Religious Liberty in 2012: Still the First Freedom?

Presented by Professor Mark Bienzi
The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law
Co-sponsored by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty

May 21, 2012
5 pm – 6:30 pm
National Press Club
529 14th Street, NW
13th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20004

Religious liberty has been part of our history and traditions since colonial times. Many of the first colonists came to America seeking religious liberty, and the first freedoms enshrined in our Bill of Rights are religious freedoms. Yet recent headlines show that this very old liberty is often the subject of heated debate today. Against this backdrop, CUA Law and the Becket Fund have assembled a panel of religious liberty experts—of different ages, sexes, and faiths—for a roundtable discussion on the status of religious liberty in 2012. Why do we protect religious liberty? Is religious liberty still in need of protection? What are the biggest challenges facing religious liberty in 2012 and beyond? Our distinguished experts will discuss these and other pressing questions.

Panelists

John Garvey, President, The Catholic University of America. President Garvey has been described as “one of the two or three most important law and religion scholars in the United States … a constitutional and political theorist of the highest order.” An expert in constitutional law, religious liberty and the First Amendment, he has won distinguished fellowships and teaching awards, served as the 2008 president of the Association of American Law Schools, published five scholar-ly books and argued several prominent cases before the United States Supreme Court. Professor Garvey has served as dean, Boston College Law School, (1999 – 2010); professor, Notre Dame Law School, (1994 – 1999); and professor, University of Kentucky College of Law, (1976 – 1994).

Douglas Laycock, Robert E. Scott Distinguished Professor of Law, University of Virginia Law School. Douglas Laycock is one of the nation’s leading authorities on the law of religious liberty and was lead counsel in Hosanna-Tabor v. EEOC before the Supreme Court. Before joining Virginia’s faculty in 2010, Professor Laycock taught at the University of Michigan Law School. Prior to that he taught for 25 years at the University of Texas and for five years at the University of Chicago. A prolific author, Professor Laycock has co-edited a collection of essays, “Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty,” and he recently published “Religious Liberty, Vol. I: Overviews and History,” and Vol. II: The Free Exercise Clause”. Professor Laycock is the 2009 winner of the National First Freedom Award from the Council on America’s First Freedom.

Helen Alvaré, Associate Professor of Law, George Mason University School Law. Professor Alvaré is an advisor to Pope Benedict XVI’s Pontifical Council for the Laity, as well as an ABC News consultant. Her scholarship considers current controversies about marriage, parenting, and the new reproductive technologies. Professor Alvaré has worked for the Office of General Counsel for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, where she drafted amicus briefs in leading U.S. Supreme Court cases concerning abortion, euthanasia and the Establishment Clause. Professor Alvaré has also spent a decade supporting the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities at the NCBC, where she lobbied, testified before federal congressional committees, and appeared on television and radio programs on behalf of the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

Asma Uddin, Attorney, The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. Asma is the primary attorney for The Becket Fund’s Legal Training Institute, which trains advocates, lawyers, judges, religious leaders, journalists and students around the world in religious freedom law and principles. She travels extensively to research issues and provide training for minority faith communities as well as politicians, journalists, and human rights organizations. She speaks widely on issues of gender and faith, and domestic and international religious freedom. Asma is also the founder and editor-in-chief of almuslimah.com, a web magazine dedicated to issues on gender and Islam. Asma is an expert panelist for the Washington Post religion blog, On Faith, and a contributor to Huffington Post Religion, CNN’s Belief Blog, and the Guardian’s Comment is Free.

Moderator

Dr. Thomas Farr, Director, Religious Freedom Project, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University. After a distinguished career in the US Army and the Foreign Service, Dr. Farr served as the first director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom from 1999-2003. In that capacity he traveled widely to promote religious liberty, engaging religious communities, government officials, and the victims of religious persecution. Dr. Farr has testified on international religious freedom policy before the US Congress. He has made presentations on religion and foreign policy at a wide variety of government agencies, think tanks and universities. Dr. Farr is vice chair of the board of Christian Solidarity Worldwide-USA and a contributing editor to The Review of Faith and International Affairs.