

# President Trump, Gov. Reynolds sign proclamations of religious freedom

In honor of the Jan. 16, 1786, enacting of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, both President Donald Trump and Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds issued proclamations declaring Jan. 16, 2018, as Religious Freedom Day.

Far more than flowery words, however, these resounding proclamations directly impact Americans' everyday lives and address some of the hottest controversies in contemporary law.

Speaking of the Virginia Statute, Trump proclaimed, "On the coattails of the American Revolution ... this seminal bill, penned by Thomas Jefferson, states that, 'All men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.'"

The full text of President Trump's proclamation further addresses a foundational conflict brewing in public debate today: specifically, whether "religious freedom" means Americans have only the freedom to believe (in the privacy of their homes and churches) or whether Americans have true religious liberty to also live and act in accordance with those beliefs.

The debate has come to a head in recent weeks in a case heard before the U.S. Supreme Court – *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* – in which the Court is being asked to decide whether a baker has the right to exercise his faith in the operation of his business or whether the State of Colorado can compel him to check his faith at his cakeshop door.

Trump's proclamation leaves no doubt of where the president stands on the debate:

"Our Constitution and laws guarantee Americans the right not just to believe as they see fit, but to freely exercise their religion," Trump's proclamation declares. "Unfortunately, not all have recognized the importance of religious freedom, whether by threatening tax consequences for particular forms of religious speech, or forcing people to comply with laws that violate their core religious beliefs without sufficient justification. These incursions, little by little, can destroy the fundamental freedom underlying our democracy. ... No American – whether a nun, nurse, baker, or business owner – should be forced to choose between the tenets of faith or adherence to the law."

Gov. Reynolds' proclamation doesn't dive so pointedly into the cakeshop controversy, but nonetheless reasserts the importance of religious liberty to America's foundation and admonishes those who would seek to erode it.

"As Americans, we have enjoyed a heritage of faith and freedom," the governor declared. "As the U.S. Supreme Court so succinctly stated, 'We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.'"

"Those who do not know history speak against religious freedom and freedom of speech," she continued, "not realizing that these fundamental human rights provide the basis for all other rights."

"Both President Trump and Gov. Reynolds deserve to be commended for these proclamations," said Bob Vander Plaats, president and CEO of The FAMILy LEADER. "In a culture being swept away from its foundations, where our most bedrock freedoms are being thrown under the bus of political correctness, we need leaders willing to stand against the tide and champion religious liberty."

“Our greatest hope,” he continued, “is not in presidents and kings, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ. My prayer is that America will always be a land where her people retain the religious freedom to proclaim and live that gospel.”

- **Click here** to read more about the U.S. Supreme Court case *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*.
- **Click here** to read the full text of President Trump’s proclamation.
- **Click here** to read the full text of Gov. Reynolds’ proclamation.

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