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Booklet, 'How Faith Communities Support Children's Learning in Public Schools,' 14 pages

*How Faith
Communities
Support Children's
Learning in Public
Schools*



PARTNERSHIP
for Family
Involvement
in Education



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Booklet, "Religious Expression in Public Schools," 14 pages



RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

**RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
September 1999**

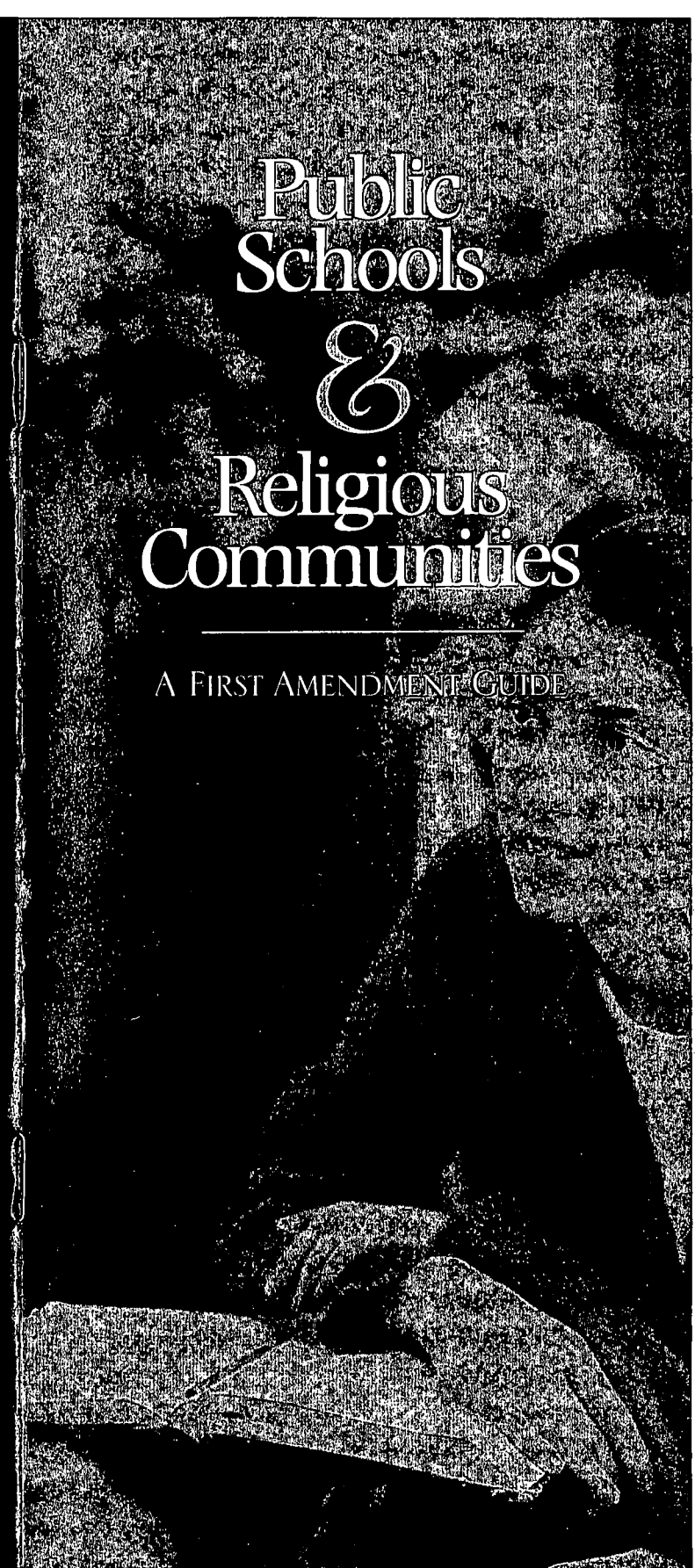
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Booklet, 'Public Schools & Religious Communities,' 12 pages



Public Schools & Religious Communities

A FIRST AMENDMENT GUIDE

For more information and additional copies of this guide, please contact:

American Jewish Congress

15 East 84th St.
New York, NY 10028
(212) 879-4500

Christian Legal Society

4208 Evergreen Lane, #222
Annandale, VA 22003-3264
(703) 642-1070

First Amendment Center

1207 18th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37217
(615) 321-9588
1-800-830-3733
www.freedomforum.org

Publication # 99-F02

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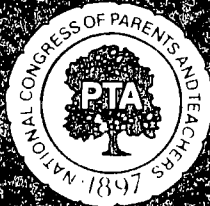
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Booklet, 'A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools,' 15 pages

Resource Guide

For in-depth discussion of the religious liberty rights of students, the Equal Access Act, religion in the curriculum and other issues addressed in this pamphlet see *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education*. This publication is available at cost (\$9.50 includes mailing) from the First Amendment Center, 1207 18th Ave. S., Nashville, TN 37212.



