

.....  
(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

## H. RES. \_\_\_\_\_

Honoring the foundational principle of separation of church and state, opposing extreme right-wing Christian nationalism, and recognizing the 65th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and 150th anniversary of President Ulysses S. Grant's speech to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee.

### IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. ANSARI submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

## RESOLUTION

Honoring the foundational principle of separation of church and state, opposing extreme right-wing Christian nationalism, and recognizing the 65th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and 150th anniversary of President Ulysses S. Grant's speech to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee.

Whereas the United States was founded upon the principles of religious freedom and the protection of individual conscience;

Whereas the Founders of this Nation envisioned a country in which every individual is free to practice any faith, or no faith at all, without fear of discrimination or hostility from the Government;

Whereas the concept of separation of church and state, often articulated as “a wall of separation”, was deeply important to many of the Founding Fathers, including James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, who famously used the phrase in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists emphasizing the distinct spheres of government and religious belief;

Whereas James Madison, often referred to as the “Father of the Constitution”, was a strong advocate for religious liberty and authored the Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, arguing against state support for religious instruction and further solidifying the intellectual foundations for the separation principle;

Whereas these values are enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution, which states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”;

Whereas 150 years have passed since Ulysses S. Grant’s September 29, 1875, speech to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee where he emphasized the Founders’ intentions, articulating that religious matters should “forever be left to the family, church, and private schools, and not involve government funding or influence” and underscored the importance of free thought, free speech, and religious liberty for all citizens;

Whereas the dual protections of the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause have been consistently in-

interpreted by the Supreme Court to mandate a separation between government and religious institutions, ensuring that the state does not favor or disfavor any religion, and that individuals are free to practice their faith, or no faith at all, without government coercion;

Whereas landmark Supreme Court decisions, including *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), which applied the Establishment Clause to the States, *McCullum v. Board of Education* (1948), which prohibited religious instruction in public schools, and *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), which prohibited public school-sponsored prayer, have, based on the history and intent of the Clauses, consistently affirmed and elaborated upon these principles; and the Supreme Court continues to rely on its landmark decisions;

Whereas the strength and vibrancy of the United States lie in its diverse, multicultural, and religiously pluralistic society, as well as those who identify as nonreligious or agnostic;

Whereas the rise of extreme right-wing Christian nationalism, which seeks to use the power of government to impose a narrow religious dogma and orthodoxy on the American people, poses a significant threat to the principles of religious diversity, democratic governance, and the constitutional separation of church and state;

Whereas nearly one-third of the population of the United States identifies as religious “nones” and nearly three-quarters of adults in the United States say religion should be kept separate from government policies;

Whereas many religious leaders and organizations recognize and advocate for the importance of the separation of church and state, understanding it to be a safeguard for

religious integrity and freedom from government interference;

Whereas, on September 12, 1960, then-Senator John F. Kennedy, a Catholic presidential candidate, delivered a landmark speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association directly addressing concerns about his faith and its potential impact on his presidency;

Whereas, in his address, Kennedy unequivocally affirmed his belief in an America “where the separation of church and state is absolute”, stating, “I believe in a President whose religious views are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation, nor imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office”;

Whereas Kennedy’s speech reaffirmed that a public servant’s primary obligation should be to the Constitution and the Nation, rather than to any religion; and

Whereas the 65th anniversary of this historic speech provides an opportune moment to reflect upon and reaffirm the enduring importance of the separation of church and state as a cornerstone of American democracy and religious freedom and particularly to oppose the rise of extreme right-wing Christian nationalism: Now, therefore, be it

- 1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2           (1) honors the Founding Fathers’ fundamental
- 3           principle of separation of church and state and op-
- 4           poses extreme right-wing Christian nationalism,
- 5           (2) recognizes the 65th anniversary of Presi-
- 6           dent John F. Kennedy’s address to the Greater
- 7           Houston Ministerial Association and the 150th anni-

1       versary of President Ulysses S. Grant's speech to  
2       the Society of the Army of the Tennessee;

3           (3) acknowledges the profound significance of  
4       President John F. Kennedy's September 12, 1960,  
5       address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Associa-  
6       tion as a testament to these enduring principles;

7           (4) reaffirms its commitment to protecting the  
8       separation of church and state, and true religious  
9       freedom for every individual, as core American val-  
10      ues;

11          (5) encourages all Americans to reflect upon  
12      the historical and ongoing importance of maintain-  
13      ing a clear distinction between governmental author-  
14      ity and religious institutions, ensuring that the  
15      rights of all citizens, regardless of their beliefs, are  
16      protected; and

17          (6) opposes extreme right-wing Christian na-  
18      tionalism and all forms of religious extremism that  
19      seek to undermine the constitutional principles of re-  
20      ligious freedom and the separation of church and  
21      state.