



February 11, 2021

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#) (BJC), I write to congratulate you on your election victory, thank you for your willingness to serve in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, and offer BJC as a resource to you and your staff. BJC is an 85-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.

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.

Our mission is to defend and extend religious liberty for all. We champion 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 the institutional separation of religion and government. We receive support from Baptist denominational bodies, 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.

From our headquarters on Capitol Hill, we pursue our mission through education and advocacy, including advocacy before Congress, the White House and the U.S. Supreme Court. We file *amicus* briefs in nearly every church-state case that comes before the Court and often provide testimony on the Hill about current religious liberty challenges. Recent examples of our work in Congress include submitting testimony for a [January 2020 hearing](#) on “Ending Global Religious Persecution,” and at a [hearing](#) before the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on the Constitution in October 2018.

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 501(c)(3) organizations.

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BJC continues to support legislation that honors our constitutional ideals of faith freedom for all. In the 116th Congress, we worked in coalition to support the successful passage of bipartisan resolutions (H.Res. 512 and S.Res. 458) calling for the [repeal of blasphemy laws](#) around the globe. BJC also supported the [NO BAN Act](#) (H.R. 2214), which passed the House in 2020 with bipartisan support, that sought to overturn the Trump administration's "travel ban" and create monthly accountability measures on any future executive action that restricts immigration. We also continued our work with the [National Coalition for Public Education](#) to support [public dollars for public schools](#) and oppose vouchers for private schools.

In addition to our direct legislative advocacy work, we encourage our constituents -- Baptists and others -- to take an active role in protecting faith freedom for all. Since 2019, BJC has coordinated and led an ecumenical initiative called [Christians Against Christian Nationalism](#), which equips individual Christians and faith communities with resources about the dangers of Christian nationalism, a political ideology and cultural framework that attempts to merge American and Christian identities in ways that are destructive to both Christianity and American democracy.

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 want to be a resource for you and your staff as you are presented with questions and legislation impacting religious freedom this Congress.

We hope this Congress reclaims a balanced approach in church-state separation matters and a greater appreciation for religious diversity. Religious freedom can cast a positive vision that protects all Americans and is part of a larger agenda of promoting human rights at home and abroad. We look forward to working with you and your staff to defend faith freedom for all.

Sincerely,



Amanda Tyler  
Executive Director