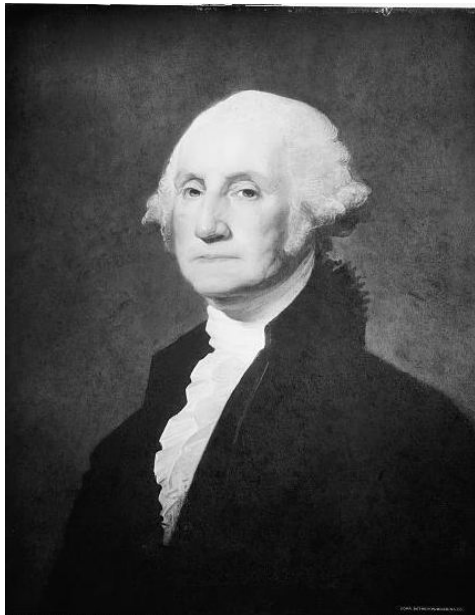




INSIDE

- Churches and Religious Organizations
- Military
- Public Schools
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- Government and Public Square
- What Can I do to Protect Religious Freedom?

Religious Freedom Then...



“The liberty enjoyed by the people of these states of worshiping Almighty God agreeably to their conscience, is not only among the choicest of their blessings, but also of their rights.”

George Washington, the first president of the United States, to the Annual meeting of Quakers, September 1789. [Image: Courtesy of Library of Congress]

...And Now

“Government pressure on religious communities has clearly increased in our country in recent years. The United States has no magic immunity attached to its liberties. The [U.S.] Constitution, as great as it is, is still just a piece of paper unless the people vigorously protect their rights. For religious believers, that means defending their faith in the courts and the legislatures. It also means living their faith with joy and conviction, publically as well as privately.”



Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput, 'The More That Gov't Mandates Evil Actions, The More Likely Civil Disobedience Becomes,' CNSNews.com, Feb. 14, 2014 [Image: Courtesy of CatholicVote.org]

Paying A High Price

Recent news stories paint a picture of serious concern for religious freedom in the U.S. today:

Two military [chaplain candidates](#) attending training sessions sponsored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs were told they could not pray in Jesus' name or quote from the Bible in the class. The two Baptist men were mocked for their beliefs on evolution, homosexuality and salvation, and lectured that they didn't belong in the program if they intended to hold to those beliefs. One resigned from the program because of the harassment; the other was threatened with termination.

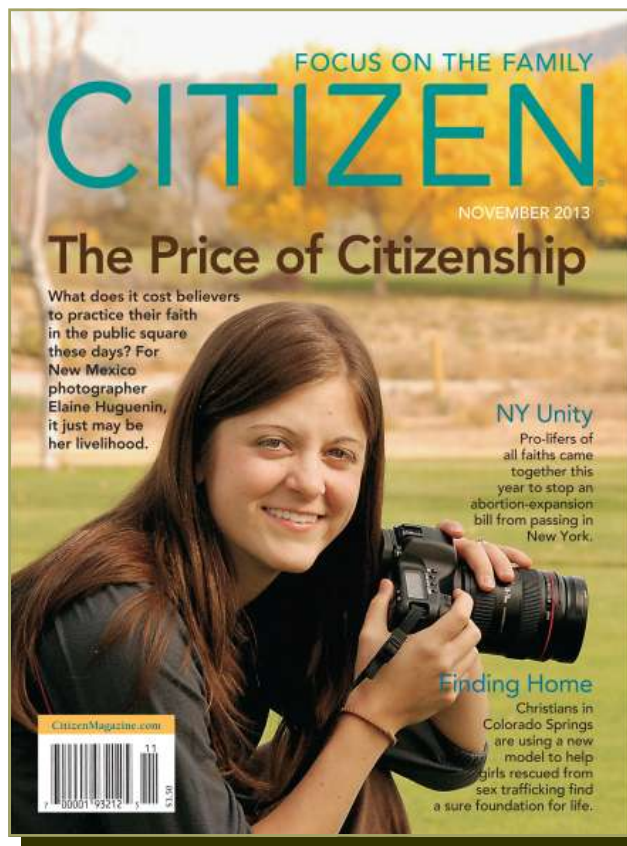
The [Little Sisters of the Poor](#) is a congregation of Catholic sisters who run homes for the poor and elderly of every race and denomination. The sisters face huge government fines for refusing to include contraception and possible abortion-causing drugs in their employee health care plan as part of the Affordable Care Act (also called "ObamaCare"). They are challenging the mandate in court; if they lose, the fines will ultimately close their doors.

