



The 18th Annual Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs

THE STATE OF INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND WHY IT MATTERS

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I truly am honored to be speaking here at FPRI, a stellar organization that is dedicated to providing sound research and analysis to aid in the conduct of the foreign policy of this nation. And I am especially honored that you have selected me to deliver this year's Annual Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs, in which I will address the topic of international religious freedom and why it matters.

It is great to be here in a city and state where the words "religion" and "freedom" came together so remarkably—even before the founding of our republic. The story began in colonial times, and it is fitting that eight days from today, on October 14, we will mark the 370th anniversary of the birth of a remarkable man—William Penn—who played so critical a role in laying the foundation for full freedom of religion in our nation.

The story continued through the Revolutionary War era, highlighted by our great Declaration here in Philadelphia that our basic rights come from our Creator, and that these include the right to liberty—which includes in the very first place the freedom to seek the truth in religious matters and to worship the Almighty and honor Him in every facet of life in accordance with the dictates of conscience. And the story culminated with the drafting of our Constitution—once again right here in Philadelphia—which came to include the First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom as America's First Freedom, a treasured human right constitutionally protected for the people of the nation.

Tonight, as the title of my remarks suggest, I will focus on this fundamental freedom abroad. I do not on this occasion speak on behalf of the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom or USCIRF, where I have served as Chairman and currently serve as Vice Chair, but my remarks will certainly reflect my experience working on the Commission.

I will begin by asking and answering as fully as I can in the brief time we have together this evening the question of why religious freedom matters. I will go on to focus on the tragically dire situation for religious liberty in so many places across the globe today. And finally, I will emphasize that our nation can and must do a better job of defending religious freedom.

WHY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MATTERS

So why *does* religious freedom matter? Why should promoting and defending it abroad, no less than honoring it at home, be a high priority? The way some people see it, the reason for respecting religious freedom is purely instrumental and self-interested. If you and I disagree in matters of religion, I should tolerate your beliefs and religious practices so that you will tolerate mine. Religious freedom, on this view, is not so much a moral or human right as it is a kind of mutual nonaggression pact. It is easy to see the attraction of this view or to explain why some people hold it. A world in which each community lives in fear that another will seize power and oppress its members is hardly an ideal state of affairs for any of them. But that is exactly what happens where there is little or no religious freedom protection. Everyone fears what will happen to his own group. And so each group agrees to tolerate the other groups so that it, too, will be tolerated.

But there's a problem with this view: It simply doesn't go far enough. It ignores the fact that at its core, religious freedom means something far deeper and more profound than people grudgingly tolerating each other in a kind of *modus vivendi*. Simply stated, religious freedom means nothing less than the right to be who we truly are as human beings. The fact is that as human beings, we are drawn to ponder life's deepest questions and seek meaningful, truthful answers. Where do we come from? What is our destiny? Is there a transcendent source of meaning and value? Is there a "higher law" that pulls us above personal interest in order to "do unto others as we would have them do unto us?"

No matter how these questions are answered, one thing is indisputable: Human beings can't stop asking them, and would be diminished precisely as human beings if they were to try to do so. And that suggests that the religious quest is a constitutive part of our humanity—an aspect of our flourishing as the kind of creatures we are, namely, rational, intelligent, and free actors.

This, in turn, suggests that we must cherish and honor, preserve and protect, the right of persons to ask and answer these questions as best they can, and, within the broadest limits, to lead their lives with authenticity and integrity in line with their best judgments of conscience. So, both as individuals and together with others in communities of faith, religious freedom means the right to ponder life's origins, meaning and purpose; to explore the deepest questions about human nature, dignity, and destiny; to decide what is to be believed and not to be believed; and, within the limits of justice for all, to comply with what one conscientiously judges to be one's religious obligations—openly, peacefully, and without fear.

The great English theologian and man of letters, John Henry Newman, once observed that "conscience has rights *because* it has duties." We honor the rights of conscience in matters of faith because people must be free to lead lives of authenticity and integrity by fulfilling what they believe to be their solemn obligations. But authenticity and integrity are directly threatened whenever there is coercion or compulsion in matters of faith or belief. Indeed, coercion does not produce genuine conviction, but merely pretense and lack of authenticity. A coerced faith is no faith at all. So, as the Qu'ran says, "there can be no compulsion in religion."

