

FIRST  LIBERTY | 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



**THE RIPPLE EFFECT**

## WE STAY FOCUSED ON ADVANCING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

First Liberty Institute is the nation's largest nonprofit law firm exclusively dedicated to defending religious liberty in America. By preserving public expressions of faith and the free exercise of religion, all people of faith will have their constitutional freedom protected. If this right were to go away, our other rights could fall like dominoes. By defending religious liberty, we're fighting for what matters most.

## WE WIN CASES THAT CHANGE AMERICA

We've defended thousands of clients and overturned harmful precedents that restricted people of faith for decades. Our win rate is over 90% and our record at the Supreme Court is nine wins and zero losses. Today, you and all Americans are experiencing more religious freedom than at any point in the last 50 years. Our wins have created a huge opportunity to change the future of our nation.

## WE'RE SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND YOUR FREEDOMS

Thanks to our previous wins that set new precedents, we have the opportunity to shape the future of religious liberty for decades to come. But despite our wins in the courts, there are powerful opponents who aren't giving up. They keep attacking religious freedom from all sides; against houses of worship, schools, within the military, and throughout the marketplace and public arena. We're fighting back in all those areas to protect the free exercise of your faith.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, CEO & CHIEF COUNSEL

The ripple effect is about waves of impact. Toss a stone into a pond and the ripples slowly make their way across the entire surface in every direction. That same ripple effect happens in the legal world. When we win a Supreme Court victory that protects the free exercise of faith, it can set a precedent that impacts thousands of cases for decades to come—affecting your kids and grandkids.

We're now seeing First Liberty's historic victories making waves throughout the entire legal system.

Our 2022 Supreme Court victory in the *Kennedy* case is being cited in courts and cases all across the country. Our 2023 *Groff* victory is now being cited in cases affecting people of faith in the workplace. (Our *Kennedy* case was even cited by the Supreme Court in their unanimous decision on *Groff*!) Our 2019 victory defending the Bladensburg Peace Cross is now protecting historic religious monuments. Many that were taken down years ago can now go back up, and new ones are being created.

Thanks specifically to our victories, law books are being updated and reprinted to include new changes in the law. Curriculums in law schools across the country are being revised.

Instead of going to court where they know they'll lose, many enemies of faith are immediately backing down as soon as we send a letter reminding them of recent rulings. Many other

potential opponents are simply steering clear of religious discrimination—which is the best kind of victory!

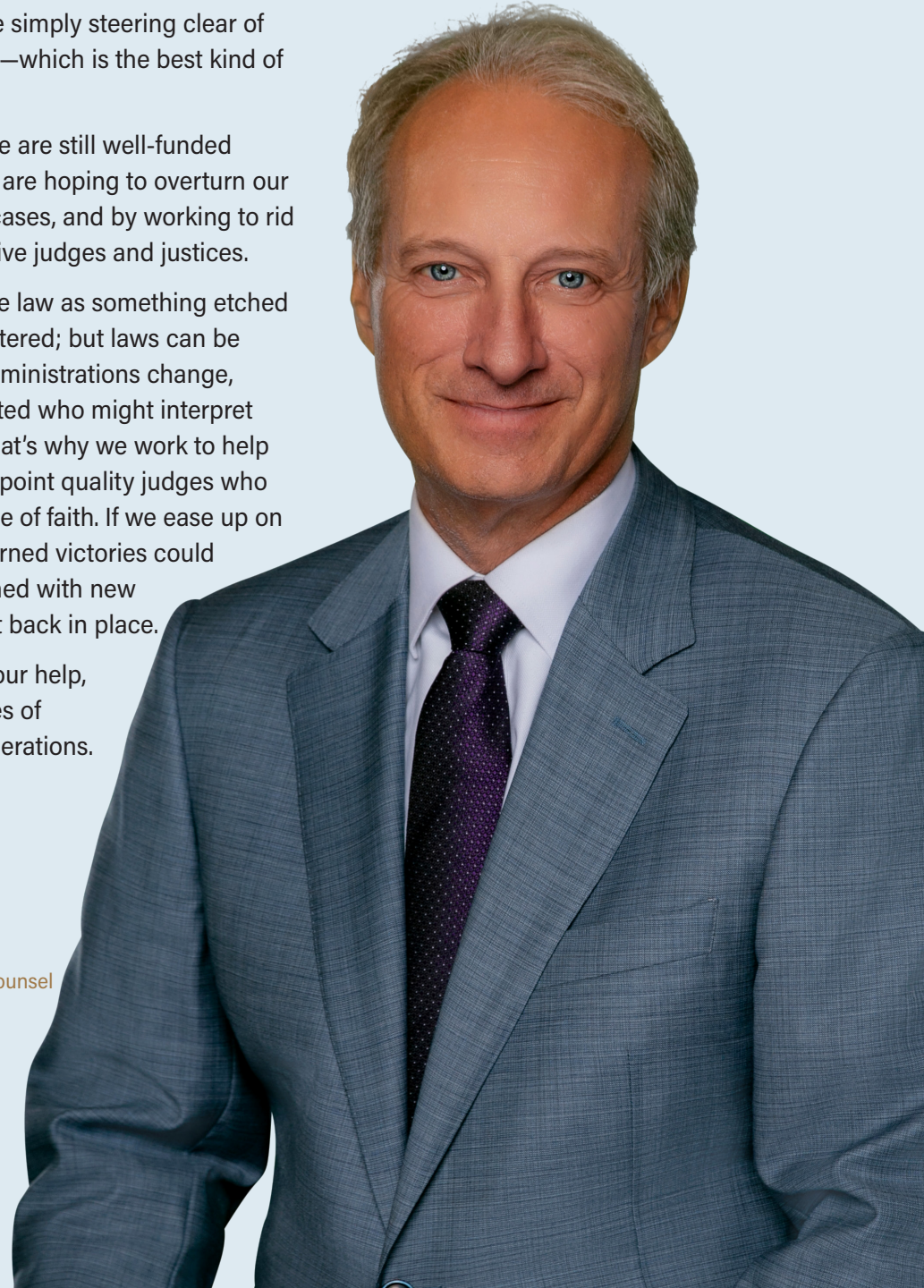
On the other hand, there are still well-funded opponents of faith who are hoping to overturn our victories by filing new cases, and by working to rid the courts of conservative judges and justices.

People often think of the law as something etched in stone that can't be altered; but laws can be surprisingly fluid. As administrations change, new judges are appointed who might interpret laws very differently. That's why we work to help government leaders appoint quality judges who respect the free exercise of faith. If we ease up on our efforts, our hard-earned victories could themselves be overturned with new harmful precedents put back in place.

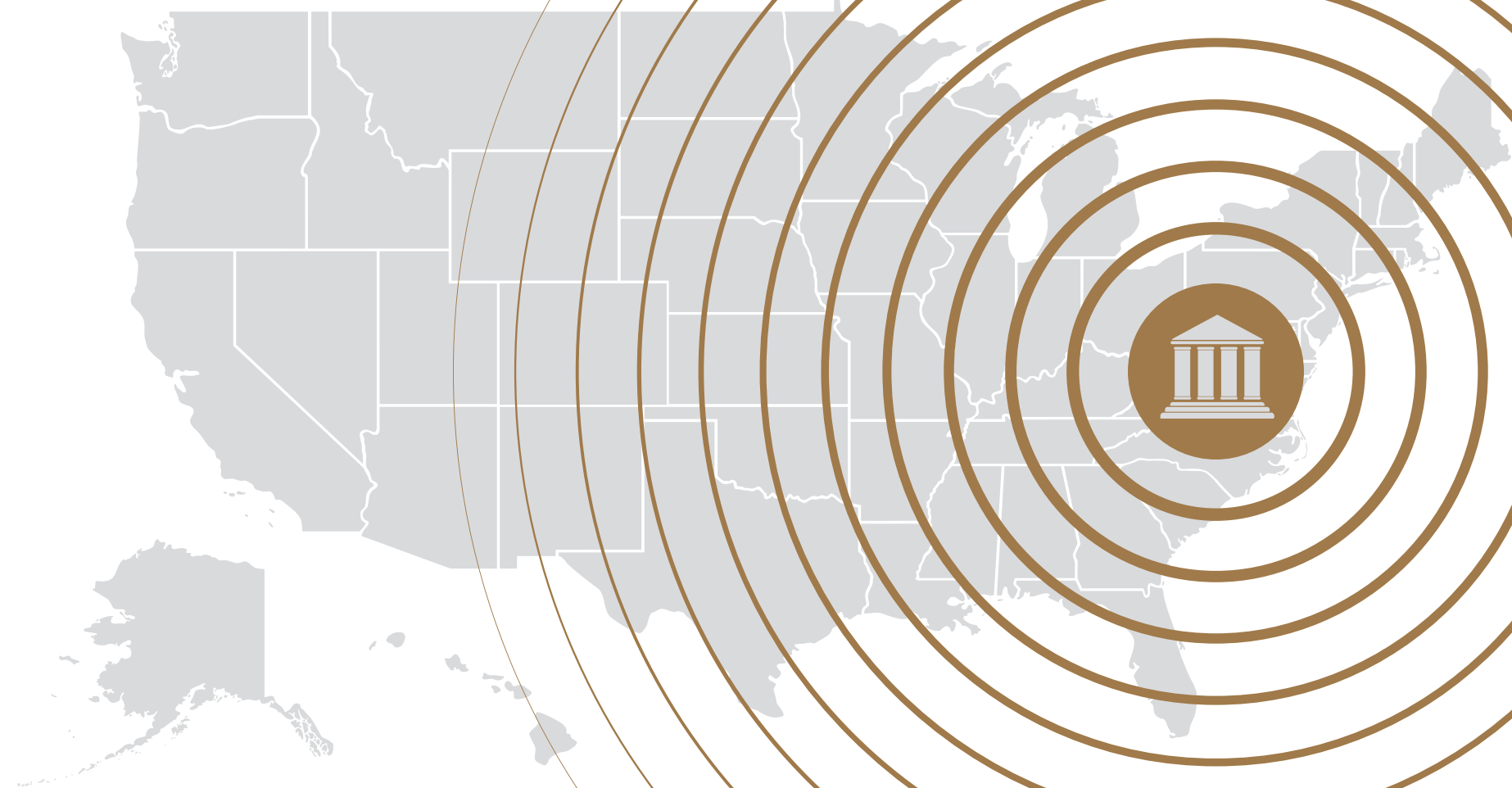
With God's favor and your help, let's keep making waves of impact that last for generations.

