

Religious Liberty Panel Member Backing Candace Owens Faces Consequences After Contentious Hearing

The White House Religious Liberty Commission convened this week for its first public hearing on antisemitism in America. The purpose was straightforward: hear testimony from Jewish Americans who have faced rising hostility since the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks in Israel and craft recommendations for President Donald Trump on protecting religious liberty.

What unfolded instead was a hearing partially derailed by one of its own members.

Carrie Prejean Boller, a Catholic activist and former Miss California, repeatedly interrupted panelists, challenged widely accepted definitions of antisemitism and defended commentator Candace Owens, who has faced significant criticism for rhetoric widely condemned as antisemitic.

"I listen to her daily," Prejean Boller said of Owens. "I haven't heard one thing out of her mouth that I would say is antisemitic."

She also pressed witnesses to condemn Israel's actions in Gaza, noting she had counted 17 references to Israel during the discussion. "Since we've mentioned Israel a total of 17 times, are you willing to condemn what Israel has done in Gaza?" she asked. "You won't condemn that? Just on the record."

Prejean Boller insisted that her opposition to Zionism stemmed from her Catholic faith.

“Catholics do not embrace Zionism, just so you know. So are all Catholics antisemites?” she said. “I want to be clear on what the definition of antisemitism is. If I don’t support the political state of Israel, am I an antisemite, yes or no?”

The audience responded with boos.

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, the commission’s only Jewish member, offered a measured but unmistakable rebuke.

“This is an incredibly diverse country, and the one thing we should be careful about is speaking on behalf of all members of a religious community, even if one is a member of that religious community. I certainly wouldn’t claim to speak for all Jews on all subjects,” Soloveichik said.

The remainder of the hearing returned to its stated purpose, addressing antisemitism as a threat to Jews and to the broader principle of First Amendment religious liberty.

Owens, who was dropped from a Trump campaign event in 2024 amid backlash over her commentary, has repeatedly rejected accusations of antisemitism, arguing that criticism of Israel is being mislabeled. Critics counter that her rhetoric goes well beyond policy critique and veers into dangerous generalizations about Jewish people and influence.

Opposition to antisemitism is not synonymous with blind allegiance to any government. But attempts to blur that distinction by invoking theology to delegitimize Jewish self determination have long histories and troubling implications. Replacement theology arguments repackaged for social media virality do not become more convincing by sheer repetition.

Within days of the contentious exchange, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who chairs the commission, announced that Prejean

Boller had been removed.

Patrick's full statement read:

"Carrie Prejean Boller has been removed from President Trump's Religious Liberty Commission. No member of the Commission has the right to hijack a hearing for their own personal and political agenda on any issue. This is clearly, without question, what happened Monday in our hearing on antisemitism in America. This was my decision.

The Commission has done outstanding work through five hearings. Two more are scheduled. The testimony has been both illuminating and heartbreaking. Under the Biden Administration, Americans of all faiths had their religious liberty not only stolen from them but were often punished for standing up for their faith, in education, the military, the private sector and even the ministry.

This spring, the Commission will deliver one of the most important reports in American history directly to the President.

The President respects all faiths. He believes that all Americans have a right to receive the great inheritance given to them by our founding fathers in the First Amendment.

I am grateful to President Trump for having the vision and boldness to create this Commission. Fighting for the Word of God and religious freedom is what this nation was founded upon. Leading this fight will be one of his greatest legacies.

Dan Patrick

Lt. Governor of Texas

Chair of the President Trump's Religious Liberty Commission"

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– Dan Patrick (@DanPatrick) February 11, 2026

Patrick's language left little ambiguity. The hearing was about antisemitism in America. It was not a stage for personal theological crusades or internet influencer defense tours.

Religious liberty hearings are meant to protect people of faith from discrimination, not to litigate centuries old doctrinal disputes or sanitize rhetoric that has already drawn bipartisan concern.

There is a difference between robust debate and rhetorical recklessness. One strengthens the republic. The other tests its patience.

In this case, the chair of the commission made clear which side of that line had been crossed.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a background in journalism from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.