

October 17, 2025

Submitted electronically via regulations.gov

Secretary Linda McMahon  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington D.C., 20202

**Re: Proposed Priority and Definitions-Secretary's Supplemental Priority and Definitions on Promoting Patriotic Education [Docket ID ED-2025-OS-0745]**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed priority and definitions on promoting patriotic education.

**As organizations committed to religious freedom in our beloved nation, we are deeply concerned about this proposed rule. On behalf of our millions of members, we write to defend our proud history of religious freedom, which is itself a basis for patriotism.**

Specifically, we take issue with the narrow way in which “American political tradition” is defined. Among other things, the proposed definition describes our American political tradition as being directly linked to “Judeo-Christianity” and “the role of faith.” That emphasis ignores the contributions of people from a multitude of religious and nonreligious backgrounds who have contributed to our nation’s founding and development. Moreover, it threatens to define America’s political tradition in a way that undermines religious freedom.

Our nation’s founders provided a powerful example to the entire world in drafting the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This first freedom in our nation’s Bill of Rights embraced the free exercise of religion, including in the public square, as well as our nation’s commitment to non-establishment, a guarantee that our government would never favor one religion over another, nor religion over non-religion.

“The role of faith” in our Constitution is to separate the institutions of religion and government. The only reference to religion in the Constitution itself is to bar religious tests for office. The history and tradition of religion and government in the founding era was to break from centuries of religious conflict in Europe where governments promoted specific religions.

**Having no state religion in the United States has empowered religious flourishing. Government promotion of religion will impoverish religion.**

Public schools should be a place where every student feels welcome, regardless of their religious or nonreligious beliefs. Indeed, it is a place where students should learn that being welcome, without regard to religion, is an important American ideal. Yet by seeking to advance a narrow religious interpretation of American history, the U.S. Department of Education is undercutting our nation's freedom of religion and parents' rights to have their kids free from indoctrination.

Patriotic education should teach about religion and our religious freedom tradition, not promote any one religion or religion itself.

Religious freedom is imperiled when the U.S. Department of Education proposes that it will promote a specific faith tradition and "the role of faith." While it may seem advantageous in the short-term, this heavy-handed government approach to religion will undoubtedly sow more conflict.

**Our organizations represent diverse religious groups and nonreligious constituencies, but we all have a place in the United States because of our Constitution's guarantee of religious freedom. It's out of this unity and desire for truly patriotic education that we write today.**

We therefore urge the Department to withdraw this proposal in its entirety. Thank you for considering this input.

Sincerely,

Interfaith Alliance (lead author)  
Alliance of Baptists  
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Ecumenical Office of the United Methodist Church  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Faith in Public Life Action  
Faithful America  
Interfaith Center of New York  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
National Council of Jewish Women  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Pastors for Children  
Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign  
The Sikh Coalition  
Sojourners  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Church of Christ