



WE ARE FREE TO BE FAITHFUL

UPDATE



Summer 2019

A Prayer for Independence Day, July 4:

O Merciful Father in heaven, from You comes all rule and authority over the nations of the world for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. Graciously regard Your servants, those who make, administer and judge the laws of this nation, and look in mercy upon all the rulers of the earth. Grant that all who receive the sword as Your servants may bear it according to Your command. Enlighten and defend them, and grant them wisdom and understanding, that under their peaceable governance Your people may be guarded and directed in righteousness, quietness and unity. Protect and prolong their lives that we with them may show forth the praise of Your name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Getty Images



KFUO Free to be Faithful – Two Kingdoms Perspective of the State of the Union Address

Kip Allen hosts Dr. Greg Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty, to discuss how the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms informs Lutheran participation in the public square: kfuo.org/2019/02/20/ftbf-022019-two-kingdoms-perspective-of-the-state-of-the-union-address/

LEGISLATION

THE EQUALITY ACT: HOW COULD SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI) LAWS AFFECT YOU?

by the Heritage Foundation

On Wednesday March 13, Nancy Pelosi introduced the so-called Equality Act, a bill that would add “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” as protected classes under federal civil rights law.

Where the original Civil Rights Act of 1964 furthered equality by ensuring that African-Americans had equal access to public accommodations and material goods, the Equality Act would further inequality by penalizing everyday Americans for their beliefs about marriage and biological sex. Similar sexual orientation and gender identity laws at the state and local level have already been used in this way.

Here are 5 groups who would be harmed if the Equality Act becomes law:

Employers and Workers

The Equality Act would force employers and workers to conform to new sexual norms or else lose their businesses and jobs.

This is already happening on the state and local level.

The most high profile example involves Colorado baker Jack Phillips, whose case went all the way to the Supreme Court after the Colorado Civil Rights Commission accused him of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation when he declined to create a custom cake for a same-sex wedding.

He is not the only victim. Other cases involving disagreement over the meaning

of marriage feature florists, bakers, photographers, wedding venue owners, videographers, web designers, calligraphers, and public servants.

Now citizens are being punished for their views on biological sex.

Shortly after the Supreme Court ruling, Jack Phillips found himself in court again after an activist attorney who identifies as transgender, requested that Masterpiece Cakeshop create a “gender transition celebration” cake.

After the Colorado Civil Rights Commission found probable cause that Phillips had discriminated on the basis of gender identity, he sued the Commission for targeting him for his Christian beliefs. Ultimately, the Commission dropped the case, and Phillips agreed to drop his own lawsuit against the agency.

Even when victims win legal battles like Jack Phillips, conflicts like these have a chilling effect. They discourage people from opening new businesses or entering into certain fields entirely.

A federal sexual orientation and gender identity law would preclude compromise of any kind on disagreements about marriage and sexuality.

Take Peter Vlaming. This high school

French teacher was dismissed under the school’s anti-discrimination policy after he refused to comply with administrators’ orders to use a female student’s preferred masculine pronouns. Vlaming had tried to accommodate the student by avoiding pronouns altogether and addressing the student by their preferred masculine name, but this was deemed insufficient by the school board.

The Equality Act would increase conflicts like these and put people out of work for their beliefs.

Medical Professionals

The Equality Act would force hospitals and insurers to provide and pay for these therapies against any moral or medical objections. It would politicize medicine by forcing professionals to act against their best medical judgment and provide transition-affirming therapies.

The fight is already here. Catholic hospitals in California and New Jersey have been sued for declining to perform hysterectomies on otherwise healthy women who want to become male. A third Catholic hospital in Washington settled out of court when the ACLU sued them for declining to perform a double mastectomy on a gender dysphoric sixteen-year-old girl.

These cases would multiply under the Equality Act. This bill would politicize medicine by forcing doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals to offer drastic procedures — not in view of new scientific

Legislation
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discoveries, but by ideological fiat.

Parents and Children

This politicization of medicine would ultimately harm families by normalizing hormonal and surgical interventions for gender dysphoric children as well as ideological “education” in schools and other public venues.