A tiny, evangelical inner-city church, the [Bronx Household of Faith](#), asked New York City in the early 1990s for permission to rent out a public school gymnasium for its weekend services. Other community groups routinely rented out the city's public school buildings during non-school hours. Yet New York denied the

church's request, claiming the separation of church and state prohibits worship services in government facilities. The church filed a lawsuit. More than twenty years later, the litigation continues, leaving in dispute the constitutional rights of the church to be treated just like any other community group.

Jonathan and Elaine Huguenin are owners of [Elane Photography](#), in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In 2006, they were asked to photograph a lesbian commitment ceremony. They politely declined, citing their religious beliefs as the reason. The

lesbians filed a complaint with the New Mexico Human Rights Commission, which resulted in a \$6,000 fine against the Huguenins for discrimination based on "sexual orientation." Ultimately, the New Mexico state Supreme Court told the Huguenins that being forced to use their creative talents to directly violate their religious beliefs was the "price of citizenship."



Look for this **symbol on page 3** to read the Huguenin's story, as featured in the November 2013 issue of Citizen, for **FREE!**

THRIVING VALUES™

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

These are just a few examples of religious freedom being challenged — even denied — in today’s culture.

Focus on the Family® has created this *Thriving Values™ Religious Freedom* resource to help you better understand and respond to threats in five key areas of culture: **churches and religious organizations; the military; public schools; the workplace; and the public square.**

The First Amendment

The religious freedom portion of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has two parts:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...”

This portion of the First Amendment is referred to as the “Establishment Clause,” and it basically means neither the states nor the federal government can create an “official” religion or favor one religion or denomination over another.

“...or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Called the “Free Exercise” clause, this applies to organizations and individuals in all areas of American culture.

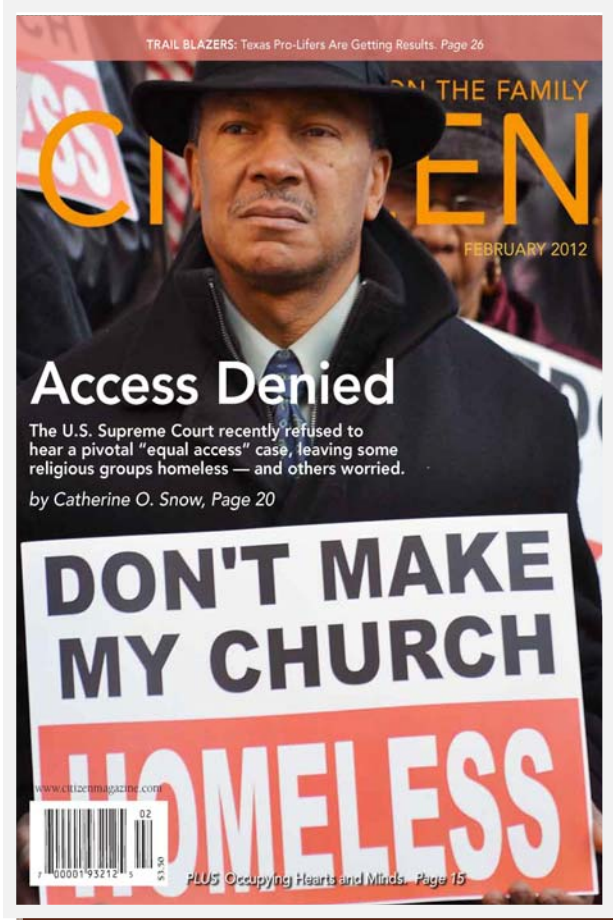
It’s the flip side of the Establishment Clause. The Establishment Clause prohibits the government from creating or favoring a religion, the Free Exercise clause forbids government from preventing or outlawing how we practice our faith, within reason.

