



Protecting the Equal Rights  
of Nonreligious Americans

September 26, 2024

1012 14th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
(202) 299-1091  
[www.secular.org](http://www.secular.org)

The Honorable Josh Hawley  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hawley,

We knew on reading the title of your latest essay in *First Things*, “The Christian Nationalism We Need” that we would be disagreeing, but we did not realize how often. We got to the fourth sentence, “Supposedly rock solid Supreme Court picks do their best to drive faith out of the public square.” and wondered if you have not noticed the winning streak you’re on thanks to three recent Supreme Court picks. These three do seem rock solid when it comes to prioritizing the Free Exercise Clause over the Establishment Clause.

Next we came to “Christian nationalism is not a *threat* to our democracy. Quite the opposite. Christian nationalism *founded* our democracy.” Yes, our democracy was founded by Christians, and deists and the occasional Thomas Paine (“As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me a species of Atheism — a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God.” - *The Age of Reason*).

However, when the time came to institutionalize the new democracy and establish the new federal government in 1787, they put aside their deism and Protestant beliefs and wrote a secular Constitution. As you probably know, it does not include the words *Christian, God, Bible, or Jesus*. It mentions religion only once where it states that “No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust.” Not a ringing endorsement for infusing Christianity into the new government.

In fact, you can go back ten more years to 1777, one year after the Declaration of Independence, and reach the exact same conclusion about the Articles of Confederation. No mention of *Christian, God, Jesus, or the Bible*. Religion is mentioned once, in Article III where the states agree to enter into a league of friendship to protect each other from any attacks “on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretence whatsoever.” That’s it. The Founding Fathers had two opportunities to set up a Christian government, and both times they chose not to.

You are also wrong when you say, “Christian nationalism is not a *threat* to our democracy.” A new study from PRRI finds that, “Those who hold Christian nationalist and Right-Wing Authoritarian views are approximately twice as likely as the public to support political violence. One-third of Christian nationalism Adherents and Sympathizers (33%) agree that ‘true American patriots may have to resort to violence to save our country.’ ”



Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists. Americans.

There is more to disagree on (such as when you state we should inscribe *In God We Trust* on every public building!) and a few statements with which we don't disagree (e.g. "making it our policy to get American workers a family wage. That means one wage a family can live on...") We cannot, however, let this statement go unaddressed: "The crisis of our time springs from the left's determination to destroy the loves that unite us, to replace God, home, and work with the religion of the trans flag."

If we knew exactly what "the religion of the trans flag" means, we'd probably be more upset that this statement came from a public official. But we can guess. You're saying the crisis of our time is in high school sports and bathrooms? It's in the six-tenths of one percent of the population who wish you'd just mind your own damn business? If that really were the crisis of our time, you could cut the federal budget by 80 percent because every other problem would have disappeared. We encourage you to focus on the failures your essay identified among the conservative elites and stop advocating for a Christian nationalism that the Founding Fathers were smart enough to explicitly avoid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Emmert".

Steven Emmert  
Executive Director

The Secular Coalition for America includes the following member organizations:

American Ethical Union

American Humanist Association

Association of Secular Elected Officials

Atheist Alliance of America

Black Nonbelievers

Camp Quest

Center For Inquiry/Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science

Cultural & Secular Jewish Organization

Ex-Muslims of North America

Freedom From Religion Foundation

Freethought Society

Hispanic American Freethinkers

Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers

Recovering From Religion

Secular Student Alliance

Secular Woman

Society for Humanistic Judaism

The Clergy Project

Unitarian Universalist Humanist Association