

January 17, 2023

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Members of Congress:

On behalf of 30 religious, secular, and activist organizations and 10 religious and secular community leaders, and elected officials we are **strongly encouraging you not to sponsor or attend the National Prayer Breakfast**. The annual event takes place in the first week of February and is framed as a large bipartisan forum for political, social, and business leaders to gather and pray together, but the [reality](#) is different.

The National Prayer Breakfast is controversial and shrouded in secrecy. It has become a nexus for religious extremism, infiltration by Russian agents, and organized bigotry (anti-LGBTQ and anti-labor). The National Prayer Breakfast is an active marketplace of Christian nationalism, and it is not the bipartisan event that it purports to be.

Every year more members of Congress walk away from the event, including Representatives [Pelosi](#), [Khanna](#), [Kirkpatrick](#), and [Lieu](#). And each year more and more [negative stories](#) and [well-sourced](#) documentaries about the event continue to surface. The event is framed as a way for all Americans to come together through prayer during times of difficulty and division – but instead it invites division.

The Breakfast is a pay-to-play political event with a troubling history. Some of the serious issues associated with the event include:

- [Anti-LGBTQ](#) rhetoric is baked into the event, and it is a key driver in organizing the event. Recent [stories](#) have documented how foreign officials who [join](#) the event are inspired and further instructed to participate in virulently anti-LGBTQ campaigns. European LGBTQ groups like Forbidden Colours are [objecting](#) to this international influence.
- Mike Lindell [credits](#) his rise and relationship with former President Trump to [being](#) “picked out of 12 people to pray with Ben Carson in a room [at] the National Prayer Breakfast.”
- The FBI caught Maria Butina, an unregistered foreign agent with ties to Putin, [using](#) the event to [illegally](#) “back channel” with American officials who attended. Butina pleaded guilty and was convicted in 2018.
- New [records](#) reveal that Franklin Graham is the primary financial backer of the event, which he [admitted](#) is meant to buy access: “They’re wanting to be able to rub elbows with somebody that they normally couldn’t rub elbows

with.” Graham justified this by [pointing](#) to “the gays, they do everything they can to get their politicians into office.”

- Former President Trump used the event in 2019 to promote discriminatory adoption practices: “My administration is working to insure that faith-based adoption agencies are able to help vulnerable children find their forever families while following their deeply held beliefs.” And his comments were met with [tremendous enthusiasm](#).
- The National Prayer Breakfast is run by the opaque Fellowship Foundation. The organization has had troubling relationships with [dictators](#) around the world such as Gen. Suharto of Indonesia, Siad Barre of Somalia, Jonas Savimbi of Angola, Artur da Costa e Silva of Brazil, Papa Doc Duvalier of Haiti and other authoritarian leaders, such as Vladimir Putin of Russia.
- The Fellowship Foundation was originally founded to oppose the [New Deal](#) and [crush](#) organized labor.
- The bipartisan framing of the event is, at best, insincere. One former member of the organizer [admitted](#) to a writer, “we had more influence as long as we can keep a couple Democrats in the fold.”

Members of Congress who sponsor or attend the event are inadvertently sending a message that their office endorses the event’s Christian nationalist message, which is incompatible with pluralistic religious freedom and our constitutional system of governance. Moreover, besides the issue of religious freedom, supporting the breakfast would be a blatant disregard for some of the most vulnerable communities in our country today given the event’s support for anti-LGBTQ+ campaigns.

We understand that Congressional representatives want to engage their constituents in a variety of venues. However, history has proven that this event is an attempt to bait members of Congress into inadvertently supporting Christian nationalist ideals, extremism, and bigotry. We respectfully ask you to decline any invitation to attend or sponsor the National Prayer Breakfast.

Sincerely,

American Atheists

American Humanist Association

All Souls Movement

Association of Secular Elected Officials

Auburn Theological Seminary

Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative

Black Nonbelievers

Camp Quest  
Campus Pride  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for Inquiry  
The Clergy Project  
Columbia Atheists (Columbia, MO)  
Council for Global Equality  
Cultural and Secular Jewish Organization  
Delaware Association for Humanism  
DignityUSA  
Fòs Feminista  
Freedom From Religion Foundation  
Freethought Society  
The Global Justice Institute  
God Can Ministries UCC  
Humanists of Long Island  
Lambda Legal  
MPact Global Action for Gay Health & Rights  
Praise House Anti-Racism Institute, Inc.  
Secular Coalition for America  
Secular Student Alliance  
Society for Humanistic Judaism  
Transgender Law Center

Community Leaders:

Rep. Sherry Dutzy, New Hampshire  
Hon. Stephen Patrick Driscoll, Pembroke, Massachusetts - Member of the Executive  
Committee, Massachusetts Democratic State Committee  
Rev. Lori Hlaban, Beaufort, South Carolina  
Rep. Lois Galgay Reckitt, Maine  
Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagán-Banks, Chicago, Illinois  
Sen. Kelda Roys, Wisconsin  
Rev. Christopher H. Schaeffer, Pomfret, New York - Councilperson  
Roy Speckhardt, Washington, DC - President, The Humanist Foundation  
Rep. Brianna Titone, Colorado  
Rep. Lynne Williams, Maine

