



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 22, 2012

## Study Shows Increasing Hostility Toward Religious Liberty in America

Two of the nation's predominant conservative Christian advocacy groups have released a report documenting the growing hostility toward religious liberty in the United States. In [The Survey of Religious Hostility in America](#), the [Family Research Council](#) and the [Liberty Institute](#) have compiled more than 600 documented incidents of hostility to religious faith that have occurred in the U.S. over the past ten years.



Kelly Shackelford, president of the Liberty Institute, said that the America of today “would be unrecognizable to our Founders. Our First Liberty is facing a relentless onslaught from well-funded and aggressive groups and individuals who are using the courts, Congress, and the vast federal bureaucracy to suppress and limit religious freedom. This radicalized minority is driven by an anti-religious ideology that is turning the First Amendment upside down.”

The published survey grew out of testimony Shackelford, along with a number of Liberty Institute's clients, provided in 2004 to the U.S. Senate about the growing hostility toward religious freedoms in America. “Because the opposition insisted these select testimonies were simply isolated incidents,” noted the Liberty Institute, “Senators Kennedy and Cornyn asked Liberty Institute to provide additional information, which led to the development of the first hostilities document.” Eight years later, the latest report shows that “hostility against religious liberty has reached an all-time high,” the organization said.

In addition to the survey, the FRC and Liberty Institute have launched a special website, [www.religioushostility.org](http://www.religioushostility.org), where many of the most egregious of the 600-plus cases of religious hostility are documented and available for download. “Whether a federal judge threatens a high school valedictorian with incarceration for referring to Jesus in her graduation speech; a city official prohibits senior citizens from praying over their meals; or the U.S. Department of Justice tells churches and synagogues which pastors and rabbis they can hire and fire, attacks on Americans' religious freedoms have dramatically increased, both in frequency and in the types of incidents,” the conservative groups noted in a press release about the study. “On the site, the public can view a U.S. map that contains a sampling of the 25 most egregious incidents of religious hostility. There is also a place to share personal stories of religious discrimination, and a photo gallery representing more than a dozen groundbreaking cases.”

Of course, the most recent high-profile attack against religious faith has been President Obama's “mandate” that faith-based institutions provide free contraception with their health insurance, including abortion-inducing drugs.

Shackelford warned that “there is really no place you can go in America to avoid these chilling attacks. Every community and every age group is affected. We have hundreds of examples. It's more prolific than we've ever seen in the history of our country.”

The study is divided into three broad categories, documenting attacks on religious liberty in the public



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arena, attacks on religious liberty at school, and attacks against churches and ministries. As readers peruse the listing of hundreds of attacks against faith over the past decade, they will be struck by the interconnection among the categories.

Among the hundreds of examples of hostility toward religious faith cited in the latest report:

- An eight-year-old girl was prevented from singing "Kum Ba Yah" at a Boys & Girls Club talent show because the lyrics included the phrase "Oh, my Lord."
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs prohibited religious content at funerals conducted at national cemeteries, even if grieving family asked for the inclusion of hymns, prayers, and the mention of God.
- Senior citizens at an elderly center in Texas were prohibited from praying over their meals because "religion is banned in public buildings," city officials told them. The elderly diners were informed by the officials that saying grace over government-funded food violated the "separation of church and state" — and that the food might be taken away.
- Officials with the public school district of Greenville, Texas, informed a job applicant that she could only be considered for an assistant principal position if she removed her children from a Christian school.

Liberty Institute attorney Justin Butterfield told [OneNewsNow.com](#) that in cataloguing the instances of hostility toward faith, the two organizations are hoping to raise awareness of the ongoing attacks against Americans' First Amendment guarantees. "A lot of people think that hostility because of people's religious beliefs and attacks on religious liberty are things that happen elsewhere in the world, not in the United States," he said. "We want to show that it actually happens with increasing and alarming regularity here in the United States." He added that "it's something that has gone under the radar, and we want to bring it up and point out that this is an issue and a concern that's affecting more and more Americans each year."

The Family Research Council's Tony Perkins said that despite the many examples that are collected in the survey, there is reason for optimism. "The secularists' agenda only advances when those who love liberty are apathetic," he said. He said that above all, the study is a call to Americans to take a stand for faith and freedom. "The Obama administration no longer even speaks of freedom of religion," Perkins observed. "Now it is only 'freedom of worship.' This radical departure is one that threatens to make true religious liberty vulnerable, conditional, and limited. This is no accident, and it has huge ramifications."

The [Associated Press](#) noted that the majority of the cases cited by the FRC/Liberty Institute report involved the Christian faith. "But recent events show hostility toward religion goes beyond a single faith and are more violent than rulings from executive and judicial branches of governments," the AP reported. No less than seven mosques were attacked in the U.S. during Ramadan this year, according to other groups that track religious hostility. "This is unprecedented in its scale and scope," said Ibrahim Hooper of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The most high-profile attack against a religious group occurred in early August, when a man entered a Sikh temple in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, killing six people and injuring four others before taking his own life. That attack was followed several weeks later by an armed attack on Tony Perkins' own FRC headquarters in Washington, DC. In that assault, a man with ties to homosexual groups shot a security guard, before being apprehended by police. He later indicated that his motive was tied to his opposition to FRC's conservative Christian values, including its support for traditional marriage.

Tony Perkins said that "as our country enters one of the most critical elections of our time, it's vital that people of all faiths continue the important work of defending our most precious liberty."

*Illustration: "The Pilgrims Going to Church," by George Henry Boughton*



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