



THE LEGAL ALERT

A Monthly Publication of the Christian Law Association

JULY 2024 IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

We the People
insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common
and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.— That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, in such a case, would dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, we have suffered long by abuses of this kind, yet the sense of a grievance, when it reaches this point, obliges us to appeal to the Supreme Judge of the world for redress, and we have the consolation to feel that our Heavenly Father is just.



CHRISTIANITY AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Declaration of Independence is a document at the very core of our American system of government. Signed on July 4, 1776, the Declaration set in motion a chain of events that would lead to the Revolutionary War, the independence of the United States, and the establishment of an unbelievably effective system of government. There are several aspects of the Declaration of Independence that are decidedly Christian, and we will examine each of them briefly.

People Were Created by God

The Declaration of Independence includes this famous quotation:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Unpacking this statement, it is clear that the Founding Fathers believed that humans have a Creator. They acknowledged that human life came from God. Further, the Declaration asserts that God Himself created humans and gave them certain rights. Since rights like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were given to mankind by God, they cannot be taken away by the State.

This statement from the Declaration of Independence is not a neutral statement. It is a statement that honors God the Creator and recognizes that human governments cannot and should not overthrow divine principles.

All Men Are Created Equal

The Declaration, of course, asserts that all people are created equal. Even though they did not fully live out this idea in regards to slavery at the time, the Christian idea about the equality of humans would eventually be adopted more and more in the American system of government, culminating in a time when slavery would be abolished.

When America first articulated this Christian ideal in the Declaration of Independence, there were still thousands of men and women on our soil who were not yet being treated as equals because they were slaves. Although it took more than two hundred years, a bloody Civil War, and an

ongoing civil rights movement to achieve it, this doctrine of equality, which has always been enshrined as an ideal in the Declaration, slowly became a reality for everyone.

In 1890, historian Richard Frothingham wrote,

[A] low view of man was exerting its full influence when Rome was at the height of its power and glory. Christianity then appeared with its central doctrine, that man was created in the Divine image, and destined for immortality; pronouncing, that, in the eye of God, all men are equal. This asserted for the individual an independent value. It occasioned the great inference, that man is superior to the State, which ought to be fashioned for his use. This was the advent of a new spirit and a new power in the world.

Ultimately, the eradication of slavery in the United States is rooted in the Christian ideal of the equality of mankind.

The Declaration's Very Words Have Christian Sources

Not only the concepts but the very words of the Declaration of Independence are rooted in Christianity. When Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, he did so with a great deal of input from those who had gone before him. He did a masterful job of setting forth our nation's reasons for coming into being, but his thoughts were not original. As political science professor, Donald S. Lutz, observed, "[T]here was nothing new in the phrasing and ideas of the Declaration."

Jefferson drew many of his ideas from John Locke and William Blackstone, both Biblical Christians. He also reflected the work of a group of twenty-seven Scotch-Irish church elders in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, who drafted their own Declaration in May 1775, under the direction of Elder Ephraim Brevard, a graduate of Princeton. A comparison of the Declaration of Independence with the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence reveals many similar phrases.

In declaring the endowment of these unalienable rights, Jefferson was also influenced by George Mason's "Virginia Declaration of Rights" which said:

THE WALL OF SEPARATION

In modern times, there is a considerable amount of confusion about the idea that America has a “wall of separation between the church and the state.” Some people erroneously believe that the separation of church and state means that Christians should essentially never express their views in public, that only secular ideas have a place in the public square. Though modern secularists may prefer this interpretation, it has no foundation in American history.

More than 200 years ago, the Danbury Baptist Convention was concerned that the newly formed federal government might attempt to interfere with their freedom of worship, and they expressed their concerns to President



