

The Strategic Prayer Initiative – **Pink Sheet Expander Legal Concerns**

Where Prayer Focuses Power Falls!

- ❑ 1. Pray that Christian messages are not silenced in our nation's public library. The American Library Association (ALA) instructed libraries nationwide to make public meeting rooms unavailable for Brave Books story hours events. In June, an American Library Association official... criticized First Liberty's (legal organization to defend religious liberty) clients for encouraging local community members to use libraries to read books with a religious perspective. The same official provided guidance on how to prevent story hours held by Brave Books, a Christian children's book publisher, from happening at libraries. First Liberty sent a letter calling for an investigation of religious discrimination, arguing that ALA officials are targeting their clients based on their religious beliefs. The letter explains that as federal grant recipients, the ALA may not utilize taxpayer funds to openly violate the First Amendment and federal regulations. But a Library in Huntsville, Alabama recently canceled a Brave Books story hour event citing "security concerns." First Liberty immediately responded and sent a letter asking the library to reschedule the book reading. Libraries must comply with federal law. They cannot discriminate against religious groups. First Liberty sent a letter this week asking the Madison Public Library in Huntsville, Alabama to reschedule a story hour event with client Kirk Cameron and Brave Books, a Christian children's book publisher. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 2. Pray that the rights of Christian professors would be upheld at colleges and universities. First Liberty Institute sent a letter to St. Philip's College in San Antonio, Texas on behalf of Dr. Johnson Varkey, demanding reinstatement to his position after the San Antonio public community college fired him for teaching standard principles about human biology and reproduction. In November 2022, a handful of Dr. Varkey's students walked out of his class when he stated, consistent with his study of human biology, that sex was determined by chromosomes X and Y. But on January 27, 2023, Dr. Varkey received a Notice of Discipline and Termination of Employment and Contract letter stating that the school "received numerous complaints" about his "religious preaching, discriminatory comments about homosexuals and transgender individuals, anti-abortion rhetoric, and misogynistic banter" and that his teaching "pushed beyond the bounds of academic freedom with [his] personal opinions that were offensive to many individuals in the classroom." Dr. Varkey taught from school-approved and science-based curriculum, but the college claims his teaching was religious. Dr. Varkey, a Christian and an associate minister says he has never discussed his religious view in class or with students. The slides he uses are from the textbook. In the letter, Dr. Varkey's attorneys state, "When St. Philip's College terminated Dr. Varkey, it violated the Free Speech Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act, among multiple other statutory provisions." (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 3. Pray for a favorable outcome for Cambridge Christian School who was told they could not pray over the loudspeaker before the kickoff at their state championship football game against another Christian school. The case was argued in June at the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 4. Ask for God's will to be done in the 2024 presidential, congressional and state level elections. Ask God for truth to be revealed about candidates and for wisdom for Christians regarding who they select in these elections.
- ❑ 5. Continue to pray for Ron Hittle, a firechief from Stockton, California, who was fired after 24 years of service for attending a leadership conference that was held at a church. First Liberty Institute, Baker Botts, and the Church State Council announced that they will seek review of a decision by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which sided with the City of Stockton in firing former fire chief Ron Hittle. Pray that the religious rights of all people are preserved. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 6. Pray for a favorable outcome for Liam, a 7th grader at Nichols Middle School in Middleborough, Massachusetts, who was sent home from school for wearing a T-shirt that says, "There are only two genders." Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) says, "All students have the constitutional right to express their free speech without having to fear being punished by school officials. They can't be forced out of the classroom for exercising their rights." ADF and the Massachusetts Family Institute are suing the Town of Middleborough and school officials in federal court on Liam's behalf." Pray that everyone is able to exercise their right to free speech. (Source: www.adflegal.org)
- ❑ 7. Pray for religious liberty in the United States and elsewhere not to be eroded. According to Supreme Court Judge Samuel Alito, "The challenge for those who want to protect religious liberty in the United States, Europe, and other similar places is to convince people who are not religious that religious liberty is worth special protection...And that will not be easy to do." He said, "Polls show a significant increase in the percentage of the population that rejects religion or thinks it's just not all that important...And this has a very important impact on religious liberty because it is hard to convince people that religious liberty is worth defending if they don't think that religion is a good thing that deserves protection." Ask God to draw people to himself and keep those in power who are willing to defend religious liberty. (Source: www.faithwire.com and www.christianheadlines.com)
- ❑ 8. Christians Lawyers and Judges: Pray that God would raise up lawyers and judges who *Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute, Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.* (Psalm 82:3-4 NASB)
- ❑ 9. Praise the Lord, that religious accommodations are still available to Christians (and those of other religions) who need work-place accommodations to carry out their faith. Groff, a United States Postal Service worker firmly believes he must "[r]emember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." When the post office began delivering Amazon packages on Sundays, Groff's supervisor granted him an accommodation to observe Sunday Sabbath. A few years later, the post office withdrew the accommodation and scheduled him on Sundays. In June 2023, the United States Supreme Court issued a unanimous opinion in Gerald's favor. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 10. Judicial Branch (U. S. Supreme Court and Federal Courts): Pray that God would help each judge to make decisions that would be in keeping with the purity and character of the living Judeo/Christian God. Pray that the Lord would bring future justices of His choice onto the Court in His sovereign timing. Ask God to draw each justice to Himself. Pray that Supreme Court's decisions would line up with the word and will of God and that they would decide justly regardless of cost or consequence.

