



Focus on Religious Freedom

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The constant misrepresentation of Jefferson's intent to protect individual conscience and religious practices from interference by the state in his phrase "Wall of Separation of Church and State" has resulted in Americans denying religious freedom to themselves and others.

The Ten Commandments Must be Displayed in Every Louisiana Public School per the Louisiana Legislature and Governor

The anticipated legal challenges are rolling in and are aimed at preventing the legislated display of a poster of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms in Louisiana. A poster or document at least 11 by 14 inches and listing the Ten Commandments and paid for by donations, not public funds, is legislated to be displayed in every classroom by Jan. 1, 2024.

The display of the Ten Commandments was chosen by Louisiana legislators because it is the moral foundation for their laws and therefore has great historical significance. The lawsuit against the display of the Ten Commandments alleges that it violates the first amendment's establishment clause and free exercise clause. Supreme court rulings have varied in their treatment of First Amendment issues and challenges and we can expect long and complex litigation over this Louisiana law, likely going to higher courts.

As Americans and Catholics we can best protect and practice religious freedom if we know a few basic facts:

- The phrase "wall of separation between church and state" was written by Pres. Thomas Jefferson in a letter assuring the Danbury Baptists that the state had no power to determine the beliefs and practices of its citizens. That phrase is not in the Constitution.
- America's public schools **are not God-free zones.** Students' rights to live their faith openly throughout their school day are protected by the Constitution and court decisions and are specifically described by the federal government in the *U.S Dept. of Education's Guidance on On Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools* which is linked below.
- The phrase *Freedom of Worship* is often used by those wanting to confine religious faith and practice within the four walls of our churches. The phrase *Freedom of Religion* reflects the intention of our founders and the First Amendment that the open, public practice and evangelization of faith is the right of each citizen.

Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/528xbzcy> <https://tinyurl.com/4ji5njhd> <https://tinyurl.com/4znwvk26>