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and Hans-Ekkehard Butzer, Torrey Butzer, and Sven Berg, architects of the memorial.

Remarks Announcing Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace

August 14, 1997

Thank you. Thank you very much. To all the members of the coalition who are here and to those of you who brought your families, thank you very much for bringing them. Congressman Cardin, thank you for coming and for your steadfast support of this cause.

Secretary Riley, thank you for being willing to take on this difficult issue 2 years ago when a lot of people thought it was a no-win issue for you. And you did a superb job. And congratulations on persuading your wife to stay with you for 40 years. [*Laughter*] Someone suggested this morning that she should be nominated for the Presidential Medal of Freedom for that great endeavor. [*Laughter*]

Ladies and gentlemen, you all know that we are here to announce the issuance of guidelines on freedom of religious expression in the Federal workplace. Our devotion to religious freedom has shaped our identity from the beginning, as the Vice President said.

Thomas Jefferson wrote, ''We have solved the great and interesting question whether freedom of religion is compatible with order in Government and obedience to the laws. And we have experienced the quiet, as well as the comfort which results from leaving everyone to profess freely and openly those principles of religion which are the inductions of his own reason and the serious convictions of his own inquiries.'' The Founders understood that religious freedom is a two-sided coin, and therefore our Constitution protects the free exercise of religion while at the same time prohibiting the establishment of religion by the state. This careful balance is the genius, the enduring genius of the first amendment.

Indeed, because we are free to worship or not, according to our own conscience, as the Vice President said, Americans worship deeply and in very great numbers. Throughout our history, men and women have come to America to escape religious persecution elsewhere and secure religious freedom here.

Over time, we'd all have to admit that our own history on this has not been free from error, but over time, we have continued to do better, and more and more and more people of many different faiths have been able to put down roots and pursue their beliefs freely here. And the churches, the synagogues, the mosques, the other institutions of worship they have built not only have been their own houses of worship, they have also quite frequently become centers of service, compassion, and community life. And in so doing, have made our entire Nation stronger.

Our own experience in America has led the United States to become a leader in promoting religious rights throughout the world, as we see through the establishment last year of the Secretary of State's advisory committee on religious freedom as well as our willingness to press for religious freedom at the United Nations and in our bilateral relations with other countries across the globe. Last month, Secretary Albright released a report that underscores our commitment to helping people of all faiths worship freely and live free of persecution as a birthright. Our commitment to religious liberty is, therefore, and it must remain, a key part of America's human rights policy and an important focus of our diplomacy.

We also continue to find work that we have to do here at home. In the 4½ years I have served as President, nothing has given me greater satisfaction than the efforts of our administration, working with the broad coalition of individuals and organizations from practically every faith, to support religious freedom here. Again let me thank all the members of the coalition for your support and for your guidance. And let me thank the Vice President for his shared conviction here. I especially want to thank Steve McFarland, Marc Stern, Eliot Mincberg, Buzz Thomas, and Rabbi David Saperstein for the particular work they have done to make today's announcement possible.

You and the other members of the coalition are the living embodiment of what I mean when I talk about one America, people coming together across the lines of faith and political conviction and race to protect the

religious liberties we all cherish. You stood with us in 1993 when I was proud to sign the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. I was disappointed that the Supreme Court struck down parts of the act in June but pleased that its provisions still apply to Federal agencies, entities, and institutions. You stood with us in '95 with Secretary Riley when we issued the guidelines reaffirming that our young people did not have to leave their religious beliefs at the schoolhouse door. And we clarified the limits of religious expression permitted in our schools. I still say what I said then: No one can seriously question that it strengthens our young people to be able to pursue their own religious convictions and thereby gain values and strength, hope and reassurance that come with faith.

Today you stand with us again as we issue these guidelines to clarify and reinforce the right of religious expression in the Federal workplace. These guidelines will ensure that Federal employees and employers will respect the rights of those who engage in religious speech as well as those who do not. They do three things. First, they clarify that Federal employees may engage in personal religious expression to the greatest extent possible, consistent with workplace efficiency and the requirements of law. Second, they clarify that Federal employers may not discriminate in employment on the basis of religion. Third and finally, they clarify that an agency must reasonably accommodate employees' religious practices.

Today I'm instructing the Office of Personnel Management to distribute these guidelines to all civilian branch agencies and officials. And we expect all employees to follow them carefully. What we accomplish here together today shows what can be done to protect religious freedom within the bounds of our Constitution, when people of good will and faith come together.

My own faith, rooted in the assurance of things hoped for and the convictions of things unseen, calls those of us who share it to a lifelong effort not only to deepen the understanding of the soul but to bring our actions, thoughts, and feelings into harmony with God's will. On that journey, as I have said many times in the past, I have been immeasurably enriched by the power of the Torah, the beauty of the Koran, the piercing insights of the religions of East and South Asia and of our own Native Americans, the joyful energy that I have felt in black and Pentecostal churches, and yes, even the probing questions of the skeptics. That is America at its best.

My great hope is that we can enter this new century and this new millennium as the most successful multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious democracy the world has ever known. We will get there through efforts like this, men, women from all walks of life coming together to respect and celebrate our differences while uniting around the ideals that bind us together, more importantly, as one America.

Religious freedom is at the heart of what it means to be an American and at the heart of our journey to become truly one America. Let us pledge always to honor it and, today, to make these guidelines the source of harmony and strength as we guarantee to all of our people our precious liberty.

Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in Room 450 in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Steven T. McFarland, director, Center for Law and Religious Freedom, Christian Legal Society; Marc Stern, legal counsel, American Jewish Congress; Eliot Mincberg, general counsel and legal director, People for the American Way; Buzz Thomas, special counsel, National Council of Churches; and David Saperstein, director, Religious Action Center and Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Memorandum on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace

August 14, 1997

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace

Religious freedom is central to the American system of liberty. Our Nation's founders erected the twin pillars of this freedom, guaranteeing the free exercise of religion and prohibiting the establishment of religion by the state, in the very First Amendment to the