REPORT from the Capital

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INSIDE:

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Prisoner's right to religious grooming practice argued before Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments Oct. 7 over whether a Muslim prisoner can exercise his religious belief by adhering to certain religious grooming standards. The prisoner is getting support from a diverse group of religious organizations, including the Baptist Joint Committee.

Gregory Holt — known as Abdul Maalik Muhammad after his conversion to Islam — wants to grow a one-half-inch beard, which is allowed in the vast majority of state prison systems, but not the one where he is incarcerated: Arkansas.

Holt says the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) protects his right to have a religiously motivated beard while incarcerated.

The religious freedom of persons in government custody is protected by a legal standard set in RLUIPA, which became federal law in 2000. The BJC led a diverse coalition in supporting the bill.

During the arguments, Chief Justice John Roberts appeared to wonder how such a seemingly straightforward case came before the High Court.

"[Y]ou're really just making your case too easy," Roberts told Douglas Laycock, the First Amendment scholar arguing on Holt's behalf. "You just say, 'Well, we want to draw the line at half inch because that lets us win. And the next day someone's going to be here with one inch.'" Roberts said the "legal difficulty" of the case cannot be avoided by asking for so little.

Laycock noted that a prisoner who wants a full beard will likely petition the Court someday, but that plaintiff is not before the Court. "So this case is only about half an inch."

Later, Laycock said the Supreme Court must decide how much deference prison officials get when they decide to limit inmates' religious observance. He reiterated RLUIPA's strict standard that the Court must apply in answering that question: Does the beard rule serve a governmental "compelling interest" and does it represent the "least restrictive" burden on the prisoner's religious rights to achieve the government's goal?

BJC General Counsel Holly Hollman speaks with coalition partners outside the Supreme Court after oral arguments in *Holt v. Hobbs*.

The prison's goal is security, explained David Curran, the Arkansas deputy attorney general who argued the case on behalf of the state's Department of Correction. Prisoners can hide all kinds of contraband in even a short beard, he said. But he rested most of his case on the potential of prisoners to shave and confuse guards as to their true identities.

Holt, imprisoned for stabbing his former girlfriend in the chest and neck, has repeatedly stated his intention to harm public officials.

Despite his behavior in and out of prison, a diversity of interest groups wrote friend-of-the-court briefs in support of Holt's case, including Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the American Jewish Committee, whose brief was joined by the Baptist Joint Committee. With Laycock, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty prepared Holt's case in *Holt v. Hobbs*.

BJC General Counsel Holly Hollman noted that this case demonstrates the need for RLUIPA. "Prison officials undoubtedly have an interest in maintaining security — and that interest affects every aspect of a prisoner's life," Hollman said. "RLUIPA, however, was designed to prevent overly broad or exaggerated security claims that would unduly restrict the religious liberty of prisoners. Here, the state has failed to show how accommodating religion will undermine the state's interests."

A decision is expected before July 2015.

—Religion News Service and BJC Staff Reports

Supreme Court agrees to take on Abercrombie & Fitch 'look policy' case

The U.S. Supreme Court announced Oct. 2 that it will hear a religious discrimination case involving a clothing retailer.

The suit was filed by a Muslim who claimed she was not hired by Abercrombie & Fitch because of her black headscarf. The Ohio-based company won the case in the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, claiming it did not discriminate because the job applicant did not specifically say she needed a religious accommodation. The woman was wearing her hijab in the interview.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission petitioned the Supreme Court for a review, saying the law does not place the burden solely on the job applicant to give explicit notice about his or her religious practice.

The Baptist Joint Committee joined a group of religious and civil liberties organizations – including the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, National Association of Evangelicals, Christian Legal Society and American Civil Liberties Union Foundation – in supporting the plaintiff in the 10th Circuit.

The case is *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc.* It is expected to be heard in early 2015.

—Religion News Service and BJC Staff Reports

Judge dismisses case against Ten Commandments monument at Oklahoma Capitol

A Baptist minister suing for removal of a Ten Commandments monument at the Oklahoma Capitol had his case dismissed by a judge Sept. 19.

Bruce Prescott, former executive director of Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists and a member of NorthHaven Church in Norman, Oklahoma, joined three other taxpayers in a lawsuit last year claiming a privately funded 6-foot-tall granite monument authorized by the legislature in 2009 and placed on the Capitol grounds in 2012 violated the state constitution's ban against using public property to support "any sect, church, denomination or system of religion."

