

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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**SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: [rob.manfred@mlb.com](mailto:rob.manfred@mlb.com)**

Robert D. Manfred Jr.  
Commissioner  
Major League Baseball  
1271 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020

Re: False Claims of Religious Discrimination

Dear Commissioner Manfred:

We write on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation to thank Major League Baseball for its commitment to fostering an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ players, employees and fans, and for its reported enforcement of neutral league policies in the face of political attacks and unfounded accusations of religious discrimination. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 41,000 members nationwide. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church and to educate the public about nontheism.

It is our understanding that Sen. Josh Hawley, Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier and Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon have accused MLB of religious discrimination after the league reportedly warned several San Francisco Giants players for writing bible verse citations on their caps during a Pride Night game. We write to commend MLB for refusing to allow those accusations to distort the meaning of religious liberty or undermine the league's legitimate and neutrally enforced policies.

The question is not whether the players are Christian or whether they quoted the bible. The question is whether individual players may alter league-issued uniforms to display personal messages in violation of league policy. As you are aware, the answer is plainly no.

Religious belief does not confer a right to disregard neutral workplace rules. An employee does not gain a special exemption from generally applicable policies merely by invoking religion. If a player wrote a political slogan, a secular anti-LGBTQ+ message or any other unauthorized statement on league-issued apparel, MLB would be entitled to prohibit it. The same principle applies when the message is conveyed through a biblical citation.

Nor were these citations viewed in a vacuum. The verses appeared on rainbow-themed Pride Night caps during an event specifically intended to signal inclusion and support for LGBTQ+ fans. Many observers reasonably understood the display as expressing opposition to that message. Whatever the players' subjective intentions, the league had a legitimate interest in enforcing uniform standards and preserving the integrity of its official messaging.

Sen. Hawley's suggestion that enforcing a neutral uniform policy amounts to religious discrimination is unfounded.<sup>1</sup> His argument appears to rest on the notion that because MLB has approved certain

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2026-06-16-Hawley-Letter-to-MLB.pdf>.

league-sponsored messages concerning equality, inclusion or social justice, it must therefore permit any player to add any personal message to league-issued uniforms. That conclusion does not follow. Organizations routinely distinguish between official organizational speech and unauthorized individual alterations. The law permits them to do so.

Attorney General Uthmeier's allegations fare no better.<sup>2</sup> Anti-discrimination laws protect employees from adverse treatment because of their religion. They do not require employers to grant special privileges to religiously motivated expression or exempt religious employees from workplace rules that apply equally to everyone else.

We are especially troubled by reports that the Department of Justice has asked the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to investigate MLB over this matter.<sup>3</sup> The Civil Rights Division exists to combat genuine discrimination, not to transform religious liberty into a weapon against organizations that seek to create welcoming environments for historically marginalized communities. Government officials should not misuse federal civil rights laws to pressure private organizations into privileging religious expression over neutral workplace standards.

The First Amendment protects every player's right to hold and express religious beliefs. It does not require MLB, or any private employer, to convert its uniforms into vehicles for religious advocacy. Likewise, federal law does not require employers to accommodate religious expression in ways that undermine legitimate organizational policies or interfere with the rights and interests of others.

Professional sports have not always been welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ Americans. Pride Night events represent a good-faith effort to ensure that LGBTQ+ fans, players and families know they belong in the game. Such initiatives are not anti-Christian, anti-religious or discriminatory. They simply reflect the principle that every person deserves equal dignity, respect and inclusion.

We commend Major League Baseball for reportedly enforcing its policies fairly and consistently, regardless of whether a message is political, religious or ideological in nature. Religious liberty is a fundamental American value, but it does not entitle individuals to disregard neutral workplace rules or demand preferential treatment. By maintaining that distinction, MLB has demonstrated that it is possible to respect religious freedom while also preserving an inclusive environment for all.

Thank you for your leadership, your commitment to equal treatment and inclusion, and your willingness to uphold neutral standards in the face of political pressure.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker  
Co-Presidents

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrelease/attorney-general-james-uthmeier-launches-investigation-major-league-baseball-alleged>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://x.com/AAGDhillon/status/2067709644185759938?s=20>.