

July 2, 2015

Greetings to the citizens of Texas gathered in Hood County today. Thank you for assembling to address the most fundamental right enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—the freedom of religion.

I regret that I cannot be with you in person today, but even in my absence, I cannot fail to address the situation at hand. I want to thank Texas Values President Jonathan Saenz for his willingness to share my words with you today.

Freedom of religion and the free exercise thereof are the most seminal aspects of freedom of conscience. The First Amendment protects not only the citizen's ability to have an opinion—whether we agree with it or not—but also the right to speak that opinion.

The father of our constitution, James Madison, said, “A man has a property in his opinions and the free communication of them.” We own our opinions, and more importantly, we own the ability to communicate them. This, friends, is the very basis of our right to conscience.

It is my right to have faith in Christ and a belief that the Bible is the inerrant word of God—just as it is the right of every citizen to agree or disagree with my views. Regardless of my views, it is my sworn duty as an elected representative of the people is to protect their right to disagree with their fellow citizens, and indeed to profess that disagreement publicly.

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Friends, the issue at hand is patently clear. The fundamental problem before those of us who disagree with the LGBT community is that this group seeks to force you and I to conform to their viewpoint and to compel us to keep our opinions to ourselves, essentially eliminating the ability for men and women of faith to participate in public policy discourse and debate. To do so is to strip us of our inherent right to live out our faith.

This attitude is in direct conflict with the principles of a free republic. We must not be deterred from engaging in public discourse based upon our beliefs; such rights to free speech and the exercise of religious freedoms is woven into the very fiber of our nation. All citizens of all faiths, creeds or cultures have the right to their opinions.

To allow in this moment anything less than the full protection of the First Amendment for ALL citizens would be an utter failure to the fidelity of our constitution and a terrible precedent for future generations. I thank you for gathering here today to fight the good fight, and for allowing my words to be shared. God bless you, and may God continue to bless this state and our nation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Birdwell".

Brian Birdwell

Texas State Senator, District 22