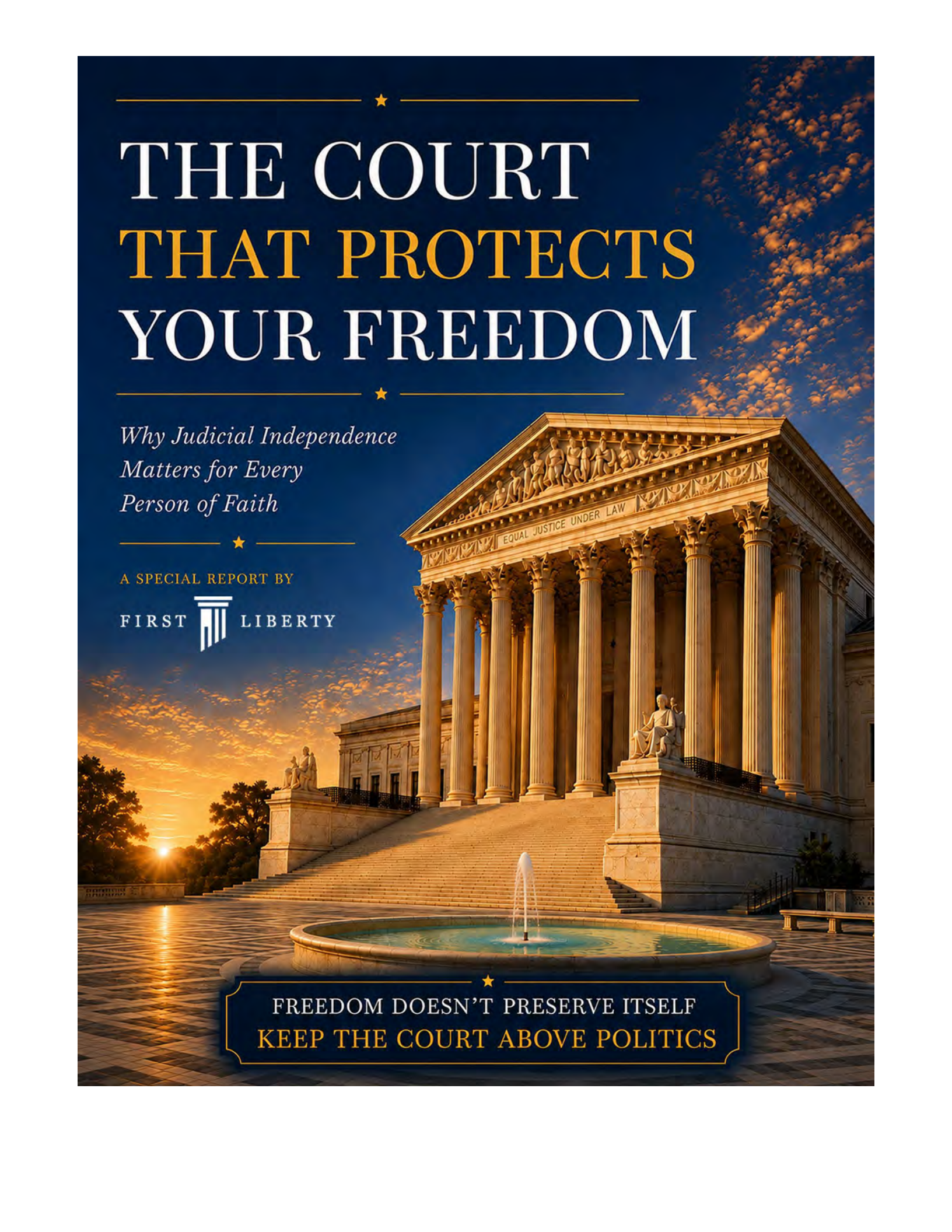




THE COURT THAT PROTECTS YOUR FREEDOM

*Why Judicial Independence
Matters for Every
Person of Faith*

A SPECIAL REPORT BY

FIRST  LIBERTY

FREEDOM DOESN'T PRESERVE ITSELF
KEEP THE COURT ABOVE POLITICS

— DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The pages that follow explore why that responsibility still matters today.

