

Without Religious Freedom, The State Is God

A Look at the Destruction of Religious Freedom in America

Religious rights are under attack in America. In 2019, legislators in Maine and New York abolished the state’s religious exemption to mandatory vaccinations. Lawmakers in six other states — Florida, Iowa, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Vermont—are attempting to do the same, while several others are trying to restrict religious and medical exemptions by making them more cumbersome for families to obtain.

At the same time, parental rights are slowly eroding. Nine states currently permit minors to be vaccinated without parental consent, and numerous states are trying to enact laws that allow “mature minors” to make their own healthcare decisions without notifying their parents.

Americans have lost sight of the fact that citizens are not supposed to be beholden to government; the government’s role is to serve and represent the people. Yet tens of thousands of Americans from coast to coast are currently fighting to safeguard their basic human rights and constitutional rights. If they don’t assert these rights, our most powerful institutions will continue to insert themselves where they do not belong. They will continue to strip citizens of our ability to worship as we choose, make our own healthcare decisions, and raise our children as we see fit.

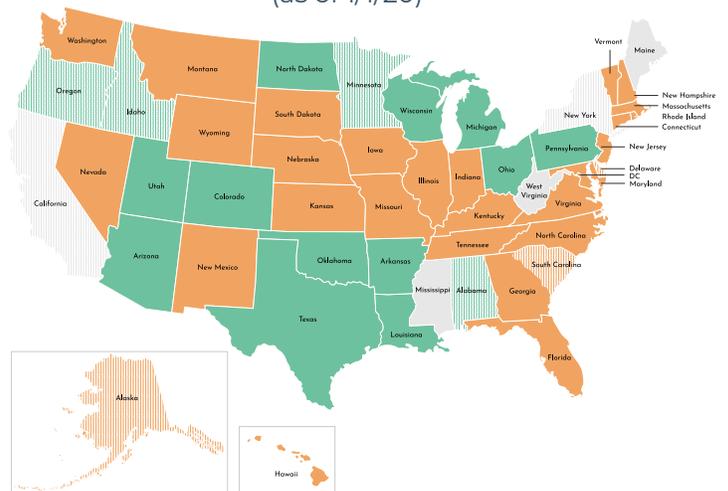
In essence, by giving the state too much power—and allowing it to continually erode our rights—we are permitting the government to play God, doctor, and parent.

That’s why Stand for Health Freedom (SHF) is calling upon all Americans to stand firmly for their rights. Below are information and tips that will help you stand for religious freedom.



The Constitution gives citizens the right to act according to their deeply held beliefs and their conscience without government interference or scrutiny. However, this right is increasingly under attack.

Exemptions from School Immunization Requirements (as of 1/1/20)



■ Religious Exemptions Permitted
■ Personal Belief Exemptions Permitted
Shaded – Minors can be Vaccinated Without Parental Consent*
**Age of consent and vaccines permitted vary by state.*

Religious Freedom Facts

- Very simply, religious freedom is the right of Americans to decide what or whom their—choose the word that's most fitting—moral, ethical, or higher authority is. It enables citizens to act freely in accordance with their convictions.
- Citizens' religious rights are protected under the US constitution and their state constitution.
- There are only two requirements for a religious belief to be protected by law: the belief must be religious in nature and it must be sincerely held.
- For something to be religious in nature, it must be a matter in question that can't be answered exclusively with intellect or in a textbook. The matter requires inspiration from a higher power. For example, deciding to become vegan because eating meat violates a deeply held belief that animals shouldn't be killed for consumption or pleasure is considered religious in nature. However, adopting a vegan lifestyle because you think it will lead to better health is not.
- It is an individual's religious beliefs that are safeguarded under law, not the beliefs of an organization. An organized religion like Christianity, Judaism, or Islam doesn't have the authority to invalidate an adherent's religious beliefs—even if those beliefs diverge from orthodoxy.
- One does not have to belong to or be affiliated with an organized religion in order to have his or her religious rights protected under law.
- The media often looks to religious leaders to take a stand on certain matters (e.g., whether the religion endorses or prohibits vaccines). However, as stated previously, religious leaders cannot legitimize or delegitimize the beliefs of adherents. That is outside of the scope of their authority.

- Sincerely held religious beliefs are private, genuine, and constitutionally protected. Lawmakers are not adept at evaluating the content of religious beliefs and thus must be deferential to religious claims.
- Civil rights are designed to protect people's freedoms from being infringed upon by government. They cover citizens' participation in society and guarantee equal opportunities and equal protection for all. They include the assurance of life and safety; privacy; and freedom of religion, thought, speech, and press. Unlike human or natural rights, civil rights are granted and guaranteed by the state. When these rights are transgressed, a civil rights movement may emerge.

FOUR TIPS TO STAND FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

- 1 Reach out to your legislators. If you've already done so, reach out again. Let them know that your religious rights are constitutionally protected and are not up for grabs.
- 2 Share SHF's latest campaign efforts with as many people as you can so we can continue to grow our voting block and stand strong together.
- 3 Visit our website regularly to stay up to date on the latest news and campaigns.
- 4 Support our mission! SHF's digital advocacy portal is a robust platform that allows conscientious citizens to take a stand on issues that matter, including the preservation of human rights and civil rights.