

## Trump Expands Religious Rights in U.S. Policy

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— Categories: Human Rights



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In his first six months back in office, President Donald Trump has delivered a series of policy changes that have energized conservative Christians, a core element of his Republican base. While also making overtures to Jewish, Muslim, and other faith groups, the administration has prioritized measures that expand religious freedoms in government, education, and public life.

Supporters say these steps restore religion's place in American society, while critics warn they blur the lines between church and state.

From the outset, Trump has backed high-profile initiatives supported by evangelicals and conservative Catholics. He signed an executive order on day one, defining male and female strictly in biological terms aimed at guiding federal policy on gender recognition. Additional orders have removed federal support for gender affirming care for minors and barred transgender athletes from competing in female sports categories.

The administration also moved against the Johnson Amendment, the 1954 law restricting political endorsements from the pulpit. In July, the IRS confirmed pastors can endorse candidates without risking tax-exempt status, a change long sought by some religious leaders.

Trump has taken further steps against. While federal law already bans taxpayer money from directly funding abortions, the cuts also affect contraception and health screening services provided by the group. In January, the president pardoned anti abortion activists convicted of blocking clinic entrances.

The White House has established a new faith office led by Pastor Paula White Cain, a prominent early supporter of Trump.

The office coordinates outreach to religious communities and advises on policy.

A separate Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias, chaired by Attorney General Pam Bondi, has been charged with identifying alleged discrimination against Christians under the previous administration. Trump has also launched a Religious Liberty Commission, including conservative clergy and state officials, to promote public displays of faith such as prayer in schools.

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, a Southern Baptist minister, has been appointed U.S. ambassador to Israel, reflecting continued evangelical support for America's alliance with the country.

Domestically, the Office of Personnel Management issued guidance allowing federal workers to share and display religious beliefs in the workplace,,e provided such expressions are not harassing.

Trump's earlier Supreme Court appointments, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett, continue to shape rulings on religious and cultural matters. Recent 6 3 decisions allowed states to restrict gender affirming care for minors, block Medicaid funds

for Planned Parenthood, and permit parents to withdraw children from school lessons containing LGBTQ+ storybooks.

The administration has also reduced federal funding for institutions and programs seen by supporters as promoting left-leaning cultural values. Cuts have affected public broadcasting, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the Kennedy Center. Funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion programmes in federal agencies has also been curtailed.

At a National Day of Prayer event, Trump declared, “We’re bringing back religion in our country.” Pastor White-Cain said faith had been restored “to where it always belongs at the center.”

Critics, however, argue that the changes could erode constitutional safeguards on the separation of church and state. Rachel Laser of Americans United for Separation of Church and State said new workplace rules “encourage federal workers to impose their religious beliefs on others.”

As the administration moves forward, these policies are expected to remain central to its domestic agenda, reinforcing the president’s standing with religious conservatives while fuelling debate over the role of faith in public life.