For liberty,

**Kelly Shackelford, Esq.**  
President, CEO and Chief Counsel



# THE RIPPLE EFFECT: WAVES OF IMPACT ACROSS AMERICA



# CHANGING AMERICA'S LEGAL LANDSCAPE



What an incredible year for First Liberty's extraordinary legal team. Building upon our significant wins at the U.S. Supreme Court the past two years, we secured major victories on behalf of our faithful clients inside and outside the courthouse.

This year's most significant victory involved our defense of 35 Navy SEALs and Special Warfare members and a class of over 4,000 sailors, who objected to taking the COVID-19 vaccine because of their religious convictions. After securing court victories, we reached a historic settlement with the Navy obtaining unprecedented relief for our clients.

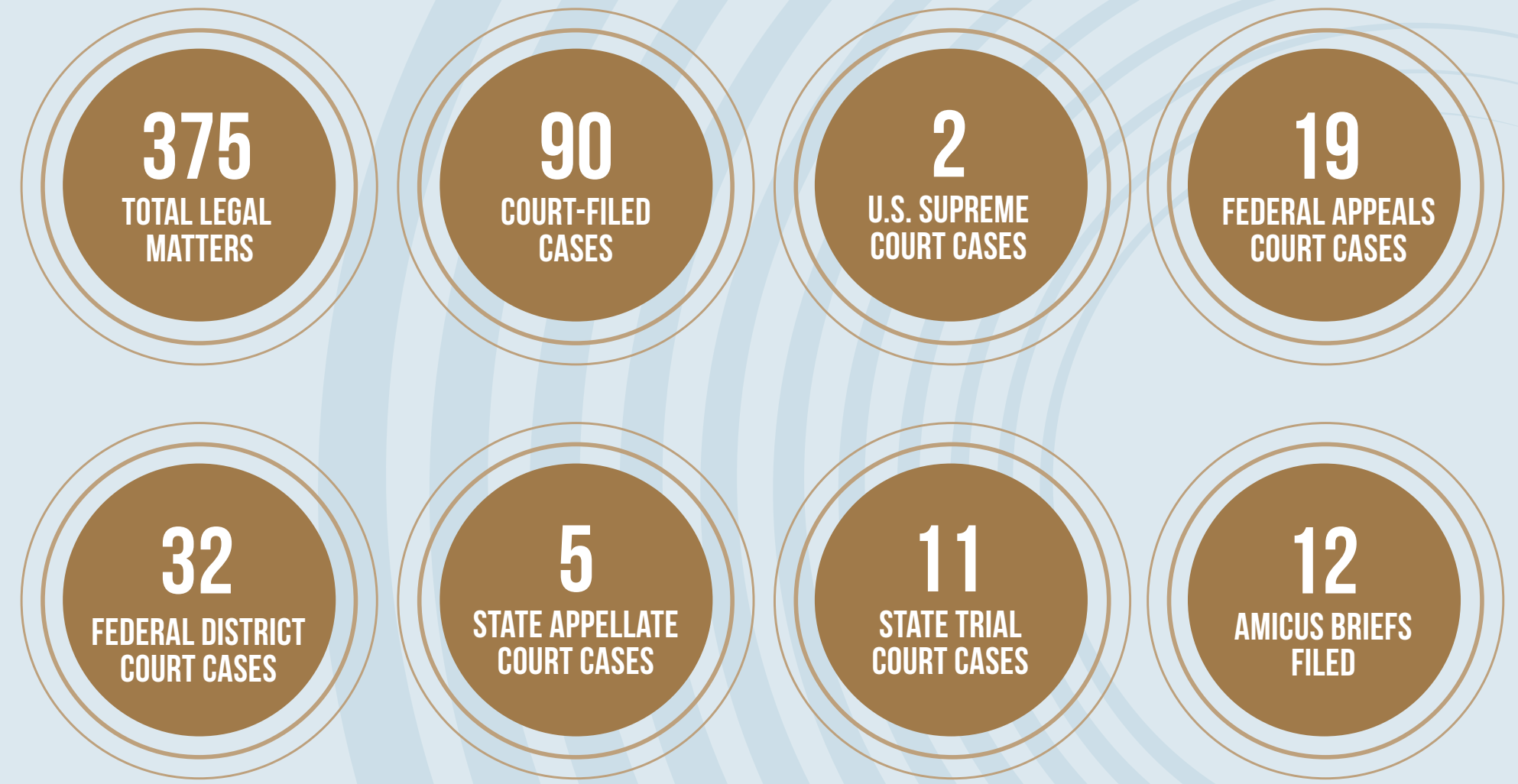
Major court wins this year also included reversing lower court decisions for a former assistant district attorney terminated because she refused the vaccine for religious reasons at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, and for a judge who faced religious discrimination from a judicial commission at the Texas Supreme Court.

We also reached numerous and favorable out of court settlements. We won for a Texas nurse practitioner in her religious employment discrimination lawsuit. We secured a victory for a college biology teacher fired for teaching biology, resulting in his reinstatement. We successfully helped the Knights of Columbus reach an agreement with the National Park Service, who after an initial denial, agreed to change its policy and allow a Memorial Day mass. We also secured a victory for a fifth grader in the Seattle area, whose school reversed course and allowed her prayer club to meet.

These victories and our continued fight in hundreds of legal matters are advancing religious freedom for all Americans.

Soli Deo Gloria,

**Jeff Mateer**  
Executive Vice President & Chief Legal Officer



# IMPACTING THE CULTURE

This has been another exciting year for the Center for Religion, Culture & Democracy, the educational and cultural advocacy arm of First Liberty!

Alumni from our student programs have launched exciting careers across industries and across the world. We count among them Senate and House staffers, journalists, teachers, policy advisors, lawyers and even a United States Congressman! Through our 2024 programs for students and faculty, we have been able to impact the educations of more than 9,000 undergraduate, graduate and law students. Our student programs still attract significant demand—each of our 2024 events has filled months early and closed with a significant waiting list.

The Religious Liberty in the States project is now in its fourth year and under new leadership. Dr. Mark David Hall and Dr. Paul Mueller assumed the roles of director and associate director respectively in 2023, and authored the 2024 RLS report which was released in July.

The reach and impact of the RLS continues to grow. Multiple states have passed new religious freedom protections including robust protections for the citizens of West Virginia, Montana, and Florida. Our staff regularly receive requests from state legislators and advocacy groups for information related to how their states can do more to protect the free exercise rights of their citizens.

All of the work of the CRCD is designed to inspire tomorrow's best citizens who understand the vital role of religion in securing democracy.



**9,000**  
STUDENTS  
IMPACTED



# HELPING STATES IMPROVE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM PROTECTIONS

Each year, the Center for Religion, Culture & Democracy publishes an index that ranks religious liberty protections for all 50 states. The Religious Liberty in the States Index is having tremendous impact nationwide.

Faith and religious liberty are being restored to where they rightfully and legally belong—and the results of the 2024 RLS reflect this. Multiple states passed bills or considered legislation to improve their religious liberty protections.

