

Separation of Church and State: What Does the Government Publish About Religion? – Transcript of audio

Please stand by for realtime captions.

Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to at the LP Academy. We have a tremendous afternoon plan for you. The title of today's app and are is separation of truth and state, what does the government publish about religion. Again, my name is , standing with my colleague, Ashley Dahlen. With us, today, is our presenter, Jane Canfield, who has presented many webinars for us, which we really appreciate. Let me read you a little bit about Jane. She is a coordinator federal government at the Catholic Puerto Rico see you. She has 40 years of experience in the library field. She started her career as a public library in, moved into school libraries, taught for six years at the Central American graduate school of information sciences, worked as the director of the library of the post secondary vocational school, and arrived at her current job in 2007. She fell in love with the role of government documents and has taken on the special task of working with documents in other languages, especially Spanish, as a native Spanish speaker. With that, I will turn the virtual microphone over to Jane.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for attending. Today's webinar, Separation of Church and State: What Does the Government Publish About Religion?\Separation of Church and State: What Does the Government Publish About Religion? . I was motivated to put together this particular webinar, first as a workplace issue, because I frequently am asked by students and faculty, since we are a religious institution whether or not there is anything that the United States government publishes on religion. There is a mistaken belief that the government really does not publish on religion. As it turns out, as I explored for this webinar, that is not true. The government does not advocate for any particular religion, but there is a great deal of information from illegal to CIA book that publishes information about the various religions practiced in the world and within the United States. I also wanted to explore this topic because, like many people, I frequently hear lots of confusion, and was perhaps a little confused myself about what exactly does separation of church and state mean? It turns out that historically, we have argued over this since the founding of the United States and continue to do so. Also, as a practitioner of my religion, I find that as many of you are, I am sure practitioners of your respective religions, that sometimes my religious beliefs conflict with what is currently illegal or politically correct, and on other occasions, my personal and political beliefs do not necessarily align with what my religion says. So, for those reasons, both work and personal, I decided to explore, what is there out there, and what exactly is separation of church and state and how have we looked at it historically? So let's get started. Okay. First, we start with -- and this is from CONGRESS.GOV on the indicated Constitution on the CONGRESS.GOV site. It is the First Amendment of the United States Constitution that separates church from state, and it goes, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" and those two phrases, no law and establishing religion and no law establishing the free exercise of religion are within the First Amendment of the Constitution, and they are what allow us both our freedom to practice our religion and frequently, over historical time, and in our current world, confusion and conflict over exactly what that means. From the United States court system, which under U.S.courts.gov has a number of excellent resources, comes this statement, and it is from a much larger statement on the First Amendment and religion from the U.S. court system. "The First Amendment has two provisions concerning religion." The establishment clause. That is what says the government will not establish a state religion. Historically, that definition has not been totally clear. It has been argued over. Historically, it has meant prohibiting a state-sponsored church, such as the Church of England is. The second clause is known as the free exercise clause. And it protects our rights as citizens to practice our

