

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1 Religious Liberty
Commission report

PAGE 2 Sabbath securities in
Peru

PAGE 2 Bullet points

PAGE 3 Baseball controversy

PAGE 3 Register for NAD
webinar/newsletter

PAGE 4 Christian ministry's
freedom to hire believers

EDITOR: Sheila Elwin
religiousliberty@southernunion.com

2026 | Volume 4

**The North American
Division has submit-
ted comments to
the DOJ following
the report of the
Religious Liberty
Commission.**



Controversial Religious Liberty Commission Releases Report

This is the third mention of the Commission in Waymarks; it is important to have access to both their findings and the Adventist Church's response.

The Religious Liberty Commission's draft report was released in late June by the Department of Justice. In numerous previous hearings, commissioners and others broached such topics as public education and religious freedom, antisemitism, and opinions on whether former administrations had used laws to mistreat Christians.

"Although their circumstances differed, their stories shared a common theme: far too often in our national life, religion is treated not as a protected and valued contribution to public life, but as a problem or annoyance to be managed, restricted, or sidelined," the report said.

Some of the report's recommendations include the following:

- Department of Justice will issue guidance clarifying the prop-

er understanding of the Establishment Clause and separation of church and state.

- Issue "Know Your Rights" posters for students, parents, public school teachers and administrators, religious leaders, religious institutions, healthcare workers, and military service members.

- Create hotlines/online portals for students, parents, teachers, healthcare workers, and others to report perceived violations of religious liberty.

- Ask the Department of Justice to create a religious liberty task force to track and prioritize litigation protecting religious liberty.

- Protect religious Americans from government-led litigation targeting their free exercise.

- Repeal Johnson Amendment.

- Order the "Department of War to update and disseminate religious liberty training for military leaders and JAG officers," maintain RFRA in the military, reverse earlier restrictions on reli-

Please turn to page 2...

NEWS OF THE WORLD

Peru Approves Bill Establishing Saturday as Non-working Day

The Congress of Peru approved a law in June that recognizes Saturday as a non-working day for those who observe it for religious reasons, and included that they may receive compensatory time off for it, whether in public or private sectors of the workforce.

Already the Political Constitution of Peru recognizes freedom of religion and conscience, and this new bill will strengthen those rights, while also recognizing the diversity of Peru's faith community. The bill received support from a majority of the Congress members voting.

Daniel Montalván, president of North Peru Mission, in a statement of appreciation, noted that "religious freedom is a right that promotes mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and the appreciation of human dignity. We celebrate this important step for our country with gratitude to God and with hope for our nation."

As it now works towards final publication and implementation of the bill, Peru has strengthened its support for religious freedom, diversity, and respect of differing consciences.

Religious freedom is a right that promotes mutual respect and human dignity.

Commission Report, *cont. from cover...*

religious practice, and "elevate the importance of spiritual fitness in military readiness."

- "...improve...enforcement against religious discrimination, including anti-Semitism, by establishing a set, expedited timeline for the investigation and prosecution of credible allegations of religious discrimination..."

Following release of the report, the DOJ issued updated religious liberty guidelines for federal agencies in mid July. This included direction that the Establishment Clause be viewed through history and tradition, forbidding government coercion or discrimi-

nation. They fulfilled Commission report requests for clear instructions regarding the Free Exercise Clause, church autonomy, and equal treatment of religious organizations in public programs.

In response, the North American Division of the Adventist Church submitted comments to the DOJ from G. Alexander Bryant, DMin, president, and Orlan Johnson, Esq., director of public affairs and religious liberty. The comments highlighted areas of agreement, as well as deep constitutional concern.

Bryant and Johnson ap-

plauded the backing of stronger religious accommodations for employees, and they recognized the report's valuable focus on preserving the legal independence and rights of faith-based organizations.

However, the two Church leaders also reminded the Commission of 19th-century prosecutions of Sabbath-keepers under Sunday laws. They urged governmental neutrality, cautioned that rejection of church-state separation risks weakening a safeguard for the freedom of conscience, and

Please turn to page 3...