Religious Freedom for Churches and Religious Organizations

The United States was founded on religious liberty, so you might assume churches and religious organizations are the most protected of any of this country’s institutions, and their rights the easiest to explain.

It’s more complicated than that, however, due to the cumulative effect of more than 200 years of court cases, legislation and the ever-increasing size and encroachment of government into our daily lives.

While specific laws exist to protect the rights of churches and religious organizations, legal challenges remain.




Look for this **symbol on p. 5** and read the story behind the **Bronx Household of Faith** case, as featured in the February 2012 issue of *Citizen*, for **FREE!** [Image courtesy of Alliance Defending Freedom]

Hiring and Employment Issues

Churches and religious organizations have the right, under [Title VII](#) of the U.S. Code and similar state laws, to give employment preference to members of their own religion. There is also the right to select ministers [and other religious leaders](#) free from any government interference via typical employment laws.

Zoning Laws

 [Churches](#) have the right to be treated similar to other community groups in situations like [rental of government buildings](#) or [zoning and land use](#) issues. There is a history of local governments discriminating against churches either because of hostility to religion, or fear of losing tax revenue (churches are typically exempt from state and local sales taxes).

ObamaCare's Abortion Drug Mandate

The Little Sisters of the Poor (mentioned earlier) is just one of [dozens](#) of non-profit religious organizations currently fighting a federal requirement (known as the "HHS Mandate") requiring them to provide possible abortion-causing drugs in their employee health plans, in violation of their religious conscience. One or more of these key religious freedom cases is destined for the Supreme Court fairly soon.

Religiously owned, for-profit companies are also resisting the HHS mandate in court (see "[Religious Freedom in the Workplace](#)" below).

Other Protections

Churches and religious organizations have additional protections from government laws that affect their free exercise of religion under federal and state versions of the [Religious Freedom Restoration Act](#)

([RFRA](#)). Under these statutes, courts try to balance any burdens placed on religion with the compelling interest of the government behind its law or action.

Religious Freedom in the Military

Court cases involving military personnel and religious freedom are often outside of the public eye because the military is covered primarily by its own internal justice system, policies and procedures.



The religious freedom of cadets attending the U.S. Air Force Academy have been the constant target of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. [Image courtesy of Chaplains Alliance for Religious Liberty.]


But since the repeal of "[Don't Ask, Don't Tell](#)," a policy that prohibited homosexuals from serving openly in the military, and the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 ruling that parts of the federal [Defense of Marriage Act](#) are unconstitutional, military life and religious freedom have clashed in a big way.

THRIVING VALUES™

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Members of the military share the same First Amendment rights as civilians, with some restrictions that civilians don't have. The demands of unit readiness, cohesion and morale must trump some of the rights civilians take for granted. For example, a soldier has the right to free speech, but he can be court-martialed for criticizing a superior officer. Religious freedom is also subject to restriction for the same reasons, but in recent years, more shocking and disappointing examples have surfaced.

For example, Air Force Senior Master Sergeant [Philip Monk](#) found himself under the command of a lesbian officer, who demanded that Monk, a Christian, affirm his support for same-sex marriage, which he declined to do. She relieved him of his duties, and he was investigated for possible court-martial. In a surprise ending to this story, Monk was later [honored by the Air Force](#) for his service, rather than punished for his politically incorrect views on marriage. Nevertheless, this story is disturbing and one that is being repeated in various ways in other parts of the military.

