

*Congressional Prayer Caucus*  
112<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS IN REVIEW

*initiatives led by*  
MEMBERS *of the*  
CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS

# 112<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS IN REVIEW

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Since our nation's earliest days, faith has been a cornerstone for countless Americans. Some of the first settlers journeyed to the New World in search of the freedom to exercise their convictions. When declaring their independence, the founders drew upon the universal truths that all men are equal and possess inalienable rights given to them by their Creator. The first act of America's first Congress in 1774 was to ask a minister to open with prayer and to lead Congress in the reading of four chapters of the Bible. For more than half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. Capitol building was regularly used as a church; and by 1867, the church at the Capitol was the largest church in Washington, D.C.

In his Thanksgiving proclamation in 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt recounted this legacy of faith: "Thus from our earliest recorded history, Americans have thanked God for their blessings. In our deepest natures, in our very souls, we, like all mankind since the earliest origin of mankind, turn to God in time of trouble and in time of happiness." Then in 1956, amidst the Civil Rights Movement, Congress adopted "In God We Trust" as our official national motto. The freedom to live in accordance with one's faith was reinforced in subsequent decades as protections were enacted to preserve diversity within the public square. Efforts like Title VII of the Civil Rights Act were crafted to prevent employment discrimination, while simultaneously preserving the freedom of faith-based employers to operate in accordance with the beliefs that often inspired their very existence.

Yet efforts by anti-faith groups have increased in recent years, seeking to wipe away religious references and suppress the First Freedoms enshrined in our Constitution. Religious freedom in America has consistently extended beyond religious worship, enabling the faithful to contribute to our society in a unique and meaningful way. But a distorted understanding of "separation of church and state" is threatening the presence of faith in the public square.

The **CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS** is a bipartisan group of more than 100 Members of the House of Representatives who work to protect religious freedom in America and to preserve our nation's rich spiritual heritage. During the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, Members of the Prayer Caucus introduced legislation, wrote letters, and delivered remarks before many audiences supporting these fundamental principles. They called on executive agencies and officials in the military to preserve the freedom of people of faith to operate in a manner consistent with their religious beliefs. In addition, they continued meeting each week in the U.S. Capitol building to pray for our nation. Members of the Prayer Caucus were at the forefront on these issues, spearheading initiatives to support the following goals:

**RECOGNIZE *the* IMPORTANCE OF FAITH IN AMERICA'S FOUNDING *and* SUBSEQUENT HISTORY**

**PROTECT PUBLIC PRAYER**

**SUPPORT FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS *and* RELIGIOUS STUDENT GROUPS**

**PRESERVE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM *for* SERVICEMEMBERS**

**DEFEND AGAINST ATTEMPTS *to* REMOVE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS FROM *the* PUBLIC SQUARE**

## RECOGNIZED THE *Importance of Faith* IN AMERICA'S FOUNDING AND SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

**Reaffirmed our national motto, "In God We Trust."** Rep. Randy Forbes, Co-Chairman of the Prayer Caucus, introduced [H.Con.Res.13](#) to reaffirm our national motto "In God We Trust" and to encourage its display in public buildings and government institutions. On November 1, 2011 the legislation passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 396-9.

**Supported the peaceful free exercise of religion.** Rep. Stephen Fincher introduced [H.Res.789](#), which acknowledges the important role that faith plays in the lives of many Americans and supports their freedom to exercise those beliefs peacefully.

**Fought attempts to remove "Under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance.** Members of the Prayer Caucus led 108 Members of Congress in sending a [letter](#) to NBC, expressing concern over the network's omission of "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance twice in a video aired during the U.S. Open. The network [responded](#) by implementing safeguards to prevent similar errors in the future.

**Acknowledged America's rich spiritual heritage.** Reps. Randy Forbes and Mike McIntyre, Co-Chairmen of the Prayer Caucus, introduced legislation to recognize our nation's religious history. [H.Res.253](#) affirms the rich spiritual and diverse religious heritage of our nation's founding and subsequent history and designates the first week in May as America's Spiritual Heritage Week.

**Recognized the significant impact of the Ten Commandments on America's development.** Members of the Prayer Caucus supported [H.Res.211](#), introduced by Rep. Louie Gohmert, which recognizes the significant contribution that the Ten Commandments have made in shaping America's principles, institutions, and national character.

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## PROTECTED PUBLIC *Prayer*

**Supported legislative prayer at the U.S. Supreme Court.** Members of the Prayer Caucus signed an [amicus curiae brief](#) asking the Supreme Court to reverse a [decision](#) by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, which held that a North Carolina board of commissioners' prayer policy was unconstitutional because the prayers mentioned "Jesus" too frequently. The brief asked the Supreme Court to uphold our nation's historic legacy of protecting such prayer; however, the Court ultimately declined to review the case, allowing the ruling against the prayers to remain in effect.