religion as we please, as long as that does not run afoul of public morals or a compelling government interest. Obviously, I think all of us are aware that public morals have changed over time. And I am going to give an example from a television series, "the Murdoch mysteries," which I am currently watching. They are set in the early part of the 20th century. And, at that time, homosexuality, lesbianism, anything which we now know as the LGQB rights were considered illegal and morally apprehensive. Just an example of changing morals over time. Compelling government interests can also change. One example that has been used more than once by the courts is the government compelling parents to vaccinate children, and, also, parents, who for religious reasons, do not believe in modern medical care, compelling most of those parents to treat those children. Our right to freely exercise our religion exists. It has changed historically over the concept of what public morals are, and it can be circumvented by a compelling government interest. So under title VII of the civil rights act of 1964, there was a definition of religion in terms of how that applies to employers being able to not discriminate against your right to practice your religion. That title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 defines religion very broadly. Not just Christianity and Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, but it also includes any religious beliefs that are new, not common, not necessarily part of a formal church or sect, only believed by a small number of people, or that is unreasonable to others. That is a very broad definition of what religion is. Title VII's protections. It also extends to people who are discriminating against or feel they need accommodation because they do not possess any particular religious belief. Also, under title VII, religious beliefs are defined that are theistic, a belief in God, but also as beliefs that do not necessarily involve a belief in God, but that are a set of moral or ethical beliefs that are sincerely held and with the same strength as traditional religious views. Religion typically concerns, if you're talking about title VII, a look at what are our ultimate ideas about our lives, our purpose in life, our ideas about death. Social, political, and economic philosophies, as well as our mere personal preferences are not considered religious beliefs. Again, under title VII, religious observances can include, in terms of what your employer must provide access to. Your worship services or prayer, you're wearing of religious garments or symbols, displaying religious objects, adhering to dietary roles, proselytizing or other forms of religious expression, or refraining from certain activities. Whether a practice will be defined as religion depends upon your motivation as an employee. What for one person may be religious for another person be purely secular are distinct. I will give you an example for my own religious tradition. As a Catholic, during the season of Lent, we are required to refrain from eating meat on Fridays. Someone else who is vegetarian, and who is not part of that religion, although if you're Hindu, vegetarianism is part of your religion, could be purely secular. Whether or not your employer needs to grant exceptions for your religious practice frequently and upping wind it up being defined in the courts as to how sincere your belief is and as to whether it is truly a religious belief or not. This came up as I was preparing a webinar. You will see the date as yesterday, December 5th. This came up in "voice of America." "Voice of America" is one of those sources about religion within the United States, and it is geared towards providing that information for people who are non-native speakers of English or are immigrants and, in this case, it is an article about a case that is currently before the Supreme Court, which, in fact, was on several different news platforms, today, that the Supreme Court is currently hearing a case. And this is an example of how are our ability to define what is our religious freedom and whether it conflicts with other people's religious freedoms changes over time and how frequently our court systems have decided what those reasons are for what we can practice and for what we cannot within the context of freedom of religion. In this case, the case that is before the Supreme Court currently is a graphic artist who designs wedding websites, and she is Christian and does not want to design wedding websites for couples who are gay. The case has made its way to the Supreme Court. That has to do with her claiming religious freedom that it could force her and other artists to do work that is against their faith. On the other side of the argument is, are those people in those beliefs that say, if she is allowed to discriminate on the basis of her religious beliefs, then does that open the door for lots of different businesses to be able to discriminate and to refuse to serve

people of other races, people of other religions, immigrants, so that case is currently in the Supreme Court and I think it bears watching because it is likely to be a pivotal case in how our religious freedom is considered against that of other people's freedoms, for quite a number of years to come. Another site that I found that I did not know that the site existed, so worker.gov. Worker.gov is not just dedicated to the protection of our religious freedoms in the workplace. It also has information about other protections for workers and ways to file complaints that protect employees within the workplace. This particular section of it talks about religious protection and freedom. Again, it protects anyone who has a sincerely held religious, ethical, or moral belief, and you have the right to ask for reasonable religious accommodations, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship on the conduct of your employer's business. Again, that particular phrasing makes many cases wind up in the courts for a decision. But your employer can be required to make adjustments in the workplace that allow you to practice your religion, such as flexible schedules, substituting shifts, acceptance to dress and grooming roles, for instance, allowing the wearing of a headscarf or allowing the use of a beard if those are not rules that are allowed in your workplace. I can give a personal example of this. When I taught in the Masters degree in library science program at American University, here in Puerto Rico for a number of years, in that program, there were a number of students who were seventh day Adventist. If you're Seventh-day Adventist, your day of worship is Saturday, not Sunday. We held mini-classes on Saturday mornings. In the case of the students, they were offered those same classes at some point during their program on a weeknight or on a Sunday that did not interfere with their religious beliefs. So that is just one example that I personally know of where someone's religious beliefs have been accommodated. And, equivalent to your being able to ask for accommodation for disabilities, you also have the right to ask for accommodation for your religious beliefs within the workplace. Okay. Let's talk a little bit about -- and this is from the Library of Congress -- Religion and the Founding of the American Republic.. If not decreed as a state religion, religion has certainly been woven into American life, and we certainly in the current United States have a great diversity of religions and religious beliefs. So this was an exhibition that is now online from the Library of Congress about the efforts of the founders of the American nation to define what the role of religious faith is in public life. How could it be consistent and supported by public officials, but not interfere with the concepts of equality and freedom? It is a very interesting exhibit, and at the end of my presentation, it is one of the places I will go live so you can see how the Library of Congress put together this very fascinating exhibit and information on how religion has played a part within the history of the United States. Okay. "The world." Another source. I suspect that most of us know the CIA world factbook. I suspect that most of us know what the religion of a country is, what percentage of people practice a religion within a particular country. This particular Internet URL takes you to an article written for the world factbook that talks in general about all the characteristics and beliefs of the world's major religions. If you want an overall general knowledge of what religions and religious beliefs exist in the world from day, it is a really excellent article. Surprising source of information on religion, the National Park Service. In this particular case, this has to do with the National Park Service offering information about its parks and areas in Hawaii, and a little bit about the religion of -- within ancient Hawaiian life. And I think that when I started putting this together, I did not realize that the volcano was erupting. I did not realize this volcano would become quite pertinent, because the ancient Hawaiians believed that the gods represented nature's elements and nature is personification of those gods. And, again, there is a great deal more information at this site on Hawaii and the Hawaiian religion at the national Parks service. Also, from the National Park Service, a very interesting article on how religion within the Latino and Spanish-speaking community has evolved and changed over the years, since the founding of the United States. Again, an interesting article to give your perspective on the practice of those people who are Spanish speakers within the United States. And on the religion. Another surprising and very interesting source of religious information on religion as it connects to medicine and also to psychology is within pubmed.gov. I just pulled out and listed and illustrate an