State District Court Judge Thomas Prince disagreed, however, finding the monument serves a "secular" purpose recognizing the Ten Commandments' place in American history and thereby is not an unconstitutional establishment of religion.

Two of the plaintiffs claimed posting religious teachings on public property constituted endorsement of a religion other than their own. The other two — Prescott and Jim Huff, a member at First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City — said the Ten Commandments are part of their faith tradition, and they object to their beliefs being exploited for political reasons.

State Rep. Mike Ritze introduced legislation in 2009 authorizing a Ten Commandments monument, modeled after one in Texas which was found constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005. The Ritze family donated $10,000 to fund the granite monument.

Represented by the ACLU of Oklahoma, Prescott and the other plaintiffs argued unsuccessfully that the Texas and Oklahoma monuments are not the same. They compared the one in Oklahoma to framed displays at courthouses and schools in three Kentucky counties that the Supreme Court found unconstitutional in another 2005 ruling, because their purpose was to advance religion.

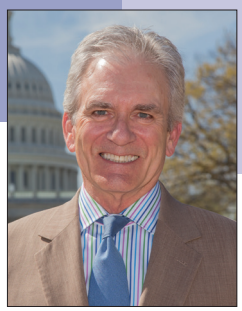
Lawyers for the ACLU said they will appeal.

"The plaintiffs in this case do not seek the removal of the Ten Commandments monument from the State Capitol lawn because they find the text of the monument offensive, but rather because, like many Oklahomans, the Ten Commandments constitute a core part of their sincerely held religious beliefs and it is offensive to them that this sacred document has been hijacked by politicians," said Brady Henderson, legal director for ACLU of Oklahoma.

Ryan Kiesel, executive director of the ACLU of Oklahoma, said from the outset plaintiffs knew the case would ultimately be decided by the Oklahoma Supreme Court, and this decision "places us one step closer to a resolution."

—Bob Allen, Baptist News Global

REFLECTIONS



J. Brent Walker
Executive Director

Fighting for a 'both/and' outlook

The 2014 American Values Survey tells us a lot about the American public's view of church and state and the role of religion in politics. Released in September, the poll is the project of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), a fine observer and chronicler of American attitudes "at the intersection of religion, values and public life," according to its website. PRRI is headed by Robbie Jones — a Baptist, a graduate of Mississippi College and Southwestern Seminary, and a good friend of the Baptist Joint Committee.

The PRRI survey asked individuals what worries them more: the government interfering with people's ability to "freely practice their religion" or religious groups "trying to pass laws that force their beliefs on others."

The answer? Not surprisingly: 46 percent more concerned about one, 46 percent more concerned about the other.

The public is split pretty much down the middle on many social and political issues, no less on how we understand church and state and religion in American public life. It's either red or blue, right or wrong, yes or no.

What a false dichotomy! The Baptist Joint Committee has been saying as much for nearly eight decades. We are a "both/and" outfit:

• Both religious liberty and separation of church and state. Indeed, the latter ensures the former.

• Both no establishment and free exercise. Our wise Founders put two clauses in the First Amendment on purpose to ensure religious liberty.

• Both the will of the majority (after all, ours is a democracy) and the rights of the minority (but it's a *constitutional* democracy).

• Both sons of the Enlightenment and the children of God. Philosophy and theology came together to help pass the First Amendment. We tip our hats to both Johns — Locke and Leland.

• Both religion's relevance to public life and the "no religious test" principle found in Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. Religion belongs in the political conversation, but it should not be used as a litmus test.

• Both accommodating religious exercise and looking out for the rights and well-being of others who are detrimentally affected. My right to swing my fist ends where your nose begins.

• Both opposing tax dollars for religious ministries and supporting tax exemption for religious organizations. Government should not give money; government should not take money away; government needs to be neutral toward religion.

"We must not intensify our polarized political culture by posing gratuitous either/or questions."

• Both teaching about religion in the public schools and ensuring there are no school-sponsored religious exercises. The public schools must not indoctrinate religious beliefs, but they should educate students about religion's place in our history and culture.

And on we could go with a dozen more.

