAs that do not provide the annual certification?
- Has [SEA] received complaints that any LEA(s) are not in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education's guidance on this topic?
 - If so, how are such complaints handled and tracked?
- Has the [SEA] provided its annual certifications to the U.S. Department of Education?
 - If so, please provide a copy of the past two years' certification that has been submitted.
 - If not, please explain why.

Please provide your response by [date]. If you have questions about this inquiry, please contact [name of appropriate staff member].

Thank you for your cooperation with my request for this information.

Sincerely,

[Legislator's name]

Talking Points

- ☑ This act is to assure compliance with requirements of federal law.
 - If the State is not compliant, it risks federal funding for education.
- Federal funding is a critical resource for the State's public school systems.
- ☑ This federal requirement is designed to ensure that public schools are respecting the constitutionally protected rights of its students. That is also a critical interest of this State.
- ☑ The reporting requirements on the SEA are basically to provide a copy of what is required by federal law to supply to the U.S. Department of Education. This will not pose a significant additional burden on the SEA.

Teacher Protection Act

An act relating to the indemnification of, and other assistance to, those who are subjected to potentially ruinous lawsuits involving approved religious practices, including teachers, other school district employees, school districts, and members of boards that govern school districts.

Section 1. Title

This act shall be entitled the Teacher Protection Act.

Section 2. Definitions

The following definitions apply for purposes of this act:

- (a) "Covered person" means any teacher, other school district employee, or member of a board that governs a school district.
- (b) "Good faith" means a reasonable belief of a covered person or school district that a policy or practice does not expressly violate an opinion or order of a court of competent jurisdiction's interpretation of a federal, state, or local constitutional provision, law, or regulation. However, should a policy or practice violate such an opinion or order, a belief shall still be considered to be held in "good faith" if it comports with the U.S. Department of Education's "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools," dated February 7, 2003, or its then-current version.
- (c) "State assistance" means:
 - 1. Defense of the law suit by the Attorney General;
 - 2. Indemnification by the State for damages and costs of any type, including, but not limited to, court costs and attorney's fees and costs;
 - 3. Resource materials, formal or informal advice from the Attorney General, or any other assistance whatsoever that the Attorney General may choose to render; or
 - 4. Any or all of the above in combination.

Section 3. Protections

A covered person or school district that is sued as a result of a good faith policy adopted by the school district's governing board or a good faith practice of an individual school or school district that authorizes religious exercise, including, but not limited to, student and teacher expression of religious views in class or class work, student and teacher wearing of religious apparel in school, religious clubs or

meetings on school grounds, voluntary prayer, a moment of silence, or a religious activity or expression at a school-sponsored event may request from the Attorney General any form of assistance as defined in section 2(c) of this act. This assistance is available regardless of whether the law suit alleges violation of the federal or state constitutions; federal or state statutes; local ordinances; or federal, state, or local regulations that specifically reference the state or federal establishment clauses; or whether the lawsuit invokes any other grounds not specifically enumerated above.

Section 4. Determination by the Attorney General

The Attorney General shall determine whether a request for assistance made under this section arises from a good faith school district policy, a good faith school district practice, or an individual school's good faith policy. If the Attorney General determines that the request does not arise from such a good faith policy or practice, the Attorney General shall decline to provide assistance. If the Attorney General determines that the request arises from such a good faith policy or practice, the Attorney General shall, if requested or if the lawsuit otherwise comes the Attorney General's attention, render assistance to the covered person or school district.

Section 5. Remedy for Non-assistance

A covered person or a school district that was denied assistance, but that prevails in the lawsuit for which assistance was requested, is entitled to recover litigation costs and attorney's fees from the Attorney General by submitting a form to the Attorney General. The required form shall be created and available within thirty days of the enactment of this bill. The required form shall require reasonable documentation to be submitted therewith. But the required form and its required documentation shall be designed so as to facilitate ease of compensation of persons and school districts described by this section.

