

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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January 5, 2023

Representative Robert Garcia  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Thank you for swear in on the Constitution

Dear Representative Garcia:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to say “thank you” for having the courage to take your Congressional oath of office using the United States Constitution instead of a religious text.<sup>1</sup> Hopefully, that swearing-in will occur soon! FFRF is a national educational nonprofit with more than 39,000 nonreligious members across the country, including more than 5,000 members in California. FFRF works to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate about nontheism.

During a time when elected officials almost invariably choose to take their oath of office on a religious text — overwhelmingly on the Bible — FFRF commends you for signaling that your obligation is to uphold the Constitution, and not your personal religion. The official oath asks U.S. representatives to swear or affirm to “support and defend the Constitution,” not the Bible, Koran or other religious texts.

A recent report indicated that the 118th Congress has a significantly higher percentage of Christians than the American public.<sup>2</sup> This fact can often make Americans of different faiths — and those of no faiths at all, now numbering 29 percent of the adult population — feel marginalized. Your gesture goes a long way to remind such citizens that we are, in fact, welcome and equal players in this country.

It is also such a welcome affirmation of the Constitution itself, which is godless and entirely secular, creating a secular nation and a secular government. Its only references to

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<sup>1</sup> Tweet, Jan. 3, 2023:

[https://twitter.com/RobertGarcia/status/1610396414353313793?s=20&t=\\_WRqYe34X-6iU1MFBFzFXg](https://twitter.com/RobertGarcia/status/1610396414353313793?s=20&t=_WRqYe34X-6iU1MFBFzFXg)

<sup>2</sup> Adelle Banks, “Congress’ New Class Has Much Higher Percentage of Christians than American Public,” Religion News Service, January 3, 2023,

<https://religionnews.com/2023/01/03/congress-new-class-has-much-higher-percentage-of-christians-than-american-public/>.

religion are exclusionary, such as barring any religious test for public office and requiring that government establish no religion. Therefore, your gesture is so appropriate.

We would be remiss if we did not also acknowledge the three documents that will be under the Constitution while you take your oath of office. FFRF admires your commitment to honoring your own history as you take your oath of office, while honoring the nation's founding document.

On behalf of our more than 39,000 nonreligious members, we write to express our deepest appreciation. We hope your gesture will inspire others to do likewise, and awaken more interest in supporting and defending the Constitution's secular provisions, at a time when they have never been under greater attack.

FFRF welcomes you to the 118th Congress and wishes you the best during your first term in office.

Very truly,

Handwritten signatures of Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker in blue ink.

Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker  
Co-Presidents