Utah, Iowa and West Virginia passed Religious Freedom Restoration Acts. Tennessee passed

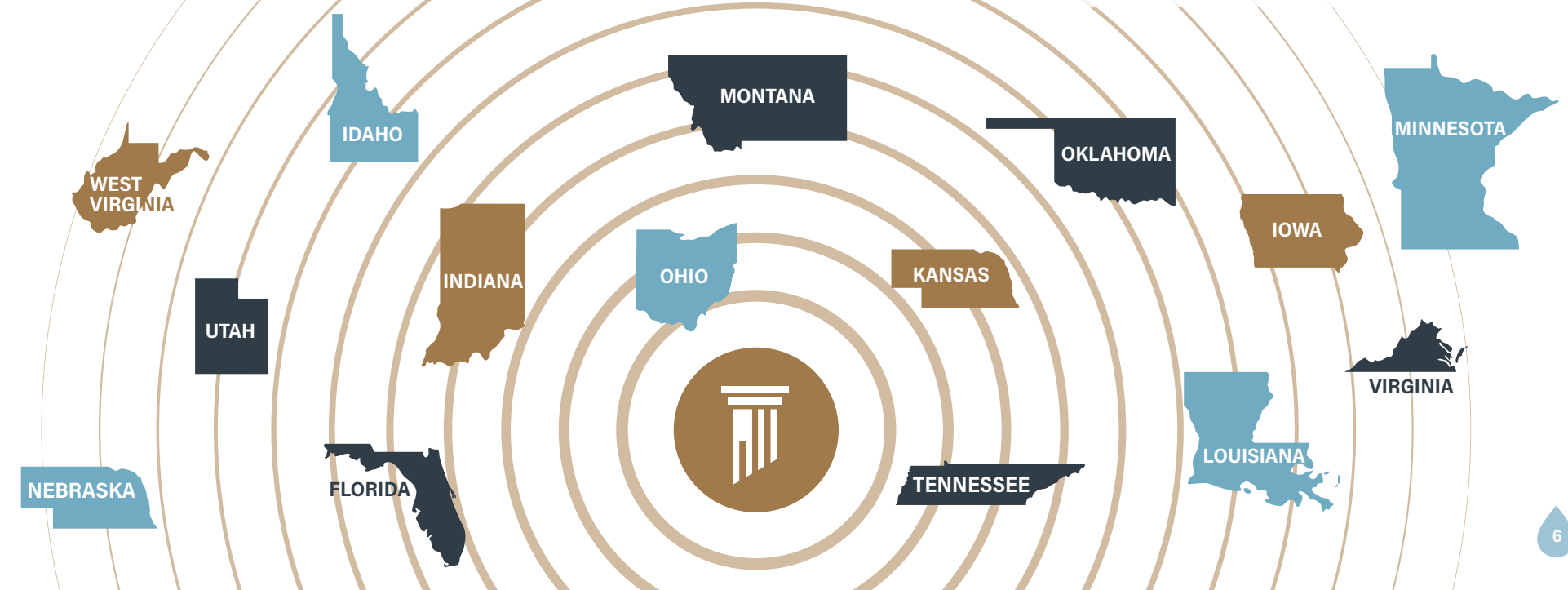
laws to protect religious freedom for parents, consumers, faith leaders and celebrate the state's religious heritage. Florida passed a law to allow volunteer chaplains in public schools. Utah strengthened religious accommodations at work. Idaho improved protections for faith-based adoption and foster care providers.

Minnesota clarified constitutional protections for religious entities. Nebraska enacted protections to ensure its citizen are free to live and work according to their faith. Oklahoma and Indiana enacted laws so students can choose to attend religious instruction. Ohio gave students more freedom to observe

religious holidays. Louisiana became the first state to say the Ten Commandments must be displayed in public schools.

These are just a select few examples. There were many other states that took positive actions for religious freedom.

We are proud of the tremendous work done by all the legal experts, researchers and fellows who worked on RLS, which remains one of our most important efforts. It was tremendously well received the last two years, and it is our hope that the 2024 edition will continue to impact the national discourse on religious freedom.



# EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

To keep advancing religious freedom, the torch must be passed from one generation to the next. First Liberty's Center for Religion, Culture & Democracy is where the brightest legal and academic minds train the next generation as they enter into careers as educators, lawyers and public servants.



# STUDYING HISTORY TO MAKE HISTORY

To bring their training to life, our emerging leaders study in locations where American history was made. This year, our Shaftesbury Fellows traveled to Boston as part of their summer program. They participated in a reading seminar in one of our country's most historic settings and had a unique opportunity to explore the city. They walked part of the Freedom Trail, saw the sights of the Boston Massacre, the Old State House, the Boston Latin School and even enjoyed a game at Fenway Park.



# A GROWING MOVEMENT OF YOUNG LEADERS

In 2024, we launched a new initiative to mobilize young leaders. We call it F3, the Future of Faith and Freedom.

F3's goal is to empower people in their 20s, 30s and 40s who aspire to be leaders in our nation's culture shift. Our F3 Ambassadors are moving the needle to secure the future of religious freedom in their communities and across the nation.

## "A WONDERFUL BLESSING"

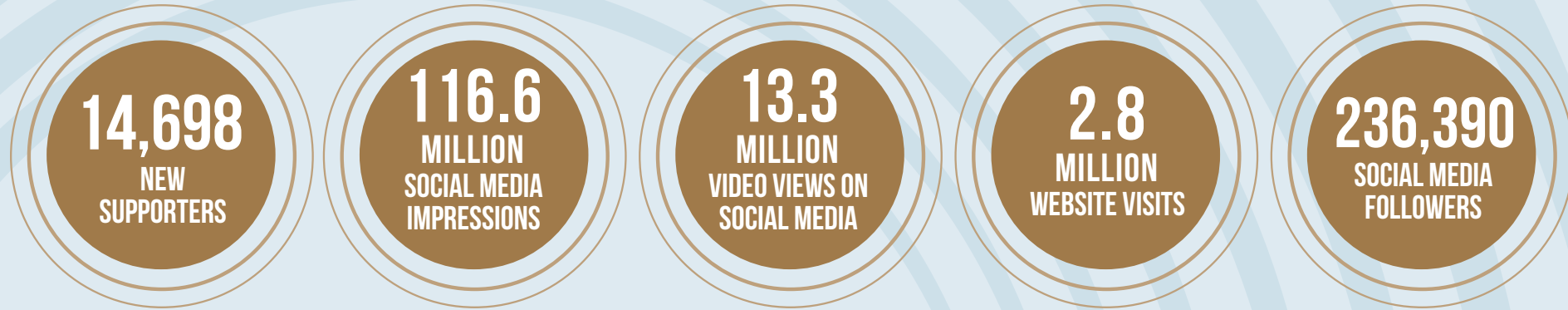


*"The Shaftesbury Fellowship was a great experience for me. The program renewed my passion for learning. It convicted me that the work of thinking well is as meaningful and necessary today as it has ever been. I am thankful for the dialogue and debates during our seminars and dinner conversations because in the struggle of thinking together the Truth shines through. Grappling with research and writing, re-reading articles and books; it will all be worth the time and effort.*

*I am especially thankful for all the time that I have been able to dedicate to what I love—philosophy—because of the Shaftesbury Fellowship. I will look back on these memories fondly. What a blessing!"*

**Alba Blanco**, Hillsdale College

## REACHING MILLIONS OF AMERICANS



More people. More reasons. More often. That's been the formula behind an incredible growth in our awareness, education and engagement efforts in 2024.

This year, we achieved major milestones in our digital marketing and communications efficacy. We're producing more content, commentary and resources than ever before. And thanks to that increased production, a record number of people are now more aware, educated and informed about the importance of protecting religious liberty.

2024 marked another year of tremendous expansion in our supporter base. We

expanded our message to reach new audiences and groups, offering them unique opportunities of how they can get involved. That paid off with 14,000 new people entering the First Liberty ecosystem because of marketing efforts and campaigns about our cases and initiatives.

Beyond sheer numbers, we cultivated and developed meaningful relationships to turn newly acquired supporters into committed and active supporters of our cause. This is clear from a 6% increase in digital fundraising and donations year over year.

We also had record-setting growth in our social media engagement. In July, one of our

short-form videos about the history of Bibles in WWII went viral with more than 9,000,000 views, surpassing all our views for the previous fiscal year! This achievement made waves and brought in over 9,000 new subscribers to our *First Liberty Live!* YouTube channel.

The ripple effect is palpable. Millions of Americans are learning about the impact of our legal victories and the resurgence of religious freedom taking place across the country.



## STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

2024 was an incredible year for First Liberty and our ministry relations team.

This year has seen some great strides in growth and in impacting individuals who want to save our culture. Our purpose is to raise funds to do the work and expand our impact and connect to others who have the same passion while working together to change our country and future.

