



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • www.ffrf.org

Faxed and Mailed February 1, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the more than 14,000 nonreligious members we represent nationwide, our organization, which works to preserve, protect and defend the constitutional principle of separation between religion and government, respectfully adds our voice to the call that you disassociate yourself from the upcoming "National Prayer Breakfast."


Our membership was most disappointed to learn that you had invited Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero to attend the National Prayer Breakfast, and equally disappointed to learn that Zapatero, once a strong secularist, had accepted your invitation. It is a sad day when elected heads of the United States or any nation feel they must pander to the religious right by wearing religion on their sleeves.

Your invitation to Zapatero lends the unmistakable appearance that the White House itself is cosponsoring the event, working hand in glove with the ultra-right wing Christian group, The Fellowship Foundation, also known as "the Family." This group, along with the Rev. Billy Graham, originated the breakfast to mix religion and state in 1950. Rev. Graham went on to suggest the adoption of the 1952 law which created the unconstitutional National Day of Prayer, whose requirement of a presidential proclamation is being challenged in federal court by our Foundation. A series of Congressional violations stemming from the 1950s, many championed by The Fellowship Foundation as well as other religious entities, have resulted in serious breaches to the treasured Jeffersonian "wall of separation between church and state." On behalf of our membership and the 30 million or more adult Americans who identify as nonreligious, the Foundation is seeking to repeal many of these McCarthy-esque vestiges that unite government with religion, and usually with the Christian religion.

The U.S. Constitution provides for a Commander in Chief, not a Pastor in Chief. The only references to religion in government in our godless and entirely secular Constitution are exclusionary. The founders did not pray at the Constitutional Convention, a deliberate choice which shows intent.

It is time for the U.S. President and members of Congress to boycott the National Prayer Breakfast and cleanly break with the scandal-ridden Fellowship Foundation, an incubator of religious-right policies. Prayer and religious ritual ought to be a private matter, not a political litmus test.

Very truly


Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor