

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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September 11, 2025

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Re: Unconstitutional promotion of religion at HUD “faith-based disaster recovery” event

Dear Secretary Turner:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to raise serious concerns over your recent statements and actions promoting religion in your official capacity as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 42,000 members across the country. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

On September 6, 2025, HUD hosted what it described as its first “faith-based disaster recovery event” on the National Mall, featuring Christian nationalist worship leader Sean Feucht¹ and other Christian figures.² During the event, you prayed publicly³ and declared in your official capacity: “faith is back in our government.”⁴ HUD also used this showcase to elevate Christian worship and Christian nationalist messaging during a federally sponsored event.

The homepage of the official HUD website even opens with a religious quote from you, “God blessed us with this great nation, and together, we can increase self-sufficiency and empower Americans to climb the economic ladder toward a brighter future.”⁵

While FFRF recognizes the important role that private charities, including religiously-affiliated ones, often play in disaster relief, the Constitution forbids the federal government from promoting religion, much less privileging one faith over all others. The inclusion of Sean Feucht, known for his divisive rhetoric and political activism, only underscores the partisan and sectarian nature of this event.

The First Amendment’s Establishment Clause requires government neutrality between religions, and between religion and nonreligion. *See McCreary v. ACLU of Ky.*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 53 (1985); *Epperson v. Ark.*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968); *Everson v.*

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2025/07/sean-feucht-christian-nationalism/683394/>.

² <https://www.msnbc.com/top-stories/latest/housing-department-hud-christian-nationalist-worship-mall-rcna229902>.

³ <https://x.com/SecretaryTurner/status/1964659917689631102>.

⁴ <https://x.com/SecretaryTurner/status/1964515833709023519>.

⁵ <https://www.hud.gov/>.

Bd. of Educ. of Ewing, 330 U.S. 1, 15–16 (1947). A government official has no business declaring religious triumphalism or tying federal disaster recovery efforts to Christian nationalism.

The Supreme Court has held that public officials may not seek to advance or promote religion, specifically stating, “If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. If there are any circumstances which permit an exception, they do not now occur to us.” *W. Va. Bd. of Educ. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 642 (1943).

The constitutional principle separating religion from government was the uniquely American vision of our revolutionary Founders. After centuries of bloody religious wars, inquisitions, crusades and pogroms in the Old World, and of the persecutions in the name of religion in most of the original colonies, the Framers were acutely aware of the danger and folly of mixing state and church.

Every reference to religion in the U.S. Constitution is exclusionary, including: a direct prohibition on religious tests for public office, an implicit prohibition in the godless oath of office prescribed for the presidency, and the First Amendment’s historic bar of any establishment of religion by the government. The Framers of the Constitution made the United States first among nations to invest sovereignty not in a deity, but in “We the People.” The proscription against religion in government has served our nation well, with the U.S. Constitution now the longest living constitution in history, and our nation spared the constant religious wars afflicting theocratic regions around the world.

This wise separation between religion and government embodied in the Establishment Clause has largely protected the United States from the religious slaughter and persecution rife around the world and historically whenever the government and religion are aligned:

“There is no such source and cause of strife, quarrel, fights, malignant opposition, persecution, and war, and all evil in the state, as religion. Let it once enter our civil affairs, our government would soon be destroyed. Let it once enter our common schools, they would be destroyed.” *State ex rel. Weiss v. Dist. Bd. of Sch. Dist. No. 8 of City of Edgerton*, 76 Wis. 177, 44 N.W. 967, 981 (1890).

America’s strength lies in its secular Constitution. True religious freedom requires that the government remain free from religious corruption. Keeping religion out of the government is a fundamental American ideal, essential for true religious freedom, and has been a tremendous asset to our society.

When HUD centers Christian worship at an official event and the HUD Secretary preaches and proclaims that “faith is back in our government,” it sends a message of exclusion to millions of Americans who are non-Christian or nonreligious. Today, nearly 37 percent of Americans are

non-Christians, and this includes the nearly one in three Americans who are now religiously unaffiliated.⁶ True religious liberty requires a secular government, free from sectarian favoritism.

We therefore urge the Department to immediately cease hosting religious events or incorporating religious messaging into its official communications, and request that you cease promoting your personal religious beliefs using your position as Secretary. Please advise us in writing of the steps your agency will take to comply with its constitutional obligations.

Sincerely,



Christopher Line
Legal Counsel
Freedom From Religion Foundation

⁶ Gregory A. Smith, About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated, Pew Research Center (Dec. 14, 2021), www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/.