

Faith Groups Fight 'Rape' of America's Religious Soul

If you get the feeling that **religious liberty** is under attack in America, you're not alone.

One Christian leader describes what many see as the attack on the right of conscience and religious liberty in America as "the raping of the soul."

"There is a widespread sense, [a] feeling that something unusual, if not unprecedented, is happening with regard to religious liberty in our country," Gerard Bradley, a professor at the University of Notre Dame's law school, said.

Some say it's the culmination of a decades-long process designed to eliminate religious people who don't subscribe to a liberal world view.

The breaking point appears to have come in January, when the Obama administration announced all groups that provide health insurance must include coverage for birth control, the morning after pill and sterilization—even organizations with religious objections.

A number of Catholic and evangelical organizations have sued the administration over the new mandate.

"You see the pattern: marginalizing religious groups," Kyle Duncan of The Becket Fund noted.

"And now we have an administration saying if you want to go out in the public square and help the poor or feed the hungry or heal the sick, you have to leave your religious beliefs. You have to check them at the door," he said.

With concern growing, leaders from across the country gathered in Washington this week for the National Religious Freedom

Conference.

In a rare move, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Mormons and other religious groups are joining forces to stop the moves against their freedoms.

"I think it's happening because all the different religious communities realize that a threat to one is a threat to all," Princeton University professor Robert George said.

George says Christians and other believers are facing animosity from secularists for standing for their religious beliefs in the public square.

He calls it an "abuse" to apply anti-discrimination laws to biblical views on sexual morality and traditional marriage.

"That's an odd thing since the very people who now condemn so many evangelical Christians and faithful Catholics for speaking publicly about their faith and acting publicly on their faith in the public square, would be the first to praise Dr. Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders who were people of faith, who acting on their religiously inspired convictions went out into the public square and advocated for justice and the common good," George said.

So what's the solution? Faith leaders say "fight back."

Their goal is to organize religious freedom caucuses in all 50 state legislatures and help state and federal lawmakers draft legislation that protects the right of conscience.