 [Chaplains](#) have been especially hard hit. In addition to the chaplain trainees story discussed earlier, other stories have been [documented](#), including a chaplain stripped of his authority over a military chapel.

Another was threatened with “early retirement” and then reassigned for standing for biblical values concerning marriage.


And then there are watchdog groups, including the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, who seem to have the Pentagon's ear and have [lobbied](#) for punishment of Christian soldiers who attempt to share their faith with others. They have successfully stopped [charitable outreaches](#), oaths that include [“so help me God,”](#) and even [Nativity scenes](#) on military bases.

On an encouraging note, in response to this unprecedented attack on religious liberty in the military, the U.S. Congress attached an amendment to the 2013 defense appropriations bill that reads:

Sec. 533. *The armed forces shall accommodate the beliefs of a member of the armed forces reflecting the conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs of the member and, in so far as practicable, may not use such beliefs as the basis of any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion, schooling, training, or assignment.*

The U. S. Department of Defense released an [“Instruction”](#) for the implementation of Sec. 533 in early 2014 that looks very encouraging.



 Look for this **symbol** on p. 6 to read — for **FREE** — “Friendly Fire,” as featured in the December 2011 issue of Citizen magazine.

Religious Freedom in Public Schools

“Public schools” are, to state the obvious, government-run schools, and as such are subject to the First Amendment’s rights and restrictions in a way that private schools are not. How those rights and restrictions play out in practice, however, differs from students to teachers to school administrations. Let’s look at each of these in turn.

Students

The U.S. Supreme Court has famously [said](#) that “it can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech and expression at the schoolhouse gate.” Religious freedom in schools is usually exercised through speech or other forms of expression. That liberty, however, has to be viewed in light of the needs of the special setting of schools, and the need to prevent disruptions that would impede the educational process.

Focus on the Family has produced easy-to-understand [explanations](#) of students’ rights. We encourage you to watch these videos, download the accompanying

resources and discuss these issues with your high school and college-age children.

Teachers

Teachers’ First Amendment rights are more complicated than students’, because of their multiple roles as citizen, employee, and as a representative of government. As a citizen, a teacher has all the same First Amendment rights as any other citizen, even at

school. However, as an employee, the

teacher needs to perform

the duties he or she was hired

for and cannot, for example, teach

a comparative religion curriculum if

the school hasn’t adopted such a curriculum.

As a government employee, a teacher cannot do certain things,

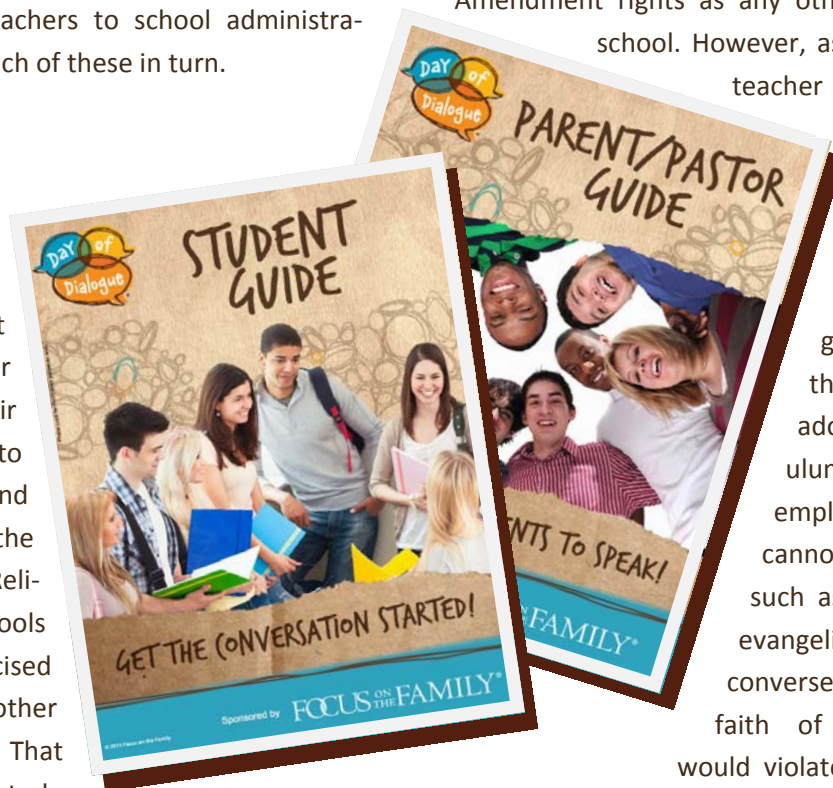
such as initiate prayer or evangelize students (or

