

Religious Freedom Day Proclamation

WHEREAS our nation's founders recognized the importance of religious freedom and secured this liberty in the words of the First Amendment, declaring that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;" and

WHEREAS the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, our country's first legal safeguard for religious liberty, was adopted on January 16, 1786; and

WHEREAS on January 16 of each year since 1994 the President of the United States has issued a Proclamation on the importance of religious liberty, which in 1994 recognized "our government did not create this liberty, but it cannot be too vigilant in securing its blessings;" and

WHEREAS the free exercise of religion has undergirded the social efforts of many Americans, notably Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday on January 15 we commemorate each year; and

WHEREAS the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 18) declares, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" including the right "to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance;" and

WHEREAS religious freedom now faces challenges, persecution and coercion, violent and non-violent, both at home and around the world; and

WHEREAS our country has embraced a tradition of religious liberty that has prevented religious domination, conflict and persecution and nurtured an environment where religion has flourished and where people have been left free to choose which faith they shall follow or none at all;

NOW, THEREFORE the City Council of Long Beach, California, hereby declares January 16, 2010 to be "Religious Freedom Day" in our community.

We encourage city government, community groups, schools and places of worship to reaffirm their devotion to the principles of religious freedom and educate and reflect on the importance of religious liberty so it may continue secure as part of our nation's fabric.

We encourage citizens and government to be mindful of the principles of religious liberty in their decisions, attitudes and actions.

On this day let us give thanks for this precious right that has so profoundly shaped and sustained our Nation, and let us strengthen our efforts to share its blessings with oppressed peoples everywhere.

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