



Protecting the Equal Rights
of Nonreligious Americans

August 8, 2025

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

Dear Mr. Kupor:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our alarm at your July 28 memorandum on "Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace." Our organizations work to protect the rights of the 30 percent of the population who have no religious affiliation, many of whom have no interest in changing that status. The 2.4 million employees of the federal government generally reflect the American population demographically, so approximately 700,000 federal employees would fit the category of having no religious affiliation.

The July 28 memorandum on religious expression in the workplace is rife with policies that support coercion and proselytizing. It is difficult to say which is most troubling: encouraging criticism of someone else's religious beliefs in the workplace, explicitly permitting supervisors to attempt to convert subordinates, or providing guidance for interactions with the public as demonstrated in the examples you give for a National Park Service ranger and a Veterans Affairs (VA) doctor.

The memorandum continues, "Employees may engage in conversations regarding religious topics with fellow employees, including attempting to persuade others of the correctness of their own religious views, provided that such efforts are not harassing in nature." Yet, unwanted conversations from a supervisor, superior, or colleague that attempt to persuade an individual that their sincerely held beliefs are incorrect is often harassment.

We are particularly concerned by the decision to allow supervisors to follow the same guidelines as their subordinates. To prevent coercion, supervisors are understandably held to a different standard in dealing with subordinates than peer-to-peer interactions. This policy should follow that practice.

Nonreligious employees are frequent targets of workplace proselytization. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, "Religious inclusion should extend to those who are unaffiliated, including agnostics, atheists, and people who identify as spiritual but not religious." The guidance fails to articulate the rights of these groups.

Finally, the guidance cites a Supreme Court decision about a high school employee praying quietly and by himself in the middle of a football field to justify a National Park Service ranger praying with park visitors or a VA doctor praying over a patient. This is appalling; people using tax-payer funded services—including something as critical as medical care—should not have an individual's religion inflicted upon them, and it is deeply troubling that the administration would seek to introduce religion into inherently secular services.



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We demand the Office of Personnel Management to rescind the July 28 guidance immediately before individuals' rights are violated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Emmert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven Emmert
Executive Director

American Atheists

American Ethical Union

American Humanist Association

Atheist Alliance of America

Black Nonbelievers

Center For Inquiry/Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science

Camp Quest

Ex-Muslims of North America

Freedom From Religion Foundation Action Fund

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