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Protecting Religious Freedom in Public Schools

By Mat Staver

As school starts this fall, both students and teachers need to understand that, as the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled, they do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” In fact, the U.S. Constitution fully protects their free speech and religious expression rights.

However, there are times when school officials, parents, and students alike are uninformed or confused about these rights, which far too often leads to bias, censorship, and viewpoint discrimination in schools.

Teacher Disciplined for Opening Classroom to Christian Students

Recently, for example, a Greater Hartford-area school district in Connecticut announced it would discipline a middle school teacher for allowing Christian students to use her classroom during lunch to pray, read the Bible, and discuss religion.

The district imposed a two-day unpaid suspension on this Christian teacher and added a letter of reprimand to the instructor's file. The district also informed Christian students that they were prohibited from meeting to engage in lunchtime religious activity.

continued on page 2 >>

TOP NEWS

- Religious Liberty in Public Schools
- Celebrating Lives Saved from Abortion
- Liberty Counsel at Work
- Why Christians Should Vote
- New Building Update



P. 4

How One Teenager's Fight for Her Baby Is Saving Others

Every life saved from abortion is worth celebrating. But every life saved should also cause us to ask a difficult question: How many others were never given the same chance?

Recently, Liberty Counsel had the privilege of helping save a life when a pregnant Florida teenager narrowly escaped a coerced abortion after Liberty Counsel intervened on her behalf. Today, she is holding a healthy baby girl in her arms because someone answered her plea for help before it was too late.

According to information provided to Liberty Counsel, the teen girl's flights, hotels, and Lyft rides for the out-of-state abortion were being funded by the Chicago Abortion Fund (CAF), even after she told CAF's Florida partner she was being forced into an abortion against her will by a family member. The clinic even tried to hide her ultrasound photos to prevent her from seeing her own baby, and travel arrangements were made to take her hundreds of miles from Florida to Illinois for the abortion.

continued on page 3 >>



The penalty was imposed even though this teacher and others had accommodated Muslim students in their religious expression and practice during lunchtime without discipline. Despite that, district administrators characterized this teacher's allowing Christian student religious exercise during non-instructional time as a "lack of professional judgment." In a disciplinary meeting with the teacher, the principal even said he had also met with the students to ensure "they understand what they can and cannot do."

School District Falls in Line with the First Amendment

Liberty Counsel responded with a [demand letter](#) on May 12, informing the school district that students have the First Amendment right to engage in voluntary religious activity on campus during non-instructional time — this teacher did not participate in the religious activity but only allowed the small group of students to use her classroom, issued hall passes for lunchtime transit, and otherwise facilitated student religious exercise with parental permission.

We noted that punishing a teacher for accommodating Christian religious exercise under substantially similar terms by which the district has accommodated other religions violates the First Amendment Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses, the Equal Access Act, and the Connecticut Religious Freedom Exercise Act.

In [response](#) to the letter, the school district acknowledged that legal precedents "make clear" that students "have the right to engage in prayer and discussion" during free time, and teachers are permitted to accommodate those activities in a non-participatory status. The district removed the discipline from the teacher's record and will permit lunchtime prayer, Bible study, and discussion for Christian students as classes resume this fall.

This teacher, who is a member of Christian Educators, will have no



"The freedom of religion does not disappear past the schoolhouse gate."

discipline for accommodating the religious needs of her students, and the students are able to resume their lunchtime Bible study — and the Constitution protects their right to do so.

Christian Teachers Cannot Be Forced to Lie

Not only do religious liberty protections allow teachers to open their classrooms to a student-facilitated Bible study, but a school also cannot force teachers to affirm ideologies that directly contradict their convictions. In Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Christian teachers faced this scenario: Affirm falsehood or risk losing your job. After completing mandatory LGBTQ+ cultural training, teachers were forced to answer "yes" to the following prompt: "I am aware that LAUSD policy requires me to affirm and respect the identities of all students, including those who identify as LGBTQ+."

Their failure to affirm this statement to complete this certification training could have jeopardized their livelihood. On behalf of Christian educators who could not contradict their biblical beliefs and affirm such a statement, Liberty Counsel sent a [demand letter](#) on June 8.

Two days after receiving the letter, LAUSD *changed* the language and removed the requirement to "affirm" all gender identities. The updated language signifies that LAUSD educators only need to acknowledge what the district's policy is, rather than accept and agree with it.