80 to 95 percent of children with gender dysphoria no longer feel distressed by their bodies after puberty. Yet activists continue to push their own radical protocol: social transition as young as 4, puberty blocking drugs as young as 9, cross-sex hormones as young as 14, and surgery by 18 (or, in some cases, even younger).

This protocol could become mandatory in the future. The latest issue of the American Journal of Bioethics includes an article arguing that the state should overrule the parents of gender dysphoric children who do not consent to giving them puberty-blocking drugs.

By silencing the scientific debate on transgender-affirming therapies through the politicization of medicine, the Equality Act would further normalize this radical protocol, and create an expectation that parents comply.

In fact, parents in Ohio lost custody of their seventeen-year-old daughter because they declined to put her on testosterone supplements.

It is no secret that radical gender ideology has found its way into our schools. This bill would stigmatize any and all opposition to such indoctrination.

The Equality Act would put parental rights to make decisions about their children’s medical treatment and education at risk.

Women

The Equality Act would ultimately lead to the erasure of women by dismantling sex-specific facilities, sports, and other female-only spaces.

Sexual orientation and gender identity laws that open up sex-specific facilities like bathrooms, locker rooms, etc. to members of the opposite sex enable sexual assault.

For example, Pascha Thomas was forced to remove her child from school after a male classmate assaulted her five-year-old



Photo by Matt Lee on Unsplash

BY SILENCING THE SCIENTIFIC DEBATE ON TRANSGENDER-AFFIRMING THERAPIES THROUGH THE POLITICIZATION OF MEDICINE, THE EQUALITY ACT WOULD FURTHER NORMALIZE THIS RADICAL PROTOCOL, AND CREATE AN EXPECTATION THAT PARENTS COMPLY.

daughter in the girls’ restroom. The boy had access to the girls’ restroom because the school’s policy that grants students access to private facilities on the basis of self-identified gender identity. Administrators refused to change the policy despite Thomas’ complaints. Federal authorities are now investigating the incident.

The concern with these policies is that predators will take advantage of the law to gain access to victims. Policies like these make women less likely to report incidents and law enforcement less likely to get involved, for fear of being accused of discrimination.

These policies also leave women at a disadvantage in sex-specific sports and other activities.

Two biological males who identify and compete as women easily took first and second place at the Connecticut State Track Championships.

Selina Soule, a female runner, lost the race — and the chance to be scouted by college coaches and selected for athletic scholarships. “We all know the outcome of the race before it even starts,” she said. “It’s demoralizing.”

Females of all ages can expect to lose more and more opportunities like these to biological males who have a natural advantage in sports and physical activities. The Equality Act would defeat the entire purpose of Title IX, which was meant to ensure that women would have the same opportunities as men including in sports, and would leave women vulnerable to sexual assault.

Non-Profits and Volunteers

The Equality Act would also hurt charities, volunteers, and the populations they serve.

State and local sexual orientation and gender identity laws have shut down numerous faith-based adoption and foster care agencies across the country, in Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, California, Massachusetts, and the District of Columbia.

These states wrongly treated the belief that children do best with both a mother and a father as discriminatory, and kids are the ones who are paying the price. With 438,000 children languishing in foster care nationwide, we need more agencies working to help kids find homes, not fewer.

Now charities that admit to the reality of biological sex are under attack too.

In Anchorage, Alaska, a biological male twice tried to gain access to the city’s Downtown Hope Center, a shelter for homeless, abused, and trafficked women. In response, the individual sued the center for alleged “gender identity discrimination.”

A federal sexual orientation and gender identity law could force any charity to open up private facilities — including sex-specific bathrooms, showers, and sleeping areas — to members of the opposite sex.

The Equality Act would cost our country countless charitable organizations, which means fewer institutions would be available to serve populations in need.

The Equality Act actually furthers inequality, especially for women and girls, by punishing anyone who does not affirm a single viewpoint of marriage and biological sex.

A federal sexual orientation and gender identity law would empower the government to interfere in how regular Americans think, speak, and act at home, at school, at work and at play. Any bill promoting such authoritarianism is a danger to our freedoms.