We at the Baptist Joint Committee acknowledge and embrace the inevitable tension between these seemingly irreconcilable polarities – sometimes at the risk of not being able to speak quickly and forcefully on every issue that comes down the pike. But, this is where the Baptist Joint Committee needs to be in a "46/46 World" – a "both/and" voice of reason.

Because — as our friend Robbie Jones said in a recent *Washington Post* interview— when the public is asked about religious liberty and the separation of church and state *separately*, about two-thirds of those polled say they believe in *both*. Two out of three say they favor a strong separation of church and state and a robust religious liberty for everyone.

We must not intensify our polarized political culture by posing gratuitous either/or questions. In the context of church and state and religion in public life — along with so many other areas of apparent disagreement — we may find more common ground than we think. Where we do, we should reinforce that both/and consensus.

The Baptist Joint Committee plans to continue doing its part now and for the next eight decades.

2014 Religious Liberty Essay Scholarship Contest

‘Run-through’ banners & religious references:
Exploring the rights and responsibilities afforded in the First Amendment

by Daniel Ingham
2014 Religious Liberty Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

The topic for the 2014 essay contest asked high school juniors and seniors to discuss whether or not religious messages, such as Bible verses on “run-through” banners at football games, should be permitted at public school-sponsored events. Daniel Ingham of Ellicott City, Maryland, won the $2,000 scholarship from the 637 entries received. His essay is below.

In May of 2013, a Texas court judge ruled in favor of a group of high school cheerleaders displaying Bible verses on “run-through” banners during school football games. Deeming the banners “constitutionally permissible,” State District Judge Steve Thomas said that no law “prohibits cheerleaders from using religious-themed banners at school sporting events.” (Dolak, ABC News) Ultimately, the court’s decision came down to the fact that the banner was “student led,” “student initiated” and, therefore, constitutionally permissible private speech. (CBS Interactive Inc.) This seemingly local news story received national notoriety because of its resonance with an ongoing debate surrounding the Bill of Rights.

Scholars and policymakers constantly grapple with the combined meaning of the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause in the Bill of Rights; the “run-through” banner story quickly became a convenient vehicle to breathe new life into this debate. The Establishment Clause states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” (U.S. Constitution). Public schools, run by the government, therefore cannot show religious preference. The other religion clause of the First Amendment, the Free Exercise Clause, holds that Congress must avoid “prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (U.S. Constitution). For publicly funded schools, that means the school must permit the private practice of any religion on school grounds without interfering with learning instruction. In order to more fully understand the proper course of action in the “run-through” banner case, we must first look to where public schools have come into conflict with the First Amendment in the past. Three cases in particular hash out the murky water that has set the stage for this review of the “run-through” banner case.

First, *Abington School District v. Schempp* in 1963 helped to clearly establish the separation of church and state in the school system when Edward Schempp of Abington Township, Pennsylvania, filed suit against the Abington School District because his children were required to hear and occasionally read from the Bible every morning (374 U.S. 203). The Court ruled with Schempp, finding that “the reading of the verses possesses a devotional and religious character and

Ingham, now a freshman at Providence College in Rhode Island, reads his winning essay at the BJC Board of Directors meeting.

constitutes in effect a religious observance” (374 U.S. 203). This case supports the Establishment Clause because it holds that the public school system cannot endorse any one religion or introduce a religious ceremony into school-sponsored activities. What *Abington* clarifies for the “run-through” banner case is that schools cannot conduct obligatory religious activities on school grounds because the school would be demonstrating a preference of religion (374 U.S. 203).

The second case is *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* from 2000, in which students offered Christian prayers over the public address system at home football games (530 U.S. 290). Students voted for student-led Christian invocations during a school election. Arguably, this made the activity student-run and student-initiated, as opposed to the prayer in *Abington*, which was run by the schools (530 U.S. 290). However, the court sided against the district, ruling that “an objective Santa Fe High School student will unquestionably perceive the inevitable pregame prayer as stamped with her school’s seal of approval” (530 U.S. 290). This court case demonstrates that a speech is public when it occurs at a school-sponsored event, on school grounds, and is led by a school representative. The religious prayer effectively demonstrates the school’s approval on that religious prayer and, by extension, that religion. *Santa Fe* adds to the precedence set by *Abington* by clarifying that even if a religious activity occurs at a school-sponsored event, which is student-led and initiated, it is still impermissible because it can be perceived that the school has demonstrated some level of approval, inferring religious bias (530 U.S. 290).