conversely, denigrate the faith of students), which

would violate the First Amendment.

Outside the presence of students, however, teachers can

exercise the same religious rights as anyone else.



Day of Dialogue is an annual student-led, free speech event, — as well as an online student resource hub —sponsored by Focus on the Family. Learn more at DayOfDialogue.com.

Here are a [couple](#) good resources [for teachers](#) that address religious issues, from treatment of religious holidays in the classroom, to the expression of personal beliefs, to wearing religious symbols.

School Administration

School administrators who get into trouble when handling religious freedom-related issues in schools seem to fall into one of three categories:

1. They're openly hostile to religion and any religious expression in schools;
2. They're neutral but ill-informed about religious rights of students and teachers, and they inadvertently, or because of legal threats from outside secular groups, violate the rights of students and teachers in the name of the Establishment Clause; or
3. They enthusiastically support religious expressions to the point where they cross the line into advocating, endorsing or participating in a particular religion or religious activity.

All school administrators should become familiar with the U. S. Department of Education [guidelines](#) for dealing with the issue of religious expression in schools.

Finally, it should be noted there are many good secular reasons for including religious elements in public school curricula, including studying the effect of religion on the founding of America and including religious music in well-rounded music programs. The Supreme Court has held that having a secular basis for including a religious element in a government activity, whether it's in public education or a town [Christmas display](#), makes the inclusion perfectly fine and not a violation of the Establishment Clause.

Religious Freedom in the Workplace

The protections for employees are simple and long-standing; the protections for some business owners, on the other hand, are contentious and the Supreme Court has had to step in to sort things out.

Employees

Under [Title VII](#) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and similar state laws, employers cannot discriminate in their hiring, firing and other employment practices on the basis of religion. That's pretty straightforward and to the point.

The other right granted to employees under this federal law is the right to a "reasonable accommodation" of an employee's religious beliefs or practices. For example, if employees consider it their religious duty to attend church on Sunday mornings, but their work schedule prevents them from doing so, they can ask their employer to accommodate their religious practice and schedule work hours around their Sunday religious duties.

Employers don't have to automatically grant these requests, if to do so would create an "undue hardship" for them. You can learn more about "reasonable accommodation" from the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#).

Business Owners

This is an uncertain time in our nation's history to be a business owner and live out faith in the operation of a business. [Florists](#), [bakers](#) and [photographers](#) with conscientious objections to using their talents and skills to participate in "same-sex weddings" have found their

religious freedom threatened. Ordered (as part of ObamaCare) to provide possible abortion-causing drugs through company health-care plans (known as the “HHS mandate”), businesses, including [Hobby Lobby](#) and [Conestoga Wood Specialties](#), also found the right to operate for the glory of God being resisted by the government and tested in the courts. In a big win for religious freedom, however, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its [Hobby Lobby decision](#) in June 30, 2014, which upheld the right of Christian business owners under the [Religious Freedom Restoration Act \(RFRA\)](#) to refuse the government’s coercive mandate.

In doing so, the Court specifically ruled that business owners do not forfeit their religious-freedom rights when they choose to organize their businesses as corporations.

Fired for Being — A Christian?

