

The First Amendment

WHEREAS the First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," and therefore was written to prohibit this legislative body from passing any legislation that would either create a national religion by law or interfere with the free exercise of religion then existing in the country; and

WHEREAS the Supreme Court has characterized the Establishment Clause as requiring a complete but benevolent neutrality toward religion, which in practice has proved neither benevolent nor neutral; and

WHEREAS the Supreme Court's predominant approach to religion is not accommodationist, but might most appropriately be described as a hostility that excludes religious values from public policy discussion, education and other areas of public life; and

WHEREAS adherence to this supposed neutrality is fostering the secularization of American society, allowing the state to flourish and expand without clear limits, thereby legislating religion out of every area the state moves into;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we, the messengers of the churches in fellowship with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting for our 58th annual conference in Columbus, Ohio, June 26–30, 1989, affirm that the First Amendment was added to the Constitution of the United States to prevent the federal government from infringing upon rights deemed basic to a free society; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we recognize anew the purpose of the First Amendment, which provides for the free exercise of religion without state interference, resulting in freedom for religion, never freedom from religion; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we remember George Washington, who, in his farewell address to the nation, stated, "Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle," and that we affirm as wrong the segregation of religious values, religious activities, and religious persons from full participation in our national life, and that we set forth as right the public acknowledgement of Almighty God our Creator, both vocally and by such means as coin inscriptions, and that God's

people be encouraged to stand up and speak out unashamedly for our great God and His gospel.

Columbus, Ohio
June 26-30, 1989