abundance of material of actual investigations into the effects of religion and its practice upon our lives. Religion, bioethics, and the practice of nursing. Religion and suicide risk, an article on how religion relates to suicide. Religion, spirituality, and health, an investigation looking at two religion has to do with health and how it affects our health. Those are just three of the numerous articles that exist within pubmed.gov. Another source, ERIC, which is the government database for articles within the field of education. And there are numerous articles having to do with religion and also with separation of church and state. I pulled out three from the list because I thought the titles of the three were quite intriguing. "The devil is in the details: in America, can you really say "God" in school?". "In the spirit of our ancestors," which has to do with American Indian religions and their role within higher education and "The "F-Word" of Social and Emotional Learning: Faith." there are also other articles within ERIC that have to do with relating our practices of and links our practices of faith and religion. The catalog of U.S. Government publications. It did not yield a huge number of publications, when I searched for separation of church and state and religion, but there is information there. A couple of examples. One from this year, "global trends and challenges to protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief." And one from 2012 that was actually a committee hearing. "Lines crossed: separation of church and state: has the Obama administration trampled on freedom of religion and freedom of conscience?" That was actually a hearing within the House of Representatives. Again, a source for information, the catalog of U.S. Government publications. The U.S. Department of State. It provides within its site factual information on various countries in which we have an embassy or consulate presence and their religious beliefs. This one I am giving you the URL for and the information had to do with a briefing and talk presented by the United States Department of State about the 2022 midterm elections, and it was a study by this professor at the University of Notre Dame on our religious beliefs and community participation. Here is just a little bit about what the briefing discussed. Recent research on the relationship between faith, religious beliefs, and politics, their influence on voting and political participation, and their potential role in the 2022 midterms. And even though the midterms have now taste or at least tonight -- are ending with the Georgia election, the article about how our religious beliefs and politics interact and how they influence us is very interesting. When you go to the URL of the State Department, there is both the article from the briefing, but there is also the actual video of the briefing that Professor David Campbell did. It is worth taking a look at. It is very interesting. Okay. And, now, I am going to share my screen and we are going to go look at some of those sites that offer information on religion and, also, on separation of church and state within the United States. So I will share my desktop. Okay. You should now be seeing my desktop and USA.gov. USA.gov is frequently a rich source of information, particularly if you are beginning to explore a topic and you are not sure exactly where you may find information. USA.gov is a good starting place because it is the portal to the entire United States Government. That can be changed into Spanish, for those of you who have Spanish speakers. Right now, there is a new version that is coming out. And USA.gov is asking you to use that and provide feedback. What I did within USA.gov is I searched religion and I searched separation of church and state. I am going to put "separation of church and state" just so you see an example of what is available. Okay. There is another article from the National Park Service. An article from ERIC. An article on information from the state of Virginia. What does separation of church and state mean for the voice of America? Separation of church and state, explained the Constitution series. "Separation of Church and State: the ongoing crisis." "Separation of church and state in Housing and Urban Development programs." "Accommodationist and separation just theories of the establishment clause." "The separation of church and state." "Introduction to the historical background." "Americans United for separation of church and state," which is an organization that would like to continue protecting the separation of church and state. So just offering an idea of, kind of, what appears when you do a search for separation of church and state. I am going to do that same search for "religion." And then other information pops up. The first one is "the world factbook" from the Central intelligence agency. Religion

