

8 States Bar This 'Religion' From Holding Public Office

Though not strictly enforced, eight U.S. states currently ban atheists from holding public office.

The states include Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas.

Though the language varies, each state has constitutional texts that make it clear nonbelievers are not welcome in their political sphere.

For instance, the Arkansas constitution—which was adopted in 1874—reads, in part, “No person who denies the being of a God shall hold any office in the civil departments of this State, nor be competent to testify as a witness in any Court.”

Mississippi’s constitution, adopted in 1890, says, “No person who denies the existence of a Supreme Being shall hold any office in this State.”

Tennessee’s is a bit different, not only banning atheists and those who deny “a future state of rewards and punishment,” but also pastors and ministers.

“Whereas ministers of the Gospel are by their profession, dedicated to God and the care of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their functions; therefore, no minister of the Gospel, or priest of any denomination whatever, shall be eligible to a seat in either House of the Legislature,” the state’s constitution reads. “No person who denies the being of God, or a future state of rewards and punishment, shall hold any office in the civil department of this state.”

Despite the existence of these bans, they stopped being

enforced after the *Torcaso v. Watkins* Supreme Court battle in 1961, according to *The Washington Post*The Washington Post. With the never-ending battle in our culture atheists bring against Christians, will the bans may soon be altogether removed.