We truly believe that our process of exploring, cultivating and developing relationships has a direct impact on God's favor and blessings of our efforts as it relates to our success.

This year, even being an election year and a challenging economy, we are already seeing a

tremendous 12% increase in revenue so far with people investing in our efforts from every state across America and a 20% increase in average gift overall.

We've made over 32,000 connections, held over 75 events and gatherings around the country and raised over \$6M through those events with outstanding pledges of nearly \$2M—a 28% increase from last year. We've added 6,348 new supporters with a 31% increase in average gift amount for new supporters.

We've also launched a new F3 initiative—the Future of Faith and Freedom. It's targeting Americans in their 20's to 40's who want to take a stand to change the culture and make a difference with their young families. This initiative

alone has opened the doors to sharing our story and engaging a demographic that truly wants to impact our culture for generations.

Our strategy for development is one that has proven very effective and one that God continues to bless.



# EXPANDING OUR OPERATIONS

First Liberty is growing! This year, we opened a new office location in Memphis, Tennessee—led by Nate Kellum, who joined our legal team as Senior Counsel in July.

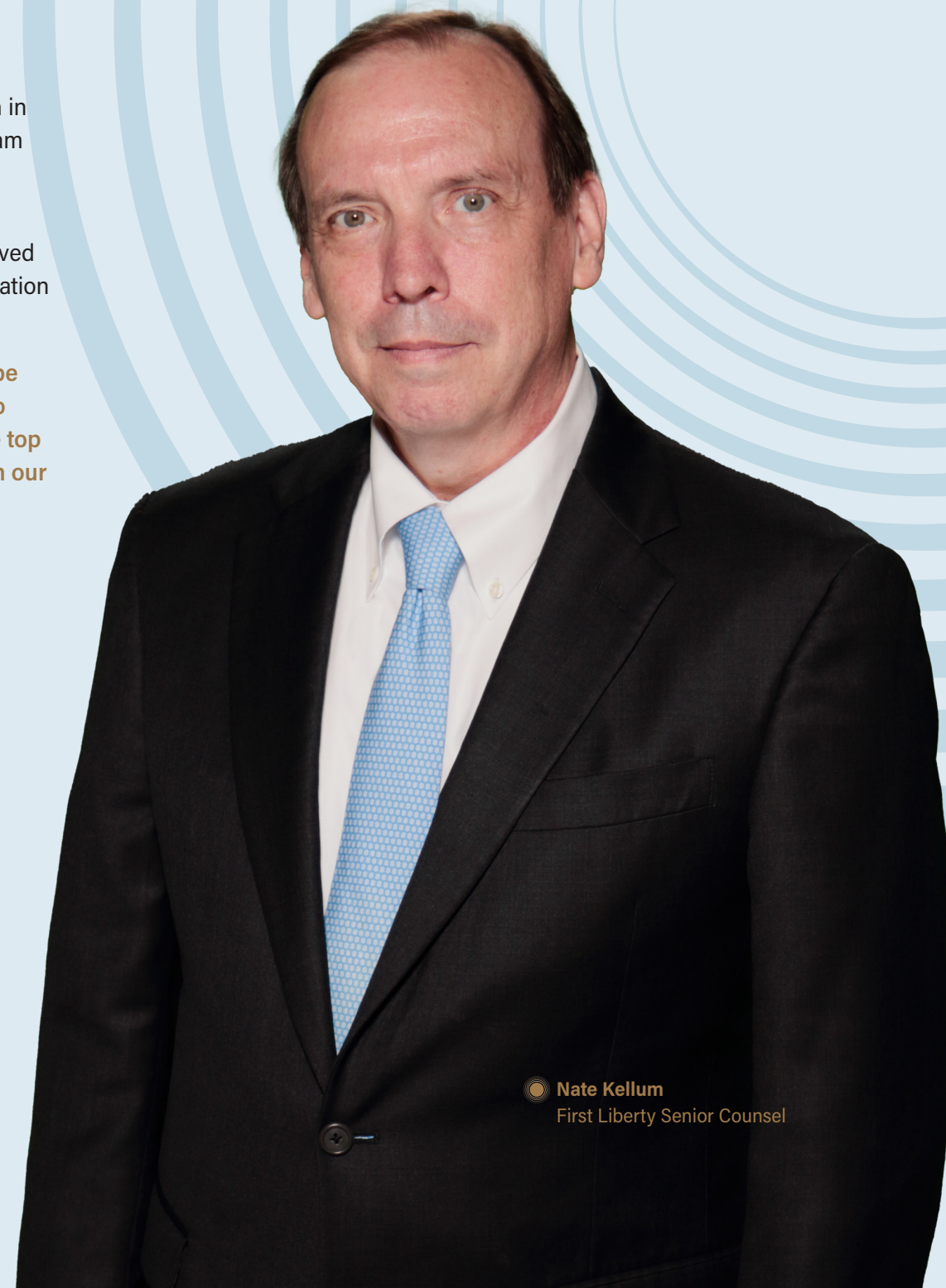
Prior to joining First Liberty, Nate founded the Center for Religious Expression, serving as its President and Chief Counsel. He also served as Senior Counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom and as Litigation Counsel for the American Family Association.

**“Nate’s extensive experience and innovative legal ideas will be a great addition to our exceptional legal team. As we strive to defend religious liberty for all Americans, it is crucial to have top talent in all areas of our firm. We are thrilled to have Nate join our team,”** said President & CEO Kelly Shackelford.

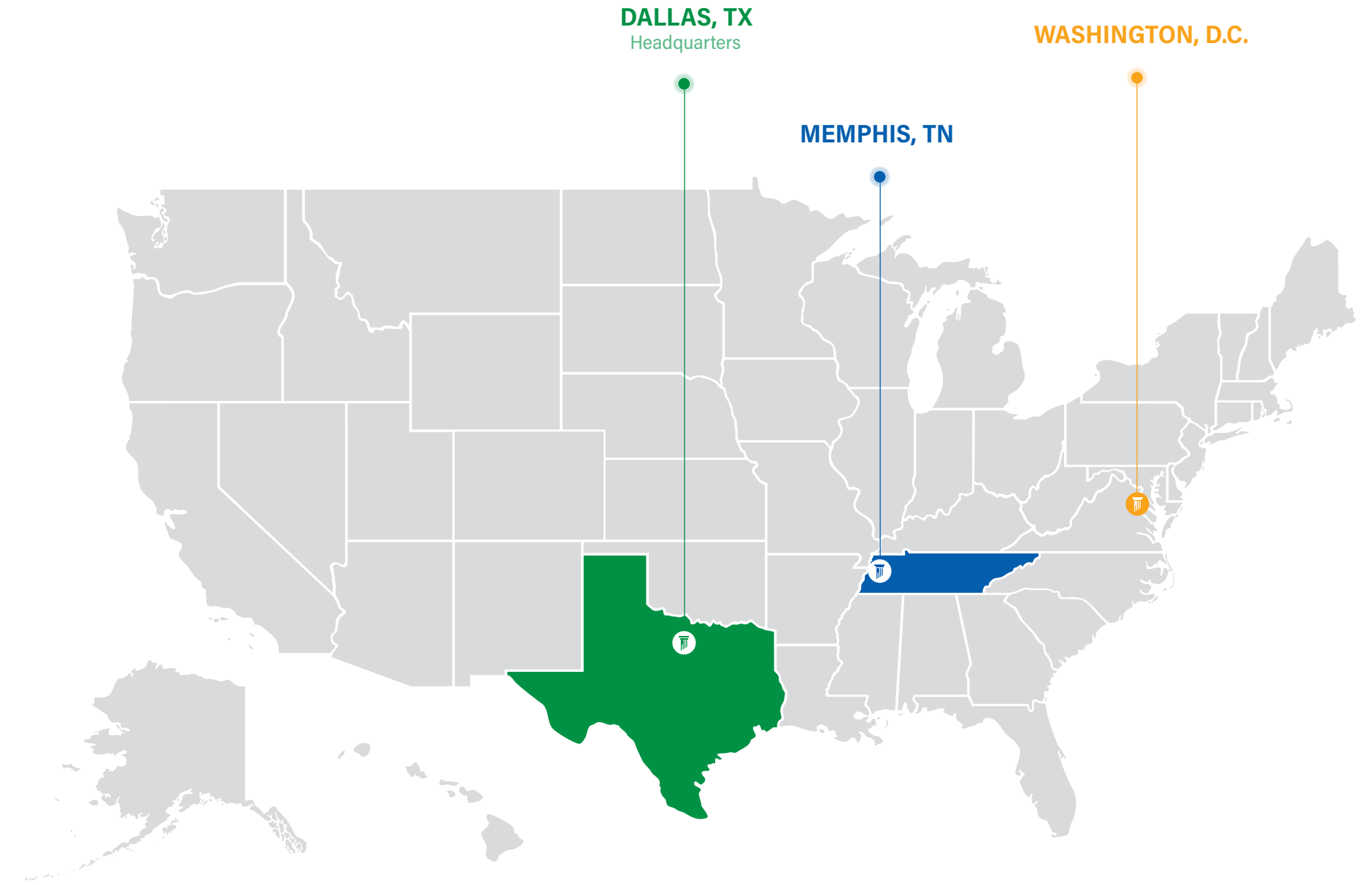
Nate expressed his enthusiasm, saying, **“I am delighted to join First Liberty in its mission to protect religious liberty for all Americans. It is essential that we safeguard our God-given, inalienable right to practice and express our faith without government interference, and no organization in America is more dedicated to this cause than First Liberty.”**

Nate is a constitutional scholar and seasoned litigator with 30+ years of experience defending religious liberty across the country. He’s handled more than 500 litigated cases and 50 appeals before various federal appellate courts, winning numerous landmark decisions. He graduated with honors from the University of Mississippi School of Law and is admitted to the bar in Tennessee and Mississippi.

