

**Separation of church and state is the right path to religious freedom—possibly the only path.**

A critical lesson from history is the utter reality that religious freedom is typically suppressed when there is no “wall of separation” between church and state. History and current experience of nations that merge a religious sect and government show that the state loses its capacity to effectively defend the rights of minority religious faith groups. Dominant religious groups typically use government to require that other religions conform or face oppression.

The early leaders of this nation had a greater understanding of problems associated with the coalescence of church and state than recent generations. They embedded in the Bill of Rights a provision that prevents government from making laws “respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Although that “wall of separation” is not explicitly stated in the Constitution, it is obvious in the [first amendment](#) that a wall was intended. In private conversations, early leaders used the expression “separation of church and state”.

Thomas Jefferson, in [response](#) to a letter from the Danbury Baptists used the expression “a wall of separation between church and state.” Jefferson was intimately involved in the formulation of the nation’s founding documents and thus the concept of a “wall of separation” was, without a doubt, one that was intended. Regardless, the words of the first amendment make it clear that the intent was to keep church and state separate. The role of church and the role of government are different and should not be merged.

The voucher scheme in Ohio is propping up the finances of private schools, most of which are operated by religious institutions. Beyond vouchers, private schools this school year will receive \$162,928,000 in auxiliary services funds and \$73,607,000 in nonpublic administrative cost reimbursement funds in addition to student transportation, all from tax revenue.

The voucher scheme and direct payments to private religious schools are taking a wrecking ball to the “wall of separation”.

Those who argue that there is no “wall of separation” are oblivious to the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution and to world history.