In the event the Attorney General disputes or fails to pay the litigation costs and attorney's fees submitted under this section, the covered person or school district may file suit in the court of appropriate jurisdiction seeking a recovery of the submitted litigation costs and attorneys' fees. If the covered person or school district prevails in this action, the litigation costs and attorneys' fees incurred in this action shall be awarded by the court in addition to the litigation costs and attorneys' fees the Attorney General disputed or failed to pay.

Section 6. Severability

The provisions of this act are severable. If any part of this act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, that declaration shall not affect the part or parts that remain.

Section 7. Effective date

This act shall go into effect immediately upon its lawful enactment.

Notes

This model act uses generic titles for “school board,” “school district,” “Attorney General,” and the like. Appropriate alterations may be needed to conform to the terminology used in your jurisdiction or appropriate officer to be designated for the specified duties (e.g., “Solicitor General” instead of “Attorney General”).

Links to the referenced U.S. Department of Education guidelines and accompanying letter are as follows:

https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/religionandschools/letter_20030207.html.

https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/religionandschools/prayer_guidance.html.

Teachers & Religion in Public Schools, a comprehensive guiding document on religious liberty issues for school personnel, was written in 2006 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.clsnet.org/document.doc?id=130>.

Helpful resources include the following:

Ann Bradley, “Rural Texas District Cancels Plan for Pupils to Dress as Opposite Sex,” *Education Week*, November 23, 2004,

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/11/24/13briefs-3.h24.html>.

Teacher Bans Cross and Forces LGBT Agenda on Students, Liberty Counsel, April 20, 2017,

<https://www.lc.org/newsroom/details/042017-teacher-bans-cross-and-forces-lgbt-agenda-on-students>.

Jessica Meyers, “Plano’s ISD’s Candy Cane Lawsuit has Turned from Case to Cause,” *Dallas News*, December 2011, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/plano/2011/12/19/plano-isds-candy-cane-lawsuit-has-turned-from-case-to-cause>.

Valerie Wigglesworth, “Texas AG’s Concerns over Legality of Frisco High School’s Prayer Room called ‘Publicity Stunt’ by School District,” *Dallas News*, March 2017,

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/frisco/2017/03/17/texas-ag-office-raises-concerns-prayer-room-friscos-liberty-high-school>.

Mark Walsh, “Supreme Court Declines to Hear Superintendent’s Appeal in Parental-Rights Case,” *Education Week*, May 19, 2008,

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/school_law/2008/05/supreme_court_declines_to_hear_4.html.

“Indoctrination in Public Schools?” Clarion Project, August 28, 2017, <https://clarionproject.org/pro-islam-indoctrination-public-schools/>.

Janet Levy, “San Diego: Ground Zero for Islamic Indoctrination in American Public Schools,” *American Thinker*, May 5, 2017,

http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2017/05/san_diego_ground_zero_for_islamic_indoctrination_in_american_public_schools.html.

Todd Starnes, "Students Opposed to LGBT Agenda Shamed in Classroom," FoxNews.com, February, 9, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2015/02/09/students-opposed-to-lgbt-agenda-shamed-in-classroom/>.

Todd Starnes, "Lawsuit: Girls Exposed to Transgender Twerking & Grinding in Locker Room," FoxNews.com, September 7, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/09/07/lawsuit-girls-exposed-to-transgender-twerking-grinding-in-locker-room.html>.

Todd Starnes, "Lawsuit: Public School Forced My Child to Convert to Islam," FoxNews.com, January 8, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/01/29/lawsuit-public-school-forced-my-child-to-convert-to-islam.html>.