Welcome aboard, Nate!



**Nate Kellum**  
First Liberty Senior Counsel





# PROCLAIMING LIBERTY THROUGHOUT ALL THE LAND

Legal victories are just one part of what we do at First Liberty. Beyond the courtroom, our mission includes speaking about religious freedom in colleges, universities, national conferences and events, legislatures and houses of worship nationwide.



## Former Press Secretary Thanks First Liberty

Kayleigh McEnany, Fox News host and former Press Secretary, attended one of our events and graciously thanked us for our work. "I cannot tell you how amazed I am by the way God is working through First Liberty," she said. "Thank you for all you do for our country!"



## Kelly Shackelford Speaks at Awaken Church

In April, President & CEO Kelly Shackelford spoke at Awaken Church in San Diego, which has 10 campuses across California, Idaho and Utah. He shared a powerful message about the future of religious freedom in America and why there's hope for more legal victories.



## Testifying at the Ohio Legislature

Matt Krause, a legal and policy advisor to First Liberty, testified before the Ohio legislature in favor of a bill that would give students more freedom to attend religious instruction during school hours. It would also empower parents who want their kids to learn more about the Bible or any religious material they choose.



## Testifying at the U.S. Civil Rights Commission

In May, attorney Camille Varone testified before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights about the positive impact religion can have on prison inmates, such as reducing reoffending rates and improving quality of life. Because inmates face difficult legal challenges, Camille urged the Commission to defend inmates' religious liberty rights.



## Inspiring the Future Generation

We're reaching future leaders in law schools and universities nationwide! This year, President & CEO Kelly Shackelford spoke at Belmont University Law School and attorney Hiram Sasser at the Harvard Faculty Club, where they shared about our mission and legal victories.



## Speaking at 2024 NRB Convention

In February, attorney Jeremy Dys participated in an expert forum at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, the world's largest association of Christian communicators. Jeremy spoke alongside many of our friends and allies during a session called "Christian Liberty: The Current Legal Landscape."



## Teaching Children About Our Country's Founding

We published a second children's book! We worked with a top-class visual artist to write and illustrate "Founded on Freedom." The book—along with an animated video—teaches children how the Declaration of Independence paved the way to bring personal freedom and religious liberty to all.



## High Praise from Louisiana Attorney General

Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill gave a shout out to First Liberty in a speech and on social media. She posted about our efforts to defend historic and religious displays, including our role in a state law that says Ten Commandments must be displayed in all public schools.

# TAKING A STAND AGAINST WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

In 2024, First Liberty asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear our case involving Fire Chief Ron Hittle, who was fired for attending a leadership conference hosted at a church.

Chief Hittle served the city of Stockton, California for 24 years. Before becoming Fire Chief, he protected the lives and property of his community as a firefighter.

In 2010, Chief Hittle's boss asked him to attend leadership training. Chief Hittle chose the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit, a renowned seminar with stellar speakers of various backgrounds and worldviews. He invited three staff members to join him, and he put his attendance on the city calendar so his supervisors would be aware. Stockton was facing a budget deficit and the firefighters paid with their own funds.

Chief Hittle told his superiors the Summit was highly beneficial for his career. But they said it was unacceptable that he attended a Christian-affiliated seminar.

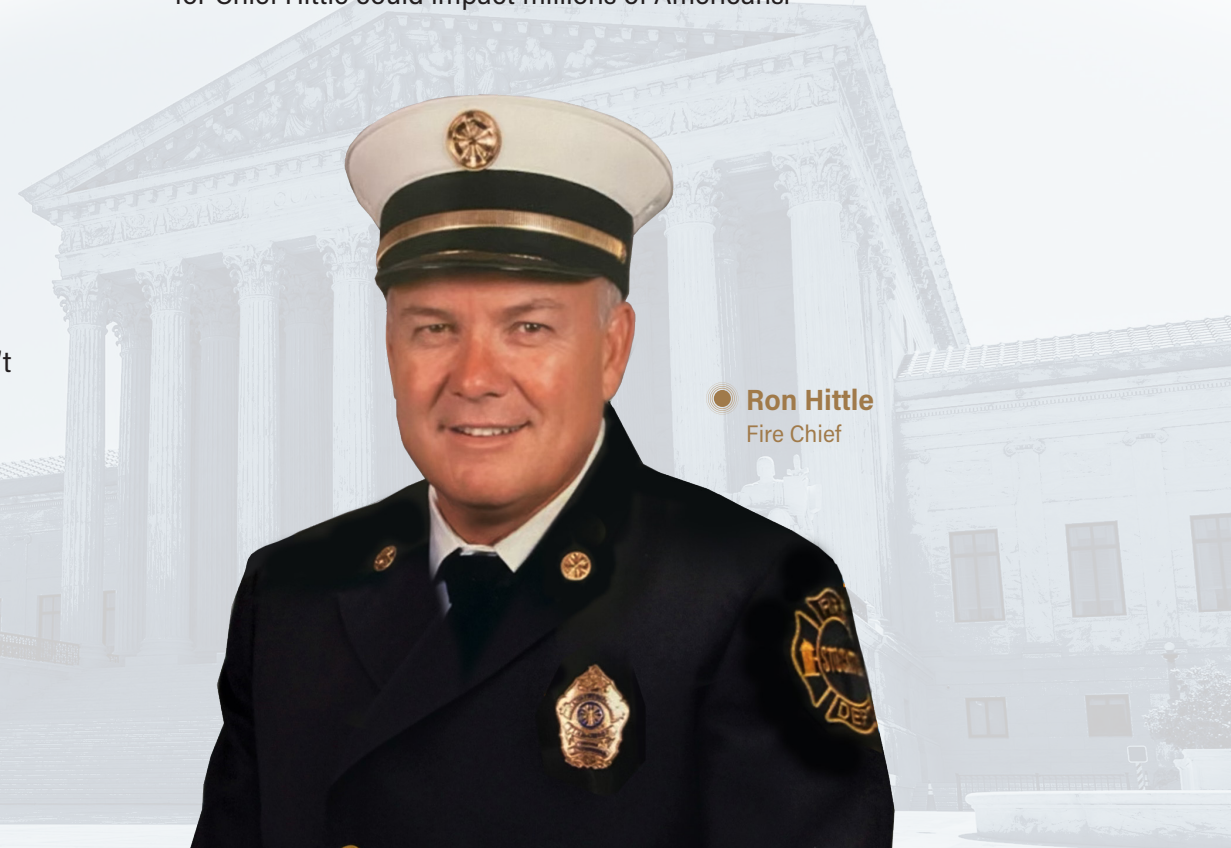
City leaders confronted Hittle with a list of "charges," the first five relating to his religious faith and activities. "I'll drag your name through the mud," the City Manager told Hittle, if he didn't accept a demotion.

They also threatened Hittle with an investigation that would be "embarrassing for you and your family," and even said "your reputation will suffer irreparable harm." Another supervisor disparaged Hittle and other Christians in the office as a "Christian Coalition" and "church clique."

After months of investigating, the city fired Chief Hittle. He sued for religious discrimination and has spent 10+ years fighting through the federal courts. He's faced numerous setbacks. But this Fire Chief isn't giving up. And neither is First Liberty.

We appealed Chief Hittle's case to the Supreme Court because it's illegal to fire an employee based on their religion. But this case isn't just about one firefighter. It affects every person of faith in the workplace.

In today's cancel culture, many employees are being forced to choose between their faith and their job. Our nation's laws protect people of faith so they should not have to face that choice. A win for Chief Hittle could impact millions of Americans.



● Ron Hittle  
Fire Chief



# LIFE-CHANGING VICTORY FOR U.S. NAVY SERVICE MEMBERS

First Liberty represented dozens of U.S. Navy SEALs, other members of the Navy Special Warfare community and Navy Special Operators who were threatened with punishment, involuntary separation and even court-martial. Why? Because they sought a legal, religious accommodation to the military vaccine mandate.

