



March 4, 2019

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC), I write to welcome you to this 116th Congress, and to offer BJC as a resource to you and your staff. The BJC is an 83-year-old agency with expertise on legal and policy matters relating to religious liberty and the separation of church and state. We hope you will call on us as matters pertaining to religious freedom for all arise during this legislative session.

Our mission is to defend and extend God-given religious liberty for all, bringing a uniquely Baptist witness to the principle that religion must be freely exercised, not advanced or inhibited by the government. BJC is the only national, denominationally based organization that works solely on matters of religious freedom and separation of church and state. We receive support from the denominational bodies listed here, family foundations, churches, and individuals – Baptists and non-Baptists – from across the country. We equip our supporters to be advocates for religious freedom in their communities.

We approach religious liberty from our historic Baptist perspective, claiming a long line of Baptist freedom fighters who have championed religious freedom for all people including Roger Williams, John Leland, and Martin Luther King Jr. As they did, we defend religious freedom rights for people of all faiths and those who do not claim a faith tradition.

From our headquarters on Capitol Hill, we pursue our mission through education and advocacy, including advocacy before Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court. We file amicus briefs in nearly every church-state case that comes before the Court and often speak on the Hill about current religious liberty challenges, including most recently before the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution last October.

With our singular focus, we have a long history of bringing diverse groups together in support of religious freedom for all. BJC chaired the broad and diverse coalitions that successfully passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000. Recently, we have led efforts to organize the faith community in support of the "Johnson Amendment," the tax law that protects houses of worship and other charitable nonprofits by keeping partisan campaigning out of tax-exempt

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501(c)(3) organizations. We also work with the National Coalition for Public Education to support public dollars for public schools and oppose vouchers for private schools.

Despite the fact that protecting religious liberty has been woven into our constitutional fabric from the beginning, there is now rampant confusion about what the interchangeable terms of “religious liberty” and “religious freedom” mean. We are acutely aware of the challenges that attend religion in American life and the complexities surrounding the interpretation and application of constitutional and statutory protections for religious freedom, as well as the political pressures that make coming together difficult. We hope to be a resource for you as you are presented with questions and legislation impacting religious freedom this Congress.

Please find included in this packet the most recent issue of BJC’s magazine *Report from the Capital*, which you will now receive quarterly, as well as further information about our priorities. We look forward to working with you and your staff to defend religious liberty for all.

Sincerely,

Amanda Tyler
Executive Director