For more information and additional free copies of this pamphlet, please contact:

 **FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER**
FOUNDED BY THE FREEDOM FORUM

1207 18th Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37212

(615) 321-9588

1-800-830-3733

www.freedomforum.org

Congress shall make
A Parent's
no law respecting an
Guide to
establishment of religion
Religion
or prohibiting the free
in the
exercise thereof, or
Public
abridging the freedom
Schools
of speech, or of the press,
or the right of the people
peaceably to assemble,

and to petition the

National PTA
Government for a redress

 **FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER**
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of grievances.

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Booklet, "A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools," 16 pages

A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools

A high-contrast, black and white photograph showing the profile of a person's head and shoulders. The person is looking down at an open book. The image is grainy and has a high-contrast, almost stencil-like quality. The word "amendment" is overlaid in a large, elegant script font across the lower right portion of the image, partially covering the book.

amendment



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

*First Amendment to the
U.S. Constitution*

December 17, 1999

Dear Principal:

For many years one of the most sensitive and controversial matters that has divided Americans when it comes to public education has been the issue of religion in public schools.

Many Americans, unfortunately, came to believe that the 1962 Supreme Court decision disallowing state-sponsored school prayer meant no religious expression at all was permitted. They were mistaken, but little was done to fully inform concerned parents that the 1962 Supreme Court ruling did not preclude individual students, in their personal capacity, from expressing their religious faith. As a result, a great misunderstanding grew up over time and the issue of prayer and religious expression in public schools became increasingly divisive and polarizing.

In the last few years, new and promising efforts have been made to end this division about the proper place of religion in our nation's public schools. Educators, religious leaders of many faiths, and civil libertarians have worked together to review Supreme Court and other court decisions. In the process, these dedicated Americans have come to a new and deeper understanding of the proper place of religion in America's system of public education.

Leaders on both sides of this debate have lowered their voices, retreated from the polarizing language of the last three decades, and worked diligently together to find a new common ground. This effort is in the best tradition of our nation's Founding Fathers and reflects a wonderful respect for the basic idea that is America – that we are free people who protect our freedoms by respecting the freedoms of others who differ from us.

These educators, religious leaders, and civil libertarians see our nation's Bill of Rights as something more than a piece of dry, old parchment on display in our National Archives. They recognize that each generation must do its part to explain fully how the First Amendment protects the rights of students to express their religious faith and/or their freedom of conscience.

It is in that spirit that I am sending you a set of guidelines that you can use to inform students, parents, teachers, and other members of the community about the proper way to treat religion and religious topics in our nation's public schools. The guidelines cover a broad range of topics from how to teach about religion to how to properly develop partnerships with community-based groups, including faith-based organizations, as part of a broad effort to improve education in our public schools.

The guidelines clearly indicate that the religious rights of students and their right to freedom of conscience do not stop at the schoolhouse door. President Clinton may have said it best:

“ For more than 200 years, the First Amendment has protected our religious freedoms and allowed many faiths to flourish in our homes, in our work place and in our schools. Clearly understood and sensibly applied, it works.”

The essence of all of these guidelines is the balanced nature of the First Amendment regarding religious expression that is rooted in two basic and equally important principles. First, schools must protect the right of individual students, in their personal capacity, to express their religious faith, or to speak about religious matters, to the same extent they are permitted to engage in nonreligious expression, or to speak about nonreligious topics.

Second, schools must refrain from government-sponsored religious activities, and from adopting or expressing any preference for or against religious expression by students speaking in their personal capacity.

Teachers, principals, and others in authority in a school must give students the same right in their personal capacity to engage in religious activity and discussion, as they have to engage in any other comparable activity. For example, students may read their Bible or other scriptures, say grace before meals, or pray before tests to the same extent they may engage in comparable, nondisruptive activities.

At the same time, school officials may not endorse or favor religious activity or doctrine, coerce participation in religious activity, or seek to impose their religious beliefs on impressionable children. Public schools may teach about religion – for example, in classes on history, music, the arts, or comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, the role of religion in history – but public schools may not provide religious instruction.