A few years ago, I stood outside the United States Supreme Court with Coach Joe Kennedy after one of the most significant religious liberty victories in our nation's history.

Coach Kennedy simply wanted the freedom to quietly pray after football games, a practice he had followed for years.

When the Court ruled in his favor, millions of Americans celebrated the outcome. As I reflected on that moment, I realized Coach Kennedy's victory represented something much bigger than one football coach.

It reminded me that our freedoms endure only when judges faithfully interpret the Constitution.

That's why I wanted to share this special report with you.

As you read, I hope you'll consider one simple question:

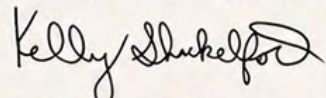
Will the choices we make today strengthen the Court's ability to protect our constitutional freedoms—or weaken it?

Above all, I hope you'll come away with a deeper appreciation for this simple truth:

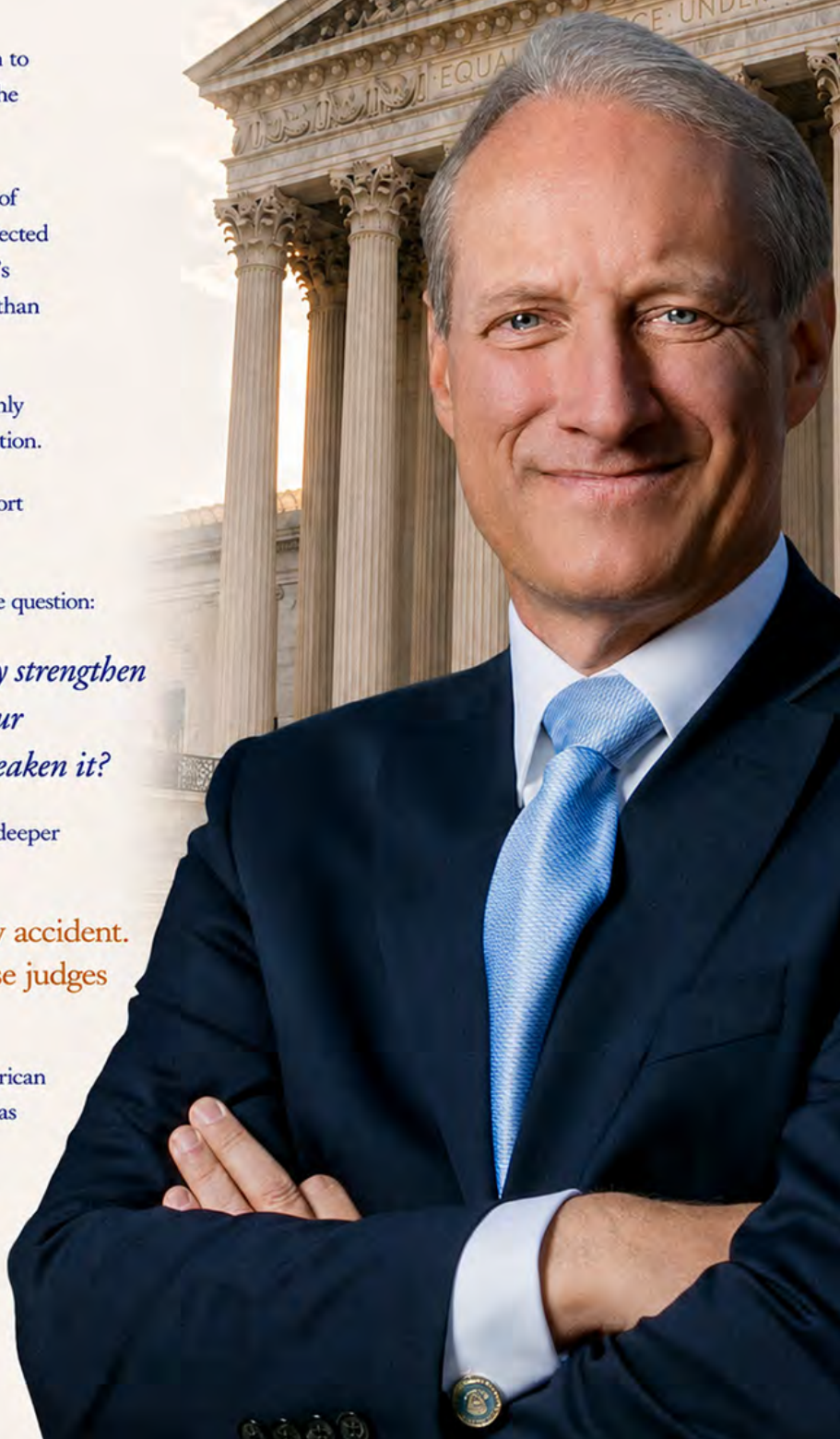
These victories didn't happen by accident. They were made possible because judges followed the Constitution.

