

Freedom of Religion

1st Amendment - Congress shall **make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof**; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The centrality of the "**separation**" concept to the Religion Clauses of the Constitution was made explicit in *Everson v. Board of Education*, (1947), a case dealing with a New Jersey law that allowed government funds to pay for transportation of students to both public and Catholic schools. This was the first case in which the court applied the Establishment Clause to the laws of a state, having interpreted the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as applying the Bill of Rights to the states as well as the federal legislature. Citing Jefferson, the court concluded that "The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach."

Freedom of religion or **religious liberty** is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or community, in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. It also includes the freedom to change one's religion or beliefs.

Freedom of religion is considered by many people and most nations to be a fundamental human right.

Public funding of religious schools in the U.S.

In 2020, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that **states must give religious schools the same access to public funding that other private schools receive**, preserving a Montana scholarship program that had largely benefited students at religious institutions

The United States Supreme Court has said that faith-based organizations may not use direct government support to support "inherently religious" activities. Basically, it means **you cannot use any part of a direct Federal grant to fund religious worship, instruction, or proselytization**.

The United States formally considers religious freedom in its foreign relations. The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 established the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom which investigates the records of over 200 other nations with respect to religious freedom, and makes recommendations to submit nations with egregious records to ongoing scrutiny and possible economic sanctions. Many human rights organizations have urged the United States to be still more vigorous in imposing sanctions on countries that do not permit or tolerate religious freedom.

Does the U.S. truly practice separation of church and state?

Should federal government provide funds for private or religious schools?

Should U.S. fight for religious freedom around the world?

If you are an atheist how do you feel about this type of funding?

What effect on public education funds?

Is state funding of religious schools really a big deal? Do you care?

Should I have to fund Muslim madrassas (schools)?