




Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

July 30, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL 

SUBJECT: Religious Liberty Task Force

Freedom of religion has been a core American principle from the very beginning of our country—indeed, it is our “first freedom.” President Trump promised that he would make preserving and protecting our religious liberty the first priority of his administration. The Department of Justice is committed to assisting with that effort.

On October 6, 2017, I issued a *Memorandum to All Executive Departments and Agencies on Federal Law Protections for Religious Liberty* (the “Religious Liberty Memorandum”). This Religious Liberty Memorandum, which the President directed me to issue in Executive Order 13798, explained twenty key principles of religious liberty in U.S. law, and provided direction to agencies in four areas: agencies as employers, rulemaking, enforcement actions, and contracting or grant-making.

The same day, I also issued a memorandum within the Department of Justice instructing components on how to implement the Religious Liberty Memorandum (the “implementation memorandum”). This implementation memorandum called on components to incorporate the Religious Liberty Memorandum in all aspects of the Department’s litigation, in advice to other agencies, in Department operations, and through its own rulemaking and its interagency rule review. The implementation memorandum required components to notify the Associate Attorney General of all issues that arise which implicate the Religious Liberty Memorandum. It assigned to the Office of Legal Policy the responsibility to review every Department rulemaking or other agency action submitted for Department review by the Office of Management and Budget to ensure its consistency with the Religious Liberty Memorandum, and it designated the Office of Legal Policy as the point of contact for any questions about either document.

Since the issuance of the Religious Liberty Memorandum and the implementation memorandum, the Associate Attorney General’s office and the Office of Legal Policy have together coordinated the Department’s compliance with both memoranda. The Associate Attorney General’s office and the Office of Legal Policy also have worked collaboratively with staff from several other components, drawing on their expertise in this area to ensure compliance with the memoranda and to identify additional opportunities to protect and promote religious liberty.

In order to institutionalize this process, and to leverage the expertise and experience of diverse components within the Department to identify new opportunities for the Department to engage with the issue of religious liberty, today I have established a Religious Liberty Task Force (the Task Force). I will serve as Chair of the Task Force, with the Associate Attorney General serving as Vice Chair for Litigation and the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy serving as Vice Chair for Policy. The Task Force will be further composed of representatives from the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, the Civil Division, the Civil Rights Division, the Environment and Natural Resources Division, the Office of Legal Counsel, the Office of Legal Policy, the Office of Public Affairs, a U.S. Attorney's Office that I will designate, and other components that I may designate from time to time to aid in the Task Force's work.

The Religious Liberty Task Force will continue the Department's ongoing work to implement the Religious Liberty Memorandum and the implementation memorandum. The Task Force will also consider new initiatives that will further the Department's work to protect and promote religious liberty. To that end, the Task Force will: 1) facilitate Department component compliance with the memoranda; 2) address novel, recurring, or cross-cutting issues in the Department's work implicating the memoranda; 3) facilitate interagency coordination regarding the Religious Liberty Memorandum; 4) engage in outreach to the public, religious communities, and religious liberty organizations to obtain feedback on compliance with the Religious Liberty Memorandum; and 5) develop new strategies, involving litigation, policy, and legislation, to protect and promote religious liberty.

Please direct any questions about the Religious Liberty Task Force to Jeffrey Hall in the Office of the Associate Attorney General, Jeffrey.Hall@usdoj.gov, phone (202) 514-0124; or to Jennie Bradley Lichter in the Office of Legal Policy, Jennifer.Lichter@usdoj.gov, phone (202) 514-4606.