

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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January 18, 2023

SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL

Congressman.Grothman@mail.house.gov

Honorable Glenn Grothman
1511 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Immediately remove offensive “Appeal to Heaven” flag

Dear Representative Grothman,

On behalf of members of our organization who are your constituents, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) is writing to ask you to immediately remove your flag reading “Appeal to Heaven” from the flagpole outside of your congressional office. FFRF is a national nonprofit educational association, which works to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate the public about nontheism. Our Madison, Wis.-based organization represents more than 39,000 nonreligious members nationwide, with 1,600 Wisconsin members, including many who are your constituents.

As a member of Congress who took an oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic,” you have sworn to uphold a godless and entirely secular Constitution.

The inherent religious significance of the “Appeal to Heaven” flag is undeniable. The “Appeal to Heaven” flag is associated with the Appeal to Heaven movement.¹ Members of the Appeal to Heaven movement, in their own words, “honor the Lord by supporting candidates for public office who are believers in Jesus Christ, who regularly attend and display a commitment to an evangelical, Gospel-centered church and who will commit to live and govern based on biblical ... principles.” The mission is clearly sectarian, and flying the flag is a tacit endorsement of evangelical Christianity. By placing this flag outside your office you are signaling that Christians of a certain ilk are “insiders” favored by you, and non-Christians and nonbelievers are “outsiders.”

But you do not just represent Christians, sir, you represent members in your district of all religious stripes, and none at all. They are all due constituency services from your office, and to be made to feel like equally welcomed and valued constituents and citizens. This flag sends a totally inappropriate message, and for this reason alone it must be removed.

¹ <https://www.appealtoheaven.org/>

Secondly, your oath promised to defend the Constitution from “all enemies, foreign *and domestic.*” [*emphasis added*] Instead you are lending your support to a symbol of a treasonous movement connected to the unthinkable events of Jan. 6, 2021.

While the flag originally has ties to the founding of the United States, it is now nothing more than a nod to Christian nationalism. There is no secular or legitimate political purpose to flying the flag. The “Appeal to Heaven” flag was proudly carried by many rioters and insurrectionists during the January 6 putsch. FFRF, along with the Baptists Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, published a report² detailing the link between Christian nationalism and the Jan. 6 insurrection. The report documents how members of the mob carried the “Appeals to Heaven” flag as they marched to storm the Capitol.

Thus placing this flag in front of your office sends an unfortunate message to your peers in Congress who, like you, were under siege on Jan. 6, that you seemingly support those who sought to effect a coup to subvert the will of the people as well as the peaceful transfer of power. It sends an especially egregious and ungrateful message to the courageous Capitol police, five of whom died and dozens of whom were injured, while defending members of Congress.

Perhaps you were ignorant of these facts when you placed this disreputable flag in front of your office. Perhaps you were even ignorant that it is being adopted by white Christian nationalist and was hoisted during the insurrection. But now you know. This symbol of white Christian nationalism and treason should not tarnish congressional property. It is evident that this flag cloaked the insurrectionists in a religious justification. Flying it outside your congressional office lends unconscionable legitimacy to their actions.

We look forward to your removing it immediately and issuing a public apology to your constituents and the nation. Please may we hear from you at your earliest convenience?

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker
Co-Presidents

² Christian nationalism and the January 6 insurrection:
https://bjconline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Christian_Nationalism_and_the_Jan6_Insurrection-2-9-22.pdf