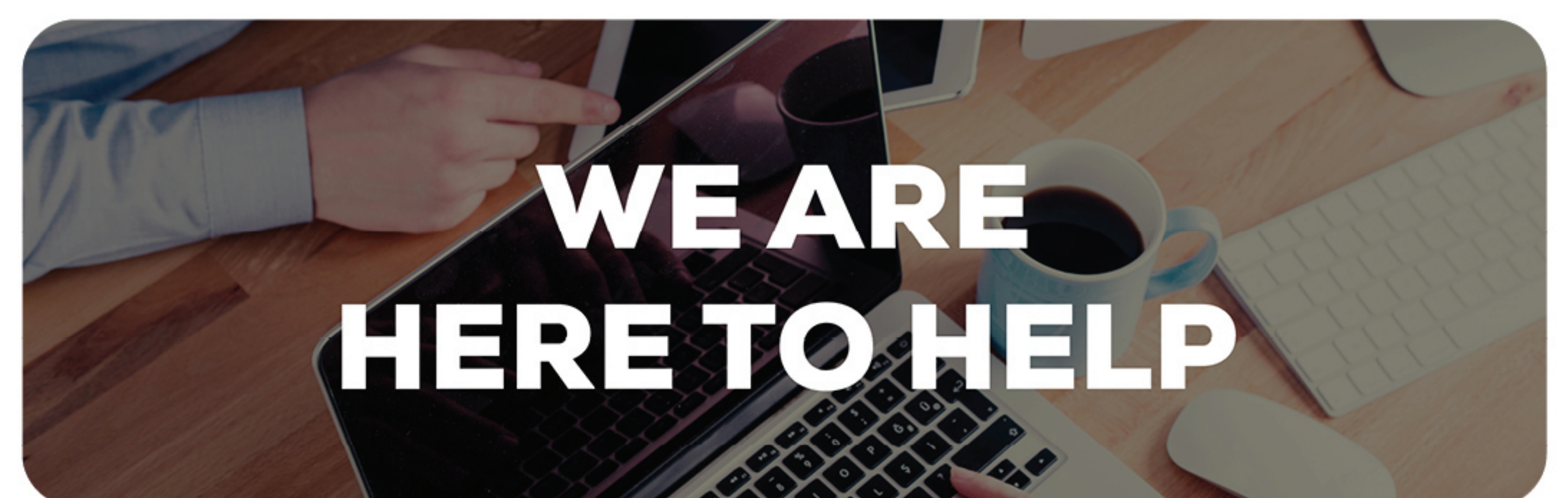
FROM ONE OF OUR READERS

I thought I would comment on an article from your newsletter, “Writing about Jesus for a School Project.” I wish you were around when I was in high school. As a young Christian, I was almost crushed. My English teacher gave us an assignment to write something that was very important to us. The assignment had to cover who, what, where, and why. I was so excited. After many hours of prep work, I turned in my assignment. When the papers were returned, I did not receive mine. After class, I approached my instructor and asked why I did not get my paper back. He opened his desk drawer and pulled it out and told me it was not acceptable, as it was just a fairy tale—and threw it in the trash can. It was all I could do to keep the tears from flowing. As the years have gone by, I did learn a valuable lesson. The world isn’t always fair, but He is. Now that is Love!



Thomas Jefferson. After all, in the colonists’ home nation of England, the government often forced churches to reflect the religious preferences of the monarch. Jefferson wrote a letter to assure the Convention that the Constitution did not allow the federal government to intervene in church affairs, saying that a “wall of separation” had been erected between church and state.

Jefferson’s letter was written to say that the federal government could not force certain religious views on citizens, not to say that religious expression in the public sphere was prohibited. Any other interpretation of “separation of church and state” is erroneous.



Dear CLA,

The Lord worked it out that my employer removed the financial penalty after all, and I was able to receive my share of the company’s largest bonus distribution in their history. Based on some checking by my new division chief and a comment from my team lead, I expect also to receive my full raise shortly. Your information was instrumental to this end. Thank you! To God be thanks also, and glory.

We praise the Lord that this Christian our team was able to assist is no longer being asked to violate his faith in the workplace in order to receive rightful compensation.

Christianity and the Declaration of Independence continued...

That all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

Much of the wording of the Declaration itself is rooted in the work of Christian ideas as expressed by Godly people of Jefferson’s generation.

Self-Evident Truths

When Thomas Jefferson wrote that certain truths were self-evident, he was referring to truth that is

known intuitively as a direct revelation from God without the need for proof, discussion or debate. For example, there is no need to prove that man is created in the image of God. It is assumed. Black is not white, round is not square, and men are not angels. These are all facts of nature that, as human beings, we are able to reason and understand without further proof.

It cannot be refuted that Christianity had a great impact on the Declaration of Independence. At the Christian Law Association, it is our honor to defend the Constitution of the United States when enemies of the Gospel attempt to use the law to thwart Christian ministries. We ask for your prayer as we continuously labor on behalf of God’s people.



A dear pastor and his wife in the Midwest found themselves in the middle of the unthinkable. Without ever violating a law or even an ethical standard, they found themselves being sued for the faith. Because they had little experience with the law and legal proceedings, they expected for their situation to be resolved speedily. They had no idea that their case would take years.

To begin with, this couple had to accept the fact that the preparations for a trial can take a lot longer than one might imagine. They had no way of anticipating how much time it would take to deal with the tedious legal details.

Finally, their case got to court. Though the facts were definitely on their side, the jury came back with a guilty verdict. Their hearts were crushed, but now they had to go through the long process of appealing their case.