Talking Points

Teachers, school administrators, school board members, and other government personnel in PreK-12 public education are confronting growing legal complexities regarding the free exercise of religion. The vast number of legal threats, lawsuits, and the lack of consistency in free exercise decisions in federal courts has created a confusing atmosphere for educators. In some instances, school personnel are so fearful of lawsuits that they fail to accommodate, and thus sacrifice, the free exercise rights of their students and teachers. By trying to create a religion-free zone, they chill religious expression and portray a hostility toward religion, something that is forbidden by the United States Supreme Court. On the other hand, those that do accommodate their teachers' and students' rights to express religious views in classroom assignments or at holiday assemblies, for example, may still receive an organization's threat of a lawsuit. Often lost in the equation are the free exercise rights that educators themselves have. Although educators have limited free exercise rights in the classroom, they still retain those rights in certain peer-to-peer and other workplace settings, and nothing impedes those rights once an educator is off campus and not acting as a representative of the school.

THE ISSUE:

- ☐ In practical terms, educators need to know that the State has their back when they have diligently implemented and followed best constitutional practices with regard to religious exercise. Currently, educators cannot count on the State to come to their aid when facing potentially ruinous lawsuits. Even when they win, it can be difficult to recover from the turmoil created by such conflicts.
- ☐ Clear legislative direction is needed in PreK-12 education to ensure that educators know the best constitutional practices for protecting free exercise rights without running afoul of establishment clause violations.

THE PROBLEM:

- ☐ School systems and educators that do their best to honor the religious free exercise rights of students and the religious heritage of our nation often receive threatening letters from organizations that accuse them of unconstitutional Establishment Clause violations. These threats often misrepresent the state of the law, but these tactics can cause school systems to restrict the constitutional freedoms of both their teachers and students.

- ❑ On the other hand, some school systems or individual teachers demonstrate a hostility toward religion by using the coercive arm of government to require students to participate in what offends their religious beliefs or to prevent students from expressing religious views or participating in religious activities. By doing so, educators fail to respect that the free exercise of religion "implicates more than just freedom of belief. It means, too, the right to express those beliefs and to establish one's religious (or nonreligious) self-definition in the political, civic, and economic life of our larger community." *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, 134 S. Ct. 2751, 2785 (2014) (Kennedy, J., concurring). Free exercise also includes the right to abstain from speech and participation in that which offends one's faith as upheld in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943). In his concurring opinion, Justice Murphy stated that "official compulsion to affirm what is contrary to one's religious beliefs is the antithesis of freedom of worship." *Id.* at 638.
- ❑ In any of these situations, there can be a potential minefield of threatened lawsuits. Such situations create expensive disruption in the public education system, and most of these situations, if not all, are totally avoidable. However, local school personnel are often unaware of best constitutional practices due to the intricate case law of the United States Supreme Court and other courts.

THE SOLUTION: LEGISLATION THAT PROVIDES LEGAL GUIDANCE AND STABILITY, VALUES FREEDOM IN A DIVERSE CULTURE, AND RESPECTS THE PEACEFUL FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION WITHIN THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK APPROPRIATE TO THE PREK-12 SETTING

- ❑ The act would help relieve the burden on classroom teachers or other school personnel when they receive letters from organizations threatening lawsuits due to alleged violations of Free Exercise or Establishment Clause concerns.
- ❑ The act provides considerable incentive for local education personnel to follow best constitutional practices. By doing so, they will greatly increase their prospects for legal support from the State's Attorney General's Office.
- ❑ The act provides specific parameters of how religious liberty must be respected in the PreK-12 setting, including by reference to U.S. Department of Education guidelines that school districts are required to follow (and certify compliance with) by federal law. Such legal clarity, distilled from at least 50 years of federal court rulings, will provide the best defense for local school personnel and should help prevent legal harassment from third parties.

EXAMPLES OF WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The Spurger Independent School District in Texas had planned a cross-dressing day for its students. Because of an alert parent who contacted legal counsel, the school system realized its error and the school system abandoned its plans and avoided potential lawsuits.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/11/24/13briefs-3.h24.html>

A superintendent at Greenville Independent School District in Texas violated a teacher's parental rights to raise her children according to the dictates of her conscience by making her promotion dependent upon her taking her children out of a religious private school which they attended. In the resulting lawsuit, the superintendent was held personally liable and was required to pay punitive damages.

