

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

THE FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

- Religious liberty is essential to free speech.
- Freedom of speech extends to all viewpoints, good or bad, religious or atheist, majority or minority.
- If free speech were limited only to non-religious subjects or the most popular opinions, it would be no freedom at all.
- Millions of Americans choose to speak or not to speak based on their religious beliefs.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

- Suppressing religious speech dangerously burdens the freedom of the press.
- Once religious views are censored, the press soon becomes a tyrannical extension of the state, stifling any speech that opposes the government or the popular majority.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

- The absence of religious liberty undermines the freedom of assembly.
- Freedom of assembly guarantees that individuals may gather, for religious or non-religious reasons, without requiring the permission of the state.
- Example: the first colonial settlers sailed to the New World seeking freedom of assembly because the Church of England prohibited citizens from gathering and worshipping.

FREEDOM TO PETITION THE GOVT.

- The Founders understood freedom to petition the government as the right to communicate with the state, giving the people another voice in government.
- Religious minorities seek exemptions based on their religious beliefs and their freedom of petition would be hollowed out without religious liberty.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Without their foundation in religious liberty, the subsequent freedoms in the First Amendment cannot stand for long.