KFUO Free to be Faithful – Preserving the Sanctity of Life

Kip Allen hosts the Rev. Roger Drinnon of southern Illinois to discuss two extreme pro-abortion bills passing through the Illinois legislature: [kfuo.org/2019/03/20/ftbf-032019-preserving-the-sanctity-of-life/](https://www.kfuo.org/2019/03/20/ftbf-032019-preserving-the-sanctity-of-life/)

SANCTITY OF LIFE ABORTION, EXTREMISM, AND THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE

By: Michelle La Rosa – Catholic News Agency

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/commentary-abortion-extremism-and-the-need-for-dialogue-47387>

Denver, Colo., Mar 4, 2019 / 12:00 pm (CNA). — Last week, 44 U.S. Senators voted against legislation that would ban the willful or negligent homicide of babies — born alive after a botched abortion.

The bill would not have placed any restrictions on abortion in this country. It would simply have clarified in law that it is illegal to directly kill or withhold necessary life-saving medical care from a newborn baby who survives an abortion attempt. Yet nearly half of the Senate opposed this legislation, saying that they did so on the grounds of supporting women’s reproductive rights.

The vote last week demonstrated just how far supporters of abortion are expected to go in the name of women’s rights. But it also sheds light on the broader polarization of our country on the issue of abortion. Amid speculation that *Roe v. Wade* could soon be overturned, activists on both sides of the issue are working adamantly to gain ground, particularly at the state level.

Last month, New York enacted a law permitting abortion in all nine months of pregnancy if deemed necessary for the sake of the mother’s health, a provision that has been interpreted by courts so broadly as to essentially allow for abortion-on-demand. Illinois and Vermont are considering even broader legislation that would openly allow abortion for any reason at any time in a pregnancy. Expansive abortion bills have also been introduced in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Mexico.

Meanwhile, pro-life states are also working to pass laws that would protect life if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned. In both Missouri and Kentucky, lawmakers have advanced bills to ban abortion after a baby’s heartbeat can be detected. Iowa is considering an amendment to declare life as beginning at conception. The Arkansas House has passed a bill to limit abortion to the first 18 weeks of pregnancy. In North Dakota, House legislators passed a ban on the most common

method of second-trimester abortion.

The stage is set for an intensified cultural confrontation over abortion, one in which each side thinks the other is a threat to fundamental human rights.

For those of us on the pro-life side, abortion is an issue of the utmost moral significance. Because we understand the humanity of the unborn person, we recognize abortion as the murder of the most vulnerable, helpless, innocent human life, something that can never be justified.

But to those who support abortion, the issue is also critical. Planned Parenthood’s new president, Leana Wen, said in an interview last week, “We should be approaching healthcare from a social justice lens, valuing each person and their choice. Only then can all people be free and equal.”

Those who believe legally protected access to abortion is necessary for freedom and equality see restrictions on abortion as a real repression of women’s basic and fundamental rights.

Abortion politics are a zero-sum game, in which neither side is content to agree to disagree. And with nearly two dozen abortion-related cases just one step away from the Supreme Court, it is clear that this issue is not going away.

A reversal of *Roe v. Wade* — a crucial first step — will usher in state-level fights in which supporters of abortion will not quickly give up.

In fact, a legal victory at the Supreme Court level would yield an unprecedented flood of money, manpower and determination for Planned Parenthood and its allies, who would broadcast immediately the message that women’s essential rights are in grave danger.

What, then, is the solution for pro-lifers? It cannot be a solely political back-

and-forth, a tangled and vicious cycle of legislation and court rulings. If nothing else, pro-lifers are at a strategic disadvantage, and likely to remain so unless something changes: we can be outspent by the abortion lobby because of the extraordinary financial resources at the disposal of Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and others.

The people speaking up most vocally about abortion tend to be those with the strongest views — either for or against. But polls consistently show that the majority of Americans are somewhere in the middle. They do not think abortion should be completely banned, nor do they think it should be completely unrestricted. They are uncomfortable with abortion — despite efforts by Planned Parenthood to depict it as something normal and even empowering — but they see it as an unfortunate solution to an unfortunate problem.