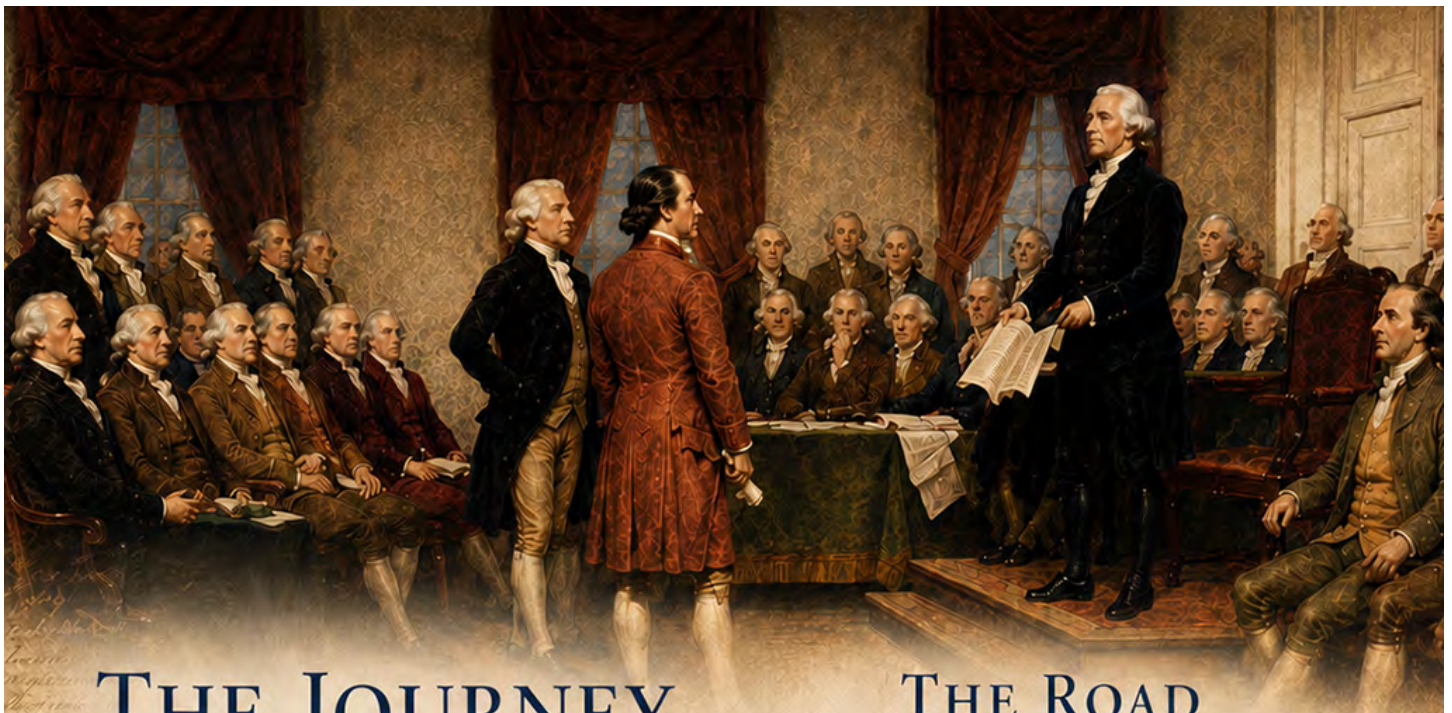
That's one of the greatest safeguards of American freedom. And it's one our generation now has the responsibility to preserve.

