

Remarks Following the Presentation of a Religious Liberty Commission Report and an Exchange With Reporters

June 26, 2026

The President. Well, thank you very much. We just got back from a wonderful group of people, Faith and Freedom, and now we have something else that I've been working on for a long time with the Lieutenant Governor of Texas, who's a fantastic man, and Ben Carson and everybody else up here.

And I'm delighted to be joined by some of our Nation's greatest champions of faith and religious freedom to receive the report of the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty, which is a very big deal. And here today are members of the Commission. They showed up for every meeting, and they take it very seriously, and they are very serious people.

Chairman Dan Patrick. And I want to thank you, Dan, because you've done a fantastic job.

Religious Liberty Commission Chair Dan Patrick. Thank you, sir.

The President. A fantastic job.

Vice Chairman Ben Carson. Dr. Ben Carson, my friend. He was originally my opponent. He ran very, very tough. I didn't like running against him. He was very tough. *[Laughter]* He was a tough one. But he's a great gentleman.

Attorney General Todd Blanche. Where's Todd? Todd.

Acting Attorney General Todd W. Blanche. Mr. President.

The President. You're doing good. Everybody tells me what a good job you're doing. I agree. They're all—even the Senators are all saying, "Wow, he's doing a great job."

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Scott Turner. Scott, thank you. Dr. Ryan Anderson. Ryan, thank you very much. Bishop Robert Barron. Attorney Allyson Ho.

Dr. Phil. Some would call him Dr. Phil McGraw. We all know him as "Dr. Phil." One of the most successful people ever on television, I might add. Thank you, Phil.

President and CEO of First Liberty Institute, Kelly Shackelford. Kelly, thank you.

Rabbi Meier Soloveichik. Thank you, Rabbi. Pastor Paula White, who's been with the campaign from day one. And Jenny Korn worked with Paula so well.

We've—we got, I think, 94 percent of the vote—the evangelical vote. Nobody has ever gotten a number——

Senior Adviser to the White House Faith Office Paula White-Cain. Yes. Never.

The President. ——like that, and we're very honored. And part of it is because of the people standing behind me.

The Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, Vince Haley. He used to be my speechwriter. Now he went on to policy—*[laughter]*—and he's done a great job. He's a fantastic guy.

In May of last year, I established the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty to outline threats to the free exercise of religion in our country and to provide recommendations for action.

America was founded by people of faith, and it was settled as a haven for religious freedom. So important.

As we prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our founding next week, it is only appropriate that we work to strengthen this fundamental right and to, most essentially, have liberty for generations to come.

We want religious liberty. We want liberty, but we also want religious liberty.

We will closely study this report that is being presented to me as President today, and my administration will continue to work with the—really, the pillars of protecting religious liberty for all America and say we must also remain one Nation under God.

We will never let that phrase be stolen from us. You know, people are trying to steal it. We all know that very well. That phrase will never be stolen. It will stand proudly in our courts and everywhere else where we have it.

And I want to thank this great team of outstanding work, and I'd like to start off with the chairman, Dan Patrick, and say a few words about the report, and followed by a couple of the people that I know up here so well. And they're going to speak at random if they want, but it will be followed by vice chairman, Dr. Ben Carson.

So, Dan, if you would, you'll start it off. And then Ben, and then you could say a few words, everybody, as you want.

Thank you.

Chair Patrick. Yes, sir. First of all, Mr. President, thank you for hosting us today, and thank you for establishing this Commission.

It was just 13 months ago when we stood in the Rose Garden. Now it's an incredibly beautiful Rose Garden today. We stood there and we talked about religious liberty and that no President in our history has stood more for God than this President.

He has been unashamed to speak the word of Jesus. He's been unashamed to speak up for all faiths. And he established this Commission so that we would assure Americans that religious liberty, that this great inheritance from our Founding Fathers, would continue for another 250 years.

And, Mr. President, we believe this will be one of your greatest legacies, and you happen to be the perfect President to be here in the 250th celebration.

The President. Thank you.

Chair Patrick. The question is, what is religious liberty? It's our conscience. It's that little voice inside of us that tells us right from wrong. It's that voice that, when we're in trouble, we can talk to in our quiet moments. It's that voice when we feel unloved and alone that can comfort us through a higher power.

