



Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists. Americans.

March 5, 2021

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Ms. Melissa Rogers
Executive Director
Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. Josh Dickson
Deputy Director
Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Rogers and Mr. Dickson,

First, we would like to congratulate you both on your recent appointments to lead the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the White House. With the reformation of the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships under the Biden administration, and a return to the principles adopted during the Obama administration, we know that together we can institute substantial change to propel our nation forward and build back better.

As a coalition of 19 nationally recognized advocacy organizations that advocate on behalf of Americans who are nonreligious and religiously unaffiliated, we look forward to working with your office to support the administration's efforts to address the various challenges our nation faces regarding our secular foundation, and equity and justice for all Americans.

Religiously unaffiliated Americans (sometimes referred to as "Nones") make up approximately 26 percent of the population and are the largest, fastest growing religious demographic in the nation. This diverse demographic includes millions of Americans who are nonreligious, including atheists, agnostics, humanists, Humanistic Jews, and "Ex" communities who have left their faith, among others.

As our nation recovers from the past four years and we begin the work to repair the damage done in that time, we respectfully request that you consider us a resource and bridge to those Americans who are nonreligious or religiously unaffiliated. Under the leadership of a new administration and Congress, we are as optimistic as ever regarding the future of our nation and look forward to doing our part.

The Obama/Biden administration made historic strides forward to include our community, including several public statements issued by President Obama, and an invitation to participate in weekly meetings hosted by the Office of Public Engagement. However, there is much more that can be done to meaningfully engage our community and address our concerns, and we look forward to partnering with you to continue the progress made under the Obama/Biden administration.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American Atheists · American Ethical Union · American Humanist Association · Atheist Alliance of America · Black Nonbelievers, Inc. · Camp Quest
Center for Inquiry · Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations · Ex-Muslims of North America · Foundation Beyond Belief · Freethought Society
Freedom from Religion Foundation · Hispanic American Freethinkers · Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers · Recovering from Religion
Secular Student Alliance · Secular Woman · Society for Humanistic Judaism · Unitarian Universalist Humanists



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As you know, the Trump administration did enormous damage to religious freedom and the separation of religion and government. While stoking fear and division, and exacerbating prejudice toward religious minorities and the nonreligious, Trump's administration used the tools of government to codify religious privilege and a Christian nationalist vision of religious liberty, which privileges one religious perspective over all others and over secular matters.

Our community firmly believes that separation of religion and government is the bedrock upon which religious freedom is made possible. While the previous administration did everything possible to undermine these important principles to favor specific, politically well-connected religious viewpoints, we are confident that under the leadership of President Biden, Vice President Harris, and your team, we will restore a more balanced understanding of religious freedom.

To achieve that balance, our community is united behind a comprehensive, shared agenda that will restore freedom of religion and conscience for Americans of all faiths and none, and repair the damaged wall of separation between religion and government. **We write to call your attention to the following four priorities, and to respectfully urge the Biden administration to take action on these requests in the administration's first 100 days.**

We would also appreciate the opportunity to meet with your office at your earliest convenience to discuss these requests and how our community may support the administration's efforts.

Executive Orders: Issue an Executive Order on Religious Freedom instructing all executive departments and agencies to protect freedom of conscience and religion by protecting the separation of religion and government, prohibiting discrimination based on religious belief or lack thereof, and prohibiting government funding of inherently religious activities. Additionally, instruct the Attorney General to issue guidance interpreting religious freedom protections in federal law, consistent with these values and goals. Revoke EO 13798, purporting to promote "Free Speech and Religious Liberty," reversing its implementation across various executive agencies.

Department of Justice Memorandum: Issue a Justice Department memorandum instructing all executive agencies to protect freedom of conscience and religion by protecting the separation of religion and government, prohibiting discrimination based on religious belief or the lack thereof, and prohibiting government funding of inherently religious activities. Rescind the Justice Department Memorandum "Federal Law Protection for Religious Liberty." Withdraw the harmful and legally erroneous Office of Legal Counsel memos issued during the previous administration that damage the separation of religion and government.

President's Budget: Provide for robust funding that matches the scale of the problem, to make significant inroads in reducing the opioid epidemic and other substance use disorders. Call on Congress to include, in applicable authorization and appropriations legislation, requirements that government grantees expand access to evidence-based, self-empowering, group-based mutual aid meetings that expressly support Medication-Assisted Treatment. Such meetings are secular in nature, and therefore fulfill the requirements set by consistent court precedent that require the criminal justice system to provide for nonreligious support meetings when such meetings are court-ordered.

In addition, we ask that the President's budget stipulates that federal funds cannot be used to support inherently religious activities; the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) cannot be used to allow discrimination in



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budgeted programs; and it requests reports from OMB and OPM to ensure that federal agency resources for grants, cooperative agreements, and other assistance is not used to discriminate.

Legislative Agenda: Express support for the passage of the Do No Harm Act, which would amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to ensure it cannot be weaponized to cause harm or erode civil rights. The bill was introduced by Vice President Kamala Harris when she served in the U.S. Senate, and we encourage the administration to ensure its reintroduction in the Senate and passage in both the Senate and House is prioritized as it works with Congress to advance the administration's civil rights agenda.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our requests that are so important to reversing the extensive harm done to true religious freedom over the last four years. Please know that our community stands ready to serve as a resource to your office, and we sincerely hope you will consider us a partner in advancing policies that will restore the true meaning of religious freedom as guaranteed by our Constitution.

In solidarity,

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