

October 26th, 2016

CONTACT: Jon Schweppe

American Principles Project

202-503-2010

[jschweppe@americanprinciplesproject.org](mailto:jschweppe@americanprinciplesproject.org)

## The State of Georgia Engaged in Religious Discrimination Against a Lay Minister

Dr. Eric Walsh was hired by the State of Georgia to be one of its District Health Directors in 2014.

He was fired for his religious beliefs immediately after the government obtained copies of his sermons.

**Atlanta, Georgia** – American Principles Project, an organization based in Washington, D.C. that advocates for religious freedom rights, is denouncing the State of Georgia for engaging in “religious discrimination” against a lay minister.

Dr. Eric Walsh, a Christian who serves his church as a lay minister on weekends, was hired by the State of Georgia as a District Health Director. Soon after he was hired, the State obtained copies of sermons Walsh had delivered at his church, reviewed their content, and then fired him without explanation.

Walsh sued the State for religious discrimination. Last month, Georgia’s Attorney General Sam Olens issued a Request for Production of Documents — which has the legal force of a subpoena — demanding that Walsh turn over any and all sermon notes and/or sermon transcripts he possessed for review and analysis. (Walsh is represented by First Liberty Institute; legal files and more information about the case are available at [FirstLiberty.org/Walsh](http://FirstLiberty.org/Walsh).)

**Jane Robbins**, a senior fellow at **American Principles Project**, released the following statement:

“The State of Georgia’s brazen discrimination against an individual on the basis of his religious beliefs violates everything we believe in as a nation. It is wrong, and it is illegal. But in attempting to defend an indefensible decision, the State is now requiring a Christian minister to surrender his sermon notes for inspection under the threat of law. It is difficult to imagine a more blatant violation of America’s founding principles.

“American Principles Project urges the State to withdraw its attempt to intimidate Dr. Walsh and other potential plaintiffs by demanding access to his sermons and sermon notes, and to make him whole for any losses he has incurred because of the State’s illegal conduct. Anything else will suggest that people of faith need not apply for government jobs in Georgia.”

For comment or to schedule an interview with Jane Robbins, please contact Jon Schweppe at 202-503-2010 or [jschweppe@americanprinciplesproject.org](mailto:jschweppe@americanprinciplesproject.org).

*American Principles Project is a 501(c)(4) organization that believes human dignity should be at the heart of public policy.*