When Governments can take away your religious liberty, they're putting their hand in your heart and taking everything you believe in. And if Governments can do that, then they become God.

[At this point, Chair Patrick continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]

So we have 12 recommendations. I'll read the first six, my great Vice Chairman will read the next six, and then members will speak to these issues.

So, Mr. President, recommendation number one: Instruct the Department of Justice to issue guidance clarifying the proper understanding of the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state.

Number two, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission shall issue "know your rights" posters for students, parents, public teachers, administrators, religious leaders, religious institution, and health care workers, and military service members.

Ben Carson, I'll let you finish with the remaining seven.

Religious Liberty Commission Vice Chair Benjamin S. Carson, Sr. Six.

Chair Patrick. Six.

Go ahead.

Vice Chair Carson. Combat anti-Semitism through enforcement of civil rights laws, litigation of credible allegations of anti-Semitic discrimination and violence, and civic education.

Protect religious Americans from Government-led litigation targeting their free exercise. Repeal the Johnson Amendment. Order the Department of War to streamline and improve the religious accommodation process.

Continue efforts to restore the retirement or reenlistment eligibility of service members who've lost employment, health insurance, pensions, and other benefits because of their religious beliefs about COVID and vaccines.

And lastly, honor the courage of religious liberty heroes through creating a Presidential Medal of Religious Liberty and First Freedom Hero Awards to recognize Americans who stand up for religious freedom and play an indispensable role in protecting citizens' constitutional rights.

And, Mr. President, we just want to thank you——

The President. Thank you.

Vice Chair Carson. ——first of all, for appointing us to this Commission.

And secondly, for your steadfast dedication to religious liberty. I don't think anybody has done as much as you have—maybe not everybody else put together. And some people in the beginning thought it was just fake, it was just politics, but you've been steadfast throughout the whole thing.

And it's a big part of America.

Senior Adviser White-Cain. It is.

Vice Chair Carson. Our founding document says that our rights come from our Creator and not from Government. And people who try to divorce us from that heritage, do they realize that that's our founding document? Do they realize that our Pledge of Allegiance says we are "one nation under God"? Do they realize that many courtrooms in the land, on the wall it says, "In God we trust"? That every coin in their pocket and every bill in their wallet says, "In God we trust"?

So, if it's in all those places, but we're not supposed to talk about it, maybe we need to see a psychiatrist. [Laughter]

The President. Thank you, Ben.

Chair Patrick. Other members?

The President. Would anybody like to say anything? Anybody? Dr. Phil?

Television personality Phillip C. McGraw. Mr. President, I want to underline that this wasn't a performative Commission. I remember walking in there; the Attorney General is there. I walk into the next one; the President of the United States is there, seeing what's going on with the Commission.

And what stuck out at me—for me is how many Americans showed up saying that they were persecuted in health care, military, education—different walks of life—for living their faith and standing up for their faith.

It's not just the liberty to choose which house of worship they—they want. It's actually getting into their daily life, and they're being persecuted in their jobs, in their professions. And that's where the fight for liberty is actually showing up, and they're having the courage to come and talk about that.

They can't show a cross on their desk at school. They can't refuse a vaccine because it's against their religion.

And they're having the courage to stand up for that, and President Trump is backing them all the way.

And this Commission is making it all transparent, and I'm just very honored to have been a part of that.

The President. Thank you very much, Phil. Appreciate your support too. Great—great gentleman. Thank you.

Anybody?

Ethics and Public Policy Center President Ryan T. Anderson. Yes. Yes. Mr. President, just——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Anderson. ——thank you for creating this Commission. You know, as we celebrate the 250th, we're reminded that we're created equal, we're endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights, that the right to religious freedom for the Founders is because of duties to the Creator.

[*Mr. Anderson continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

The recommendation that I really want to encourage you to make prominent is the last one that Dr. Carson read. Who a community celebrates shows what a community values, and we should be celebrating the heroes of religious liberty.

Over and over again, we saw men and women who were victimized, and then they fought back, and they won. And we should celebrate those heroes.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Yeshiva University Merkin Family Research Professor in Jewish History and Literature Haym Y. Soloveitchik. Mr. President, I'll just——

The President. Please.

