**PROCLAMATION FOR RELGIOUS FREEDOM DAY (EXAMPLE)**

As Americans, we have enjoyed a heritage of faith and freedom in this nation since our earliest days. As the U.S. Supreme Court so succinctly stated, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being. . . . We make room for as wide a variety of beliefs and creeds as the spiritual needs of man deem necessary." (Zorach v. Clauson, 343 U.S 306, 313 (1952))

America has long been a place where civil body politic respected our First Freedom, not just from the institutional level of government but within the civil discourse of the nation's people. Even at this nation's lowest point, when it was divided by the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued a Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day so that all Americans would seek God, "to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

Americans understood that language then and responded. To such a plea today, many citizens would merely scoff. Respect for the sacred has faded. As a people, we have entered into the spiritual wilderness where we face yet another great divide. Discord and disunity pollute the body politic. Those who do not know our history rail against religious freedom and freedom of speech, not realizing that these fundamental human rights provide the basis for all other rights we enjoy as Americans. As Thomas Jefferson said of the First Amendment, it "guard[s] in the same sentence, and under the same words, the freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press; insomuch as that whatever violates either throws down the sanctuary which covers the others."

Now, as in Lincoln's day, "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven," but just as he proclaimed, "[W]e have forgotten God . . . and vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our own hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own . . . we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!" In today's America, however, what is worse is that we, as a people, no longer make room for as wide a variety of beliefs and creeds as the spiritual needs of neighbors require and many government officials go out of their way to ensure that our institutions no longer presuppose a Supreme Being either.

On this day, Religious Freedom Day, when we take time to commemorate the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in 1786, perhaps now, more than ever before, those who understand the link between faith and the freedoms we enjoy in this nation must arise to meet the challenges of the times we face. Much like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, when they first labored to bring to fruition that vision of expanding religious toleration in Virginia to true religious freedom, we, too, have much work to be done in our generation to rekindle, to nurture, and to protect that vision throughout our nation so that we can pass a heritage of liberty to the next generation.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, (name), (position), do hereby proclaim January 16, 2018, as Religious Freedom Day. I encourage all citizens of (place) to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities in their homes, schools, work places, and places of worship as an expression of our gratitude for the blessings of liberty, particularly religious liberty, and to recommit ourselves to preserve these blessings by exercising our spiritual responsibilities to pray for one another, to pray for the unity of the nation, and to each do our part to restore civility in the public square.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this (date) day of (month), in the year of our Lord two-thousand and seventeen.