- *The Supreme Court has ruled against a Rastafarian man in his religious rights claim against prison officials who cut his dreadlocks in violation of his religious beliefs. Damon Lator was seeking damages, but the court ruled 6-3 against him, with the conservative majority departing from its regular support for religious claims; those, however, are usually Christian claims.*

- *The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the firing of a bus driver with the Chicago Transit Authority. He had refused to comply with the COVID vaccine mandate. The court noted that he had specifically requested a religious exemption, but they felt his reasoning — unclean animal derivatives, heavy metals, potential longterm risks, and rush to approve the vaccine — did not fit a religious exemption category.*

- *The Texas State Board of Education approved a required reading list which includes Bible verses and stories for grades 1-12 — ranging from Jonah and the Whale in first grade to 1 Corinthians 13 in 12th grade. It will take effect in the 2030/31 school year. It becomes the only state in the country with state literature requirements instead of leaving choices up to teachers and districts.*

San Francisco Giant Players' Cap Protest Provides Lesson in Religious Accommodation

A conflict over baseball caps may provide lessons in religious accommodation.

As background, in mid June the San Francisco Giants held their annual Pride Night. Most players wore caps with the logo colored like a rainbow, but three pitchers wrote a Bible verse about God hanging the rainbow, Genesis 9:12-16, on their caps, and a fourth wore his regular cap. They did this without asking for any sort of accommodation. In response, the league warned the players against marking their caps. They said it didn't have to do with scripture, but with the rule against changing uniforms with markers.

A huge political backlash arose from the incident. Ar-

guments were made about the First Amendment, Title VII, religious liberty, and employers' rights.

The final decision? The baseball commissioner stated that the players were never fined, and will not be disciplined.

The takeaway, however, is that there was heightened emotion and a lack of communication all around. The players should have brought up their beliefs and asked for accommodation. The league could — and should — have been allowed the opportunity to work within the law by allowing all of them to wear their unmarked, standard caps with no rainbow.

"Cooler heads must pre-

vail when accommodation is needed. Some basis for accommodation is already set in the federal law," notes Amireh Al-Haddad,

Southern Union director of public affairs and religious liberty. "Those who seek accommodations must give the law a chance to work."

Be an Advocate for Freedom.

Religious liberty affects us all. Subscribe to the NAD PARL newsletter for insights, news, and opportunities to stand up for faith and freedom.



Report, *cont. from p. 2...*

issued the following two recommendations:

- "The final Religious Liberty Commission report should acknowledge the nuanced and diverse range of interpretations of the historic principle of church-state separation."

- "Rather than asserting that those who champion meaningful church-state separation are always motivated by hostility toward religion, the Commission's final report should acknowledge that many sincere believers value this historic principle."



North American Division
of Seventh-day Adventists



bit.ly/4enLahQ

POLITICS & THE PULPIT:

HOW TO KEEP YOUR TAX-EXEMPT
STATUS WHILE STAYING ENGAGED

**SABBATH, AUG. 29, 2026
5 P.M. ET**

Join us for a webinar and Q&A about:

Ministry best practices in a polarized
political climate

What the U.S. Tax Code allows—and
prohibits—for houses of worship

Recent NAD Working Policy
amendments on political endorsement



Willie E. Hucks II
Ministerial Director



Orlan Johnson
Director, PARL



Bettina Krause
Editor, Liberty magazine



Todd McFarland
General Counsel, General Conference

Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Public Affairs and Religious Liberty
P.O. Box 923868
Peachtree Corners, GA 30010

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHATTANOOGA, TN
COLLEGE PRESS

Christian Ministry's Freedom to Hire Believers in Question in Washington State

The state of Washington is threatening the Union Gospel Mission of Yakima, in *Union Gospel Mission of Yakima v. Brown*, because it requires its employees to share and uphold its Christian beliefs. In 2021 the Washington Supreme Court limited hiring protections within faith groups to ministers, which threatens the mission's ability to hire faith-sharing employees in other positions.

Though aimed at a Chris-

tian institution, the policing of faith communities by the government also threatens Jewish, Islamic, and all other faith communities. The Aleph Institute, a national Jewish organization rooted in the Orthodox Jewish, Hasidic tradition, is taking part in the defense in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. They were aided in this with a friend-of-the-court brief filed by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a non-profit, public-

interest legal and educational institute dedicated to protecting the free expression of all faiths.

"A Jewish school shouldn't be forced to hire an antisemitic janitor, and a Christian charity shouldn't have to hire someone who mocks the cross," said Rebekah Ricketts, senior counsel at Becket. "... We're confident the full Ninth Circuit will recognize that religious groups must be free to hire people who will support...their mission."

"...a
Christian
charity
shouldn't
have to hire
someone
who mocks
the cross."