Federal law protects teachers from being forced to "affirm" a student's perceived "gender identity" or use false pronouns in violation of their religious convictions, and teachers should not give in to unconstitutional pressure to affirm what they know to be false.

Religious Liberty Supported by Decades of Legal Precedent

Christian teachers and students should also be encouraged and emboldened by decades-worth of legal precedent, affirming the First Amendment within the schoolhouse gate.

On top of this, Liberty Counsel is undefeated in defending Child Evangelism Fellowship's Good News Clubs and the right of these after-school Bible clubs to spread the Gospel and minister to students on public school campuses.

Under the First Amendment, public schools cannot prevent students from religious practice during their free time, nor can they discriminate against Christian viewpoints regarding use of school facilities or force students and teachers to violate their faith.

The freedom of religion does not disappear past the schoolhouse gate, and Christian students and teachers should not be intimidated out of abiding by their faith in a public school setting. **TC**

Mat Staver is the Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel and Chairman of Liberty Counsel Action.

With only days remaining before the scheduled abortion, her teenage boyfriend reached out to Liberty Counsel for help on a Friday afternoon in November 2025. Liberty Counsel immediately worked alongside the Florida Office of Attorney General to intervene.

Within 24 hours, a demand letter informed the family that coercing a woman into an abortion is illegal in every state and reminded them that the expectant mother's legal rights regarding her unborn child could not simply be overridden by other relatives.

The intervention worked. A family member soon provided a screenshot showing that the travel arrangements to Illinois — which would have amounted to forced abortion trafficking — had been canceled. Shortly before the Fourth of July, the reason that intervention mattered became beautifully clear when the teen mom gave birth to a healthy baby girl weighing nearly eight pounds.

Her story reminds us that timely intervention can change the course of

a life — and even save a life. Because this young mother chose life, more lives have been saved. Liberty Counsel recently received another urgent call on a Saturday morning after a pro-life organization had heard about the Florida teenager who saved her baby through legal intervention. By the time Liberty Counsel became involved in this case, the young mom was reportedly already in an Uber on her way to the abortion facility against her will.

A Liberty Counsel attorney quickly sent her information about the Florida case and urged her not to go inside. When the adult accompanying her forced her to enter the facility, Liberty Counsel intervened and warned Planned Parenthood that legal action would follow if it proceeded with an abortion against the girl's wishes. As a result, her baby was saved.

Then, just two days later, Liberty Counsel learned of yet another situation involving another baby at risk. Those involved had also heard about the

Florida case and knew there was somewhere they could turn for help. Once again, swift legal intervention helped save this third baby's life.

What began with one frightened teenager asking for help last fall has now helped protect three children. That ripple effect demonstrates why information, compassion, and action matter so deeply.

The little girl born in Florida this summer may never fully comprehend how close she came to never taking her first breath. Yet her life already has a remarkable legacy. Because she was saved, her story was told. Because her story was told, others knew where to turn, and two more children were spared from abortion.

In these cases, life won. While these are beautiful stories, they are also uncommon. This is precisely why we cannot remain silent.

Do you know of any expectant mothers in similar situations? Reach out to [LC.org/legal-help](https://www.libertycounsel.org/legal-help) for lifesaving legal intervention. **LC**

Liberty Counsel at Work: Lawsuit Filed for Unlawful Firing

The East Baton Rouge Parish Library unlawfully fired bi-vocational pastor Luke Ash when he refused to violate his religious convictions and use false male pronouns to refer to a female trainee in compliance with the library's so-called "Inclusivity Policy" in July 2025.

Pastor Ash would not lie to affirm a delusion that violates God's design of male and female. Because he upheld his Christian faith, Pastor Ash was wrongfully terminated from his second job as a library technician, which allowed him to better support his family.

On July 9, 2026, Liberty Counsel filed a [lawsuit](#) on Pastor Ash's behalf against the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, the City of Baton Rouge, the Metropolitan Council, and the Library Board of Control for the City of Baton Rouge, seeking a permanent injunction that declares the library's "Inclusivity Policy" unconstitutional for violating Pastor Ash's constitutional rights, the Louisiana Preservation of Religious Freedom Act, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

"Defendants terminated [Pastor Ash] solely on the basis of his articulated religious beliefs and need for an accommodation. It was thus the sole motivating factor in their termination of his employment," the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit also requests that the court order the library to reinstate him to his prior position, restore his benefits, and award backpay, damages, and attorney's fees and costs.