Compulsion may cause a person to manifest the outward signs of belief or unbelief, but it cannot produce the interior acts of intellect and will that constitute genuine faith. Therefore, it is essential that freedom of religion include the right to hold any belief or none at all, to change one's beliefs and religious affiliation, to bear witness to these beliefs in public as well as private, and corporately as well as individually, and to act on one's religiously-inspired convictions about justice and the common good in carrying out the duties of citizenship. And it is vital that religious liberty's full protections be extended to those whose answers to life's deepest questions reject belief in the transcendent.

Because the right to freedom of religion is so central to human personhood, and thus to the dignity of human persons, we would expect that in places where it is dishonored, societies would be less contented and secure. And according to a growing number of studies, that is precisely the case across the world. These studies show that

countries that protect religious liberty tend to be more secure and stable than those that do not, and nations that trample on this freedom provide fertile ground for war and poverty, terror and radical movements. In other words, not only do religious freedom abuses violate the core of our humanity, they do grave harm to the order and well-being of societies.

- They do so *politically* – as religious freedom abuses are highly correlated with the absence of democracy and the presence of other human rights abuses.
- They do so *economically* – as religious persecution destabilizes communities and marginalizes the persecuted, causing their talents and abilities to go unrealized, robbing a nation of added productivity, and reducing that nation's ability to fight poverty and create abundance for its citizens.
- They do so *morally* – since wherever religious freedom is dishonored, the benefit of religion in molding character is diminished, and with it, the self-discipline necessary to handle the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- Finally, they do so *socially* – since wherever religious freedom is abused, peace and security become ever more elusive.

For the United States, all of this has a direct bearing on our own security. For example, of the four countries that hosted Osama bin Laden during his notorious life—Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Pakistan—each is an incubator of terrorism in the form of violent religious extremism, and all have perpetrated or tolerated repeated religious freedom violations. And as we all know, the 9/11 attacks on our country were plotted in Afghanistan, which was run by the Taliban which originated in Pakistan, with 15 of the 19 attackers coming from Saudi Arabia.

THE BLEAK LANDSCAPE

Clearly, religious freedom matters greatly. But sadly, according to a recent Pew study, nearly 75 percent of the world's people—more than 5 billion human beings—live in countries with governments that significantly restrict this fundamental right. Such restrictions range from burdensome rules on building houses of worship to detention and imprisonment, torture and murder. All of these abuses violate not just American standards of religious freedom, but international human rights standards and covenants as well. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, in Article 18, that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Since 1966, the governments of 167 countries have signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a binding treaty with protections similar to Article 18, and regional bodies, such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States, also confirm religious freedom as a fundamental liberty.

As an independent, bipartisan, government advisory body, my Commission is firmly committed to the human rights standards found in these documents. As a key part of its mandate, USCIRF monitors religious freedom worldwide and makes recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and to Congress. Based on our monitoring of religious freedom conditions, we see how nations that fail to respect or protect religious freedom fall into the following categories:

- state *hostility*;
- state *sponsorship*;
- state *enforcement*;
- and state *failure*.

State *hostility* involves the government actively persecuting people due to their beliefs. State *sponsorship* refers to the government actively promoting—and sometimes even exporting—ideas and propaganda, often of a violent, extremist nature, that include hostility to the religious freedom of others. State *enforcement* refers to the government actively applying laws and statutes such as anti-blasphemy codes to individuals, often members of religious minorities. And state *failure* means that the government is neglecting to take action to protect those whom others are targeting due to their beliefs.

