



Religious Freedom Depends on State Laws, Not Political Whims, Napa Legal Institute Warns

Third Annual Faith and Freedom Index Highlights Strengths and Weaknesses Across All 50 States

For Immediate Release: 10/27/2025 11:00 a.m. EST

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the Napa Legal Institute released the [2025 Faith and Freedom Index](#), its third annual report analyzing and scoring state laws that affect faith-based, federally tax-exempt nonprofits across all 50 states and Washington, D.C. This year, the Index found that [Alabama](#) and [Kansas](#) ranked the highest overall, with Kansas's overall scores increasing since last year. Conversely, [Michigan](#) and [Washington](#) received the lowest scores.

Each year, the Faith and Freedom Index reminds Americans not to rely on federal policy to make up for bad laws or weak protections remaining at the state level. Despite a White House that is favorable to religious liberty, and a U.S. Supreme Court making progress in restoring robust First Amendment protections for religion, state and local issues remain critical for determining whether religious institutions can form, operate, and thrive.

The third annual Faith and Freedom Index found that many states are hindering rather than helping religious organizations. States like [Michigan](#) and [Washington](#) over-burden and are even hostile towards faith-based nonprofits. Conversely, states like [Alabama](#) and [Kansas](#) have exemplary protections for faith-based nonprofits that other states should emulate.

The results do not neatly fall along partisan lines. There are “blue states” that have some important religious freedom and regulatory protections for faith-based nonprofits, as well as “red states” that have much room for improvement. For example, New York state receives a higher score than Alaska, Tennessee, and South Carolina. Connecticut and Illinois have Religious Freedom Restoration Acts while Alaska and Ohio do not. Hawaii and Maine have stronger employment law protections for religious organizations than South Dakota and West Virginia.

Napa Legal's Senior Counsel and Director of Content Frank DeVito notes: *“The many religious freedom attacks over the past few years are chilling reminders that without staunch state level protections for religious freedom, ordinary Americans will suffer, regardless of how supportive the current Administration may be. From Catholic priests in Washington to concerned parents in Montgomery County, Maryland — incidents from two of the lowest scoring states on the 2025 Faith and Freedom Index — too many Americans have been forced to spend precious time and money litigating issues that should never have gone to court in the first place.”*



The Faith and Freedom Index evaluates 15 different areas of state law that affect faith-based nonprofits, rates the laws of all 50 states (plus Washington, DC), and provides scores for each state.

The highest overall scores went to [Alabama and Kansas](#). These states have important laws that are friendly to the work of religious organizations that can serve as models for other states. The lowest overall scores went to Massachusetts, Michigan, and Washington.

Some states have made progress since the last version of the Index was released. For example, Georgia and Wyoming have passed state Religious Freedom Restoration Acts in the last year, providing strong defenses for faith-based nonprofits against laws that conflict with their religious beliefs and practices. Every state that passes a law improving the religious liberty landscape for faith-based nonprofits is a victory for society.

The mission of Napa Legal is to help religious organizations to succeed and flourish. By providing a series of skills courses and resources in its [All Access](#) platform, Napa Legal has helped hundreds of religious organizations to understand the law, improve compliance, and achieve organizational excellence.

Through the [Good Counselor Project](#), Napa Legal provides formation to faith-based attorneys, equips them with the skills they need to assist religious organizations, and has created a nationwide network so that faith-based nonprofits and faith-based attorneys can come together and serve each other's needs.

The Faith and Freedom Index compliments all these programs by providing a valuable policy resource for policymakers, faith-based nonprofits, and the attorneys and other professionals who serve them.

Napa Legal's Senior Counsel and Director of Content Frank DeVito concluded: *"This year's Faith and Freedom Index serves as a powerful tool for lawmakers to see where they must add protections, strengthen existing state laws, or repeal harmful state laws. We must seize this moment, especially given the current presidential administration and a Supreme Court that continues to champion religious freedom, to enact stalwart, enduring state protections that will protect the rights of Americans for generations to come."*

Napa Legal educates faith-based nonprofit leaders on general corporate and legal issues by publishing resources such as issue reports, webinars, and sample documents. Napa Legal's educational resources should be used in close consultation with an attorney, but not as a substitute for an attorney's advice. Napa Legal is not a law firm and has no attorney-client relationships. Read more [here](#).



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