To win the abortion battle, at the federal and state level, we will need to change the hearts and minds of those people in the middle. And to do that, we need to learn how to dialogue with people who disagree with us on important issues- politicians, perhaps, but more important, ordinary people who have not been engaged meaningfully on the topic. We need to see them as human persons to be encountered.

The “us vs. them” mentality that leads to bitter, vitriolic arguments in Congress — or, more frequently, on social media — is only doing damage to the pro-life cause. That’s not how hearts and minds are changed.

Because these people “in the middle” often haven’t given a lot of thought to the issue of abortion, they have the potential to shift their views in a more pro-life direction, if they are presented with both scientific facts about unborn human life and compassionate solutions to difficult pregnancies. Especially if the pro-lifers presenting those things are open to patient and respectful conversation that recognizes the human dignity of those with whom we disagree.

This article is a shortened version of the original publication.

USCIRF COMMENDS U.S., SEEKS MORE ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

By Tom Strobe – Baptist Press May 3, 2019

<http://www.bpnews.net/52853/uscirf-commends-us-seeks-more-on-religious-liberty>

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Trump administration again demonstrated a commitment to global religious liberty in 2018, but the United States and other countries must do more to hold severe violators accountable, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom said in its 2019 report.

The report, issued April 29, provides an international overview and individual reports and recommendations on 28 countries regarding the state of religious liberty last year from USCIRF, an independent, bipartisan panel. The document included recommendations to the State Department for designations of the world's most severe violators of religious freedom.

In its report, USCIRF said President Trump's administration "continued to emphasize its commitment to international religious freedom through statements from high-level officials, as it had in 2017." Those administration officials included Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

The commission also said Sam Brownback — who became ambassador at large for international religious freedom in February 2018 — "energetically implemented his mandate."

In addition, the report noted the State Department's inaugural Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July in Washington, where delegations from more than 80 foreign governments gathered in an effort to combat persecution of and discrimination against people of all faiths. The second such meeting will be held this July.

USCIRF said, however, the United States, as well as the international community, must take stronger actions to protect religious adherents in some countries. The federal government also needs to address such problems as the processing of asylum seekers at its border and ports of entry.

The report gave special attention to the ongoing religious liberty abuses in China — particularly its treatment of Uighur Muslims in the western part of the country.

Uighur Muslims "are constantly surveilled, their phones confiscated and scanned, their skin pricked for blood samples to collect their DNA, their children prohibited from attending mosque," according to USCIRF. "Even worse, the Chinese government has ripped entire families apart, detaining between 800,000 and two million adults in concentration camps and relegating some of their children to orphanages."

While the United States and a few other governments have strongly criticized the communist government, "China has faced few, if any, consequences," USCIRF reported. "Despite years of escalating abuses, the wider international community has tragically missed the opportunity to prevent what is now happening to Uighur and other Muslims in China."

The United States and the international community "must swiftly and resolutely sanction Chinese officials and agencies that have perpetrated or tolerated severe religious freedom violations," the commission said.

USCIRF Chair Tenzin Dorjee said in a news release accompanying the report, "In the past year, we have seen severe violations of religious freedom mount around the globe, from the imprisonment of individuals charged with blasphemy in several countries to the internment of over one million Uighur Muslims in China. We and others laboring in the realm of religious freedom must persevere in our efforts to make this right a reality for everyone, everywhere."

Travis Wussow, vice president for public policy of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, expressed the ERLC's gratitude "for the vigilance of USCIRF in holding states accountable for conscience freedom."

He looks forward "to the report's release each year because I know how important the commission's leadership is to advance international religious liberty," Wussow said in written comments for Baptist Press. "While we long for the day when lists like this are no longer necessary, we know state authority is still abused and the vulnerable voiceless depend on those of us with a voice to raise their case."

The recommendations of China and North Korea for the list of most severe violators of religious freedom are of particular interest to the ERLC because "we are working with [North Korean] defectors and a broad coalition calling for liberty for people whose consciences are held captive in those countries," Wussow said.