In protecting students from government-sponsored prayer, the First Amendment also shields students of all faiths from any effort by a majority faith to define how religion should be expressed in a public school. The right to engage in personal voluntary prayer or religious discussion free from discrimination does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, or to compel other students to participate. We are a nation of many religious faiths and we must be vigilant in protecting the right of all students to express their religious faith in their own way, in addition to expressing their freedom of conscience not to participate in religious activities.

Some have suggested that the federal government has been an enemy of religion. I believe otherwise. I know that President Clinton and Vice President Gore have gone out of their way to encourage the growing effort to find a new common ground regarding religious expression in our nation's public schools. I am pleased to be part of this effort as well.

After more than 30 years of division on this most sensitive of subjects, I believe we are finding a positive way to bring people together and that's good for education. I hope public officials, at all levels of government, will support this growing effort to find common ground and retreat from the

Page 4

polarizing language of the past. Our public schools should not be the public space for a war on values but the public space where we educate our children, help them to build good character, and teach them about the many freedoms, including the freedom of religion, that are embodied in our nation's Constitution.

All of the documents in this packet are freely available from either the U.S. Department of Education or the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center. The full text of all of these publications is available through the U.S. Department of Education's Web site (www.ed.gov). I encourage you to read these documents carefully and make them available to teachers, other staff, parents and students. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dick Riley". The signature is stylized with a large "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Richard W. Riley

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Guidelines for School Officials, Volunteers and Mentors Participating in Public School Community Partnerships

Children and schools gain a great deal when every part of a community comes together to support education. This is why we encourage the growing partnership efforts between our nation's public schools and families, community groups, faith-based communities and employers. In 1994, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley began the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (PFIE) with 40 organizations. Today, close to 6,000 groups and organizations are part of this dynamic and growing effort.

Every part of the community can do its part to encourage adults to take time out of their busy schedules to support the work of our nation's schools. Faith communities can be important participants in these partnerships. For example, members of faith communities can act as tutors and mentors to help children learn to read and write. They can also work with other members of the community to ensure the safety of children in positive after-school activities.

However, it is not appropriate for members of faith communities to use their involvement in public schools as an occasion to endorse religious activity or doctrine or to encourage participation in a religious activity. Adults who choose to volunteer in public schools must respect both the rules established by the school and the strong constitutional protections that children have from becoming a captive audience.

In August 1995, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, in consultation with Attorney General Janet Reno and at the direction of President Clinton, released guidelines entitled *Religious Expression in Public Schools: A Statement of Principles*. These guidelines were released again in June 1998, and most recently in December 1999. In his original cover letter to these guidelines, Secretary Riley pointed out that the guidelines for religious expression in public schools reflect two basic and equally important obligations of the First Amendment.

"First, schools may not forbid students acting on their own from expressing their personal religious views or beliefs solely because they are of a religious nature. Schools may not discriminate against private religious expression by students, but must instead give students the same right to engage in religious activity and discussion as they have to engage in other comparable activity... At the same time, schools may not endorse religious activity or doctrine, nor may they coerce participation in religious activity....[t]he right of religious expression in school does not include the right to have a 'captive audience' listen, or to compel other students to participate."

Questions and Answers on Release of Guidelines
Relating to Religion and the Public Schools

1. Is the President putting these guidelines out now in an effort to remove "religion and public schools" as an election issue? Many of the Republican candidates have been very vocal about prayer in school and putting up the Ten Commandments on school walls.

This comprehensive package of guidelines is the culmination of several years of work and a realization that people are looking for more "practical guidance" on how to do all of this properly. Secretary Riley has a long history of working with religious organizations and he has been a very strong advocate of developing partnerships between public schools and religious groups, if done properly.

These guidelines have been in the works for over six months. As you will see, the individual rights of every student are very well protected. If individual students want to bring the Ten Commandments with them to school every day and read them, they can. What a public school cannot do is put the Ten Commandments up on a wall or bulletin board or tell students they have to read them every day.

2. Secretary Riley writes in his letter that public schools should not be the public space for a "war on values." Are these guidelines being put out because public schools are losing the war on values?

I think all Americans want to make sure that our children grow up with good values. I think all Americans have been shaken by what happened at Columbine High School. The Secretary believes that Americans need to come together and rally around our public schools as the place to sort out differences over contentious social issues.

3. What is new about this package?

Several things. First, this set of guidelines is being sent to every public school in the nation. We have never transmitted this information to the school level before and that is where the issues arise. Second, while some of these materials have been available for awhile, some of these guidelines are new. For example, the package contains recent publications directed at teachers and how schools can form partnerships with community based organizations, including religious organizations. Third, we are putting this information all together in one package so that it will be more easily available to school officials.