Thank you for taking this journey with us,



Kelly Shackelford
President, CEO & Chief Counsel
First Liberty Institute





THE JOURNEY to FREEDOM

America's fight for liberty didn't end when independence was declared.

The Founders knew that freedom would not survive under a government of men unless power itself was limited. They set out to build a nation where no single person—or branch—could dominate, and where the rights of every individual were protected by law, not by politics.

After long debate, they created the Constitution that established separation of powers—and an independent judiciary as its essential safeguard.

This is the story of how liberty was designed—and why it must be defended.

THE ROAD to the CONSTITUTION



1776

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

A bold declaration that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights.



1781

ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

America's first government—weak and unable to secure the blessings of liberty.



1787

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

The Founders gathered in Philadelphia to design a stronger, more perfect union.



1787

CONSTITUTION RATIFIED

We the People established the Constitution to secure liberty for generations to come.

WHY THE COURTS MUST REMAIN INDEPENDENT

The Founders understood that liberty cannot survive if those in power control those who interpret the law.

An independent judiciary was their solution—a principled barrier between the people and the politicians, between power and the Constitution.

It ensures every person is equal before the law, protects constitutional rights even when they are unpopular, and keeps justice from being swayed by politics or pressure.

This was not an afterthought. It was the constitutional safeguard that makes all our freedoms possible.

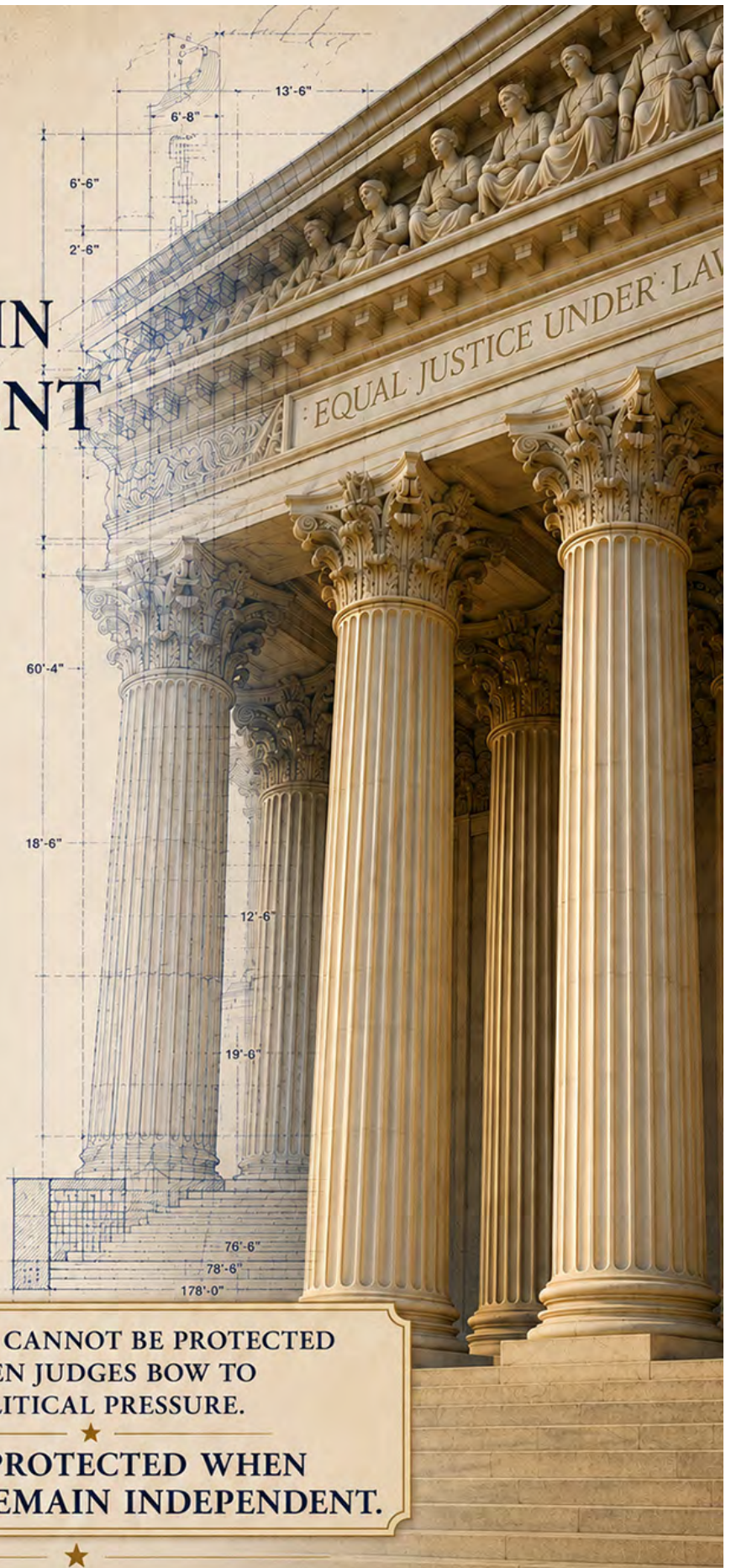
“THE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS OF JUSTICE IS PECULIARLY ESSENTIAL IN A CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC.”