Our clients and countless other service members were horribly mistreated for staying true to their faith. Many were denied assignments, prevented from receiving critical medical care and threatened with dismissal.

In January of 2022, we won the first major legal victory for these brave Navy service members. A federal district court judge ruled that the Navy could not take any adverse action against them because of their sincere religious objections.

We eventually expanded the case to a class action that included over 4,000 Navy personnel.

After more than 2 years of additional litigation, we officially reached a settlement that benefits ALL the Navy personnel we represented. Plus, all Navy service members now have more religious freedom protections than ever before.

The settlement ensures that Navy service members who refused the COVID vaccine for religious reasons—as well as those who elected to leave service after being mistreated by the Navy—will have an opportunity to correct their records. This outcome protects the careers of thousands of America's Navy heroes.

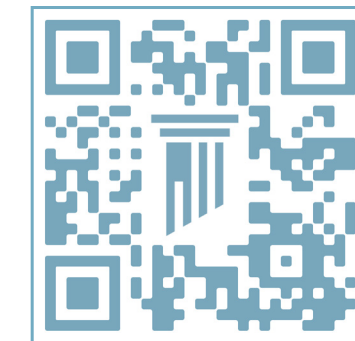


# RETIRED NAVY SEAL SHARES HIS STORY

America's Navy SEALs are regularly pushed to the brink in their training to make sure they're fully prepared for dangerous missions.

Everything changed for them, their families and their careers when the vaccine mandate came down from the brass at the Pentagon. This lengthy legal battle showed us even more how resilient these warriors are in the face of adversity.

After more than two decades as a Navy SEAL, one of these brave warriors, Gabe, tells us about the adversity he faced trying to get a religious accommodation. Gabe shares why getting legal help from First Liberty and winning in court was so meaningful to him and his family.



SCAN THE CODE TO WATCH GABE TELL HIS STORY



# HONORING OUR MILITARY HEROES

Just as America's Navy SEALs never give up on their country when serving, we at First Liberty will never give up on our service members. President, CEO & Chief Counsel Kelly Shackelford presented an award to three of our former Navy SEAL clients to honor their bravery, sacrifice and perseverance.

# FREEDOM TRIUMPHS AT HAYOVEL FIRST ISRAEL SUMMIT

In 2024, we secured a tremendous victory for the Jewish community.

With anti-Semitism on the rise, both in our country and around the world, many Americans are looking for ways to support Israel and our Jewish neighbors. HaYovel is a Christian organization that offers people a way to do just that.

HaYovel's ministry brings volunteers from all over the world to aid Israeli grape farmers in harvesting their vineyards. HaYovel's mission is to take people to serve in Israel, with the goal of connecting Christians to the land of their faith.

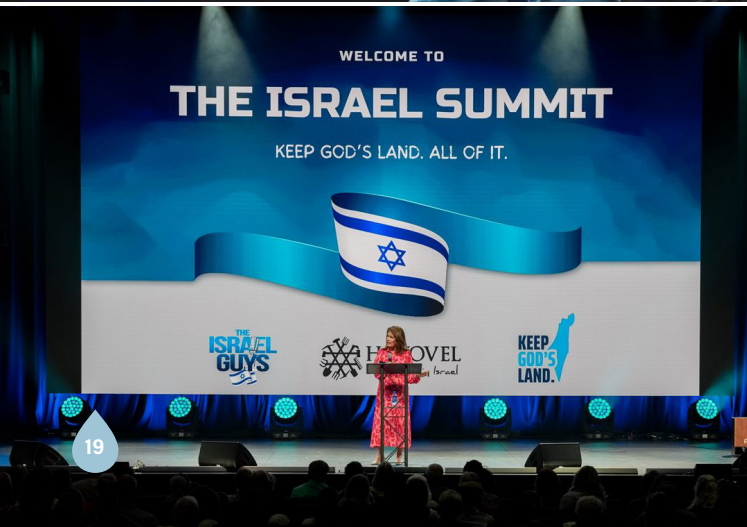
With a desire to show support and solidarity, HaYovel decided it would host the Israel Summit at a Nashville hotel. This would be the first annual gathering of Israel supporters of its kind, with the goal of equipping and educating people on how they can stop anti-Semitism. This three-day event would feature religious, political and non-profit leaders, as well as a musical artist.

But the hotel canceled the event just days before it was set to take place. Why? Because pro-Hamas agitators made threats and tried to stop the event from happening. It seemed like HaYovel wasn't going to have a space for their summit.

First Liberty stepped in to represent HaYovel and helped reach a quick and amicable resolution with the hotel. We witnessed how God turned a difficult legal situation into something truly special and encouraging.

Christian financial advisor Dave Ramsey graciously offered to host the summit at the Ramsey Solutions Event Center, located on the outskirts of Nashville. Even better, Ramsey offered the venue at no cost!

Religious freedom won the day and HaYovel's first Israel Summit was a massive success. The publicity boosted attendance and brought the local community together. HaYovel expected 400 people in attendance. That number doubled to about 800—plus many more who attended via livestream.



# FREE TO WORSHIP AT LAST!

First Liberty secured a huge victory for White Rock Chapel of Addison, a historic church located just north of Dallas.

For months, the city of Addison refused to grant permits and abused zoning regulations to keep the church from renovating its property. Hostile neighbors also kept the church from making renovations.

First Liberty stepped in and explained to city officials that churches are protected to operate free from unreasonable government interference. The city council approved the permits, giving this chapel the freedom to improve its historic property, gather for worship and Bible study, and serve its community.

But there's much more to White Rock Chapel's story. The church was originally founded by freed slaves more than a 100 years ago. Its legacy of racial reconciliation dates back to the Civil War.

Some north Texas plantation owners opened the way for circuit preachers to organize worship and prayer meetings for enslaved men, women and children. Several churches grew out of those meetings in the Upper White Rock area, according to the descendants of some who were enslaved in nearby plantations.

In 1884, families of the White Rock Chapel CME Church purchased an acre on the shady banks of the creek and built their first building of rough-hewn logs. They worshipped there for 34 years. Unfortunately, the location was devastated by flooding. In 1918, Sidney Smith Noell, who owned more than 1,200 acres in the area, donated two acres to the congregation so they could move to higher ground away from the creek.

The congregation lost one building to a storm, and another burned down in 1960. Following the fire, the congregation worshipped

in the tiny 1918 parsonage for 21 years, until the current building was dedicated in 1981. In 2000, the Texas Historical Commission designated 5555 Celestial Road in Addison, the home of White Rock Chapel, a historic location and granted it a Texas State Historical Marker. The parsonage was replaced by the current fellowship hall in 2009.

First Liberty is honored to have represented White Rock Chapel and to be a small part of its rich history. This congregation is a vivid reminder that unity, diversity and religious freedom are core values that strengthen us as a nation.



● Don & Wanda Wesson  
White Rock Chapel Leaders



# CHANGING LIVES ALL ACROSS AMERICA

We don't just win big at the U.S. Supreme Court. From local schoolboards to state courts, we're securing victories in communities all around our nation that impact the lives of everyday Americans.



## Big Win for Minnesota Muslim Moms

We helped make sure six Muslim families in Minnesota could continue raising their kids consistent with their faith. The St. Louis Park Public School District agreed to allow parents to opt their children out of sexually-based materials being taught in English classes.

## Biology Professor Gets His Job Back

Dr. Johnson Varkey was reinstated at St. Philip's College in San Antonio in Spring 2024. He'd been fired for teaching basic biological concepts, such as sex being determined by X and Y chromosomes. After we stepped in, the college guaranteed his return to the classroom.



## Brave 5th Grader Starts Prayer Club

We helped Laura, a fifth-grade student in the Seattle area, start an interfaith prayer club at her school. The school district initially denied her request. First Liberty intervened and the school district changed course. What an encouraging win for the rights of students to express their religious beliefs in school!

## Knights of Columbus Can Honor America's Fallen Heroes

The Knights of Columbus successfully held their Memorial Day Mass at the Poplar Grove National Cemetery in Virginia this year. Due to a National Park Service policy, they were initially denied this permit. We filed a lawsuit explaining that religious services can't be treated differently from secular ones.



## Nurse Practitioner Stands Up for Her Beliefs

We reached a favorable settlement for Robyn Strader. She was fired from CVS Minute Clinic due to her religious beliefs and for seeking a religious accommodation not to prescribe hormonal contraceptives. After months of fighting in court, this was the start of a new chapter in life for Robyn.

## Colorado Church Can Keep Serving People in Need

We secured an important win for The Rock, a church in Colorado. A federal judge granted a preliminary injunction that will allow the church to continue its RV ministry that gives displaced people temporary shelter and also helps them find a job and their own residence.