4. What do these guidelines say about teaching evolution in the schools?

That issue is not directly discussed in the guidelines, although there is information in the guidelines on the important distinction between teaching about religion in public schools, (which is allowed) and providing religious instruction (which is not

allowed). The theory of evolution is a proper and important topic to be taught in public schools as it has a scientific basis. However, creation science has been viewed by the Supreme Court as a religious belief.

5. What do the guidelines say about student-initiated prayers at graduations and football games?

The guidelines do not answer either of these controversial issues directly, but they do indicate that the right of personal religious expression does not include the right to have a captive audience listen. It should be noted that the guidelines generally address issues about which there is a general consensus. It is not intended to take sides on issues where there is conflicting court precedent.

6. What is the Department's position in the case pending in the Supreme Court on student initiated-prayer at football games (Doe v. Santa Fe Independent School District)?

We are not a party in that case and we have not taken a position on that issue. It is my understanding that the Solicitor General is considering whether to file an amicus brief in that case.

7. What is your view about the report in Thursday's New York Times about the school district in Indiana posting in classrooms a revised version of the Ten Commandments?

I think all Americans were terribly shocked by what happened at Littleton and the desire to put the Ten Commandments up on the wall reflects people's very legitimate concerns about the values of our young people. I understand why people feel the way they do. However, the Supreme Court has made it very clear that it is unconstitutional to post the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms. We are a nation of many religions and public schools have an obligation to respect religious rights of all students.

8. Are these guidelines all being issued or endorsed by the Department of Education?

Three of the documents in the package are products of this Department—Religious Expression in Public Schools: A Statement of Principles; How Faith Communities Support Children's Learning in Public Schools; and Guidelines for School Officials, Volunteers and Mentors Participating in Public School Partnerships. The other documents were developed and published through the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center with a number of other groups representing a broad cross-section of interests. We feel that all these documents provide useful and accurate information for school officials, parents and students.

9. Some of these guidelines seem to be endorsed by a lot of religious groups and others have fewer endorsements. Can you explain?

All of these guidelines are based on the principles in the Secretary's original guidelines issued in 1995. Those original guidelines were issued after reaching a consensus with 35 different religious groups. So we are starting with that very large base. Many of these groups have endorsed this new effort as well. For example, over 20 groups have signed on to the Teacher's Guide to Religion in Public Schools. Other groups were still in the process of considering endorsing when we sent the publications to the printers. I am sure we will continue to receive more endorsements.

10. I look at these endorsements and I don't see two of the largest religious groups in the United States, the Southern Baptists and the Roman Catholics. Do they oppose this effort? Have you reached out to them?

A broad variety of groups have endorsed the various guidelines in our package. We understand that other groups are considering endorsing the guidelines and we are hopeful that they will do so.

11. Why haven't you included the Freedom Forum's new guidance on teaching the Bible in public schools in this package?

We have attempted to include a limited number of documents that address the most pressing "religion" issues facing public schools. That document, which addresses the very specific issue of how properly to teach about the Bible in public schools, can be obtained directly from the Freedom Forum (or its web site).

12. Do these guidelines address the issue in the Mitchell v. Helms case pending before the Supreme Court?

No. That case involves the constitutionality of providing computers and other materials to private school children as part of a general Federal education program providing assistance to all children. The guidelines in this package concern religion issues in the public schools.

13. Is there anything in these guidelines on vouchers for children to attend private schools?

No. However, as we stated previously on numerous occasions we are opposed to using public funds to send students to private schools.

14. Do these guidelines apply to private schools?

No.

15. How will the Department enforce these guidelines?

The Department has no enforcement power with respect to any of these guidelines. We are releasing them so that school officials, parents and students can have a better understanding of what the First Amendment means in the context of the public schools.

16. Are you saying that the Department could not take any action if Federal funds are spent contrary to the guidelines?

In the limited context where Federal funds are being spent in violation of the First Amendment, the Department could withhold those funds. Of course, the Department would seek voluntary compliance before any funds are withheld.

17. Well, what should a parent or student do if these guidelines are being violated?

We hope that the guidelines will help to avoid conflicts and that school officials, parents and students can work together to resolve any differences. And we encourage school districts to adopt their own policies with community input so that the issues are addressed in a calm, thoughtful manner. As a last resort, of course, parents and students can seek judicial relief if their constitutional rights are being violated.