— ALEXANDER HAMILTON
Federalist No. 78



FREEDOM CANNOT BE PROTECTED
WHEN JUDGES BOW TO
POLITICAL PRESSURE.

IT IS PROTECTED WHEN
JUDGES REMAIN INDEPENDENT.



WHY JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE MATTERS TODAY

Every day, our rights are challenged by government—not just in Washington, but in every community across America.

An independent judiciary ensures no one—not the president, not Congress, not the crowd—can trample the Constitution.

It is the safeguard that keeps liberty alive for everyone, regardless of who holds power or what the moment demands.

A COURT MORE UNITED THAN THE HEADLINES SUGGEST

During the Supreme Court's October 2024 Term, agreement among the justices was the rule, not the exception.



COALITION ALIGNMENTS (OCTOBER TERM 2024)



The Court's work cannot be reduced to a simple partisan narrative. Justices appointed by different presidents and shaped by different philosophies frequently reach agreement by applying shared legal principles.



Source: Adam Feldman and Jake S. Truscott, *Supreme Court Statpack: October Term 2024-2025 (Extended Version)*, EmpiricalSCOTUS.

“Justice is the steady and perpetual will to accord to every man his due.”

— ULPIAN

An independent Court
isn't just a constitutional principle.



IT'S THE REASON
**AMERICANS
ARE FREE**
TO LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH.



*Meet the First Liberty clients whose freedoms
were protected because judges followed
the Constitution instead of bowing
to political pressure.*



★ FIRST FREEDOM RESTORED

The Freedom to Pray

★ COACH JOE KENNEDY

It was a cool October evening. The game had ended. Coach Joe Kennedy walked alone to the 50-yard line, took a knee, and bowed his head in prayer.

He had done it quietly after every game for years. This time, school officials ordered him to stop.

And because he stayed true to his faith, he was fired.

But that wasn't the end of his story.

It was the beginning of a Supreme Court case that would strengthen religious freedom for millions of Americans.

The Court ruled that Coach Kennedy's constitutional rights had been violated.

In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court affirmed that the Constitution protects private religious expression—even for public employees.

WHY THIS VICTORY WAS POSSIBLE

This victory didn't happen by accident.

When judges follow the Constitution, Americans remain free to live out their faith—even in the public square.



★ FIRST FREEDOM RESTORED

The Freedom to Work

★
GERALD GROFF

For Gerald Groff, Sunday wasn't just another day. It was a day set apart for worship.

That's one reason he accepted a job with the United States Postal Service, where Sunday deliveries weren't required.

When the Postal Service began requiring Sunday deliveries, Gerald requested a religious accommodation.

Because his request was denied, Gerald walked away from the career he loved.

But that wasn't the end of his story.

It was the beginning of a Supreme Court case that strengthened workplace protections for religious Americans across the country.

Faithfully interpreting the text of federal law, the Supreme Court made clear that employers must do far more to accommodate sincerely held religious beliefs.

WHY THIS VICTORY WAS POSSIBLE

★
This victory didn't happen by accident.

When judges follow the text of the law, Americans don't have to choose between their faith and their livelihood.