When it comes to state *hostility* toward religions, some of these governments, like North Korea or China, are secular tyrannies which consider all religious beliefs as potential competitors of state secularist ideology such as Communism. Others, like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, are religious tyrannies which enthrone one religion or religious interpretation over all others, which they see as rivals to the one they favor. Still others, like Russia, are a hybrid of secular and religious. In North Korea, the government severely represses religious activity, and individuals who defy it are arrested, imprisoned, tortured, or executed. In China, the government continues its persecution of Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims. To stem the growth of independent Catholic and Protestant groups, Beijing has arrested leaders and shut churches down. There have been reports of officials even going after registered churches, tearing down crosses and church steeples. Members of Falun Gong, as well as those of other groups deemed “evil cults,” face long jail terms, forced renunciations of faith, and torture in detention. In Iran, the government has executed people for “waging war against God,” while relentlessly targeting reformers among the Shi’a Muslim majority, as well as religious minorities, including Sunni and Sufi Muslims, Bahai’s, and Christians. Pastor Sayeed Abedini remains in prison, and the regime has stirred up anti-Semitism and promoted Holocaust denial. Saudi Arabia completely bans the public expression of religions other than Islam. Not a single church or other non-Muslim house of worship exists in the country. In addition, the Kingdom enthrones its own interpretation of Sunni Islam over all others and has arrested individuals for apostasy, blasphemy, and sorcery. Sudan continues its policy of Islamization and Arabization, imposing Shari’ah law in Muslims and non-Muslims alike, using amputations and floggings for acts of so-called indecency and immorality and arresting Christians for proselytizing. And finally, Russia has a secular government but favors the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church while persecuting competitors, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, or those it deems a threat to the state, such as Muslims.

Regarding state *sponsorship* of radical ideology which targets others’ religious freedom, Saudi Arabia continues to export its own extremist interpretation of Sunni Islam through textbooks and other literature which teach hatred and even violence toward other religious groups. Regarding state *enforcement*, Egypt and Pakistan enforce anti-blasphemy or anti-defamation codes, with religious minorities bearing the brunt of the enforcement. And finally, regarding state *failure* to protect religious freedom, the abysmal record of the governments of Burma, Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria exemplifies those of nations which do *not* protect their citizens against religion-related violence.

In Burma, sectarian violence and severe abuses against Christians and Muslims continue with impunity. The plight of the Rohingya Muslims is especially alarming and heartbreaking, as countless numbers are stateless, homeless, and endangered. In Egypt, Cairo has failed repeatedly over time to protect religious minorities, including Coptic Orthodox and other Christians, Baha’is, Shi’a Muslims, and dissident Sunni Muslims from violence or to bring perpetrators to justice. In Iraq, the rise of the so-called “Islamic State” is a major consequence of the government’s continued failure to protect the lives and freedoms of non-Muslims minorities such as Christians and Yazidis, as well as Shi’a Muslims and dissenting Sunni Muslims. In Nigeria, as Boko Haram attacks Christians, as well as fellow Muslims, the government continues its failure to prosecute perpetrators of religiously-related violence that has killed more than 14,000 Nigerians, both Christian and Muslim, since the turn of the century. In Pakistan, the government’s continued failure to protect Christians, Ahmadis, Shi’a, and Hindus, has created a climate of impunity resulting in further vigilante violence. And in Syria, a civil war triggered at least in part by the Assad regime’s refusal to respect human rights and embrace reform has devolved into a sectarian religious conflict. We now have a combination of state tyranny and state failure to protect life and freedom. While the Assad regime targets Sunni Muslims, its terrorist opponents (such as the “Islamic State”) are targeting those on all sides, from Sunnis and Alawites to Christians, who oppose their dictates. It is a complete nightmare.

THE TOTALITARIAN IMPULSE

As we survey this bleak landscape for religious freedom abroad, we detect a number of unmistakable patterns and trends. We see the rise of violent religious extremism, largely through radical Islamism, and its continued conflicts with the majority of Muslims, as well as with non-Muslim religious minorities. We see the continued persecution of Christians—a persecution the sheer size and scope of which is astonishing. And we see the stubborn persistence and in some places revival of anti-Semitism across countries and cultures.

Let me offer a few words on these disturbing patterns and trends. It has often been said that radical Islamism and its leaders seek to recover a mythical golden age from a far-distant past. While this is undoubtedly the case, we must also realize that they are also propelled by an inescapably modern—and terrifying—idea. Surfacing in the last century, that idea came to be known as totalitarianism. What defines totalitarianism is a series of demands which may be summarized as follows:

- Give fanatical leaders and movements absolute and permanent authority.
- Make these leaders and their followers into virtual gods, charged with seizing control of history and transforming humanity itself.
- Release these leaders and their followers from accountability to any law or institution, belief or custom, and moral norm or precept.
- Grant these leaders and their followers complete control of every facet of human existence, from outward conduct to the innermost workings of conscience.