- ❑ 11. Pray that Christians will be able to peacefully share the gospel and evangelize. Matthew Meineke, intending to share the gospel and offer hope, attended a protest against the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*. While reading his bible, some protesters reacted by ripping Matthew's Bible from his hands and tearing it to pieces. When the police came, they ordered him to leave and ultimately arrested him (not those who assaulted him). Two days later he went to Seattle's PrideFest where an attendee dumped water on his Bible, others spat on him and squirted water on him. When 10 police officers arrived, they again, did not deal with the unruly attendees, but instead required Meineke to leave and then eventually arrested him. Although in April 2023, the Center for Religious Expression (CRE) filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking a preliminary injunction to protect the fundamental freedoms of Matthew, the request was denied in June 2023. The reasoning was that the police were protecting him by asking him to leave but he refused, so he was arrested. Continue to pray that Christians can openly read their bible in public places. (Source: www.crelaw.org, *Meinecke v. City of Seattle*, 23-cv-352 (W.D. Wash. June 22, 2023))
- ❑ 12. Executive Branch (President): Pray, petition and give thanks for "...all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." (1Timothy 2:2). Pray that the Executive Branch would create policies that would allow Christians to live in peace and share their faith freely and that would be compassionate while protecting our nation. (Psalm 82:3-4 NASB)
- ❑ 13. Continue to pray for Robyn Strader, nurse practitioner with multiple degrees including a PhD in health education, and other Christian healthworkers not to face adverse consequences for choosing to practice medicine in accordance with their faith. Robyn was fired from CVS Pharmacy after CVS had accommodated her religious beliefs about prescribing contraception, without issue for six and a half years. Now CVS wants to force its employees to prescribe contraception even when it violates the employee's religious beliefs. First Liberty Institute filed a charge of discrimination at the EEOC, making it clear that Robyn should not be forced to choose between her faith and her livelihood. First Liberty sued CVS to ensure that Robyn and faithful workers like her are not discriminated against simply because of religion. Her case is still pending in federal court. Pray for a favorable outcome for Robyn. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 14. Legal Organizations: Pray for Christian legal agencies (Alliance Defending Freedom, ACLJ, Christian Legal Society, Center for Religious Expression, First Liberty and a host of others) that provide legal advocacy for issues surrounding freedom of speech and religion around the world. Pray that leaders nurture their walks with God and that they are open to the leading of the Spirit of God, not political ideology or expediency. Pray for wisdom as they choose, advocate, and litigate cases and effectiveness in their work.
- ❑ 15. Legislative Branch (Congress): Pray that "Congress...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". Pray that no law be passed that would infringe on freedom of religion or speech for any citizen and that the free sharing of the Gospel will always remain legal. Pray that all life would be protected by our nation's laws. Pray for your U.S. Senators and Congress person to be led by God in their legislative decisions. ." (Source: First Amendment U.S. Constitution)
