



## Focus on Religious Freedom

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**To undervalue it (the Constitution) is one of the surest ways to lose it. Take pains to know what the Constitution is - the more you study, the higher you will esteem it.**

**The better you understand your own rights,  
the more likely you will be to preserve and guard them.**

Arthur J. Stansbury, Elementary Catechism on the Constitution of the United States, 1828

### Principles of Religious Liberty For Constitution Week

The U.S. Constitution is the world's longest surviving charter of government. It was signed on September 17, 1787, and since 2004, Congress requires that all public schools receiving federal funds implement educational programs about the Constitution on the day or week of Sept. 17 every year.

Following are some little known facts about the American Constitution:

- \* The Constitution was written in the same Pennsylvania State House where the Declaration of Independence was signed.
- \* The Constitution was prepared in secret, behind locked doors guarded by sentries.
- \* 55 delegates attended the Constitutional Convention and 39 signed, 3 delegates dissented. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams could not sign because they were representing the United States in France and Great Britain at the time.
- \* At 81, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania was the oldest delegate at the Constitutional Convention and at 26, Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey was the youngest.
- \* George Washington established the first national "Thanksgiving Day" on Nov. 26, 1789 to "give thanks" for the Constitution. <sup>(1)</sup>

#### Principles of Religious Liberty and the Constitution:

James Madison explained that the free exercise of religion "is in its nature an inalienable right" because the duty owed to one's Creator "is precedent, ... to the claims of Civil Society." <sup>(1)</sup> Religious liberty is not merely a right to personal religious beliefs or worship. It encompasses observance and practice and should be reasonably accommodated in all government activity, including employment and contracting.

"To avoid the very sort of religious persecution and intolerance that led to the founding of the U.S., the Free Exercise Clause of the Constitution protects against government actions that target religious conduct. Government may not treat the same conduct as lawful when undertaken for secular reasons but unlawful when undertaken for religious reasons. For example, government may not ... allow the distribution of political leaflets in a park but forbid the distribution of religious leaflets in the same park." <sup>(2)</sup>

(ciis.edu(1); justice.gov, 5/4/17(2); nationalday.com; dar.org; constitutionfacts.com/us; christianheadlines.com, 8/10/21(3))

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#### Happening Now: Major win for Religious Liberty Advocates

On Aug. 9, 2021, a federal judge ruled that Christian doctors and religious hospitals cannot be forced by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) insurance plan to perform abortions or gender transition procedures. Federal Judge O'Connor ruled that recent government rules forcing such procedures "substantially burdens Christian Plaintiffs' religious exercise in clear violation of" the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). <sup>(3)</sup>

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Catholics For Freedom of Religion

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***"Hold on to the Constitution, for if the American Constitution should fail,  
there will be anarchy throughout the world." - Daniel Webster, Lawyer and Statesman (1782-1852)***