In response to this blatant religious discrimination, Liberty Counsel also sent a [demand letter](#) to the East Baton Rouge Parish Library on Oct. 17, 2025, and filed [discrimination charges](#) with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in November 2025 on Pastor Ash's behalf.

Employers cannot force employees like Pastor Ash to choose between their faith and their livelihood — the East Baton Rouge Parish Library violated state and federal law by not considering a religious accommodation and firing Pastor Ash for abiding by his Christian convictions. Visit [LC.org/Luke](https://www.libertycounsel.org/Luke) for more information, and stay tuned for updates. **LC**



Apathy Is Not an Option: Why 'Good' Men Must Do Something

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

This quote, often attributed to Edmund Burke, shows what happens when Christians are apathetic in the political process: Evil triumphs. This especially rings true during the election season, when U.S. citizens have the duty and privilege of deciding which policies and politicians prevail.

If the people in the pews do not vote in the polls, their absence gives unrighteousness the license to advance. The church, at large, has remained on the sidelines for far too long. As a result, across the country, abortion is legal and the leading cause of death, God's design for marriage and family is ignored, first freedoms are threatened, and truth is exchanged for a lie. Scripture is clear: "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan" (Prov. 29:2).

Christians should take this seriously and vote for what promotes good and restrains evil. Voting is one way Christians can love their neighbor — by supporting policies and candidates that protect life, natural rights, God's design for marriage and family, godly values, and law and order in society.

While Christians are more likely to vote than non-Christians, a staggering number of American Christians do not regularly vote. In the 2024 election, just 56% of self-identified Christians voted, and 65% of mainline Protestant church attendees voted, according to a [study](#) led by George Barna from Arizona Christian University's Cultural Research Center.

How should we expect righteous laws and leaders to advance if a large number of American believers do not fulfill this basic civic duty?

Each election matters on the local, state, and national level. This November, however, voters in nine states may vote on up to 12 ballot initiatives related to life, marriage, and biological reality. Voters in all 50 states will have a say in pivotal races, but specifically, voters in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington will face a clear choice between good and evil, truth and lies, common sense and insanity, through ballot initiatives that directly affect policy.

These 12 possible ballot initiatives for the midterm election include positive proposals that would protect parental rights, as well as negative proposals that would constitutionalize "trans ideology" and same-sex "marriage," and enshrine abortion as a "right."

Of these 12 initiatives, most will be on the ballot, but Nebraska's is still pending, and the pro-abortion measure in Virginia is facing a legal challenge from Liberty Counsel.

Voters often do not understand how far these initiatives reach: Not only do some of them allow [abortion until birth](#), but some also may permit [infanticide](#) or create a "[right](#)" to mutilating, sex-rejecting ("transgender") surgeries.

So much is at stake, and sitting out of this election cycle is not an option. Proverbs 14:34 reminds us that "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

Christian, fulfill your civic duty to vote, and cast a ballot for policies and candidates that most reflect biblical values. Pray for righteousness to prevail and evil to be defeated. Check your voter registration status, make a plan to vote, and encourage your church family to do the same. Visit LCAction.org/StateAmendments for more information on the initiatives on your ballot and for a state ballot initiative tracker.

In the words of Dr. Jerry Falwell Sr., "The idea that religion and politics don't mix was invented by the Devil to keep Christians from running their own country."

"Good men" must do something this election season — *pray and vote*. **LC**

New Building Purchased, Preparing for Move-In

We're incredibly grateful to all who contributed toward the Building a Legacy Campaign, which helped Liberty Counsel purchase a 75,000-square-foot command center in Lake Mary, Florida. This new ministry headquarters consolidates our expanding ministries, creating greater operational efficiencies in a secure, strategically located facility. Now being prepared for move-in, this two-story building features abundant office space, kitchens, multiple conference rooms, a large warehouse, and more. It is crucial infrastructure for defending freedom, proclaiming truth, equipping believers, saving unborn lives, discipling future generations, and advancing the Gospel during one of the most pivotal moments in our nation's history. It will strengthen our impact for generations. Thank you to all who prayed and partnered with us to make this possible. **LC**