In the Wellington Independent School District of Texas, teachers sent fliers home with students asking them to bring Valentines for their upcoming Valentine's party, but specifically stated that their Valentines were to be "free of religious content." It was discovered that one teacher had made this constitutional error when drafting the flyer. The administration corrected the flyer to ensure that the school was not expressing religious hostility and reassured students that the school did not ban items with religious content.

Charles County Public Schools in Maryland is facing a lawsuit due to inappropriate instruction in the Muslim faith which took place at La Plata High School. The parents had requested that their child opt-out of the instruction which demeaned her Christian faith, but the principal did not allow the request and told the parents the student "would receive 'zeros' on any incomplete assignments even if the assignments violated the family's religious beliefs and heritage." Furthermore, the school banned the father from being on school property. Due to such hostility toward the family's religious objections to the Islamic lessons, the principal, the vice-principal, and the entire school system must endure the time and costs of defending its actions in court. <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/01/29/lawsuit-public-school-forced-my-child-to-convert-to-islam.html>.

In another Texas case, the issue of whether the principal and teacher should be personally liable for prohibiting elementary school students from, for example, confiscating pencils with "Jesus Is the Reason for the Season" from "goodie bags" voluntarily provided by a student to fellow students during a non-curricular, "winter break" party was litigated not only in the federal district court but also before a three-member panel of the Fifth Circuit and then before the full Fifth Circuit, which ultimately held (on a closely split vote) that the law was too confused (prior to the ruling by that court) to hold the teachers personally liable, even though they had acted improperly. *Morgan v. Swanson*, 659 F.3d 359 (5th Cir. 2011) (en banc).

Preserving Religious Freedom in School Act

An act to preserve and protect the religious freedom guaranteed by the United States and State Constitutions for students and teachers in the primary and secondary public schools.

Section 1. Title

This act is entitled the “Preserving Religious Freedom in School Act.”

Section 2. Findings

- (a) Recently, the United States Supreme Court recognized again that the peaceful free exercise of religion is a fundamental constitutional right. In *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017), Chief Justice Roberts wrote, "A law may not discriminate against 'some or all religious beliefs.' . . . Nor may a law regulate or outlaw conduct because it is religiously motivated," *id.* at 2021, citing *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. Hialeah*, 508 U. S. 520, 532 (1993).
- (b) Protecting religious freedom from government intrusion is a government interest of the highest order. Federal law requires that federal courts use strict scrutiny, the highest level of judicial review, to ensure the greatest possible protection for free exercise claims. *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer*, 137 S. Ct. 2012 (2017). State legislation advances this interest by remedying, deterring, and preventing government interference with religious exercise in a way that complements the protections mandated by federal laws and the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.
- (c) The freedoms of speech and assembly, as parts of the First Amendment, are intrinsic to the free exercise of religion. The United States Supreme Court has noted with regard to the linkage between freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion, "Indeed, in Anglo-American history, at least, government suppression of speech has so commonly been directed *precisely* at religious speech that a free-speech clause without religion would be Hamlet without the prince." *Capitol Square Review and Advisory Bd. v. Pinette*, 515 U. S. 753, 760 (1995). And with regard to the linkage to freedom of assembly, the Supreme Court has noted that "this Court has more than once recognized . . . the close nexus between the freedoms of speech and assembly." *NAACP v. Ala.*, 357 U.S. 449, 460 (1958).
- (d) The U.S. Department of Education, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § 7904, requires State and local educational agencies annually to certify, as a condition to receiving funds, that there is no policy that prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary and secondary schools.

Section 3. Definitions

As used in this act:

- (a) “Discrimination” means the act of denying rights, benefits, equitable treatment, or access to facilities available to others.