# CHANGING LIVES ALL ACROSS AMERICA

Every legal win helps houses of worship, ministries, pastors, students, families, military service members and everyday heroes fulfill their divinely-inspired calling. Because of what we do, people of all faiths can do what they do.



### Military Hero's Career Saved

We secured a win for Matthew McCarthy of the Maine Air National Guard. Matthew's display of the historic "Appeal to Heaven" flag on his property led to a reprimand that kept him from being promoted to the rank of Captain. First Liberty fought back, and the reprimand was withdrawn.



### Texas Judge's Wedding Refusal Upheld

Our client Judge Dianne Hensley got a great victory! The Texas Supreme Court decided that Judge Hensley did not deserve to be reprimanded for refusing to perform weddings that went against her religious beliefs.



### Seattle Pastor is Free to Share His Faith in Public

Seattle police arrested Pastor Matthew Meinecke for sharing the Gospel at two public events. We secured a complete and full victory in court for the Pastor. He's once again free to read the Bible and share his faith without fear of arrest.



### Federal Court Victory for Jewish Attorney

Rachel Spivack requested a religious accommodation to the vaccine mandate. But the Philadelphia District Attorney's office denied it and then fired her. We secured a favorable ruling in federal appeals court that allowed Rachel's case to go before a jury because the city showed religious hostility.



### WallBuilders' Ads Displayed in America's Capital

A federal district court ordered the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to accept and run two religious-themed ads that were unconstitutionally rejected. WallBuilders is now running its ads across metro stations in Washington, D.C.



### Hulu Approves Church's Worship Service Ad

This year, we helped Hulen Street Church get their worship service ads approved. Streaming platform Hulu initially denied the church's 22-second video that invited people to attend. Less than 36 hours after we sent a letter, Hulu responded positively and allowed the ad to run.



# REMEMBERING THE BLADENSBURG PEACE CROSS

2024 marks the 5-year anniversary of our victory for the Bladensburg Peace Cross. The ruling in *American Legion v. American Humanist Association* ushered in a new era for religious freedom and public religious displays.

The Bladensburg Peace Cross was built to honor 49 heroes of Prince Georges County, Maryland who died in WWI. After the war, the mothers of these men formed a committee to build a memorial.

In September 1919, a site-dedication ceremony was held where the memorial would one day stand. In 1922, the effort was turned over to newly returned veterans of The American Legion. The Gold Star Mothers, with the help from The Legion, inaugurated the Bladensburg Peace Cross in 1925.

For over 90 years, the memorial stood as a symbol of sacrifice, and served as a gathering

point for veterans' ceremonies and events. But the American Humanist Association filed a lawsuit in 2014 claiming the memorial was unconstitutional and had to be removed.

We represented The American Legion in federal court for several years, arguing the memorial is constitutional because it is part of our nation's history and tradition. Lower courts ruled against it. One appellate court judge even suggested "chopping the arms" off the cross as a "solution."

Defiling or destroying the memorial was not an option. So, we took the case to the Supreme Court.

In June of 2019—100 years after the first shovel broke ground—First Liberty's Supreme Court victory saved the Peace Cross from destruction. The Court upheld the memorial as constitutional and set a major precedent. For cases involving religious displays, the Court

would apply a more constitutionally faithful "history and tradition" test.

That precedent restored protections for crosses, Ten Commandments monuments outside government buildings, nativity scenes and Menorahs in city parks and many more historic displays with religious references and imagery.

Five years later, the impact of this win is multiplied across the country whenever a religious display comes under attack. Now, Americans have the legal foundation to restore religious memorials, displays, seals and symbols in their communities—and to confidently defend them if anyone tries to tear them down.

# CELEBRATING TOGETHER ON FIRST FREEDOM DAY

In 2024, we held our second annual First Freedom Day—a special day we set aside to celebrate our historic success at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Because of First Liberty's precedent-setting victories in our Coach Kennedy, Faithful Carrier, Treat Children Fairly and Bladensburg Peace Cross cases, Americans are experiencing more religious freedom than at any point in the last 50 years.

Our wins overturned decades of bad precedent and are having a seismic impact on the law. Religious freedom is being restored in virtually every area of our lives: from the military, to our children's schools, houses of worship, charities, businesses and the marketplace, as well as our local veterans' memorials and neighborhoods.

This legal momentum means the path is now clear for powerful expressions of faith. For the first time in more than a generation, religious Americans have the opportunity to go on offense and

change the future so their children and grandchildren can enjoy more religious liberty than ever before. We're witnessing a revival and a new dawn for religious freedom in America.

First Freedom Day is a great reminder that when we work as one team, in one fight, with one purpose and through God's grace, we can accomplish great things.





# EDUCATING AMERICANS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THEIR VOTE

Elections have consequences. A single election can have a ripple effect not only on millions of Americans today, but also for future generations. That's why we launched a major educational and non-partisan initiative this year to inform Americans about the impact of the election on religious liberty.

Our team built a dedicated webpage ([www.firstliberty.org/elections](http://www.firstliberty.org/elections)) complete with a variety of practical tools, information, videos and shareable content, all of which was designed to help people of faith learn how their vote could make a difference for our nation and for freedom.

We created several free, downloadable resources explaining the issues at stake in the 2024 election. This featured a side-by-side comparison of the two presidential candidates' records on key faith-related issues, including religious liberty, judges, free speech, family, life, the military and more.

We also distributed a legal guide explaining the rights of pastors and churches during elections, as well as materials that helped Americans understand how a vote for president impacts the Supreme Court, judges, bills in Congress and their rights under the law.

To amplify this initiative, we used targeted digital advertising in addition to speaking engagements and person-to-person activation at key events around the country.



# EDUCATING AMERICANS ABOUT SUPREME COURT REFORM

In July, the Biden administration unveiled a plan to make sweeping changes to the U.S. Supreme Court. Those proposals included ending lifetime tenure for Supreme Court justices and imposing a binding code of ethics.

Following this announcement, First Liberty reactivated Supreme Court Coup, our comprehensive marketing campaign to educate Americans about court reform. Supreme Court Coup was initially launched in 2021 in response to court expansion efforts by the Biden administration. It continued to be one of First Liberty's major initiatives over the past several years. After court reform resurfaced as a national issue in mid-2024, our team went to work to ensure Americans were properly informed.

We launched a \$2 million effort, which featured television and digital ads that ran on Fox News, Tucker Carlson, Glenn Beck, Newsmax BlazeTV, Matt Walsh and other popular platforms. We even advertised on a billboard in Times Square! We also conducted expert research, funded national polling and revamped our educational microsite ([www.supremecoup.com](http://www.supremecoup.com)) with new resources, articles and op-eds.

Through strategic ad buys and placement, we spread the word to Americans nationwide, asking them to sign our Declaration of Judicial Independence. This online petition allowed hundreds of thousands of people to make their voice heard in opposition to reforms that would threaten judicial independence and the rule of law. More than **750,000** Americans signed on!

The Supreme Court Coup microsite has received more than **8 million** visits since its launch. The site garnered **1.1 million** visits this year alone.



# STEERING STORMY SEAS

Last year's challenges to religious liberty from adversarial philosophies in America were considerable and remain so to an even larger extent now. Yet despite these threats our legal and educational efforts sent shock waves through the religious liberty landscape as many of our victories upset long-held legal precedent and refreshed Americans' ability to freely exercise their faith.

Because of support now coming from most every state in the Union, and our sound stewardship of those resources, I happily report the financial condition of First Liberty Institute remains very strong.

Once our FY23/24 audit concludes, revenue for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, although down modestly from the two previous years, will be the third highest in our history. Importantly, revenue for the current fiscal year is rebounding in remarkable fashion, even as people are buffeted by inflation-upon-inflation, war in the Middle East, tensions with China, assassination attempts, and political vitriol.

Throughout this tumult, the reaction from patriotic, faithful Americans like you is heartening. In fact, during this election year, faithful Americans probably voted with their dollars in the financial and donation markets, as they yearn for saner times. The number of legal matters (375) remains strong although down from anticipated reductions in pandemic-related cases in previous years.

We spend about 80 cents of every dollar on programs and, as a pro bono law firm, this is critical as our clients never pay a penny for legal costs. We offer this even though we are almost entirely dependent upon generous donations—legal fee recovery is not a normal occurrence in religious liberty law, and so contributions from supporters are a lifeline to our clients.

