



WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS,
THERE IS LIBERTY.

— 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17



The First Amendment in the Fight of its Life Part Four: A Conversation with Mat Staver

LC: Looking at the last few years, what will go down in history as the most concerning attack on the free exercise of religion in America?

Mat: I think the most significant attack on free exercise of religion has been the COVID pandemic restrictions that began in 2020, escalated in the fall of 2021, and continued throughout 2022. Part of those restrictions came in the form of COVID vaccine mandates. With these mandates, the free exercise of religion was trampled. Non-accommodating mandates affected so many people -- from students to employers and employees. And let's not forget what happened to those serving in the military who had religious objections to the shot. These vaccine mandates have been the most significant attack on religious freedom that I have ever seen because they were so widespread and affected so many people.

LC: Why was this unconstitutional agenda allowed to be pushed through?

Mat: Fear, a false narrative about COVID-19, and the money behind the COVID shots allowed this freedom-destroying agenda to be pushed on people. Many judges failed, because without any research, some bought into the CDC narrative. Some did not, but many did. They didn't do their own research. They just bought the CDC,

FDA, and government narrative, which was parroted and promoted by the mainstream media. It's amazing how easily judges can be influenced by the media.

LC: Judges are supposed to be impartial...

Mat: They should have been impartial, and they should have been critical thinkers, and many of them were neither.

LC: But there are still good judges, wouldn't you agree?

Mat: There are still many good



judges, but some of them just bought the CDC narrative. Incredibly, some judges accepted the false and dangerous notion that there is a pandemic pause button on the Constitution. During the pandemic, we had to fight to take two cases to the U.S. Supreme Court to secure the right of churches and



Senior Counsel for Governmental Affairs Jonathan Alexandre holds a copy of Senator Roger Marshall's bill prohibiting federal funding of gender transition procedures for minors.

America's New Civil War Over Mutilating Surgeries for Minors

There is a civil war going on in America. The dividing lines are not geographic; the casualties are children — *all of them.*

As LGBTQ activists push radical gender ideology in America, states are now enacting legislation to protect the fundamental rights of children, parents, and women in the public sector. These commonsense laws recognize that biology is fixed at birth. They also raise a standard against giving legal credence to manufactured mental constructs causing chaos and significant harm.

"Liberty Counsel has been tirelessly battling the abhorrent gender ideology that has infested our nation," says Jonathan Alexandre, senior counsel for governmental affairs. "We have taken on school boards, the nation's capital, and legislative halls across the county, all to combat the most despicable act of permanently mutilating innocent children through transgender surgeries. These vile procedures, pushed by the twisted proponents of gender ideology, have reached their peak of wickedness."

Tragically, even in the face of settled science at the chromosomal level, about half of all states in America have zero laws in place protecting children and teens from irreversible and regrettable cross-sex medical treatments and gender-mutilating procedures. In fact, in the United States alone, the "Sex Reassignment" Surgery Market size was valued at over \$464 million in 2022 and is projected to reach more than **\$3.3 billion by 2030**, according to [Verified Market Research](#). Another company, Grand View Research, pushes these estimates even higher, projecting that the

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genital-mutilating "health care" machine will rake in a mind-blowing [\\$5 billion](#) by 2030.

Those estimates are nothing compared to the impacts these practices will have on both this generation and the next. "It is impossible to ignore the fact that these experimental procedures, designed to manipulate and halt the natural development of a child's sex characteristics, are nothing short of child abuse," Alexandre says. "They inflict irreversible changes that do nothing to alleviate mental health distress, but instead condemn young, vulnerable children to a lifetime of physical trauma — all in the name of this twisted gender ideology. It is a sickening display of disregard for the well-being and future of our children."

The different stances on "transgender" surgery vary wildly from state to state and from governor to governor. On one end of the spectrum, Governor Gavin Newsom declared California a "[sanctuary state](#)" for sex reassignment procedures, even for minors. He signed legislation last fall to effectively protect parents and children from consequences for breaking the law in their home state. On the other hand, governors like Ron DeSantis of Florida signed the "Let Kids be Kids" package of bills, one of which ([SB 254](#)), outlaws the permanent mutilation of children.

DeSantis joins 15 other governors who signed similar state legislation into law, all of which are either in effect or soon to go into effect. Further, several states such as Florida, [Idaho](#), [North Dakota](#), and [Oklahoma](#), have provisions that will charge health care practitioners with a felony for violating the law, while others like [Mississippi](#), [Montana](#), [South Dakota](#), and [Utah](#) have created pathways for minor patients to collect damages later in life if they believe they have been harmed by mutilating surgeries.