When the appellate court heard their case, they actually won. But the day they won, they responded,

“We are surely grateful for this legal victory. But this case has consumed so much of our lives for more than four years that even winning seems hollow. We are thankful, but we are exhausted.”

This story, of course, could be told over and over. There is a reason the old adage says, “The wheels of justice turn slowly.” People who watch court cases mustn’t be disheartened when they don’t receive the outcome they had hoped for because the case may be won on appeal. People who are in the midst of court cases need patience as they deal with legal matters day in and day out, especially when they feel that there is no end in sight.

At the Christian Law Association, we are thankful when certain matters can be handled expeditiously, when they can be “nipped in the bud,” so to speak. But we also covet your prayers as our legal missionaries spend an enormous amount of time on difficult cases. Though our experienced attorneys do unparalleled work on the cases, all of us benefit from having more patience.

We humbly ask that you pray for good and Godly people who are in the midst of legal struggles at this moment, that you pray for our legal staff as they tend to these difficult and tedious cases, and that you pray for our nation as many important cases slowly make their way through the legal system. We surely need God’s gracious hand of blessing, and we need to be patient people.



The church is not a building. The church body is the group of people who join together and worship God in one accord. But the church is not held captive in the sanctuary. Our church expands far beyond the walls and into the daily lives of all who believe. However, today’s culture wants to rip the fabric of the church apart. There’s no denying that. Every day, our legal ministry is contacted by a believer who is shocked that someone is suing his church, and we step up to defend him. A vast majority of these calls describe legal situations that are happening about which you would think *NEVER IN AMERICA*. But they do happen. Every day.

What can you do? Is the battle too hard? Below are a few things you can do.

1. Pray for our country, and let us know! Pray for these legal issues. Nothing is too hard for God.
2. Stand. Stand for what the Bible says is right. Do not give in on Biblical principles.

3. Give. Give of your time to witness. Give of your resources to your church and to those causes that protect your rights. Give of yourself, and God will reward your stewardship.

Today, we received dozens of phone calls and emails into our office. One was a call from a pastor who is devastated by legal action taken against his church. A mother dialed our office from a school where her child was being forced to participate in anti-Biblical rituals. Another call was from a Christian who was simply inviting a co-worker to a church dinner and was reprimanded by his boss. These believers just wanted to obey God’s Word and handled their situations with the utmost grace, but the culture is now targeting Christians.

You have the right to do what’s right! We are here to stand with you. Please stand firm and allow CLA to be your legal missionaries along the way.



AMERICA IS IN TROUBLE

NEVER BEFORE HAVE WE SEEN SUCH ISSUES IN AMERICA

Since 1969, CLA has been providing free legal assistance to Bible-believing churches and Christians who are experiencing difficulty in practicing their religious faith because of governmental regulation, intrusion, or prohibition in one form or another. The Christian Law Association serves in the following ways...

- Free legal defense of those facing difficulties for the Biblical faith
- Free legal counsel to churches and Christians for their ministries
- Legal books and other resources to inform Christians of their rights
- Weekday radio program broadcast, *The Legal Alert*, on over 1,586 outlets around the world
- Publication of *The Legal Alert*, a monthly newsletter
- Free legal help to homeschooling families
- Free legal consulting to local, state, and federal officials and legislators to provide maximum religious liberty
- Intercessory prayer ministry for requests sent to the ministry offices
- Prayer initiative for our national leadership and government
- Legal seminars for ministries to help prevent lawsuits
- Preaching in churches across the country

WHAT IS THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE?



When the colonists came to America, the government of England had an official church, and English citizens could be punished for worshipping in any other church. The colonists' desire for religious freedom caused them to leave their home nation completely.

The First Amendment declares that the federal

government cannot create an official church that everyone must support—that is, the government may not establish an official religion.

The original intent of the Constitution was never to say that school teachers cannot lead a class in prayer, only that the federal government couldn't force people to support an official state church.



DOL ANNOUNCES MINIMUM SALARY INCREASES FOR EXEMPT EMPLOYEES

The Department of Labor has issued a two-part raise of the minimum salary amount that can be paid to an exempt employee to keep them from being non-exempt (and thus eligible for overtime). In 2020, the minimum weekly salary amount was increased from \$455 to \$684. As of July 1, 2024, that amount will increase again to \$844 per week, or \$43,888 per year. In July of 2025, the minimum will rise again to \$1,128 per week, or \$58,656 per year. The salary amount for being classified as highly compensated has also risen from \$107,432 to \$132,964 in 2024 and \$151,164 for 2025.