★ FIRST FREEDOM RESTORED

The Freedom to Parent

THE CARSON FAMILY

Like every parent, the Carsons wanted the freedom to choose the best education for their children.

Because their community had no public high school, Maine provided tuition assistance to attend another school.

But there was one catch.

The state told the Carsons they could choose almost any school—except one that was religious.

The Carsons believed parents—not government—should decide how their children are educated.

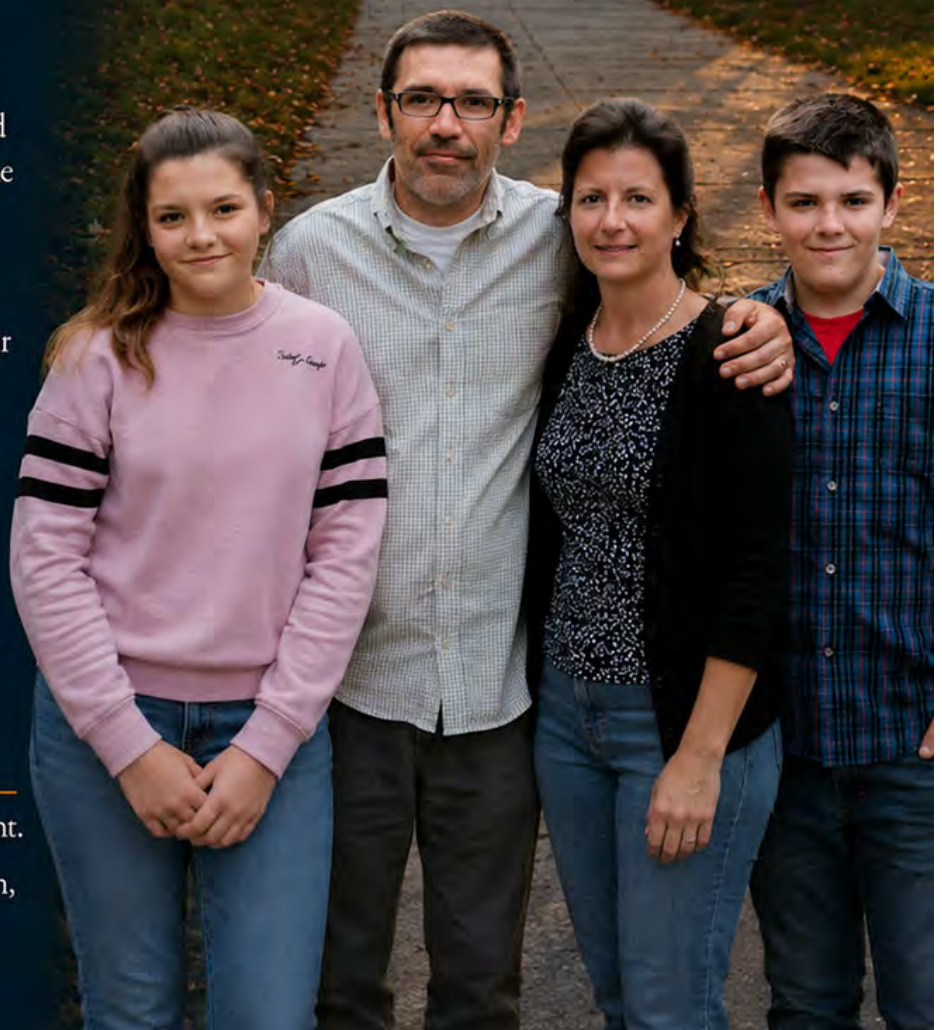
The Supreme Court agreed.

The Court ruled that government cannot deny public benefits because families choose a religious education.

WHY THIS VICTORY WAS POSSIBLE

This victory didn't happen by accident.

When judges follow the Constitution, parents remain free to direct their children's education.



★ FIRST FREEDOM RESTORED

The Freedom to Remember

THE BLADENSBURG PEACE CROSS

It's more than a cross.
It's a gravestone.

More than a century ago, grieving Gold Star Mothers raised the Bladensburg Peace Cross to honor 49 local men who never returned from World War I.

