

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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March 15, 2021

**SENT VIA FAX AND U.S. MAIL:  
(202) 225-5724**

The Hon. Clay Higgins  
U.S. House of Representatives  
572 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Inappropriate religious comments on gun control

Dear Rep. Higgins:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) and our national membership to object to your recent comments citing biblical violence to justify opposition to gun control. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 35,000 members across the country, including many members in Louisiana. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

In these remarks, you invoked your own personal religious belief that humans are naturally violent, as well as the motto “In God We Trust,” to argue that American citizens need more deadly weapons. This argument is not only at odds with reality and reason, but is also inappropriate because the United States is a secular nation whose laws are not based on the religious whims of our elected representatives.

We ask that you reflect on the fact that you swore an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution, which is a godless and entirely secular document separating religion from government and barring any religious test for public office. The Bill of Rights includes not only the Second Amendment you so cherish, but the First Amendment, whose Establishment Clause ensures that the government may not establish a religion, *e.g.*, public officials should not impose personal religious beliefs upon the American people.

In your recent floor speech you said the following:<sup>1</sup>

There's a higher authority than the law of man. Above the Speaker's podium are the words in this great chamber, In God We Trust. Do we? Do we recognize that the biblical record is replete with the violence of man? Shall we admit, shall my colleagues on the other side of the aisle admit that laws designed to restrict Second Amendment rights and freedoms are but a veil to conceal the violence of man, born since Adam? First born son of Adam killed his brother in a violent rage. I'm rather certain he did not use a firearm. The Second Amendment protections that we have as American citizens shall not be infringed. Remember these words and that they are born of a nation that recognized our service to our Lord.

This seems to be arguing that since humans, as portrayed in the bible, are prone to murderous rage with or without firearms, we may as well distribute as many deadly weapons as possible and trust in supernatural powers to protect us. Such backward and callous religious statements betray your oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution and such sentiments would put American lives in danger.

Since you cite "the biblical record," we hasten to observe that the biblical deity, which you purport to trust to save Americans from murdering one another, is depicted as one of the greatest mass murderers<sup>2</sup> in all literature.<sup>3</sup> In 2 Chronicles alone, the villain of the Old Testament killed a million Ethiopians<sup>4</sup> and half a million Israelites.<sup>5</sup> That's in addition to destroying every human on earth, save eight,<sup>6</sup> razing entire cities,<sup>7</sup> and repeatedly committing and commanding genocide.<sup>8</sup> In any case, you placed your hand on the bible to swear allegiance to the Constitution, not the other way around.

The phrase "In God We Trust" is a Johnny come lately, not adopted as our national motto until 1956. The phrase isn't even accurate. More Americans than ever before do not subscribe to religion or believe in any god at all, and only a fraction of

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<sup>1</sup> Clay Higgins, Floor Comments (Mar. 10, 2021), *available at* [www.c-span.org/video/?509630-1/house-passes-19-trillion-covid-19-relief-bill-220-211#!](http://www.c-span.org/video/?509630-1/house-passes-19-trillion-covid-19-relief-bill-220-211#!) At 7:34:21.

<sup>2</sup> See [unpleasantgod.ffrf.org/#/](http://unpleasantgod.ffrf.org/#/) (Check out in particular the links for bloodthirsty, ethnic cleanser, infanticidal, genocidal)

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., [www.vocativ.com/news/309748/all-the-people-god-kills-in-the-bible/index.html](http://www.vocativ.com/news/309748/all-the-people-god-kills-in-the-bible/index.html).

<sup>4</sup> 2 Chr. 14:12–13 ("The Lord smote the [thousand thousand] Ethiopians ... they were destroyed before the Lord").

<sup>5</sup> 2 Chr. 13:17 ("There fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men").

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 6:9–9:17.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 18–19.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Deut. 20:16–18 (commanding his people to "not leave alive anything that breathes... completely destroy them ...").

Americans are foolish enough to think a supernatural being will save them from gun violence.<sup>9</sup> For the phrase to be honest, it would have to say “In God *Some* of Us Trust,” and wouldn’t that be silly?

Non-religious Americans are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population by religious identification—35 percent of Americans are non-Christians, and this includes the more than one in four Americans who now identify as religiously unaffiliated.<sup>10</sup> Younger Americans are not just religiously unaffiliated, they are largely atheist or agnostic. A recent survey found that 21 percent of Americans born after 1999 are atheist or agnostic.<sup>11</sup>

“Thoughts and prayers” are meaningless and hollow. Americans deserve better. Rep. Higgins, we encourage you to please get off your knees and get to work.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker  
Co-presidents  
Freedom From Religion Foundation

ALG/DB:rdj

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<sup>9</sup> About 90% of Americans think that American gun laws should not be more lenient. *See* [www.npr.org/2019/10/20/771278167/poll-number-of-americans-who-favor-stricter-gun-laws-continues-to-grow](http://www.npr.org/2019/10/20/771278167/poll-number-of-americans-who-favor-stricter-gun-laws-continues-to-grow).

<sup>10</sup> Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” (Oct. 17, 2019) at <https://pewrsr.ch/2VPiFS7>.

<sup>11</sup> *Atheism Doubles Among Generation Z*, The Barna Group (Jan. 24, 2018), <https://www.barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/>.