

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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August 12, 2025

**SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: [mark.smith@spart1.org](mailto:mark.smith@spart1.org)**

Mark Smith  
Superintendent  
Spartanburg School District One  
121 Wheeler St.  
Campobello, SC 29322

Re: Religious letter at graduation

Dear Superintendent Smith:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding a constitutional violation occurring in Landrum High School. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 42,000 members across the country, including over 300 members in South Carolina. Our purpose is to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

A concerned District parent reported that on May 20, 2025, students graduating from Landrum High School received a senior packet assembled by the school which contained a letter from South Carolina State Representative Josiah Magnuson. This letter contained evangelistic statements, such as “Be mindful to acknowledge and honor the omnipotent Person who our Founders sacredly named in the Declaration of Independence as Nature’s God, the Creator, the Supreme Judge of the World, and divine Providence,” and “By building your faith in Christ you can stand firm to meet the unknown and overcome every obstacle . . . .” This letter also quotes Proverbs 9:10 (“The Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding”) before saying “I urge you to read and meditate on His Word.” Please see the enclosed letter.

It is inappropriate and unconstitutional for the District to allow its staff to distribute religious materials to students. Public schools may not show favoritism toward or coerce belief or participation in religion. See generally, *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290 (2000); *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1967); *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962); *McCullum v. Bd. of Ed.*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948). By distributing a religious letter from a state representative to all graduating students, the District displays blatant favoritism for religion over nonreligion, and Christianity above all other faiths.

High school graduation is a once in a lifetime event that students spend over a decade working toward. Distributing a proselytizing letter to graduating students marginalizes those students and families who are not religious. Thirty-seven percent of the American population is non-Christian,

and almost 30 percent<sup>1</sup> are nonreligious. At least a third of Generation Z (those born after 1996) have no religion<sup>2</sup>, with a recent survey revealing almost half of Gen Z qualify as “nones” (religiously unaffiliated).<sup>3</sup>

Out of respect for the First Amendment and the diversity of its community, we ask that the District investigate this situation and ensure that its staff ceases distributing religious materials to students. Please respond in writing with the steps the District is taking to remedy this constitutional violation so that we may inform our parent-complainant. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Kyle Steinberg  
*Anne Nicol Gaylor Legal Fellow*  
*Freedom From Religion Foundation*

KJS:tbp

Enclosure

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory A. Smith, *Religious ‘Nones’ in America: Who They Are and What They Believe*, Pew Research Center, Jan. 24, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel J. Abrams, *Perspective: Why even secular people should worry about Gen Z’s lack of faith*, Deseret News (Mar. 4, 2023), [www.deseret.com/2023/3/4/23617175/gen-z-faith-religious-nones-civic-life-volunteers-charity](http://www.deseret.com/2023/3/4/23617175/gen-z-faith-religious-nones-civic-life-volunteers-charity).

<sup>3</sup> 2022 Cooperative Election Study of 60,000 respondents, analyzed by Ryan P. Burge, [www.religioninpublic.blog/2023/04/03/gen-z-and-religion-in-2022/](http://www.religioninpublic.blog/2023/04/03/gen-z-and-religion-in-2022/).

Josiah Magnuson  
District No. 38 - Spartanburg County  
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Campobello, SC 29322

Committee:  
Medical, Military, Public and  
Municipal Affairs



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May 15, 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

Congratulations on your graduation from high school! I commend you for your hard work. The diligence you have sown in your education will reap a great harvest.

The world is changing quickly, and I encourage you to continue learning, so you can stay equipped to keep the Republic. Preserving America's precious freedom, now more than ever, will require committed effort and eternal vigilance.

Be mindful to acknowledge and honor the omnipotent Person who our Founders sacredly named in the Declaration of Independence as Nature's God, the Creator, the Supreme Judge of the World, and divine Providence. Our country's history underscores that liberty is sacred because it is His gift. And it is only in His presence that we find the courage we need for the journey.

Our national motto reminds us, "In God we Trust." To trust God, we need to prioritize getting to know Him. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). I urge you to read and meditate on His Word.

Knowing God is the foundation of all other learning throughout life. Today, the stability of Scriptural truth is more critical than ever. The challenges you face will be far different from those of previous generations. By building your faith in Christ you can stand firm to meet the unknown and overcome every obstacle – for the good of your family, community, state, and country.

In sum, I encourage you to stay flexible yet resolved to do right. Take initiative, make the hard decisions, and move forward boldly. Be confident in the truth while remaining teachable and humble. I promise you will be greatly rewarded.

Please feel free to contact me any time I can be of service. Congratulations again!

Your servant,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. Josiah Magnuson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rep. R. Josiah Magnuson  
SC House District 38

Cell: 864-420-7933