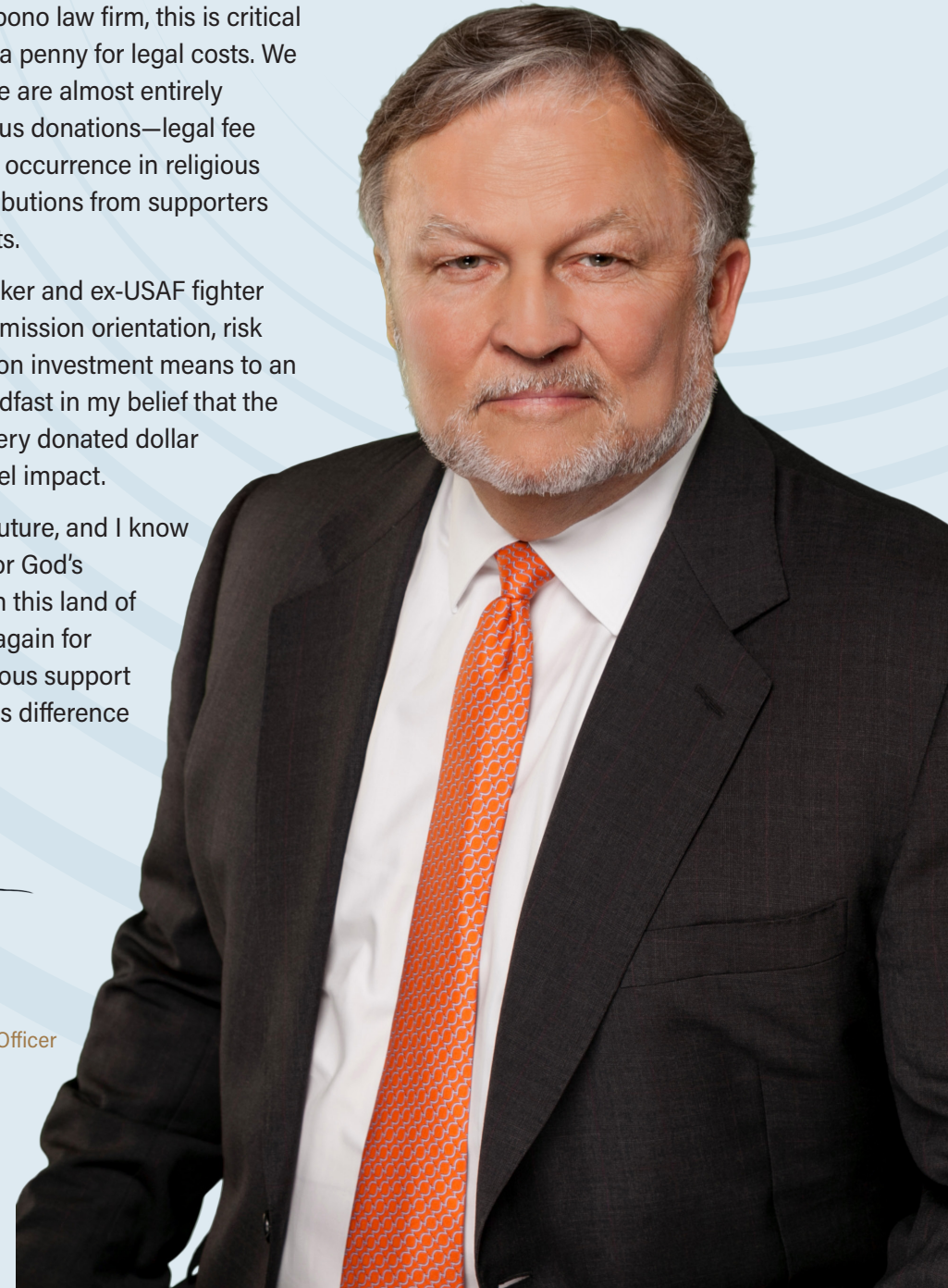
As an ex-Wall Street banker and ex-USAF fighter pilot, I understand what mission orientation, risk assessment, and return on investment means to an enterprise. I remain steadfast in my belief that the investment return on every donated dollar here yields platinum-level impact.

I am hopeful about the future, and I know you join me in praying for God's continued blessing upon this land of opportunity. Thank you again for your prayerful and gracious support – you make an enormous difference to America!

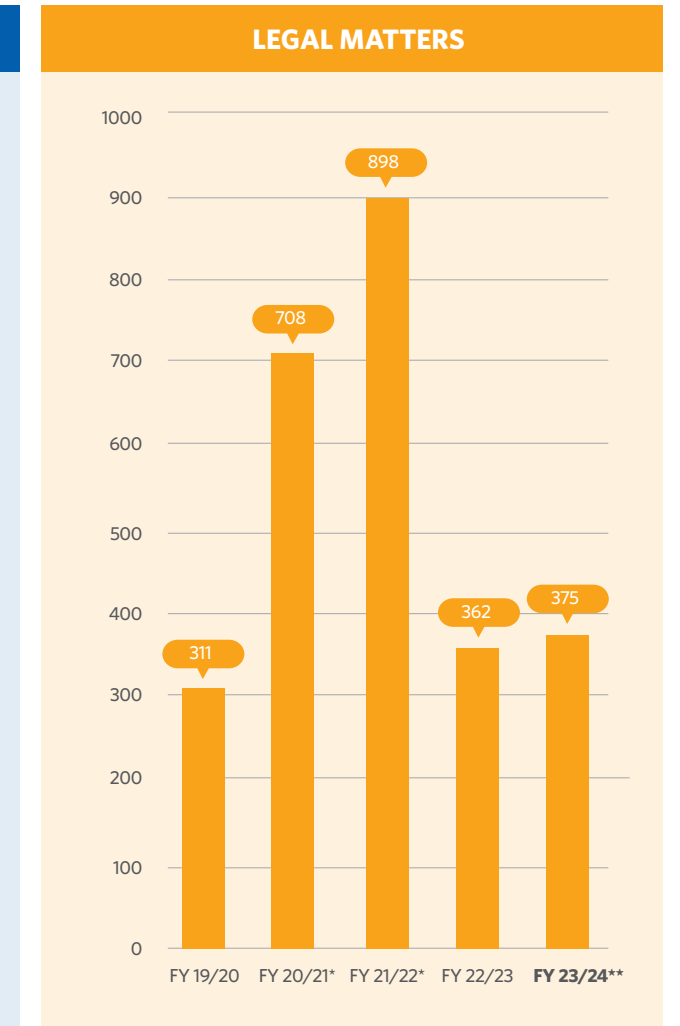
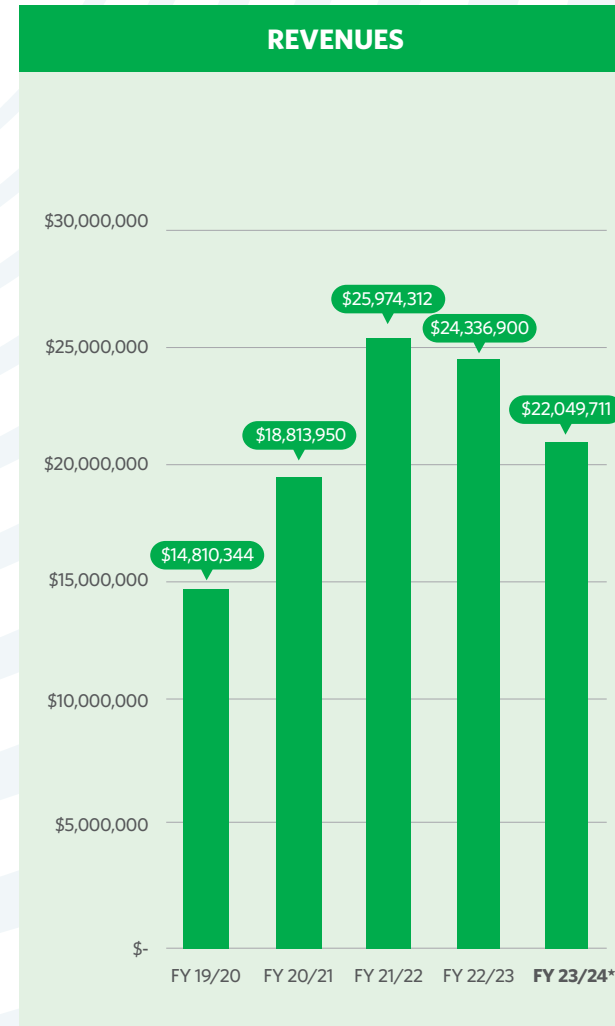
Gratefully,



**David K. Holmes**  
Executive Vice President  
Chief Operating & Financial Officer



# FINANCIALS



\*Spikes in legal matters due to COVID-19 pandemic  
\*\*Estimated until conclusion of the FY 23/24 audit



Visit [www.FirstLiberty.org/2024Financials](http://www.FirstLiberty.org/2024Financials) for more information.

# Fighting for What Matters Most™

*Protecting and restoring religious liberty is the most important battle of our lifetime.*

*Here's how you can join First Liberty's growing army:*



## GIVE TODAY

Supporting First Liberty with a gift helps us stay on the frontlines of the battle, defending religious Americans across the country free of charge.



**FLI Insider**

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