

AFA: Don't Let the Coronavirus Turn America Into China

Quarantine enforcement measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have motivated some state and local officials to impose restrictions that trample religious liberty underfoot.

And this is extremely troubling to the American Family Association (AFA,).

Unlike other voluntary restrictions imposed by organizations such as the NCAA or the NBA, these state-mandated measures carry the force of law. Church and state have an opportunity to work together to reduce the impact of the coronavirus on our communities while encouraging calmness and preserving liberty.

“Religious institutions must continue to serve their local communities,” said AFA President Tim Wildmon in an Action Alert to AFA’s 1 million friends and supporters. “Religious liberty, which is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and state constitutions across America, must remain inviolate. America’s churches and religious institutions have played a central role in caring for their local communities throughout history. The coronavirus pandemic is no exception, especially as churches’ communities may be particularly burdened during this time.”

AFA is encouraging concerned citizens to email their governors if they feel their religious liberties are being compromised in their state.

AFA provides a way for people to contact their state governors with the following message, with the option to add their own message as well:

Extraordinary state actions prohibiting the peaceful gathering of American citizens to exercise their religion violate the U.S. Constitution and are not permissible. As they have throughout history, churches and America's religious institutions will play a key role in providing care during this global pandemic. Quarantine measures should not be used as a pretext to trample religious liberty.

I want to encourage you to stand ready to defend the peaceful gathering of our state's citizens should their right to do so be infringed upon by any government official or police.

"Temporary, evenly applied restrictions may be permissible," Wildmon added. "However, the government may not substantially burden the free exercise of religion unless it has a compelling reason for doing so, and even then, it must use the least burdensome approach that achieves that compelling interest. Moreover, the government cannot treat religious institutions unfairly compared with how it treats other comparable gatherings."

AFA added that a number of churches have been targeted specifically to prohibit drive-in services, including Easter services dedicated to celebrating Jesus' Resurrection. The widely discussed case in Greenville, Mississippi, was perhaps the most egregious. (See video [here](#).)

In these cases, officials targeted churches for discriminatory prohibitions while allowing liquor stores, restaurants and others to offer drive-in or curbside services.

"This is blatantly unconstitutional," Wildmon said.