**Protected the Colorado Day of Prayer.** The Colorado Court of Appeals [ruled](#) that the state's annual Day of Prayer proclamations violated the state constitution. Rep. Doug Lamborn sent a [letter](#) calling on Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper to appeal the decision. Fourteen Members of the Prayer Caucus then sent a [letter](#) echoing Rep. Lamborn's request. In July of 2012 Governor Hickenlooper [asked](#) the Colorado Supreme Court to reverse the lower court's ruling.

**Supported the freedom of school boards to open meetings with prayer.** Rep. Tim Walberg introduced legislation supporting the freedom of school boards to engage in prayer at meetings. [H.Res.662](#) recognizes that school boards, like other legislative bodies, enjoy the fundamental freedom of

**Advocated for the inclusion of prayer in the commemoration of the 9/11 attacks.** Rep. Randy Forbes sent a [letter](#) to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg urging him to include prayer in the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks. Rep. Mike McIntyre then led 31 Members of Congress in sending a [letter](#) to Mayor Bloomberg echoing the call for the inclusion of prayer.

**Defended city council prayer in Florida.** Thirteen Members of the Prayer Caucus signed an [amicus curiae brief](#) asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit to reverse a ruling that held that a Florida city commission’s practice of offering invocations at the beginning of meetings was unconstitutional. The brief argued that courts do not have the jurisdiction to delve into the inner workings of a deliberative body’s meetings because of the constitutional separation of powers between the branches of government.

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## SUPPORTED *Faith-Based Organizations* AND RELIGIOUS STUDENT GROUPS

**Asked Vanderbilt University to protect religious student groups.** Rep. Randy Forbes led 22 Members of Congress in sending a [letter](#) to the Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, urging him to ensure that the school’s nondiscrimination policy was not being applied in a manner that discriminated against religious student groups. Several religious student organizations had been placed on “provisional status” for requiring their student leaders to share the groups’ religious beliefs. Thirty-five Members then sent another [letter](#) in May of 2012, expressing continued concern that the school required religious student groups to open leadership positions to all students, yet exempted fraternities and sororities from the requirement.

**Urged the President to preserve religious hiring rights.** Reps. Randy Forbes and Mike McIntyre sent a [letter](#) to President Obama, urging him to maintain current policies that allow faith-based organizations that consider religious criteria in their employment decisions to perform contract work for the federal government.

**Advocated for religious freedom protections for employers.** Members of the Prayer Caucus signed *amicus curie* briefs in twelve religious liberty cases challenging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate that will force most employers to provide employee health plans that cover abortion-inducing drugs, contraceptives, and sterilization—services that directly violate many employers’ religious beliefs. Members also cosponsored the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act ([H.R. 1179](#)), which would amend the recent healthcare overhaul to ensure that it does not discriminate against healthcare providers or purchasers who have religious or conscience objections to certain procedures and services.

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## PRESERVED *Religious Freedom* FOR OUR SERVICEMEMBERS

**Reversed a policy that prohibited the use of religious items during visits at Walter Reed Medical Center.** Members of the Prayer Caucus met with officials from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center to call for the reversal of a [policy](#) that prohibited individuals from using or distributing religious items during visits to the hospital. The policy was rescinded, an apology was posted on Walter Reed’s website, and officials are working to implement a new policy that will ensure the religious freedom of our service members.

**Fought against hostility towards faith in the Air Force.** Reps. Todd Akin, Diane Black, and Randy Forbes led sixty-six Members of Congress in sending a [letter](#) urging Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to investigate a pattern of hostility towards faith in the Air Force. In recent years the Air Force has repeatedly capitulated to pressure from outside groups to remove religious symbols and references to faith from the service. The letter called on Sec. Panetta to issue clear Department of Defense policy guidance, consistent with our Constitution, to preserve the place of religious expression in the military.

**Called for specific religious freedom protections for service members.** The repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in the military raised concerns that service members whose religious beliefs

conflicted with homosexual behavior would face discrimination and disapproval. Members of the Prayer Caucus sent a [letter](#) to President Obama, urging that specific religious freedom and conscience protections be adopted to formally assure Americans that our citizens need not leave their faith at home when they volunteer to serve.

**Opposed the removal of a reference to “God” from an Air Force logo due to outside pressure.**

Rep. Randy Forbes led 35 Members of Congress in sending a [letter](#) to the Air Force expressing concern over a decision by the Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office (RCO) to change its logo to remove a reference to “God” after receiving complaints from the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (MAAF). The RCO patch, like many unit patches, included a line in Latin meant to be a clever pun understood by members of the unit.

**Inquired into removal of military branch emblems from military-themed Bibles.** Rep. Alan Nunnelee led 22 Members of Congress in sending a [letter](#) to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta calling on him to explain the removal of branch emblems from military-themed Bibles. In 2003 Holman Bible Publishers obtained permission from each branch to use their official emblems on the Bibles. The “Soldier’s Bible,” “Sailor’s Bible,” “Marine’s Bible,” and “Airman’s Bible” displayed the official emblems, and in addition to the Biblical text, contained items such as patriotic quotes and historic prayers. The Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) claimed responsibility for convincing the branches to revoke authorization for the publishing group to use the emblems on Bibles.