The lines drawn in these cases are articulated clearly in the conclusion to *Board of Education v. Mergens* in 1990, which allowed a public school student to begin a Christian after-school Bible study group (496 U.S. 226). *Mergens* found that “there is a crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the Establishment Clause forbids based on bias, and private speech endorsing religion, which the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses protect” (496 U.S. 226). Public government-sponsored speech must not prefer a religion, while private speech about religion is protected (496 U.S. 226). With this important context applied to the “run-through” banner case, it is clear that the deciding factor for the cheerleaders is whether their speech occurred in a private or public setting.

The main defense of the cheerleaders’ position was that the banner effort was “student-led” and “student-initiated;” the students argued that the administration was not involved in the process (CBS Interactive Inc.). This argument leans heavily on the Free Exercise Clause, positing that the cheerleaders should not be barred from their Constitutional right to freely exercise their religion (U.S. Constitution).

The first major problem with the cheer-

leaders' stance is that cheerleading is a school-sponsored sport; tryouts, practices, performances, and school uniforms sporting the school logo are all funded by the school. There is no question that the cheerleaders are meant to represent both the student body and the administration. This means that the banner effort is in fact not "student-initiated;" therefore a student-initiated activity in a school-sponsored sport at a school-sponsored event is no longer private speech. The cheerleaders are leaders of the school; in this case, "student-led" is the equivalent of "school-led." This contradicts the precedence set in *Abington* and *Santa Fe* because it amounts to the school showing public preference of religion.

The second major problem is the nature of the free exercise of religion in the "run-through" banner case. As ruled in *Santa Fe*, pregame prayers cannot be permitted because the school is essentially sealing that prayer with its approval (530 U.S. 290). The same goes for overtly Christian "run through" banners because the cheerleaders and football players are elected to represent the school on the field. Any message the cheerleaders deliver at the school-sponsored event is directly tied to the school. This means that the audience is captive and obligated to listen to the religious message of the school via the cheerleaders; the cheerleaders' free exercise is no longer private and therefore impeding the free exercise of the audience. In the "run-through" banner case, the administration's responsibilities to avoid religious preference overrule the student's ill-conceived "constitutional" rights to display biblical quotes.

While the cheerleaders cannot make Christian "run-through" banners, they have many other options when it comes to demonstrating and practicing their religion. During school and during school-sponsored events, students are allowed to pray individually or in groups, discuss religion, and read Scripture as long as it does not interfere with instruction (ACLU). The cheerleaders can also initiate a school prayer group or theology club (ACLU). These are all private speech activities that are protected by the Free Exercise Clause without interfering with the Establishment Clause (U.S. Constitution). However, once that private religious speech enters the sphere of a public forum, it is in conflict with the Establishment Clause and no longer permissible (U.S. Constitution). Cheerleaders should not be able to display overtly Christian "run through" banners at football games because that is public speech being made by the school that is in direct conflict with the Establishment Clause.

For more on this year's winners and information on the 2015 contest, visit www.BJConline.org/contest.

Endnotes

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2014 BJC Board of Directors meeting

Representatives of the Baptist Joint Committee's 15 supporting bodies met in Washington, D.C., October 6-7 for the annual meeting of the BJC Board of Directors. The board heard updates on the BJC's work, approved the operating budget and attended a special presentation in the U.S. Capitol from 2014 Shurden Lecturer Michael Meyerson. During his presentation, Meyerson reviewed religious liberty during the founding of the United States and the important role Baptists played in protecting the freedom for all people. On day two of the meeting, BJC General Counsel Holly Hollman briefed the board on that morning's oral arguments in *Holt v. Hobbs*. For more photos from the meeting, visit Facebook.com/ReligiousLiberty.

Hollman REPORT

RLUIPA case demonstrates need for balance between security and religion

K. Hollyn Hollman
General Counsel

"Religious liberty ... is a fundamental value that should be protected, even in prisons."

Prisons are dangerous places where security is the primary concern. They are designed for involuntary confinement of individuals, including dangerous ones, who have failed society's standards. That is the unsurprising emphasis of the Arkansas Department of Correction's position in *Holt v. Hobbs*, a case brought by an inmate serving a life sentence in a maximum security prison for a violent crime.

