

March 14, 2024



Protecting the Equal Rights
of Nonreligious Americans

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The Honorable Josh Hawley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hawley,

There are several points in your recent article “Our Christian Nation” that we agree with, and many more to which we strongly object. We agree that Christian nationalists who believe that “America’s constitutional project and our long-standing commitment to individual liberty [are] misguided” are “deeply mistaken.” We see them as far more of a threat to democracy than you seem to.

We agree that stagnant wages for jobs for blue collar men in this country is a problem that should be addressed. But we go further and support better wages for blue collar women, too. Not because this would encourage more nuclear families who will somehow increase the Christianity quotient in the country as you do. Wouldn’t better wages help Jewish men and create more Jewish families too? And more Muslim families? And more families for the 30 percent of Americans with no religious affiliation? While the growth in real earnings since 2019 has skewed towards lower and middle earning workers, there is still room for better wages among people of all genders, races, beliefs, and occupations.


We even agree with your implied lack of the need for churches, because in a 4,359 word article on how to “re-christianize America” you mention churches only three times, almost in passing. When fewer than half the country attends church regularly after decades of declining numbers, churches seem to be a solution few are looking for. This brings us to where we could not disagree more with your basic premise, which is the need to “re-Christianize the great institutions of our society by rearticulating the gospel’s meaning for every aspect of life. . . . Because America as we know it cannot survive without biblical Christianity.”

The United States was not founded as and has never been a Christian nation: it is a nation with an intentionally strong wall of separation between religion and government. Certainly, the majority of American citizens have identified as Christian throughout our history, but within your lifetime if current trends hold, that may no longer be true, which is undoubtedly why you wrote this article. As a United States Senator, you know the Constitution well enough to recognize the complete absence of any references to religion within it other than concerning those seeking public offices. The separation of church and state was a uniquely American principle enshrined in our constitution, though partially derived from Christian tradition, as well as Enlightenment philosophy.

Americans don’t need to believe in the Bible to be good citizens, to be good neighbors, to be good parents, or to be good people. We and the members of our organizations prove that every day.

Not only do we disagree that Christian heritage “should be honored in public places,” and that the Ten Commandments should be displayed in classrooms, we doubt that you have convinced those members of non-Christian faiths in this country that their faiths aren’t good enough to be the national religion. Religious freedom necessarily depends on governmental neutrality on matters of religion. Honoring any religion in public places, and especially in classrooms, contradicts that principle of neutrality that has benefited Americans for over two centuries.

Many, but not all, of this coalition support ideas you would attribute to “the left.” “The left seeks salvation, but in political activism,” you say. Quoting Senator Daniel Moynihan, “The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.” So yes, you can count on our political activism to fight school prayer, the Ten Commandments in classrooms, discrimination based on personal religious beliefs, public funding for religious schools, and many of your other prescriptions. If “America as we know it cannot survive without Biblical Christianity,” then maybe our efforts to prevent your national religion from “re-Christianizing the great institutions of our society” will result in something better than America as we now know it.

Sincerely,

Steven Emmert
Executive Director

The Secular Coalition for America includes the following member organizations:

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| Atheist Alliance of America | Black Nonbelievers |
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| Cultural & Secular Jewish Organization | Ex-Muslims of North America |
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