

# The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution



Freedom of religion is too important for us not to stand together with all faiths and all denominations.

*"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 First Amendment lists five powerful freedoms. The framers of our government were clear that our religious liberty is one of our most fundamental freedoms and needs to be safeguarded in two major ways.

First is the **"establishment clause,"** which prohibits government from establishing a state religion. To give this concern historical perspective, at the time of our country's founding, it was common for European governments to impose on their citizens a religion selected by the monarchy and to ban all others. Our Founding Fathers wanted citizens to be free to select their own faith and have complete freedom of conscience.

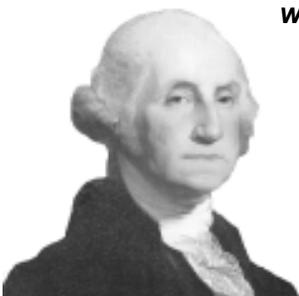
The second safeguard is addressed in the **"free exercise clause."** Here the Founders clearly established the fundamental right of citizens to freely exercise their religion without government interference or prohibition.

Depending on the religious liberty issue, one of these clauses will apply. For example, government is prohibited from forcing students to pray before class under the **"establishment clause"** – the government cannot force a citizen to practice a particular religion. However, if a student elected to "thank God" in a valedictorian speech, he would be protected under the **"free exercise clause."** Government cannot deny his free exercise of faith.

Unfortunately, many today are seeking to establish not freedom **"of"** religion, but freedom **"from"** religion. Activists claim the **"establishment clause"** prohibits the mention of God or the display of religious symbols in any public place, attempting to use the "establishment clause" to negate the "free exercise clause."

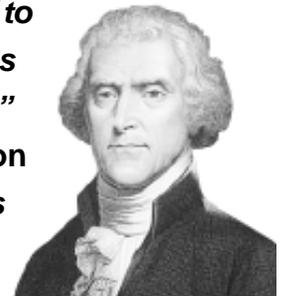
**SB158 – The Kentucky Religious Freedom Amendment** – will help clarify and safeguard the fundamental religious freedom established by our Founding Fathers in the **"free exercise clause."** The Kentucky Religious Freedom Amendment does not address the "establishment clause" of the First Amendment.

*"The liberty enjoyed by the People of these States of worshipping Almighty God agreeable to their consciences is not only among the choicest of their blessings but also of their rights."*



– George Washington

*"No power over the freedom of religion . . . [is] delegated to the United States by the Constitution."*



– Thomas Jefferson  
*Kentucky Resolutions of 1798*