- (b) "Parent" is either or both parents of a student, any guardian of a student, any person in a parental relationship to a student, or any person exercising supervisory authority over a student in place of the parent.
- (c) "Public K-12 School" include charter schools and consist of kindergarten classes; elementary, middle, and high school grades and special classes; virtual instruction programs; workforce education; career centers; adult, part-time, and evening schools, courses, or classes, as authorized by law to be operated under the control of district school boards; and lab schools operated under the control of state universities.
- (d) "School personnel" means all personnel employed by the public K-12 school whether employed on a regular full-time basis, an hourly basis or otherwise.
- (e) "Student" means any person enrolled in a public K-12 school in this State.

Section 4. Prohibited discrimination

- (a) A school district may not discriminate against a student or parent on the basis of a religious viewpoint or religious expression. A school district shall treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner that the school district treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular viewpoint.
- (b) A student may express his or her religious beliefs in coursework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination. A student's homework and classroom assignments shall be evaluated, regardless of their religious content, based on expected academic standards relating to the course curriculum and requirements. A student may not be penalized or rewarded based on the religious content of his or her work if the coursework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments permit a student's viewpoint to be expressed.
- (c) A student may pray or engage in religious activities or religious expression before, during, and after the school day in the same manner, and to the same extent, that a student may engage in secular activities or expression. A student may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, and other religious gatherings before, during, and after the school day in the same manner and to the same extent that a student is permitted to organize secular activities and groups.
- (d) A school district shall give a religious group access to the same school facilities for assembling as given to secular groups without discrimination based on the religious content of the group's expression. A group that meets for prayer or other religious speech may advertise or announce meetings in the same manner, and to the same extent, that a secular group may advertise or announce meetings, including school media, the school's public-address system, the school newspaper, and school bulletin boards.
- (e) A school district may not prevent school personnel from participating in religious activities on school grounds that are initiated by students at reasonable times before or after the

- school day, if such activities are voluntary and do not conflict with responsibilities or assignments of such personnel.
- (f) Students and school personnel may wear clothing, accessories, and jewelry that display a religious message or symbol in the same manner and to the same extent that secular types of clothing, accessories, and jewelry that display messages or symbols are permitted to be worn.
 - (g) A school district shall not prohibit members of athletic teams at any public elementary and secondary school from engaging in voluntary, student-initiated, student-led prayer.
 - (h) A school district shall allow a religious group and/or student to distribute religious literature in a public school to the same extent, and under the same circumstances, as a student is permitted to possess or distribute literature on non-religious topics or subjects in such school.
 - (i) A school district shall not censor the religious content of any speech of a student invited to speak at a school's commencement ceremony, *provided that* the school district shall, either in writing or orally, state that the school district does not endorse or sponsor any of the commencement speeches.
 - (j) A school district shall comply with the federal requirements in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits an employer from discriminating against an employee on the basis of religion.

Section 5. Severability

The provisions of this act are severable. If any part of this act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, that declaration shall not affect the part or parts that remain.

Section 6. Effective date

This act shall go into effect immediately upon its lawful enactment.

Notes

- This model act is similar to legislation passed in 2017 by the Florida Senate (SB 436), the Indiana House of Representatives (HB 1024), and the Kentucky Senate (SB 17).
- Since the religious expression of a high school coach has been in the news recently (the well-publicized case of Coach Joe Kennedy, who prayed on the 50-yard line after each game and recently lost in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit his claim for his job back at Bremerton High School in Washington State), further information on the particular responsibilities of teachers and coaches may be beneficial. The following information is provided by the Virginia Board of Education and the Virginia Office of the Attorney General, which were directed by the Commonwealth (Va. Code § 22.1-280.3, subsequently renumbered §

22.1-203.2) to hold public hearings and draft guidelines for public school districts to consider and adopt as policies:

As public employees, and agents of the public schools, the speech rights of teachers are not absolute and must be balanced against the school's legitimate right and duty to maintain order, perform its obligations to the population served, and avoid government sponsorship of religion. Teachers must be cognizant of their great influence in shaping student values and their overarching duty not to use their position to indoctrinate students into their religious beliefs or lack thereof.