Christian employees are finding the secular workplace increasingly hostile, as more and more companies embrace values that are at odds with biblical teaching on sexual morality and marriage. Though state and federal laws prohibit the firing of employees because of their religion, companies attempt to sidestep the law by firing Christian employees not complying with politically correct “tolerance” policies. Consider these recent examples:

- **Frank Turek** was hired by Cisco Systems as a leadership consultant, helping the company’s employees become better leaders and team players. He was so successful that his contract was renewed. His seminars were highly rated by those in attendance. That is, until one of his seminar attendees Googled Turek’s name and learned he had written a book supporting one man, one woman marriage. The student complained that Turek didn’t fit with Cisco’s “tolerance” policies. Shortly thereafter, the [company fired Turek in 2010](#).
- **Craig James** was a former NFL running back and U.S. Senate candidate from Texas prior to being hired in 2013 by Fox Sports Southwest as a college football broadcaster. Just days later, [James was fired](#) when Fox learned that James, while campaigning for U.S. Senate, had advocated for one man, one woman marriage.
- **Natalie Johnson** worked for Macy’s in 2011, when she asked a man to leave the women’s dressing room area. The obviously male customer argued he was a woman; however, Johnson was adamant. [Johnson was fired](#) for not complying with Macy’s policy regarding transgender-identified individuals.

The lesson here for Christians is one of caution: Standing up for what we believe will entail risks; but, stand we must. And there are several outstanding Christian legal organizations ready to defend our rights, including [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) and [Liberty Institute](#).

Religious Freedom in Government and the Public Square

Here are the basic rules government has to respect when it comes to its citizens' freedom of religion:

The [First Amendment](#) prohibits government from creating a state-supported religion, favoring one religion or sect over another, or interfering with how people of faith work out their beliefs in daily life, otherwise called "free exercise" of religion.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (federal and in 19 states) prohibits government from passing laws that restrict religious liberty unless there's a really important purpose that cannot be achieved in a less burdensome

way. So it's important for citizens to be aware of these protections.

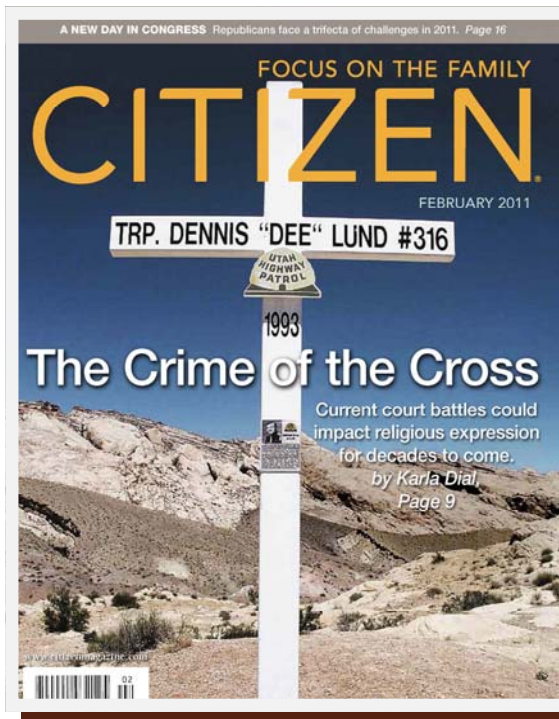
There are a few other issues that come up regularly and cause lawsuits. These are the types of cases where good legal representation is vital:

1. **Religious Speech in Public, Government-Owned Areas.** If it's private speech in an area that is traditionally reserved for public expression, like public parks, sidewalks and other areas, then government can't restrict or prohibit it except for reason-

able time, place and manner rules. (e.g., not in the middle of the night under your neighbor's bedroom window.)

2. **Legislative Prayer.** Can your city council begin its meetings with prayer? Can people pray "in Jesus' Name" at those meetings? Is there a problem if nobody except Christians ever pray at the meetings? These types of questions often end up in courtrooms, but the Supreme Court long ago held, and recently reaffirmed, that "[legislative prayer](#)" before the proceedings of deliberative bodies is a time-honored practice in America, beginning with the Founders, who drafted the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.