All ministries should examine all employee positions to determine which exempt positions will be potentially affected by this increase, and whether or not those positions are subject to the ministerial exception (exempting them from minimum wage and overtime laws). If you have an employee in a position that is not exempt, you will either need to increase that employee's salary or re-classify the position as non-exempt. If you have any questions on any of this, please call our attorneys today and let us walk you through what you need to know.



PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER

SOUTH CAROLINA: Pray for a pastor and his church who were told they could not go door-to-door witnessing around government-funded homes. Our attorneys have advised them regarding their legal rights to witness door to door and how that cannot be restricted.

FLORIDA: Pray for two Christian friends who decided to start a choir and band program for homeschool families. Over two years, their ministry has grown exponentially, and our attorneys were honored to assist them in establishing a nonprofit.

OKLAHOMA: Pray for a pastor our attorneys are assisting with the proper protocols in handling background checks that came back with issues.

GEORGIA: Pray for a Christian starting a nonprofit that spreads the Gospel and helps people financially.

WASHINGTON: Pray for a church CLA is helping as the pastor deals with a large gaming company about removing his church's location from a popular app.

KENTUCKY: Pray for wisdom and discernment for Christians CLA counsels regarding their involvement with local prisons as they minister to the men and women who are incarcerated.

INDIANA: Pray for a Christian who has sought our help as he starts a ministry to help local police officers.

GEORGIA: Pray for our attorneys as they advise a church handling a situation with a roofing company employing shady practices, resulting in the church signing a contract with the company for roof repair.

RHODE ISLAND: Pray for a church as we assist them in handling a dispute with a neighbor who is repeatedly not observing the church's property boundaries.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Pray for a pastor who contacted CLA for help as they confront a cable company about paying for sewer damage to the church's property which resulted in thousands of dollars in repairs.

INDIANA: Pray for a Christian seeking our attorneys' guidance on witnessing and passing out tracts at her local grocery store.

WISCONSIN: Pray for a business owner who called to speak with our attorneys about her rights as a Christian employer as she builds her business.

TEXAS: Pray for a Christian we are helping who has been banned from a popular website for neighbors because he posted a church invitation and several people complained.

NEW MEXICO: Pray for a pastor as he works with our attorneys regarding potential protection he may have for liability as a volunteer chaplain at his local sheriff's office.

TEXAS: Pray for a Christian who called our office regarding his rights to witness to clients.

ILLINOIS: Pray for a Christian CLA is advising as he requests a religious accommodation at his workplace.

NORTH CAROLINA: Pray for a Christian business owner who contacted us for assistance in dealing with a management company that is causing issues for his business.

OHIO: Pray for a Christian asking for information from our attorneys as she confronts the city to stop a festival held near her home that goes against her religious beliefs.

ARIZONA: Pray for a Christian who sought CLA's advice as he gets ready to start a nonprofit organization for a Christian school and expand outside his own state.

ARKANSAS: Pray for a church seeking guidance as they get ready to start a Christian school this coming fall.

ALABAMA: Pray for a pastor who contacted CLA for counsel as he and the Christian school board consider reinstating a student who was dismissed.

COLORADO: Pray for a pastor as he talks with our attorneys regarding his rights in setting up a mobile chapel and witnessing at truck stops.

OHIO: Pray for a pastor and his church who are repeatedly encountering conflict with the city. They are seeking help from our legal team because the city is once again causing issues after the church received a generous building donation from another non-profit.

NORTH CAROLINA: Pray for a church that contacted our office with questions about liability as they prepare to host Vacation Bible School. Our attorneys are always honored to assist with such questions when it comes to church outreach, especially during the summer months when such events are more common.

CONNECTICUT: Pray for a church deacon as he has discussions with our attorneys and local rescue departments regarding the liability of handling medical emergencies in the church.

WASHINGTON: Pray for a pastor requesting legal guidance from our attorneys regarding starting a new church.

NEW MEXICO: Pray for a pastor we are advising as he works with a local family whose children attend using church transportation but repeatedly cause issues for the staff.

ILLINOIS: Pray for camp officials who contacted our office with questions regarding staff and volunteers as they begin working with local churches and ministries this summer.

ILLINOIS: Pray for a Christian seeking counsel as she begins her journey to start a Christian school ministry.

NEW JERSEY: Pray for a Christian asking for CLA's help as she considers starting a homeschool enrichment program for her community.

MISSISSIPPI: Pray for a Christian school requesting advice from our attorneys regarding unpaid student tuition.

These requests are a small sampling of those we have received in recent weeks. We covet your prayers for these and hundreds of others that come to us on a regular basis.