from the Department of Justice. This is where I found the worker.gov site and its information. Characteristics that are protected and your ability to practice the religion. This one is again from the National Park Service. Religion and culture from PubMed. Religious discrimination and the equal employment opportunity commission. Women in Buddhism. That is from the national endowment on the humanities. Suggest examples of if you do a search within USA.gov, the type of information that you will find. Again, nothing that is advocating the practice of any particular religion. But multiple sources of information on religion as practice within the United States, investigations on the role of those religions in our lives, information on the history of religion within the United States. Okay. I'm going to move on to ERIC, which is also an excellent source, again. I am going to do separation of church and state. And, within ERIC, inside of it, there are more than 250,000 results that all have something to do with religion and education. You can limit those for the last five years or the last 10 years. Here is my article, "the devil is in the details." "Religious Roots of Boyer's Educational Vision." "Religion in the Lockerroom." "Portraits of Religion in Introductory Textbooks." "Integrating Faith-Based Organizations within Programs." Within ERIC, there are various sources of information on the teaching of religion and within education. Okay. I am going to, again, change my search. This time, I am going to put "religion" so you see what happens we search for separation of church and state. When you search for religion, it gives you a differing set of articles. In this case, 13,000. "Science-religion dialogue in education." "Making sense of religion." "School leaders' perceptions." "Stories Alberta social studies teachers tell." A different set of articles having to do with religion within education. Okay. I am going now to the world factbook from the CIA. I still miss and I admit that I missed the physical version of the world factbook in which there are countries and maps. If you continue going downward, you can find out what is new, explore countries, you can explore by regions, by oceans, and I am just going to go down to "explore countries." And because I know Puerto Rico happens to be included in here as a country, even though we are sort of not really totally a country, Puerto Rico is included. And there is information. There are photos. There are a flag, a map, a locator map, country products, a summary of the country, and this is usually where within the country summary there will be information about history, the geography, climate, depopulation, ethnic groups, languages, and here within the country. And this will be true for any country that you look for it within the CIA World Factbook. Roman Catholic, 56%. Parsing, 33%. Other, 2%. Atheist, 1%. This is interesting because when my husband and I moved to Puerto Rico in 1980, the percent of Roman Catholicism was 98%, not 56%. So, over time, this information about religion within a country can tell you a great deal about changing values and changes within a population. That is just one example from the CIA World Factbook. That's what you find. Okay? Wow, I am going to the library of Congress, "religion and the founding of the American Republic." This was, at one point, I believe, and actual physical exhibition, and now it is a digital exhibition within the Library of Congress site. There is an overview of what is here. There are sections, America as a religious refuge, "religion in 18th-century America," "religion and the American Revolution," "religion and the Congress of the Confederation," "religion and the state governments," "religion and the federal government," and "religion and the new Republic." It gives you the entire history of the religion within the United States in our history as a country. It tells you there were what, 200 objects in the exhibition. And here are the sections of that. Here is a reading from the exhibition. And, if you choose any one of these, I am going to choose "religion and the federal government." And what I get is "Religion and the Federal Government." it is giving me the history of the Constitutional convention. It says no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification for federal officeholders. The Constitution says a little bit about religion. That troubled two groups of Americans. Those who wanted more faith. And those who feared that there would be more faith. Sound familiar? I would say that we still continue with much of the same division. So the latter group worried that the Constitution did not prohibit state-supported religion that some colonies had had. It came up with the First Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited Congress to make any law prohibiting an establishment of religion. Many of our presidents, including the first two, and the

patrons of religion, offered support for religion, but not necessarily for a state-sponsored religion. Saw religion in the Constitution, if you are interested in exploring in more depth what exists about the history of religion within the United States and its relationship to the Constitution, its relationship to the Bill of Rights, here it is, gathered by the Library of Congress into this exhibition. Okay. Finally, I am going to go to PubMed. Let's see what search results are in PubMed. In this case, I am going to put "religion." And I have 7000 results within PubMed, which are articles and investigations which have to do with religion and health, in some way. "Religion and identities." "Current understandings of religion, spirituality, and normal biological means." You can learn a lot about religion from food. Religion in smoking. Religion and the plastic surgeon. "Religion, self-regulation, and self-control." And so on and so forth for 7605 articles. If you do a search in PubMed for "spirituality," you also get in this case 2000 articles. "The interface between psychology and spirituality." "A model of spirituality." "Integrating spirituality into care." "Conceptualizing spirituality for care." So another source for information from U.S. government agencies or entities on religion. So, with that, I am going to stop sharing. I will return to my presentation. I would urge each of you, if a topic interests you, if you have users who are interested, explore for yourselves what exists on a topic, and have a good time doing so. With that, I'm going to conclude. I usually say thank you. Today, I am saying happy holidays. I searched very hard for a "happy holidays" that was totally neutral. I cannot find one. "Happy holidays" have snow and Christmas trees and Christmas ornaments. And finding a "happy holidays" that is neutral either in terms of religion or in terms of how we perceive the December holidays was very hard. This particular picture I chose, I like it, I think it is cute. My sister who lived in New Hampshire would think it was wonderful. In Puerto Rico, there is no way that our students, my grandchildren, who have never seen snow, would associate this picture other than by being told that this is a "happy holidays" picture. Just a little commentary there on even sometimes with our holidays, it is very difficult to separate our cultures, our religious beliefs, from those of other people who have different cultures or different beliefs. With that, indeed, happy holidays to each and every one of you. I am open to questions. I will do my best to answer them.