- ❑ 16. Pray that parents continue to have the right to voice their opinion about their own children's education, even if they work for the school district. In August of last year, a substitute teacher learned that a school employee planned to read a picture book with pro-LGBT illustrations to all children at McAllister Elementary School. Speaking as a parent, she expressed concerns with her boys' teachers and the school principal and asked that her children not participate in the reading. The next day, when she, as a teacher, tried to log into her school e-mail account, she didn't have access. It was days later that she learned she had been fired. She filed a lawsuit against the school administrators who fired her because every parent has the right to speak out about what their children are learning in school. Every parent has the right to decide when, how, and where their children learn about complicated issues like sexuality. She, through her attorneys with Alliance Defending Freedom, filed and favorably settled a lawsuit against McAllister Elementary: because schools must respect true diversity, the diversity that comes from allowing parents to direct their children's education in controversial topics. (Source: www.adflegal.org)
- ❑ 17. Pray for Valerie Kloosterman, a physician assistant at The University of Michigan Health system who was fired because of her religious beliefs. She was terminated for seeking a religious accommodation from using biology-obscuring pronouns and from referring patients for "gender reassignment" drugs and surgeries. First Liberty is also fighting this case in federal court. . (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 18. Praise the Lord, for upheld right not to be forced to participate in activity contrary to one's religion in government hospitals. Stephanie Carter, a pro-life nurse practitioner, faced an impossible choice. Stephanie works at a Texas VA hospital. But when the Biden federal government adopted a new rule requiring VA facilities to perform abortions, Stephanie was forced between violating her conscience or keeping her job. First Liberty Institute (legal organization representing religious rights) filed a federal lawsuit to ensure that Stephanie won't be forced to participate in or counsel for abortion or work in a facility that provides abortion services in instances other than saving the life of a mother. As a result of the lawsuit, the VA issued a department wide accommodation process. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 19. Pray that employers won't be able to punish Christians who speak their views when asked. Pray for Lacy Smith and Marli Brown who were flight attendants before being fired by Alaska Airlines because of their Christian faith. Acting on their religious beliefs, Lacey and Marli politely asked about the company's support for the "Equality" Act, after the airline invited employees to discuss the topic in an employee-only forum. Both of them were concerned about the impact this bill could have on their freedoms. After posting their questions, both plaintiffs, who had exemplary records as employees, were subsequently investigated, questioned by airline authorities, and eventually fired from their jobs. Their case is currently in federal court, and fighting to make sure people like Lacey and Marli are not forced to choose between their faith and their livelihood. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)
- ❑ 20. Praise the Lord that In June 2023, the Supreme Court vacated the lower court rulings against Melissa and Aaron Klein, owners of Sweet Cakes by Melissa, and return the case once again to the state. Because of their Christian convictions, the Kleins declined to design and create a custom cake to celebrate a same-sex wedding. As a result, the State of Oregon punished them with a \$135,000 penalty and a gag order. At the end of First Liberty Institute and Boyden Gray & Associates announced they will ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the Kleins' case by the end of Summer 2022. " It's a win when the Supreme Court vacates a bad lower court decision like it did for Aaron and Melissa today, but the case is not over," said Kelly Shackelford, President, CEO, and Chief Counsel to First Liberty. "The Kleins have been fighting for the First Amendment for over a decade. Pray that Christians will not be forced to express views to which they disagree. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)