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## FOUGHT ATTEMPTS TO REMOVE *Religious Symbols* FROM THE PUBLIC SQUARE

**Defended roadside memorial crosses.** Members of the Prayer Caucus signed an [amicus curiae brief](#) submitted to the Supreme Court, urging it to reverse a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit that held that crosses placed on Utah roadsides to honor fallen state troopers violated the Establishment Clause.

**Worked to protect the symbols and traditions of Christmas.** Members of the Prayer Caucus supported [H.Res.489](#), introduced by Rep. Doug Lamborn, which expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the symbols and traditions of Christmas should be protected for use by those that celebrate Christmas.

**Voted to add the D-day Prayer to the World War II Memorial.** Members of the Prayer Caucus supported the World War II Memorial Prayer Act ([H.R.2070](#)), introduced by Rep. Bill Johnson, which directs the Secretary of the Interior to add President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s D-Day Prayer to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. On January 24, 2012 the legislation passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 386-26.

**Opposed efforts to remove a memorial cross honoring military veterans.** In January 2011, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that a cross displayed as part of the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego, California was unconstitutional. Members of the Prayer Caucus signed on to *amicus curiae* briefs at both the [Ninth Circuit](#) and the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) defending the cross’s presence at the veterans memorial as constitutional. A cross has been part of the Memorial since 1913, and the current cross has been in place for over fifty years.

**Prohibited use of federal funds for dismantling memorial cross.** Members of the Prayer Caucus then supported [language](#) added to the Department of Defense Appropriations Act for FY 2013 ([H.R. 5856](#)) to prohibit the use of federal funds for dismantling any portion of the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial.

# CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS

112<sup>th</sup> Congress

*bipartisan* group of 104 Members

Forbes (VA-04), Founder and Co-Chairman

McIntyre (NC-07), Co-Chairman

Adams (FL-24)	Harper (MS-03)	Ross, D. (FL-12)
Aderholt (AL-04)	Harris (MD-01)	Royce (CA-40)
Akin (MO-02)	Hartzler (MO-04)	Ryan, P. (WI-01)
Alexander (LA-05)	Huelskamp (KS-01)	Scalise (LA-01)
Austria (OH-07)	Huizenga (MI-02)	Schilling (IL-17)
Bachmann (MN-06)	Hultgren (IL-14)	Schock (IL-18)
Bachus (AL-06)	Hurt (VA-05)	Scott, T. (SC-01)
Bartlett (MD-06)	Johnson, B. (OH-06)	Shuler (NC-11)
Berg (ND-AL)	Johnson, S. (TX-03)	Smith, Adrian (NE-03)
Bilirakis (FL-09)	Jones, W. (NC-03)	Smith, C. (NJ-04)
Bishop (UT-01)	Jordan (OH-04)	Smith, L. (TX-21)
Black (TN-06)	King, S. (IA-05)	Southerland (FL-02)
Blackburn (TN-07)	Kingston (GA-01)	Stearns (FL-06)
Broun (GA-10)	Kline (MN-02)	Stivers (OH-15)
Buerkle (NY-25)	Lamborn (CO-05)	Stutzman (IN-03)
Burton (IN-05)	Lankford (OK-05)	Terry (NE-02)
Camp (MI-04)	Latta (OH-05)	Thompson, G. (PA-05)
Cantor (VA-07)	Lipinski (IL-03)	Turner (OH-03)
Capito (WV-02)	Manzullo (IL-16)	Upton (MI-06)
Carter (TX-31)	McHenry (NC-10)	Walberg (MI-07)
Cassidy (LA-06)	Miller, Gary (CA-42)	Walsh (IL-08)
Chaffetz (UT-03)	Miller, Jeff (FL-01)	West (FL-22)
Clarke, H. (MI-13)	Neugebauer (TX-19)	Wilson, J. (SC-02)
Coble (NC-06)	Noem (SD-AL)	Wittman (VA-01)
Coffman (CO-06)	Nunnelee (MS-01)	Wolf (VA-10)
Conaway (TX-11)	Paulsen (MN-03)	Young, T. (IN-09)
Duncan, Jeff (SC-03)	Pearce (NM-02)	
Ellmers (NC-02)	Pence (IN-06)	
Emerson (MO-08)	Pitts (PA-16)	
Fincher (TN-08)	Pompeo (KS-04)	
Foxx (NC-05)	Price, T. (GA-06)	
Franks (AZ-02)	Reichert (WA-08)	
Garrett (NJ-05)	Ribble (WI-08)	
Gingrey (GA-11)	Rigell (VA-02)	
Gohmert (TX-01)	Roby (AL-02)	
Goodlatte (VA-06)	Roe (TN-01)	
Griffin, T. (AR-02)	Rogers, M. (AL-03)	
Griffith (VA-09)	Roskam (IL-06)	