As a general matter, neither the Free Exercise nor Free Speech clauses provide teachers an unqualified right to engage in religious expression with students at school. Because teachers play a central role in setting values for our children, they must also bear responsibility for their actions which impermissibly create a danger of establishing religion in the public schools, including misapprehension by pupils that the public schools sponsor the teacher's viewpoint. Teachers should not lead students in devotional activities during class or school-sponsored activity, or encourage students to participate with the teacher in religious activity before or after school. A teacher who wishes to participate in voluntary student, religious activity during free time should be careful that his or her participation is not misinterpreted by students as official sponsorship of religious belief. The circumstances of each case, including the maturity of the students and the context and duration of the event must be professionally considered.

A teacher may respond honestly, in a noncoercive, and nonindoctrinating manner, to student-initiated inquiries about religion, just as a teacher may respond in an appropriate manner to student inquiries about political, philosophical or other secular interests. Balance, degree and fairness are important considerations, and the specific question may best be answered by referring the student to his or her parents.

Teachers should be able to meet with other teachers for private religious speech, including prayer, meditation and reading of religious materials, during their free time, such as immediately before or after class or during breaks or lunch. As professionals, teachers need to be careful however that their actions are not misinterpreted by students.

Virginia State Board of Education, *Guidelines Concerning Religious Activity in the Public Schools 6-7* (1995), available at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/guidance/support/religious_activity.pdf; see also First Amendment Center, *A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* (2008), available at <http://www.religiousfreedomcenter.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/08/teachersguide.pdf>.

Talking Points

- As the Supreme Court has repeatedly said, students and teachers do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate. *E.g., Tinker v. Des Moines Ind. Commty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969).
- The United States Supreme Court has made clear on many occasions that the government cannot advance or inhibit religion. *E.g., Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971). That is, the government must be neutral between religious and secular expression, activities, and organizations. See *Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of the Univ. of Va.*, [515 U.S. 819](#) (1995).
- One of the greatest forums for contact between government and its citizens is public schools. More than half of the formative years for about 90% of our nation's students is spent under the instruction and control of public school personnel, who may inadvertently promote or hinder religious expression, thereby violating the constitutional rights of students.
- The act is modeled after legislation passed by the Florida, Kentucky, and Indiana legislatures in 2017. It is designed to protect the constitutional rights of students who express a religious viewpoint in class or homework, want to pray, or want to start a Bible club or other religious group.
- This act, however, is not designed to give the religious students an *advantage*; rather, it permits religious expression, prayer, or religious clubs *only* to the extent secular viewpoints or secular, non-curricular clubs are allowed consistent with appropriate time, place, and manner restrictions. If the public high school chess club, debate team, or student activities council use a classroom after school and can announce their meetings, the same courtesy must be given to religious student groups. The same equal treatment is afforded religious accessories and jewelry.
- This act also considers the rights of school personnel who may also be religious and who may want to participate with the students in religious activities. This participation must be voluntary, and it must not interfere with other assigned duties. With these conditions, the school personnel (teachers or staff) may participate (and sponsor if such sponsorship is a necessary condition of the club), but may not lead.
- The act deals with many situations common in schools (homework that includes a religious viewpoint, a student wearing a cross on a necklace, and prayer) that have led to litigation in the past. The act does not permit persons in authority (such as teachers and administrators) to proselytize, and it permits religious conduct and expression only to the extent that secular conduct and expression is permitted.
- This act has the salutary purpose of avoidance of the expense and disruption of litigation by clarifying rights and obligations in this sometimes contentious area.
- Federal law requires certification of compliance with Department of Education guidance assuring the religious freedom of students and staff in the public schools. The act provides assurance that the federal funding conditioned upon that compliance continues.