- ❑ 21. Pray for a just verdict for Judge Dianne Hensley in the Texas Supreme Court. Like many other Justices of the Peace around Texas, Judge Hensley found a way to reconcile her religious convictions after she received many requests for same-sex weddings. Despite her efforts to ensure that anyone who wants to get married can get married, she is being punished. She was brought before the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct and issued a warning. First Liberty attorneys will argue her case at the Texas Supreme Court in October. (Source: www.firstliberty.org)

- ❑ 22. Frequent Legal Opponents: Many organizations (Freedom From Religion Foundation, American Civil Liberties Union, American Humanists Association, American Atheists, Military Religious Freedom Foundation and others) target Christian schools, ministries, churches, and individuals in court and in legislative initiatives with the purpose of silencing or punishing believers for behaving in accordance with their religious beliefs. Pray that believers would fight with spiritual weapons and seek and obey God as they combat these onslaughts. Pray that the leadership of many of these opposing organizations would come to know the love of Christ, forgiveness of sins and transformation of their lives. Pray that believers show love towards these people. Luke 6:27-28 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Source: www.cpcfoundation.com)

- ❑ 23. States' Lawmakers: Pray for governors and state legislators to create no law that hinders the freedom of speech or religions for its citizens. Pray for your governor and state legislators to be led by God as they create bills, laws and policies.

- ❑ 24. Pray that Christian organizations like Fellowship of Christian Athletes will not be forced to leave school campuses because they require their leaders to agree with the tenets of the organization they lead. FCA is appealing rulings of San Jose Judges regarding the withdrawal of official recognition of FCA because it required club leaders to affirm its statement of faith meanwhile a Satanic Temple student club was given official recognition. After the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of FCA and required the district to recognize the FCA student groups, the defendants filed a petition requesting a rehearing or a rehearing en banc, which FCA opposed. The Ninth Circuit granted the defendants' request, and an en banc panel heard oral argument on March 23, 2023. Shortly thereafter, on April 3, the en banc panel voted to issue a preliminary injunction ruling protecting all FCA clubs on all campuses in the San Jose Unified School District pending resolution of the appeal. The injunction ordered the school district to immediately recognize student chapters affiliated with FCA as official "Associated Student Body" approved clubs. (Source: www.wng.org and www.firstliberty.org)

- ❑ 25. Praise the Lord that Lorie Smith prevailed in the Supreme Court when it decided that "The First Amendment prohibits Colorado from forcing a website designer to create expressive designs speaking messages with which the designer disagrees." Praise God for this ruling which was requested previously on this prayer list. Lorie Smith, an artist who runs her own design studio (303 Creative) to use her skills to promote causes consistent with her beliefs. She was excited to expand her portfolio to create websites that celebrate marriage between a man and a woman, but a Colorado law censoring what Lorie wants to say and requiring her to create designs that violate her beliefs about marriage, made clear she's not welcome in that space. Although the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit ruled against Lorie, holding that Colorado can force her to create websites promoting messages that contradict her beliefs about marriage, in her appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States she prevailed. Continue to pray that the Free Speech of Christians and that "the government can't force Americans to say things they don't believe..." and that "...the state will not be able to eliminate from the public square ideas it dislikes..." (source: www.supremecourt.gov/opinions and www.adflegal.org)

- ❑ 26. Rights of Public-School Students: Pray that students and parents know and exercise their rights to opt out of activities that violate religious beliefs; to bring a bible to school; to form bible clubs; and choose religious topics. (Source: www.christianlaw.org)

- ❑ 27. Continue to pray for Seattle's Union Gospel Mission who came under fire when the Washington Supreme Court said the mission can be sued under the state employment laws for declining to hire a lawyer for its legal-aid clinic who disagreed with the Mission's religious beliefs and even explicitly stated that he had applied for the position hoping to change those beliefs. If the Mission wants to continue sharing the Gospel message of new life in Christ with its homeless neighbors, it cannot hire people who disagree with its Christian beliefs—let alone those who seek to undermine them. If the government can bar the Mission from hiring co-believers, it can demand that other religious institutions violate their beliefs as well. It can demand a synagogue employ a Christian, or a Muslim ministry hire an employee who lives inconsistently with the Quran. Pray for an outcome to this case where the government will stay out of the internal faith matters of churches and religious ministries. (Source: adflegal.org)

- ❑ 28. Municipal Governments: Pray that local ordinances would not hinder the rights and activities of individual Christians or Bible believing Churches and that the free spread of the Gospel is not hampered.

- ❑ 29. Pray that the 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution would strongly protect all religious rights in the United States.

- ❑ 30. Involvement: Ask God to direct you and other believers to legal issues that concern Christians.