

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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January 14, 2020.

SENT VIA EMAIL

contact@jeffsessions.com

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Former Attorney General
P.O. Box 211268
Montgomery, AL 36121

Re: Misstatements to media regarding FFRF

Dear Mr. Sessions:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to object to disparaging and inaccurate statements that you recently made about FFRF to a conservative website. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 30,000 members across the country, including many members in Alabama. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

You reportedly described FFRF's efforts to ensure the right of students to a secular public school system as "trying to intimidate people of faith."¹ To apparently polish your Christian persecution credentials, you listed eight separate times that FFRF has "attacked" you. This includes FFRF pointing out that you were a poor choice for U.S. attorney general and subsequent objections to your actions that validated those initial misgivings, including your abuse of that government office to promote your personal religious viewpoints. It is our right to point out that you undermined the very Constitution you swore an oath to uphold, as well as the religious liberty rights of every American who does not share your beliefs.

Although your stint as attorney general has ended, we are disappointed to read that you are, once again, seeking to entangle religion and government and undermine true religious liberty — in this case the rights of public school students in Alabama.

You described FFRF's efforts to defend the separation between state and church as a "fundamental battle that is raging in America, and it is a battle that is no small matter." We agree with that sentiment, but your clichéd complaint of "militant

¹ Sean Ross, *Sessions joins defense of Reeltown High School against atheist group—Hard left in America is becoming militantly secular*, Yellowhammer News (Jan. 14, 2020), available at <https://donotlink.it/WeR5Z>.

secularism” is a grave distortion of reality. Secularism in government is a precious founding American principle, and an American original at that. Your hyperbole about FFRF “seeking to silence the faithful” shows that you profoundly misunderstand this fundamental concept. Every American has religious liberty, but no American has a right to a government megaphone to broadcast their religious views. FFRF’s founder, Anne Gaylor, wisely noted: There can be no religious liberty, without the freedom to dissent. Persecution always accompanies governmental endorsement of religion.

Genuine religious freedom is universal. It is not reserved only for those who share your personal religion. Religious liberty cannot be redefined to allow Christians to use the machinery of the state to impose their religion on non-Christians. This is unconstitutional and un-American. You exemplified this warped perspective during your brief tenure as U.S. attorney general. To give just one example, you cited the New Testament, Romans 13, to rationalize the Justice Department’s barbaric separation of children from their refugee and immigrant parents. You learned of this justification during the White House Bible Study, another constitutional problem.² This passage, which was used to defend slavery, has no place in government policymaking.

Mr. Sessions, you’ve been monumentally wrong, but it is never too late to start learning. Today, more than one-quarter of Americans, 26 percent, are religiously unaffiliated and about 30 percent are non-Christians, either practicing a minority religion or no religion at all.³ A recent survey found that 21 percent of Americans born after 1999 are atheist or agnostic.⁴ These nonreligious Americans, like America’s Founders, understand that there can be no freedom of religion without a government that is free *from* religion. We urge you to join us in defending religious liberty for *all* Americans, not just those who happen to share the same religion as their elected representatives, teachers, or coaches.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker
Co-Presidents

ALG/DB:rdj

² Andrew L. Seidel, “The White House Bible Study group that influenced Trump’s family separation policy,” *ThinkProgress* (2018) at <http://bit.ly/2PMb3hf>. In 2017, Ralph Drollinger, who runs that bible study, told the Christian Broadcasting Network that the people in his Bible study “are so teachable.” He then bragged about how “Jeff Sessions [will] go out the same day I teach him something and he’ll do it on camera. And I just think, man, these guys are faithful, available, and teachable.”

³ Robert P. Jones & Daniel Cox, *America’s Changing Religious Identity*, Public Religion Research Institute (Sept. 6, 2017), available at www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PRRI-Religion-Report.pdf.

⁴ *Atheism Doubles Among Generation Z*, The Barna Group (Jan. 24, 2018), <https://www.barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/>.