For the better part of a century, those promoting and exploiting this malignant idea have advanced it by dressing it up in a variety of costumes and by hijacking various ideals and institutions and putting them to work in its cause. In the 1930s and 1940s, it threatened humanity through Nazism and other forms of fascism which exploited the concept of race and the ideology of nationalism. After World War II, totalitarianism posed its greatest threat through Communism, which exploited the concepts of class and class consciousness and highjacked people's strivings for social justice. By the close of the 20th century, these movements had committed every crime under the sun, triggering the deaths of nearly 150 million human beings. They also waged war against the rights and duties of conscience, leaving behind a world where to this day, most people live in countries that are hostile—in many cases deeply hostile—to freedom of religion or belief.

Today, that same totalitarian impulse which drove Nazism and Communism has hijacked religion as its latest vehicle, creating radical Islamism. From the “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria to the extremist mullahs in Iran, and from al Qaeda to the Taliban, these new totalitarians pose similar threats to the world. Displaying utter contempt for the rule of law and for any distinction between combatants and non-combatants in the conduct of war, they target civilians and commit mass torture and murder, precisely as the Nazis and Communists did. Many observers presume that these movements and their leaders simply represent Islam on steroids. Some even claim they represent the “true Islam.” I submit to you today that they are mistaken. Granted, the history of nearly every religion—including Islam—contains periods of despotism and bloodshed. Granted, every major religion has had to go through periods of reform or clarification of some of its beliefs and ideas. Granted, as so many Muslim reformers have stated repeatedly, Islam should be no exception.

But let us be clear. No civilized religion—certainly no creed in the tradition of ethical monotheism—including Islam, ever stood in principle, as the Nazis and Communists did, and as the “Islamic State” does today, for what amounts to sheer, unadulterated nihilism—the idea that any and every means—torture, rape, prostitution, drug sales, the slaughter of innocent children and defenseless elderly people, genocide—may be carried out in the cause of regional hegemony and, ultimately, world domination. No world religion ever granted any human being, group, or government the permanent right in principle to flout any rule, break any law, or commit any atrocity at will. In other words, the struggle we face is not that of one religion against another, nor of religion against humanity. Rather, it is a struggle that pits lawlessness and tyranny against basic decency and dignity. And in this struggle, reformers must be applauded for their resolute stand not only to reform and clarify from within, but to stand against the hijacking of Islam by those driven by the same impulse that drove the likes of Hitler and Stalin, Mao Zedong and Pol Pot. They must rip away radical Islamism's religious mask – revealing its idolatrous soul before the world.

At the hands of violent religious extremists, Christians especially face severe persecution. Ironically, it is in the Middle East, the cradle of Christianity, that both persecution and the flight of the persecuted cloud the future of the world's oldest Christian communities. Unless circumstances change, many are asking whether a graveyard will one day replace the cradle. In Egypt, violence against Coptic Christians reached alarming proportions in recent years. In Iraq, severe violence against Christians, which peaked after Saddam Hussein's fall, has returned with a vengeance. The "Islamic State" is principally to blame for that. Once home to approximately one million Christians, Iraq has half that number today. Many Iraqi Christians sought refuge in Syria, where fellow Christians and Muslims—from Sunnis to Shi'a, including Alawites—once had co-existed peacefully. We all know how that turned out. For Christians, Syria's civil war has been nothing short of calamitous. In Saudi Arabia and Iran, it is mainly the government that severely represses Christians and other religious minorities. And just outside the Middle East, in Pakistan, attacks against Christians are escalating. In September 2013, suicide bombers launched the worst anti-Christian attack in Pakistan's history, assaulting All Saints Church in Peshawar, leaving nearly 100 dead and more than 150 other parishioners wounded.

In looking at the plight of Christians, especially those in the Middle East, those who know Jewish history see something hauntingly familiar. Iraq's Jewish community provides a somber example of what the future may hold. Like Iraq's Christians, the Jews were there for a long time—perhaps as many as 20 centuries or even more. As of 1947, the country's Jewish population exceeded 50,000. Today only a handful remain. People professed shock when it was revealed that in 2010, Mohammed Morsi, who was later elected Egypt's president, depicted the Jewish people as "descendants of apes and pigs," whom Egyptian children and grandchildren must be taught to hate "down to the last generation." Yet his comments were no worse than those of Iranian leaders, who denied the Holocaust and allowed state-run media to broadcast anti-Semitic messages and hateful cartoons. Nor are they worse than the lies and defamations against Jews and Judaism that one finds in the media elsewhere in the region, including in Egypt itself.

Yet it would be a mistake to say that anti-Semitism is confined to the Middle East. In post-Soviet Russia, skinhead groups commit acts of anti-Semitism in the name of Russian nationalism. In Belarus, the anti-Jewish utterances of President Lukashenko and the state media are accompanied by a failure to identify or punish the vandals of Jewish cemeteries and other property. Even in Western Europe, anti-Semitism has been making a comeback. Since 2000, anti-Jewish graffiti increasingly have appeared in Paris and Berlin, Madrid and Amsterdam, London and Rome, and synagogues have been vandalized or set ablaze in France and Sweden. In Malmo, Sweden, physical attacks fueled a Jewish exodus. In France, according to a report by the security unit of its Jewish community, there were 614 anti-Semitic incidents in 2012, compared to 389 in 2011.

Who are the perpetrators of these hateful acts in Europe? Some are neo-Nazis. Others claim to act in the name of Islam. Compounding the problem are four factors. First, European officials remain reluctant to identify the ideological or religious motivations of perpetrators. Second, surveys show that anti-Semitic attitudes among Europe's population are shockingly widespread. Third, these surveys confirm that some of this bias manifests itself in harsh and unbalanced criticisms of the state of Israel. While no nation is beyond reproach, when such criticism includes language intended to delegitimize Israel, demonize its people, and apply to it standards to which no other state is held, we must call it what it is—anti-Semitism.

Finally, a number of European governments and political parties have added fuel to the fire by backing restrictions on vital religious expression such as the donning of religious garb in public or the performance of kosher slaughter and male infant circumcision. They have proposed or enacted similar kinds of restrictions on practitioners of other religions, including Christianity and Islam. France and Belgium, for example, bar students in state schools and government workers from wearing "conspicuous" religious symbols, such as the Muslim headscarf, the Sikh turban, large crosses, and the Jewish yarmulke and Star of David. Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland have banned kosher and halal slaughter. In Germany and Sweden, government authorities have told Jewish and Christian parents that they cannot homeschool their children for religious reasons. And government officials in the United Kingdom are forcing Catholic adoption agencies to shut down because they follow the moral criteria of their faith—criteria that are by no means idiosyncratically Catholic—in placing orphaned children in homes that provide a mother and father and not in same-sex headed households. What drives these governments and parties is an attempt to grant secularist ideology dominance in the public square by placing serious restrictions on religious expression or practice. It is an extreme view of state-church separation which seeks to relegate religion to the purely private domain of the home, church, synagogue, mosque, or temple.

Let me add that this is no different in principle from attempts by theocratic forces to grant monopoly power in the public square to one particular belief over others, including ideologies—such as Communism—that reject any and all religious beliefs. Both are a violation of the religious-freedom ideal of a free and open marketplace of beliefs thriving in the public square.

There is one more point I'd like to make about anti-Semitism. It's one that my dear friend, Britain's former Chief Rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks has made. One of the ways in which hatred of Jews has endured is by expressing and justifying itself in terms of the dominant discourses of time and place. Thus in the medieval period, the so-called "Age of Faith," anti-Semitism (or anti-Judaism) was expressed in theological terms, with the Jews portrayed as having been rejected by God and being completely replaced by the church, in contradiction to the plain words of St. Paul in the New Testament. In the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th century, when nationalism was in vogue, anti-Semitism was expressed in nationalistic terms, with Jews presented as cosmopolitan enemies of the nations in which they lived. Today, when the language of human rights predominates, anti-Semitism is expressed by accusing Jews of violating these rights in the name of national aspirations embodied in Zionism, or by the practice of male infant circumcision.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Thus far, I've shared with you reflections on why religious freedom matters and what the landscape for religious freedom looks like across the world. I've discussed the main kinds of violations of religious freedom that USCIRF has been concerned with. And I've discussed the disturbing rise of violent religious extremism, the nearly universal persecution of Christians, and the stubborn resiliency of anti-Semitism. All of this leads to the question: What is being done about religious freedom abuses worldwide?