Rabbi Soloveichik. ——add, first, how grateful I am for the privilege of serving on this Commission and for being given the opportunity to work for the religious liberty of all Americans.

Dr. Carson is part of the recommendations that this Commission mentioned fighting against anti-Semitism, fighting against Jew hatred. And, of course, your administration has been so, so incredible in the way that it's worked on this issue.

I'll be heading back now for Shabbat to New York.

The President. Good.

Rabbi Soloveichik. As you know, the Jewish community there faces a lot——

The President. Yes.

Rabbi Soloveichik. ——of threats, and it's a scary time in New York right now.

The President. Serious threats.

Rabbi Soloveichik. Very serious threats, as you mentioned in your speech today. And I, for one, am profoundly grateful for your leadership on this matter and the incredible leadership of the Justice Department on this matter and of the entire administration.

The President. Thank you——

Rabbi Soloveichik. Thank you very much.

The President. ——very much. Thank you, Rabbi.

Rabbi Soloveichik. Thank you.

The President. Appreciate it.

This is the report, and it was just presented to me by the group. Looks beautiful.

[*The President held up the report.*]

And you'll all get a copy of this during the day, and you'll see it's quite a report. A lot of very important things in this report, having to do with religion and actually some other topics also. But it's——

Chair Patrick. Is there anyone——

The President. ——it's very important.

Chair Patrick. Paula, did you want to speak, or Bishop Barron?

Senior Adviser White-Cain. I want to say thank you, President Trump. You are the greatest champion of faith. And these were not just superficial woundings that we heard against people of faith; they were egregious acts that were very difficult to even listen to that you would think wouldn't happen in a country like ours, but they did—to 4-year-olds, 6-year-old little children; to moms, dads, communities. The rejection, the pain, the trauma that was caused simply because of faith, and it is just inconceivable that no one has stood up like you have stood up to fight for faith, which gives us meaning and purpose and hope and an ability to continue to be our better selves.

So thank you for honoring——

The President. Thank you, Paula.

Senior Adviser White-Cain. ——people of faith and being the greatest champion with this religious Commission, with two DOJ task force, with the historical White House Faith Office, and all the many other things you've done. We could sit here and list this all day, but your history will go down as the greatest history of a President that fought for people of all faiths, and we're grateful.

The President. Thank you, Paula.

Senior Adviser White-Cain. Yes, sir.

The President. Thank you very much.

Chair Patrick. Bishop Barron.

Bishop Robert Barron of Winona–Rochester, MN. Mr. President, I am very grateful to you as well. The Commission was a wonderful year. I enjoyed the meetings very much, and the witnesses were very impressive—the people that we heard.

I'm struck as I stand in this historic place, looking over the portrait of James Madison. We spent a lot of time talking about the First Amendment.

Lt. Gov. Patrick. Yes.

Bishop Barron. No one in this Commission wants an established religion, but we all want the free exercise of religion, and we sense that being limited in different ways.

I think we also sense that behind a lot of the particular offenses there was this great battle, you might say, with what I call the "culture of self-invention"—that my freedom determines value, I invent who I am, I determine what's good.

And the avatars of that culture realize that the religious people stand athwart that view. We think they're objective goods, moral goods, spiritual goods that we ought to align our freedom with, and I think that came through a lot in the witness testimony.

But it was a wonderful experience, and I think this Commission accomplished a lot. So God bless you for——

The President. Thank you——

Bishop Barron. ——drawing it into existence.

The President. ——very much. Thank you very much. Great.

Vince, do you want to say something?

Domestic Policy Council Director Vincent Haley. Yes, sir. Our Founders know and wrote that no government has the right to come between the citizen and their relationship with God. It's one of the most powerful forces in life—in anybody's life.

I'd say two things about this report. One, it's a body of evidence. We took testimony so people can judge for themselves what people said in this report. It's a body of evidence.

And to violate religious liberty is self-destructive in two ways. One, religious people, religious organizations provide so much fruit for society, whether it's education, health care. To violate the beliefs of those organizations and the people that work there would be undermining for all citizens and the type of value they get from that.