Thank you, Jane. Great webinar. Really, really good.

Thank you.

Let's see if we have got any questions. We have got some shout outs here. And Mark said, he had not thought of all these great resources on the topic. Very informative. Happy holidays to you. Oh, here is something. Mark says, "I saw an interesting resource on October 22. A devotional field book from the Marine Corps which discusses a variety of faiths, including prayers versus --"

If you will, you will find it. It is really cool.

He included the link. You should take advantage of that. Thank you.

As always, if you would like a copy of the original PowerPoint, send me an email, and I will happily send it.

Right. And you'll get a PDF of the PowerPoint in a day or so. Mark also said, he did not look at the subject headings for a title. A devotional field book might provide him for more clues for searching. Thank you. Here is a question from Trina. Jane, do you know anything about the census and data on religion? Currently, I do not think that census asks about religious affiliation, but did it ever do so in the past?

I don't think so. I have seen the historical lists multiply recently, because I am also representative to the state. I don't think the census has ever asked about religious affiliation. Probably, I am going to guess that because of the separation of church and state, and our religious freedom, it might ask in a census -- okay. It did ask. Somebody is writing that there is some report. Okay. Bert. There's plenty of criticism on the wall of separation concept and they are putting in some addresses. Okay. So the State Department does actual reports on international religious freedom in countries. And freedom/Census did religious data until about 1934 1940. So thanks, Bert. That was great. That was great information. I will take all of those and incorporate them into the presentation for the next time.

There you go. Very good information from Bert and into the chat there.

Good information. Yes.

Of that ala. Ashley, if you but the satisfaction survey in and the links to the file repository, I would appreciate that. Also, you can see the file repository really have about two or three years of webinars, and many of chains are in there and many others. There you go, right there.

I think one of the best things about these webinars is, there is no one person in all of us who can ever find all the information that exists on a topic. So when other people have other information, I always learn something new, whether I am the presenter or the person who is listening to somebody's webinar. I am putting in a plug for all of the webinars.

Yeah. Thank you. Keep those questions coming. I am going to say a few words here, while the questions are still coming in. First, I would like to thank Jane for another great webinar. I would also like to thank my colleague, Ashley Dahlen for the excellent tech support and running things smoothly. Also, thank you, audience. And happy holidays to you all, too, as we said. Also, we have two more webinars scheduled for December. The next webinars on Tuesday, December 13th, titled "chronicling America: using historical newspapers." Is that your webinar, Jane?

I don't know.

I am mistaken.

That is not progress

Anyway, that is our next webinar. Tuesday December 13th, 2022. Don't forget to check out our fall conference on October 17th-19th. A lot of great information is reported at every event. That is all on our file repository. Please give that a watch. You can receive notice on all of our upcoming webinars in our news and events newsletter services. We could sign you up for that. Also, we have another webinar if you want to contact us and volunteer. We can teach you any government information topic. They are accepting how to run a depository. That is fair game for a webinar. Think about that. Let's see. Any other questions here? Let me see. Jennifer asks, didn't IRS come up with new information for churches and religion?

I don't know about that. Did anyone tell you about that, Jane?

IRS? Jennifer, I honestly do not know. For the webinar, I did not even go looking in that direction. But that would make an interesting -- I think somebody could make an interesting webinar out of that.

Yeah. That does sound interesting. Let's see. We are getting close to the finish year. Let's see. Cracking down on people who can -- oh. "Cracking down on people declaring themselves a personal religion." I have not heard about that. That is interesting. Never heard about that. Okay. Any other last-minute questions for Jane? We do have a few minutes. I am supposed to close out by 3:00. We are getting close to the end. Will be back for our other webinars. Last few of the year coming up. They should be good ones. Any last questions for Jane? "HAPPY days." That's nice. That removes all controversy. All potential conflict. That is very nice.

Per just put in an IRS resource reference about charities, churches, and politics. Thanks, Bert.

Thank you very much.

The webinar was presented and he will be doing more in the future. Let's see. Any last questions for Jane? I'll wait one more minute and then we will see what we have got. Well, looks like that is about it. Maybe I can close things out. Thank you, one more time.

Thank you. Thank you all.

I really appreciate it. Happy holidays to you. Thank you, Ashley. Good tech support as always. And thank you audience, for attending. Happy holidays to you. Come back for the last few webinars of 2022, to the DLP Academy. And have a great rest of the day. And thank you.