Americans for Religious Liberty
A Statement of Principles

We believe in the American tradition of religious and intellectual freedom within a secular democratic state. We believe in the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison which gave birth to this tradition. We believe in the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights which make it the law of the land.

In this time of political, religious and moral confusion we re-affirm our commitment to this tradition and call upon all Americans to do the same.

A free and secular democratic state guarantees religious liberty. It guarantees equal freedom to the religious and the non-religious. It makes religious faith a private matter and gives no special privileges to any religious idea or practice. Both prayers sponsored by public schools and public aid to private schools are violations of its integrity.

A free and secular democratic state promotes good citizenship. It fosters respect for the law and respect for the rights and dignity of all citizens. It establishes a free and religiously neutral system of public education. It provides for moral instruction in the public schools through the use of reason and common sense. It encourages religious and other private institutions to reinforce these values in accordance with their own religious beliefs.

A free and secular democratic state values education in science. It recognizes that a strong country needs citizens who are trained in the methods of science and makes it available through public institutions. Since it protects the integrity of science and free inquiry it refuses to allow public school classrooms to be used for religious indoctrination. It especially defends the integrity of modern biology. The evolution of life is science. It is more than speculation. It is an established truth, which over one hundred years of biological research has confirmed.

A free and secular democratic state supports intellectual freedom. It encourages free speech and open discussion. It recognizes that creative and useful ideas emerge from controversy. It protects public schools and public libraries from arbitrary censorship.

A free and secular democratic state secures personal freedom and privacy. It defends the individual against the tyranny of transient majorities or determined minorities. It allows all people to follow their own consciences and restrains them only when they harm the public welfare. It makes abortion and sexual behavior between consenting adults issues of personal choice.

A free and secular democratic state provides equal dignity for all. It refuses to place any ethnic, racial, religious, sex or age limitation on the enjoyment of rights and privileges. It deplores any effort to deny women equal status with men.

A free and secular democratic state defends the independence of its court system. It resists any attempt to strip the courts of their authority to review controversial legislation. It affirms the truth that a good democracy is a constitutional democracy.

A free and secular democratic state is the traditional American guarantee of religious, intellectual and moral freedom.

In a world where many voices of extremism seek to subvert freedom, we need to be voices of reason and to rally to its support.