



## Focus on Religious Freedom

[www.cffor.org](http://www.cffor.org)

**"Liberty must at all hazards be supported.  
We have a right to it derived from our Maker." - John Adams, 1765**

### **It's OK For Students to Pray in Public Schools**

As students prepare for the new 2021-22 school year, they need an important tool in their backpacks: **knowledge of their religious liberty rights.**

On January 16, 2020 (Religious Freedom Day), the Dept. of Education issued updated *Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer & Religious Expression in Public Elementary & Secondary Schools*. The guidance was originally issued in 2003. The Guidance explains that "students and teachers do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate." The law also requires that, as a condition of receiving federal funds, local education agencies must certify that they are in compliance with the prayer guidance.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the First Amendment, with its enumerated rights of Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Speech, requires public school officials to be neutral in their treatment of religion, showing neither favoritism toward nor hostility against religion. The newly updated U.S. Department of Education Guidelines explicitly list the many rights of students in relation to religious expression. These rights include:

- \* **Students may read their Bibles** or other religious materials, say grace before meals, and pray or study religious materials with fellow students during recess, lunch hour, or other non-instructional time.
- \* **Students may express their beliefs** about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments.
- \* **Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs**, or other religious themed gatherings before or after school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other non-curricular student activity groups.
- \* **Schools may teach about religion** but not provide religious instruction.<sup>(2)</sup>

These rights are often denied as happened on Long Island, NY, when a high school senior was reading his Bible during free reading time. The teacher asked what he was reading and then proceeded to mock the student for reading the Bible and encouraged other students to join in.

(justice.gov, Volume 84-January, 2020(1); Ed.gov, Guidance from U.S. Dept. of Education(2))

***"The sacred rights of mankind ... are written, as with a sunbeam, on the whole volume of human nature, by the divinity itself; and can never be erased."*** - Alexander Hamilton, Founding Father

---

#### **Be Silent No More!**

Assert your concerns re religious freedom in schools, the public square and legislation such as the misnamed Equality Act, covered in a previous bulletin. Do not be silent. Contact your Senator at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), and your Representative at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov). Call Switchboard at 202-224-3121 to be connected to any Senate or Representative office.

**Focus on Religious Freedom**  
**Catholics For Freedom of Religion**  
www.cffor.org

**"Liberty must at all hazards be supported.  
We have a right to it derived from our Maker." - John Adams, 1765**

**It's OK For Students to Pray in Public Schools**

As students prepare for the new 2021-22 school year, they need an important tool in their backpacks: **knowledge of their religious liberty rights.**

The U.S. Dept. of Education Guidelines lists the many rights of students in relation to religious expression. These rights include:

- \* Students may read their Bibles or other religious materials
- \* Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, etc.
- \* Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs
- \* Schools may teach about religion but not provide religious instruction.<sup>(1)</sup>

These rights are often denied as happened on Long Island, NY, when a high school senior was reading his Bible during free reading time. The teacher asked what he was reading and then proceeded to mock the student for reading the Bible and encouraged other students to join in.

(Ed.gov, Guidance from U.S. Dept. of Education (1))