Its purpose was simple:

Remember sacrifice. Honor service. Preserve history.

Decades later, the memorial came under threat—not because of those it honored, but because it was shaped like a cross.

The American Legion asked the Supreme Court to protect this tribute to America's fallen heroes.

The Supreme Court stood with the American Legion.

The Court recognized that monuments like the Peace Cross are part of our nation's history and heritage. Their religious symbolism does not diminish the sacrifice they commemorate.

WHY THIS VICTORY WAS POSSIBLE

This victory didn't happen by accident.

When judges follow the Constitution, our nation's history and religious heritage remain protected.



LOOKING AHEAD



THIS IS WHAT AN INDEPENDENT COURT PROTECTS.



Some of America's
most important freedoms
are lived quietly.

The freedom to
worship.

The freedom to live
according to your *faith.*

The freedom to pass that
faith to the *next generation.*

Each of these freedoms exists
because our Constitution is
faithfully applied by an
independent judiciary.

That is what we must
preserve—together.



LOOKING AHEAD



The Inheritance Worth Protecting



*The freedoms we protect today become
the inheritance we leave tomorrow.*

America's Founders did their part.

They established a constitutional system
designed to preserve liberty for generations.

The judges who faithfully applied
that Constitution did theirs.

Ordinary Americans like Coach Kennedy,
Gerald Groff, the Carson family, and the
American Legion did theirs by standing
for their freedoms.

Now it's our turn.

Our responsibility isn't merely
to preserve the Supreme Court.

It is to preserve the constitutional
principles that protect religious liberty—
and countless other freedoms—
for generations to come.

The freedoms we enjoy today will become
the inheritance we leave tomorrow.



★ FIRST FREEDOM RESTORED

Why First Liberty

The freedoms you've read about in these pages didn't protect themselves.

As the largest legal nonprofit dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom in America, First Liberty has spent decades protecting the constitutional freedoms of people from every walk of life.

Today, First Liberty is 11–0 before the United States Supreme Court and has achieved a 90%-win rate across all legal matters.

Those victories are possible because ordinary Americans are willing to stand for their convictions—and because First Liberty stands with them.

That's why we provide every client with the highest level of legal representation—without ever sending them a bill.

Because protecting religious freedom should never depend on a person's ability to afford an attorney.

Our work isn't finished.

New challenges continue to emerge.

That's why First Liberty remains committed to defending an independent judiciary—because when judges faithfully apply the Constitution, Americans remain free to live according to their faith.

FIRST LIBERTY

FIRST LIBERTY BY THE NUMBERS



11–0

U.S. Supreme Court
victories



90%

Overall legal
win rate



100% Free

Legal representation
for every client



Largest

Legal nonprofit
exclusively dedicated to
defending religious liberty

We the People

*“It is emphatically the province
and duty of the judicial department
to say what the law is.”*

— CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN MARSHALL
Marbury v. Madison (1803)

★

FREEDOM DOESN'T PRESERVE ITSELF

Every generation inherits America's freedoms.
What we do with that inheritance determines
what the next generation receives.

America's Founders didn't simply declare liberty.
They established a constitutional system designed
to preserve it. Now it's our turn to ensure that
inheritance endures.

The stories you've just read remind us that judicial
independence isn't an abstract constitutional principle.
It's what protects the freedom of ordinary Americans
to live according to their faith.

Together, we can help ensure that the Court remains independent,
that the Constitution remains our nation's highest law, and that
future generations inherit the same freedoms we've been
blessed to enjoy.

★

HELP PROTECT THE COURT THAT PROTECTS OUR FREEDOM

Join thousands of Americans committed to keeping the
Supreme Court independent, faithful to the Constitution, and above politics.



ADD YOUR NAME

Join the movement to
protect an independent
Supreme Court.



ONE NATION.

ONE CONSTITUTION.

ONE INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY.



★
EVERY GENERATION
INHERITS AMERICA'S FREEDOMS.

★
EVERY GENERATION
MUST STAND TO
PRESERVE THEM.



— JOIN THE MOVEMENT —
Protect the Court that Protects Our Freedom.



SCAN TO ADD YOUR NAME

*Help safeguard freedom
for the next generation.*

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