



INTERFAITH ALLIANCE

PROTECTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

Rabbi Jack Moline
President

Board of Directors

Jacob Worenklein, Chair
New York, NY

Julie Cloud, Vice Chair
Southlake, TX

Rev. Dr. David Currie
San Angelo, TX

Bishop Joseph Grieboski, OBM
Alexandria VA

Peter Maer
Fairfax, VA

Iqbal G. Mamdani
Naples, FL

Robert Meyers
Alexandria, VA

Bishop Carlton Pearson
Tulsa, OK

Skye Perryman
Washington, DC

Tom Ullman
New York, NY

Claudia Wiegand
Treasurer
Rehoboth Beach, DE

President Emeritus
Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy
Monroe, LA

Founding President
Dr. Herbert Valentine
Perryville, MD

Past Honorary Chair
Walter Cronkite

Past Board Chairs

Denise T. Davidoff
Rt. Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon
Alex Forger, Esq.
Arun Gandhi
Helio Fred Garcia
Rev. Galen Guengerich
Rev. Dr. Gwynne M. Guibord
Amber Khan
Rabbi Jack Moline
Rev. Dr. Albert Pennybacker
Rev. Dr. J. Phillip Wogaman
Dr. Herbert D. Valentine

March 26, 2021

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Via Email: elizabeth_henry@hydesmith.senate.gov

RE: Defending Religious Freedom at the Ballot Box

Dear Senator Hyde-Smith:

When you took your oath of office just three years ago, you made a promise to your constituents to protect and serve the American people, regardless of who they are and what they believe. This sacred oath is the backbone of our democracy, the promise that all of us have leaders fighting to protect our constitutional rights. As the first woman to represent Mississippi, you know well what it means to work with pride in your identity, in service of those who may not share it.

Your recent comments regarding the People for All Act, however, gravely contradict your promise to serve all of your constituents. As a national nonpartisan organization that works to advance true religious freedom for all Americans, Interfaith Alliance is particularly attuned to the impact of proposed legislation on diverse communities. Using a religious justification to defend a certain policy – in this case, restricting Sunday voting – is a clear violation of the Establishment Clause, preventing the codification of any one faith into law. Previous attempts to enforce Sunday Sabbath observance – or Blue Laws – have historically been rolled back across the country. The ones that remain are to protect employees from the expectation that they will work around the clock, seven days a week. All public policy must first have a secular purpose. Advancing religion alone – and certainly not a specific religion – is not the role of government.

I hold no doubt that many Mississippians – and at that, many Georgians – observe the Sabbath on Sunday, and therefore would choose to vote on a different day. But those belonging to Jewish or even other Christian denominations observe the Sabbath on Saturday, while Muslims observe Jum'ah on Friday. Others observe no Sabbath at all. To claim that Southern states should embrace a state-based observation of the Sunday Sabbath erases the diversity of faith traditions present in both Mississippi and Georgia.

Ironically, Sunday voting restrictions would arguably negatively impact Christian Georgians most of all. For decades, Black churches have mobilized congregants to vote through Souls to the Polls initiatives. Eliminating this historic and successful tradition of democracy in action only serves to silence Black voters, many of whom already face deliberate tactics to suppress their vote,



INTERFAITH ALLIANCE

PROTECTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

including strict voter identification laws and harassment at voting sites.

In 2020, we saw a historic wave of voter mobilization, especially among women and voters of color whose voices have often gone unheard. Amid an unprecedented pandemic, we took to the polls by any means possible to defend our great democracy. Now, we need our elected officials to live up to their promises to protect our democracy, in service of Americans of all faiths and none.

Respectfully,

Rabbi Jack Moline

President

Interfaith Alliance

jmoline@interfaithalliance.org