In addition to China and North Korea,

USCIRF recommended "countries of particular concern" (CPC) designation for the eight other countries on the State Department's list named in November: Burma; Eritrea; Iran; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Sudan; Tajikistan; and Turkmenistan. CPC designation by the State Department is reserved for the world's most severe violators of religious liberty.

As it had last year, the commission again urged six other countries be on the State Department's CPC list: Central African Republic; Nigeria; Russia; Syria; Uzbekistan; and Vietnam.

USCIRF placed the same 12 countries on Tier 2, once known as its "watch list." Tier 2 countries, which are on the threshold of recommendation for CPC or Tier 1 designation, are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia and Turkey.

The commission also recommended five terrorist organizations as "entities of particular concern" (EPCs): The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); the Taliban in Afghanistan; Al-Shabaab in Somalia; Houthis; and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Pompeo named all but HTS as EPCs in November. He also designated five other Islamic terrorist groups as EPCs: al-Nusra Front in Syria; al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; al-Qaeda; Boko Haram in West Africa; and ISIS-Khorasan in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In its report, USCIRF's recommendations also included calls for:

- The administration to appoint a special adviser on international religious freedom within the National Security Council.
- The increased use of sanctions, such as visa denials and asset holds, on particular government officials, agencies and armed services units for "severe religious freedom violations."
- Congressional delegations to examine during trips overseas religious liberty conditions for people of all faiths or none.

The president has various means for inducing countries on the CPC list to change, including sanctions such as export and travel restrictions. He also has the authority to waive such penalties because of the "important national interest of the United States."

USCIRF — which is made up of nine commissioners selected by the president and congressional leaders — tracks the status of religious liberty worldwide and issues reports to Congress, the president and the State Department.

The commission's 2019 report, which is 234 pages in length, is available at <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>.

Tom Strobe is Washington bureau chief for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness, and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.



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LUTHERAN CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Encourage, Educate, Advocate

KEEP UP TO DATE on what's happening with the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) at LCRLFreedom.org, or on our "Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty" Facebook page.

The LCRL's mission is to ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the Church, while educating, encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom.

One of the ways to "get on board" is to prayerfully receive our "Word from the

Center" devotions and "Word from the Center" D.C. updates. On our "Word from the Center — Mondays" you'll receive a devotional reflection from His Word. At the end of the week, "Word from the Center — Fridays," you'll receive a Two-Kingdom reflection from the LCRL about a topic, issue or court case that concerns the issues of liberty, life, marriage and occasionally issues concerning education. When you receive the "Word from the Center," I believe that you will be blessed by God's Word and will become better informed as to how to be a more useful citizen in His Hands for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel for all.

TO SUBSCRIBE to our semi-weekly "Word from the Center" encouragement, please email us at info@lcrifreedom.org.

Our influence on the Hill is growing with our partnerships in the cause of religious liberty and life, with our commitment to be a balanced voice of God's Two-Kingdom work for the sake of our culture and our church, and with your prayerful consideration to be at work together with us. To that end, we serve.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the LCRL, including ways to support it, visit lcms.org/lutheran-center-for-religious-liberty or contact Martha Dahlke at martha.mitkos@lcms.org or 888-248-1930.



KFUO Free to be Faithful – Pro-Life Community Rallies Together in Philadelphia

Kip Allen hosts Alison Centofante, director of External Affairs with Live Action, to discuss the response to the public bullying in Philadelphia by a Pennsylvania state representative. What was meant to

silence advocacy for life turned into an overwhelmingly positive event:

kfuo.org/2019/05/15/ftbf-051519-pro-life-community-rallies-together-in-philadelphia/

Join the conversation by listening to Worldwide KFUE host Kip Allen moderate *Free to be Faithful*® discussions on KFUE.org at 2:30 p.m. Central time on the third Wednesday of each month.

Previously broadcasted interviews also are available at kfuo.org/category/free-to-be-faithful.



Photo by Tessa Rampersad on Unsplash

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Free to be Faithful Update | lcms.org/socialissues/freetobeforthful

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