17. Aren't the guidelines being put out a little late for this holiday season?

While the guidelines certainly will be useful at this point in the school year, holiday celebrations are just one issue that is addressed in this package. The great majority of issues could arise at any point in the school year.

18. Do the guidelines address the concept of "charitable choice"? Do you support that idea?

These guidelines include information about how to properly develop partnerships between public schools and religious organizations, but they do not address the charitable choice idea of government funding being provided directly to religious organizations to provide social services. Our guidelines only address partnership programs that are jointly sponsored by community organizations, including religious groups, and public schools.

Education Q & A
Religious Guidelines Radio Address
December 18, 1999

Q: What is the President announcing in the weekly radio address?

A: The President is announcing the release of a comprehensive packet of guidelines on the role of religion in the public schools that will be mailed to every public school in America, as well as to prominent national religious organizations. This information is the culmination of four years of work on this issue, begun in 1995 when the President directed Secretary of Education Riley to provide every school district in America with a statement of principles on religious expression. The packet contains information for teachers, parents, administrators and faith communities on issues of religious expression, teaching about religion, and partnerships between public schools and faith-based organizations.

Q: Who developed the packet and what is in it?

A: The mailing is a joint effort of the Department of Education and the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center. The six publications in the packet are:

- *Religion in the Public Schools: A Statement of Principles*
- *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*
- *A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*
- *Public Schools and Religious Communities: A First Amendment Guide*
- *Guidelines for Volunteers Participating in Partnerships with Public Schools*
- *How Faith Communities Support Children's Learning in Public Schools*

Q: A number of Republicans have called for the posting of the Ten Commandments as an antidote to youth violence. Is this the Administration's response?

A: No. The packet is a proactive attempt to put out practical information and guidance on the role of religion in schools. President Clinton and Secretary Riley have a long history of working with religious organizations. The guidelines reflect the President's belief that public schools and faith organizations, while different, share many of the same goals for our children and families. The guidelines show the possibilities of bringing together schools and faith communities to build find common ground and build partnerships that pass Constitutional muster.

As for the Ten Commandments, if individual students want to bring the Ten Commandments with them to school every day and read them, they can. What a public school cannot do is put the Ten Commandments up on a wall or bulletin board or tell students they have to read them every day.

Q: Do the guidelines provide information on creationism and evolution?

A: No. The guides focus more broadly on what is allowed and what is prohibited based on the law. The teacher's guide on religion, for instance, describes how a broad treatment of religion can be taught in the classroom and discusses the appropriate role for religious expression in schools, but does not address specific curricular questions.

Q: The Supreme Court has a case pending on prayer before high school football games. Do the guides address this issue? What is the Administration's position?

A: The guide doesn't address this issue. In general, the guidance focuses on areas of consensus, not where there is conflicting court precedent or a case pending. On this particular case, it is my understanding that the Solicitor General is considering at the present whether to file an amicus brief in that case.

PRESIDENT CLINTON RELEASES NEW GUIDELINES OUTLINING POSITIVE ROLE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 18, 1999

In today's weekly radio address, the President will announce a comprehensive set of religious guidelines to be sent to every public school in America. The guidelines contain information for parents, teachers, and faith communities on religious expression and on partnerships between schools and faith-based organizations. They are the culmination of the Administration's four-year effort to forge consensus on the role of religion in the schools. Decrying the polarizing rhetoric that has long defined this issue, the President will note that public schools and faith communities share many values and goals. He will urge them both to use the new guidelines to forge partnerships that pass constitutional muster and that can benefit all our children.

NEW GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS, PARENTS, VOLUNTEERS AND FAITH COMMUNITIES.

In 1995, at President Clinton's direction, the Department of Education sent every district in the country *Religion in the Public Schools: A Statement of Principles*. The guidelines the President is announcing today build upon those principles and encourage greater cooperation, within constitutional limits, between public schools and faith-based organizations. The guidelines will be mailed to every public school in the nation, and to leading religious organizations as well. The mailing is a joint effort of the Department of Education and the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, and the six publications in the packet are:

- *Religion in the Public Schools: A Statement of Principles*
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PACKET HIGHLIGHTS HOW FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS CAN SUPPORT LEARNING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Faith-based organizations can and are playing an effective role in helping boost student learning and school success. The President today will argue that schools and faith communities should be reaching out to each other, in constitutional ways, to support their common goals for children and families. He will emphasize that schools should not be religion-free zones. The guidelines he is announcing highlight successful partnerships across the nation in after-school programs, school safety, discipline and student literacy. These range from mentoring programs jointly run by schools and interfaith groups to statewide summits on the role of faith-based groups in college preparation. Throughout, the guidelines emphasize both the protection of private religious expression in schools and the prohibitions against coerced student participation in religious expression.