Here is where the proverbial rubber meets the road. In 1998, when Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law the International Religious Freedom Act, or IRFA, which created the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom—and with it, a religious freedom office in the State Department headed by a religious freedom ambassador-at-large—it charged us not only with monitoring religious freedom overseas, but with making concrete recommendations—to Congress, to the Secretary of State, and to the President. Most of our recommendations focus on how Washington can encourage countries to improve their religious freedom records. But Congress also gave the IRFA law some real teeth through a groundbreaking enforcement mechanism. It required annual review and designation of "countries of particular concern," or CPCs, defined as those governments engaging in or allowing "systematic, ongoing, and egregious" religious freedom violations. These nations are by definition the world's worst religious freedom abusers.

Measuring each nation against this objective standard, USCIRF's job in the process is to recommend, based on its review, which countries the State Department should designate as CPCs. Once the State Department agrees on a designation, the IRFA law allows for diplomatic steps to be taken and/or sanctions to be imposed on such nations. While the law provides any administration with flexibility in this arena, the review and designation process is not discretionary. Simply stated, the IRFA law requires every administration, without fail, to engage fully in the job of designating countries. Whatever one's view of appropriate penalties for violators, there can be little disagreement on the imperative of bearing witness to abuses. And that is what the designation process is—at minimum—supposed to do. Unfortunately, neither Republican nor Democratic administrations have consistently designated countries that meet the standard for offenders. The result is that some of the world's worst violators—such as Egypt, Pakistan, and Vietnam—are escaping accountability.

There is more: Even those countries which currently are designated as CPCs are escaping accountability on the sanctions end. Under the law, while CPC countries remain designated until removed from that status, any corresponding penalties on these nations expire after two years. In September of last year, when the current administration in Washington failed to take action, the IRFA-related sanctions attached to Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, and Sudan *expired*. And while these countries are subject to sanctions under other U.S. laws, allowing the religious freedom sanctions to expire sends the disturbing message that the United States will not implement its own law on religious freedom.

Clearly, it is time for the executive branch to take its own IRFA obligations and responsibilities seriously by making designations and doing so in a timely manner. Its doing so can make a difference. When combined with diplomacy

and other tools, the prospect or reality of being designated a CPC and being sanctioned can move certain repressive governments—some, though admittedly perhaps not all—to make changes. In the past, we have seen that happen with countries like Vietnam and Turkmenistan. And let me add that I commend the State Department for recently designating Turkmenistan a CPC. Because a CPC designation is rightly perceived as a statement by the United States about its relationship to an offending nation, it can create political will for reform where none would otherwise exist. And it can strengthen the hand of reformers, thus providing what London School of Economics international relations graduate student Rachel George calls an “anchor” for the promotion of human rights.

Let me conclude by saying that for those of us who care about religious freedom, we have a job to do. We need to make the case to our fellow Americans on behalf of supporting religious freedom abroad. We need to explain why this matters for our country and for our world. And then, as we increase our support, we can move Washington to do the right thing by supporting religious freedom. We must make it clear to those in public office that we expect them to honor religious freedom. We must insist that religious freedom be given the priority it is due in the conduct of our international diplomacy and our foreign policy. Trade considerations matter; geopolitical and strategic considerations are important; but religious freedom is important, too. It is not a second-class concern—not since IRFA became the law of the land.

More than three centuries ago, one remarkable gentleman—William Penn—made a historic difference for religious liberty in our country. Let us follow in the footsteps of this trailblazing man of conscience and stand tall for religious liberty—truly America’s first freedom, and the birthright of every member of the human family. Thank you, and I will not hesitate to exercise my own religious freedom in saying to all of you and to FPRI, whose work I so greatly admire, *God bless you.*

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