And secondly, the people that defend our freedom writ large are often religious people because they get a power from above, and so if you go after religious people, you're actually undermining—undermining the very foundations of a freedom and those who will protect in this country. So that's——

The President. But it doesn't——

Director Haley. ——why this report is so——

The President. It doesn't stop them.

Director Haley. No.

Bishop Barron. Yes.

The President. They make it——

Director Haley. That's why——

The President. ——they make it worse.

Director Haley. That's why——

The President. And we have a great defender right here, Todd. Go ahead. You're the one.

Acting Attorney General Blanche. I'm ready.

I mean, the most important part of what we did today, Mr. President, after a lot of hard work, is what you just heard Dr. Carson and Lieutenant Governor talk about, which is the work we have left to do. So we're not here saying, you know, "We're done."

The President. Yes.

Acting Attorney General Blanche. We're here saying, "There's a lot of work left to do." I'm excited to do my part at the Department of Justice. I know that the White House—we're going to do our part together, and so everybody that—all the work that was done over the past 8 months sets us up for the next—the next several years to make sure that we don't drop this and that this stays as important as it should be.

So thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Todd. Great job.

Chair Patrick. Mr. President, could I just say one last thing?

The President. Yes, please.

Chair Patrick. On the issue of church and state—that was used as a hammer against almost all of our witnesses—one of the important recommendations that we made, if that happens in the future, if any superior—a person in the military, a superintendent of a school district, someone in the health care system—whoever uses that against someone who is simply standing up for their religious liberty or simply praying in public, that within a short amount of time, if they alleged separation of church and state, that public official must, in writing, explain how that person has violated the Constitution, because, again, the separation of church and state is not in the Constitution.

And from this day forward, if anyone says that to you and they're in public office or serve at any agency in any official capacity, they have to point out exactly where you have violated the Constitution, because you have not. And from this day forward, that phrase should have no power over people of all faiths ever again in America.

The President. Thank you. Okay, how about a couple of quick questions? Then we have to——

Q. Mr. President——

U.S. Military Operations in Iran

Q. Mr. President, on Iran. On Iran, Mr. President——

The President. ——get on to other things.

Q. We—you said that Iran violated the cease-fire.

The President. Yes. They did.

Q. Will they face any consequences?

The President. Well, you'll find out.

Q. Do you consider the cease-fire to still be in place?

The President. I don't like the fact that they took a shot yesterday—actually, four; we knocked down three—at a ship. Not an allied ship, but a ship—a very expensive Iran, commercial transit through Strait of Hormuzship. And it was fine, but it took a little beating. They shouldn't be doing that.

So you'll find out.

Q. Will the U.S.—

The President. I mean, you'll find out exact.

Q. Will the U.S. respond? What is your message to Iran after all of this?

The President. When I respond, you're going to find out.

Iran/U.S. Diplomatic Engagement

Q. Sir, why do you think they did that if the talks—you've said repeatedly, they're going well. What do you think the motivation is for Iran in attacking a ship?

The President. They're a little bit different. That's why—think of it—47 years, no President did what we're doing. So you just asked a question; you'll find out.

Okay, I think we had enough. This is so important. I want to have it stand on its own.

These people are incredible patriots. They're people of great respect and religion. They're among the most respected people in our country.

And I just want to thank Dan and Ben and Todd and Vince and everybody for—Paula—always Paula, because she's been here from the beginning. We have a White House office now on faith. Nobody thought that was going to happen.

Senior Adviser White-Cain. That's right.

The President. Never happened before.

Senior Adviser White-Cain. Never.

Q. How will the findings—

The President. So we have it.

Religious Liberty Commission Report

Q. How will the findings of this Commission change how the Government operates going forward?

The President. Well, we're going to sell it. We're going to sell some of the things that we have. We have some incredible recommendations, but a recommendation doesn't mean anything. This group can sell, and that's what we're going to be doing.

We're going to bring religion back even stronger. You know, religion has made it—it's been a tremendous resurgence in our country. I have not seen anything like it.

I hate to joke, but if this were a stock, you'd be very rich, because—[laughter]—it has gone up like a rocket ship over the last year, year and a half.

And I'm very honored to be sitting here. Maybe I had something to do with it.

But they've made some very strong recommendations, and now we have to convince people to adhere by those regulations.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jennifer S. Korn, Director, White House Faith Office.

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