At the national level, Liberty Counsel's public policy organization, Liberty Counsel Action (LCA), has been active on Capitol Hill to advocate for measures that would rightfully ban gender-transitioning procedures on minors across the country. Two bills on these procedures have been proposed, one in the House and one in the Senate. LCA met with Senator Roger Marshall, M.D., from Kansas who, on May 15, 2023, introduced S 1595, which is intended to prohibit taxpayer-funded gender transition procedures. [Rep. LaMalfa](#) describes the "Protecting Children from Experimentation Act" as "an all-out prohibition with criminal charges." Representative Doug LaMalfa from California introduced on the same day in the House a similar bill, "End Taxpayer Funding of Gender Experimentation Act."

"If we can do this federally, and we can make it stick," LaMalfa added, "It just can't help but build a grass fire amongst normal folks out there that think this is outrageous."

In the end, protecting children from destructive gender ideology is a war worth fighting, no matter what it takes. **LC**

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places of worship to be treated just like secular gathering places such as big box stores, which had preferential treatment to stay open. Big box stores do not have a constitutional right to exist, but churches and places of worship do. This goes back to the secularization of government that's even infected the judicial branch.

LC: Were there any other threats to constitutional freedoms that you witnessed during COVID?

Mat: The biggest, most shocking threat to freedom of speech I witnessed was the targeting of highly experienced medical doctors and scientists who expressed their opinions contrary to the government-approved narrative for COVID and the COVID shots.

LC: Since 2020, we've seen unprecedented censorship in the media. Considering ongoing censorship, do you believe free speech may be in an existential crisis?

Mat: Social media censorship is a serious violation of free speech and runs counter to the principles embedded in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Free speech is one of the pillars of our nation functioning as a republic that values the voices of the governed. When you go back and look at some of the revolutions such as the one that took place several years ago by the people in Iran, how did we find out about it? It was through Twitter. In a lot of these places, the citizenry would tell the world what was happening in these repressive regimes through tweets. And Twitter would allow this communication without censorship.

If Twitter had been in the censorship business back then, we would never have seen how the people in Iran or other countries were mistreated and murdered by their own governments. Although Twitter and social media platforms are private entities, they present a serious threat to freedom when online speech is suppressed. These social media platforms have become our information superhighway channels. One of the most serious threats to our freedom of speech is from online censorship and the manipulation of data.

LC: Speaking of the manipulation of data and the mainstream narrative, we now know, through the release of the Twitter files, that the CDC had a hotline to Facebook to influence COVID messaging. Government entities were driving messaging behind the scenes.

Mat: There are constitutional principles by which we can hold the government accountable. We suspected what was happening behind the scenes, but now we know that the collusion between the federal government and Big Tech

was, in fact, happening. Due to constitutional constraints, what the government is unable to do directly, it could do privately through a third party. So, if the government can't censor people, it can work through a private party to censor people.

LC: It's disturbing to think that our government would do this behind the backs of Americans.

Mat: In principle, the government should not be hiding behind private actors, especially when constitutional rights are infringed. It's as if the government is pulling all the strings like they're operating a mannequin, or they're a ventriloquist. These social media platforms are their dummies.

LC: And it's as if there aren't enough Americans outraged by this practice to call it out and put a stop to it...

Mat: Right, and another concern is that people — many Americans you wouldn't expect — have lost the appreciation for freedom of speech. And they're willing to censor somebody's speech because they disagree with it, and that's just completely antithetical to everything that we've ever been as a nation.

LC: That answer flows easily into our last question: If you had to convince a roomful of Gen Zers that preserving the First Amendment is essential to preserving the future of America, what would you say to them?

Mat: That's a good question. If all you have to depend upon is power — "might makes right" — instead of having the same

standard of protection that the First Amendment provides for everyone, then you need to realize that one day you might be on the receiving end of that power instead of being the one wielding it. How would that make you feel? For example, you may be OK with a government forcing a website designer to create a website that is contrary to the designer's religious beliefs, such as one that celebrates same-sex marriage. But what happens when the government changes? When a different group of leaders with completely opposite views takes control and now forces their viewpoints on you — perhaps a view that you absolutely detest and that goes against your very being — you may suddenly wish there was protection for your beliefs that transcends the changing governments. Thankfully, that protection does exist. It's called the Constitution.

You've got to understand that in protecting the opposing viewpoint, essentially you are protecting your own. We must protect a rule of law that provides freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion for everyone. **LC**