Religious liberty, however, is a fundamental value that should be protected, even in prisons. Congress said so when it passed the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). RLUIPA, like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) on which it was modeled, is written in broad terms that prohibit the government from imposing substantial burdens on religious practice unless narrowly tailored to serve a compelling government interest.

Of course, Congress knew that protecting religious liberty in the unique context of prisons must take account of special governmental concerns. RLUIPA's legislative history indicates that the statute should be applied with "due deference to the experience and expertise of prison and jail administrators in establishing necessary regulations and procedures to maintain good order, security and discipline, consistent with considerations of costs and limited resources."

The question in *Holt v. Hobbs* is whether RLUIPA allows the prison to deny a Muslim inmate's request to grow a half-inch beard in accordance with his faith but in conflict with a "no beards" policy, which the state claims is necessary for security and identification purposes. A broader underlying issue is what kind of deference should be given to prison officials.

During oral arguments, the justices seemed disinclined to give deference to the state's stated security concerns. Justice Samuel Alito drew laughter when he suggested that the prison could require inmates to comb their beards so that anything hidden, like "a tiny revolver," would just fall out. Indeed, the oral arguments were dominated by the suggestion that, in this case, the state's arguments were unbelievable.

In addition to the support from a wide range of religious and civil liberties organizations, including the BJC, the plaintiff's case was also bolstered by a group of former prison wardens who filed an *amicus* brief, which deserves particular attention. It made four important points.

First, RLUIPA's requirement to consider specific requests and weigh them against prison regulations is consistent with good prison administration. The brief states: "[T]houghtful consideration is not only necessary to give meaning to RLUIPA's protections, it leads to sound policy that promotes more effective security while simultaneously better meeting inmates' needs."

Second, reviewing prison policies by comparing practices with those of other prisons encourages sound policy and efficiency, and it should be encouraged. Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia permit beards in prison. Yet, Arkansas failed to consider that industry standard and establish any basis for tighter restrictions on grooming standards. "Certainly deference to the expertise of prison officials is warranted in many contexts. But no deference is appropriate where, as here, Respondents made no showing of any careful analysis or familiarity with industry practices applicable to Petitioner's requested accommodation."

Third, the prison officials noted that a "no beards" policy is a weak approach to prevent hiding forbidden objects or ensuring inmate identification. The interests of deterring contraband and maintaining proper identification of prisoners are better served by other policies that would not violate religious grooming standards. "[The state's] broad assertion that beards present a contraband secretion risk is simply not credible nor deserving of any deference."

Fourth, a body of evidence demonstrates that allowing inmates to practice their religion may lead to security and broader rehabilitative benefits. The group of former wardens states that, instead of increasing security concerns, they believe "that allowing inmates to practice their religion is likely to result in inmate behavior that alleviates security concerns and contributes to other goals of prison administration."

The former wardens explicitly recognize that important religious rights of inmates must sometimes give way to prison security concerns. But, like the congressional sponsors of RLUIPA, those who have been on the front lines of running prisons recognize that "prison officials sometimes impose frivolous or arbitrary rules" that unnecessarily restrict religious liberty. In the view of these former wardens, this case is "precisely the type Congress was concerned about—where vaguely articulated security concerns are being used to justify an outdated and unwarranted policy depriving an inmate of his religious rights."

BJC welcomes fall interns


Kearns


Pertiller

The Baptist Joint Committee is pleased to welcome two fall semester interns working with our staff.

Jessie Kearns of Woodbridge, Virginia, earned a bachelor's degree in Bible and Theology from Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky, and a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Kearns is a member of Commonwealth Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, where she was ordained to the Gospel Ministry in September. She is pursuing a career in ministry.

Danielle Pertiller of Evanston, Illinois, earned her Bachelors of Arts from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, with a dual degree in political science and psychology. Pertiller is currently a student at the Washington Center in Washington, D.C., focusing on advocacy and law. She plans to pursue a master's degree in clinical psychology and law.

Support the BJC on Giving Tuesday

December 2 is "Giving Tuesday," which follows the Christmas shopping kickoff days of "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday." The day is set aside for individuals to show their commitment to causes through their words, actions and financial donations. The movement began several years ago in a response to the commercialism of the season.

On Giving Tuesday, tell others why you care about religious liberty and the work of the Baptist Joint Committee. If you use social media, post a message or photo of yourself holding a sign sharing why these issues matter to you. When you post on Facebook or Twitter, be sure to include the hashtags #GivingTuesday and #BaptistJointCommittee. If you don't use social media, reach out to someone personally to discuss the importance of religious liberty.