ENDORSEMENTS BY EDUCATION, RELIGIOUS, AND CIVIL RIGHTS

ORGANIZATIONS DEMONSTRATE EMERGING CONSENSUS. The guidance released today has been endorsed by a broad spectrum of organizations, including the National Association of Evangelicals, the National PTA, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, The American Association of School Administrators and other faith-based and educational associations. The President today will characterize these endorsements as a sign of an emerging consensus on the role of religion in schools. He will also call on political leaders to resist the polarizing language of debates past and instead to help find common ground for appropriate collaborations between schools and faith communities.

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December 18, 1999

RADIO ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE NATION

10:06 A.M EST

Message Creation Date was at 18-DEC-1999 11:09:00

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release
1999

December 18,

RADIO ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATION

The Oval Office

10:06 A.M EST

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. The holiday season is a time when America's remarkable religious diversity shines brightest in so many homes and different places of worship and schools. Today I want to talk to you about the role of faith in our lives, in all of our religious diversity, and, particularly, in the education of our children.

America's founders were men and women of faith many of whom fled oppression overseas to find freedom on our shores. They believed the best way to protect religious liberty was to guarantee, first of all, the right to practice religion by the dictates of their own conscience; and, second, to forbid our government from imposing or establishing any religious belief. In their wisdom, they enshrined these two principles in our Constitution.

But, of course, reconciling these principles has not always been easy, especially when it comes to our education system. Finding the proper place for faith in our schools is a complex and emotional matter for many Americans. But I have never believed the Constitution required our schools to be religion-free zones, or that our children must check their faiths at the schoolhouse door.

Americans expect our schools to teach our children the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. We also trust our schools to strengthen the moral foundation of our society, to reinforce the values taught at home and in our communities.

Studies show that children involved in religious activities are less likely to

use drugs. Experience tells us they're more likely to stay out of trouble. Common sense says that faith and faith-based organizations from all religious backgrounds can play an important role in helping children to reach their fullest potential. That's why I've always supported individual student's rights to voluntarily practice religious beliefs, including prayer in school and to engage in religious activities on school grounds, but not to have any kind of enforced such activities.

Now, in 1995, our administration released a set of principles for protecting religious freedom in our public schools. We did so in response to parents and educators who asked for help in knowing what kinds of religious activities are permissible in public schools and what is not permissible. They asked for help in respecting the rights and beliefs of all students, from the most observant from all religious backgrounds to those who choose freely, as is their right, to completely abstain from any religious activity.

Those guidelines we issued make it clear that students do have the right to pray privately and individually in school, the right to say grace at lunch, the right to meet in religious groups on school grounds and to use school facilities just like any other groups do. They have the right to read the Bible or other religious books during study hall or free class time, and the right to be free from coercion to participate in religious activity of any kind. Now, since we first issued those guidelines, appropriate religious activity has flourished in our schools and continuing in our country. Today I'm announcing the release of expanded guidelines, more practical help for teachers and principals, for parents and students for the whole community. Guidelines like this will help teachers better understand how to teach about religions and help faith-based organizations join the effort to improve public education.

Across America, schools and faith-based organizations are telling us they want to build new and effective partnerships, like the large number of faith-based groups involved in America Reads, or the Shiloh Baptist-Seaton Elementary School partnership, which offers after-school activities here in Washington, D.C. Faith-based organization in schools, though different in many ways, do often share important goals, expanding opportunities to learn, lifting children's lives. Our new guidelines will help them work together on common ground to meet constitutional muster, to avoid making students uncomfortable because they come from different religious traditions, while helping students make the most of their God-given talents. These guidelines also tell us that a consensus is emerging among educators and religious leaders, and among defenders of the 1st Amendment so many of them have endorsed our efforts. Their voices echo the words of George Washington who said that Americans have and I quote "abundant reason to rejoice that in this land every person may worship God according to the dictates of his own heart."

Today, as we count the days down to the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, we know that this fundamental and precious liberty is still strong. We are determined that it will remain so, not just for our own children, but for generations yet to come.

Thanks for listening.

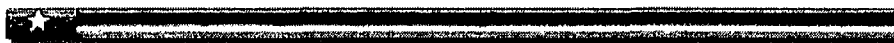
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