3. **Religious Symbols.** Can governments put up a Nativity scene in their Christmas season displays? Can they post a copy of the Ten Commandments in the courthouse, or a [monument](#) outside on the lawn? The answer is "yes" they can, if they are part of a larger display that has a secular purpose, such as celebrating a seasonal holiday or explaining the origins of our nation's laws.



Look for this **symbol on p. 10** to read —for **FREE** — "The Crime of the Cross," as featured in the February 2011 issue of Citizen magazine!

Fortunately, there are wonderful religious liberty legal organizations, such as the [Alliance Defending Freedom](#), which exist for the sole purpose of assisting Christians in the defense of their rights in these situations.

What Can I Do To Protect Religious Freedom?

Our freedoms require diligent protection. And an ever-expanding government is not necessarily respectful of any rights it deems to be a roadblock to “progress.” Here are some suggestions to help keep our religious freedom intact.

1. **Understand it is biblical to stand on your rights as citizens.** Consider the example set by the Apostle Paul. On at least two occasions, he claimed the benefit of his rights as a Roman citizen. See Acts 22:25 (Paul was about to be unlawfully flogged) and Acts 25:11 (Paul appeals his legal case to Caesar).
2. **Make it a point to study the issues and stay informed.** You’ve already made a great start by reading these materials, but we’ve barely scratched the surface. Bookmark [Focus on the Family’s Social Issues](#) site which is full of articles, videos, toolkits and more on religious freedom and related cultural issues (e.g., marriage, education, sexuality, life, etc.)
3. **Get and share accurate information.** Some of the greatest threats to religious liberty have

arisen from recently passed federal laws. But if you follow only national media outlets, chances are you won’t hear about it at all.

Or worse, the reporting is skewed to criticize the people fighting for freedom. Here are some ways to get the real story and act on it:

A. **Sign up for our weekly, mobile-friendly e-newsletter.** [Thriving Values](#) brings to you fresh, Christian commentary and engagement ideas on a wide range of hot-button, cultural topics.

B. **Subscribe to [Citizen](#) magazine.** Citizen sets the record straight on the issues affecting your family, your community and your church. You’ll read about everyday Americans impacting the culture for Jesus Christ – and future generations.

C. **Educate your family.** Use books, radio and movies to teach your own children and grandchildren about our country’s founding on freedom.

D. **Share on social media.** Use platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest to help raise awareness when religious freedom is threatened. You can start today by sharing this resource kit with your friends and family!

Never too busy to be a citizen.



Citizen subscribers are making a difference in our culture.



4. **Get involved in your state.** People and organizations who work to suppress religion usually start with the local and state governments, so your efforts to defend religious freedom should start there, too! If your state has a [family policy council associated with Focus on the Family](#), get on their mailing list. Also, consider becoming an active member of your community! Here are a few ways to start making an impact today:

- A. **Write letters to the editor** of your local newspaper on items of community concern involving religious freedom.
- B. **Start a small group or Bible study** on this topic, or suggest that your existing group tackle this subject.
- C. **Talk to the leadership at your church** about getting involved at the state and local level regarding this issue. The subject of religious freedom and civic engagement would also make a good subject for a sermon series.
- D. **Sign up for Focus on The Family's** [Moral and Social Updates and Alerts](#), and participate in calls to action.

Did You Know?

- **July 4:** Independence Day is not the only day our nation celebrates our freedoms. This year, consider celebrating these specific dates with your family and friends — and learn more about the founding documents that define our freedoms!
- **Sept. 17:** Constitution Day & Citizenship Day
- **Dec. 15:** Bill of Rights Day
- **Jan. 16:** Religious Freedom Day



We want your values to **thrive** in today's culture, so we invite you to check out our host of helpful resources at FocusOnTheFamily.com/SocialIssues.aspx!

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Revised on July 3, 2014