We also encourage you to make a financial contribution of any size to our work. On December 2, there will be a **matching gift up to $5,000** for those giving to the BJC for the first time, those increasing gifts and those who haven't given in a while. You can give online that day or mail a contribution to support the effort – just put "Giving Tuesday" in the memo line on your check and mail it to Baptist Joint Committee, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

If you want to see examples of how others participated last year and get ideas for this year, visit a special page on our website: **BJConline.org/GivingTuesday**.

Brownstein to deliver 2015 Shurden Lectures at Mercer


Brownstein

Constitutional law scholar Alan Brownstein will deliver the 2015 Walter B. and Kay W. Shurden Lectures on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State, to be held April 7-8 on the Mercer University campuses in Atlanta and Macon, Georgia.

Brownstein, who teaches at the University of California, Davis, School of Law, has written extensively about First Amendment issues, concentrating mostly on the religion clauses. His assistance is often sought by advocacy groups on issues relating to religious liberty and equality. He is a frequent invited lecturer at academic conferences and regularly participates as a speaker or panelist in law-related programs before civic, legal, religious and educational groups.

Brownstein received the UC Davis School of Law's Distinguished Teaching Award in 1995 and the school's Distinguished Scholarly Public Service Award in 2008. He is a member of the American Law Institute. As of January 1, 2015, Brownstein will be an emeritus member of the Law School faculty.

A graduate of Antioch College and Harvard Law School, Brownstein practiced law in Los Angeles before joining the UC Davis Law faculty.

In 2004, the Shurdens of Macon, Georgia, made a gift to the BJC to establish the annual lectureship. Designed to enhance the ministry and programs of the BJC, the lectures are held at Mercer University every three years and at another seminary, college or university the other years. For the latest information about the 2015 Shurden Lectures and to see videos of past events, visit our website at **BJConline.org/lectures**.

Spanish-language resources now available from the BJC

Some of the Baptist Joint Committee's most popular resources on religious liberty and the separation of church and state are now available in Spanish.

Visit our website at **BJConline.org/espanol** to access our introductory video with Spanish subtitles, handouts and bulletin inserts with information on the biblical basis for church-state separation and frequently asked questions about the BJC, answers to questions about churches and political campaigns, an article on the importance of education and more.

Let others know about these new resources, and tell us what you would like to see translated next.

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REPORT from the Capital

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Why We Give

By Woody and Penny Jenkins
Goochland, Va.

We have supported the Baptist Joint Committee for more than 20 years now. We first learned of the work of the BJC while attending Baptist meetings, both locally and nationally, and hearing Brent Walker's presentations and "breakout sessions" on the BJC's work.

We know of no other organization that is solely devoted and focused on the issue of separation of church and state like the BJC. As one of the most important elements of the Bill of Rights, and a foundational tenet in Baptist faith, no other group can or will speak to the issues around this belief as well as the BJC.

The BJC is also committed to the education and empowerment of ordinary folks so that the reasons for and the benefits of religious liberty are not lost on succeeding generations. There are few things more precious to the health and well-being of democracy as we know it than the protection of this right.

When we began our estate planning, we very intentionally looked at all the institutions, schools and organizations we had supported in the past. We decided that, although we would like to provide assistance to all of these, our limited estate would best be utilized by a select few for whom these funds would help further their important work. The BJC ended up very high on the short list of these select organizations.

What we are able to do for the BJC now and will do in the future through our estate may not make a huge difference. However, we pray that we will be joined by many others who are able to offer their "meager gifts" to be added to ours. Collectively, we know that the ongoing success of the BJC may be assured, securing the religious freedom of all citizens of these United States.

When you consider the many worthy causes and organizations that seek your support, we would urge you to choose those that will make a lasting difference in the religious life of the people of this great nation. The sacrifices of those who have made our freedoms secure to this point must not be in vain. There is no more foundational right than religious freedom and no organization more committed to defending this freedom than the BJC.

If you have included the BJC in your estate plans or would like more information about naming us as a beneficiary of a will, trust or financial account, fill out a simple form at **BJConline.org/planned-giving** or contact Taryn Deaton, director of development, at tdeaton@BJConline.org or 202-544-4226.