ASTRONAUTS FOR AMERICA

POLICY GRIEVANCE OR ANTI-CHRISTIAN BIAS?

Constitutional Principle: Religious Freedoms. Institutional Norms: Executive Constraint; Administrative Neutrality; Truth, Science and Evidence.

BOTTOM LINE

In May 2026 the Justice Department's Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias published a report accusing the previous administration of systemic anti-Christian bias. Its central examples do not hold up: two university fines that turned on campus safety and consumer protection rather than faith, and a sentencing comparison that does not control for the different crimes charged. Congress should hold hearings requiring the task force to substantiate its contested findings and should protect Justice Department independence from the White House by statute.

NARRATIVE

Many Americans welcomed the White House's call for the Department of Justice (DOJ) to examine whether federal agencies were infringing the Free Exercise Clause. That is a legitimate constitutional question, worth asking of any administration. But when we looked at the scope and methods behind the resulting study, we saw that it was flawed to the point of counterproductivity.

President Trump created the DOJ Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias by Executive Order 14202 in February 2025. It was chaired by the Attorney General and drew on findings from seventeen federal agencies. The findings were not subjected to independent, external review or oversight before publication. On May 1, 2026, the task force published a 500-page report (200 pages of analysis, 300 pages of exhibits) accusing the Biden administration of a systemic anti-Christian culture. It built its case around examples like the Education Department's fines against Liberty University and Grand Canyon University, as well as the DOJ's enforcement of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act against anti-abortion protesters. It also cited the FBI's 2023 Richmond Memo, which had angered Catholics and GOP lawmakers by suggesting that violent extremists might infiltrate traditionalist Catholic churches and recommending that parish leaders be enlisted as informants.

We reviewed the report and its public reception and found real problems with its methodology and findings. For example, as regards government bias against Christian universities, Liberty University's $14 million "Clery Act" fine followed a documented pattern of the school discouraging sexual-assault reporting, corroborated by more than two dozen survivors in a 2021 lawsuit. Further, Grand Canyon University's fine, later rescinded, was for misleading doctoral students about program costs, a straightforward consumer-protection matter under a law that applies to every university, religious or not. Neither case turned on the schools' faith. On the FACE Act, a companion Justice Department report found pro-life defendants received harsher sentencing recommendations than pro-abortion defendants, 26.8 months versus 12.3. That comparison does not control for the type of crimes charged: the cases driving the higher average were multi-defendant clinic blockades charged with conspiracy against rights, a ten-year felony. They were significantly more serious than typical pro-abortion FACE Act violations (e.g. vandalism of pregnancy resource centers).

Nonpartisan organizations, including the watchdog group Democracy Forward, said the report consisted of cherry-picked e-mails "to create a false narrative." The Richmond Memo is the report's strongest example, and it is a real one. The FBI's own Inspection Division found the agents' memo "incorrectly conflated the subjects' religious views" with extremism and lacked "sufficient evidence or articulable support" for the link. The Bureau withdrew it within days of its 2023 leak and formally admonished the agents involved; the DOJ Inspector General later found no evidence that anyone had ordered analysts to target a religion.

To date, although several conservative Christian groups and legislators have praised the report, no mainline Protestant or Catholic national body has endorsed it by convention or executive action. Various reputable sources, religious and secular, have labelled it political rather than an ecumenical consensus statement. Religion News Service reported that the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty called the report's evidence "cherry-picked anecdotes that omit crucial context." In May 2026, the Director of Georgetown University's Center on Faith and Justice criticized the report as "advocacy dressed up as investigation."

Aware of these critiques, our approach shifted from analyzing verified first amendment rights violations to asking whether the task force followed a rigorous, evidence-based process. Did they start from a politically dictated conclusion and work backward to fill a 200-page report? Real religious bias does occur in government — the Richmond Memo is this report's own best proof — but stretching weak examples into "persecution" risks a cry-wolf effect: fact-checking voters will disregard the findings, and valid government reports of genuine bias will suffer from public mistrust.

FINDINGS

PROXIMATE CAUSE(S)	CONTRIBUTING CAUSE(S)	ROOT CAUSE(S)
• The report recasts secular law enforcement, including a Clery Act fine and a consumer-	• Absence of Truth, Science and Evidence rigor: poor methodology throughout the investigation.	• Use of religious grievance to advance political aims.

protection fine, as religious persecution without evidence of religious intent.
- The sentencing-disparity claim compares averages without controlling for the crimes charged.
- The report leans on the Richmond Memo, unprofessional but arguably not anti-Catholic, which had already been retracted and its analysts admonished shortly after its 2023 release, amid public and political backlash.

- Lack of independence: report was written by the administration's own agency and department officials, without independent review or validation.
- Administrative Neutrality abandoned: a body created to "eradicate" bias displayed confirmation bias in its methods.
- Lack of Executive Constraint: the White House endorsed the faulty report in its entirety and initiated corrective actions by executive order.
- Lack of checks and balances: Congress has yet to convene formal hearings on the task force findings and recommendations, despite significant public criticism.

- Emphasis on political messaging over resolving a documented constitutional problem...
- Underestimation of voters' ability to recognize overstated or unsupported claims.
- Weak checks and balances, allowing the executive to declare serious national threats without independent review and to order remedies before the evidence is established.
- Reluctance of other officials to challenge an executive because they are concerned about the consequences of dissent.

Norm Erosion: *Executive Constraint: the expectation that presidents and their appointees do not use executive-branch agencies to participate in "political investigations" that rationalize a constitutional emergency where none exists, was set aside. Administrative Neutrality: Serving the executive in a political activity dressed up as an unbiased investigation. Truth, Science and Evidence: Manipulation or disregard of evidence for political purposes, a clear case of confirmation bias, the opposite of the evidence-based method that science and other truth-seeking activities require.*

*Political scientists Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, in **How Democracies Die** (2018), identify executive constraint and administrative neutrality as the two most critical norms sustaining democratic governance, and warn that courts cannot enforce norms precisely because they are norms, not laws. When those guardrails erode, the remedy must come from legislators, the states and, finally, from voting citizens.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

LEGISLATORS

- Hold hearings requiring the task force to substantiate contested findings.
- Pending hearings, withhold funding for Task Force recommended policy and regulatory changes.
- Promote DOJ independence by statute, regardless of which party holds the White House.

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVES

- Distinguish content-neutral law enforcement from religious-viewpoint discrimination in official communications.
- For credibility, subject important task force investigations to proven methodology and independent review.
- Encourage staff to speak truth to power.
- Treat we-the-people like educated adults and tell us the truth…***"Let Facts be submitted to a candid world."*** Declaration of Independence (1776)

CITIZENS

- Read the DOJ final report.
- Check out reliable, unbiased reviews.
- Call on your legislators for a hearing when a major, constitutionally relevant investigation smacks of political meddling.
- Visit AstronautsForAmerica.org for The Candidate Integrity Pledge.
- Challenge your local school board to improve civics and STEM education at all levels.
- Vote as though your country depended on it!

Key Sources: *DOJ Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias report (May 2026); Executive Order 14202; Cornell LII, 18 U.S.C. § 248 (FACE Act); Religion News Service; NPR (Apr. 14, 2026); Baptist News Global; Inside Higher Ed (Liberty and Grand Canyon University fines); Higher Ed Dive (GCU fine); Democracy Forward; Georgetown University Center on Faith and Justice (advocacy v. investigation); House Judiciary Committee (The FBI Richmond Memo); DOJ Office of Inspector General letter (April 18, 2024) (no evidence analysts were directed to target a religion; FBI Inspection Division faulted the [Richmond Memo] for conflating religious views with extremist activity).*

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