



#### FOREWORD

#### LABORATORIES OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

n this fourth year of the Religious Liberty in the States project, the scope of the protections measured continues to expand. Over the four years of this project, the number of items covered has increased by more than 60 percent, from twenty-nine in 2022 to forty-seven in 2025. And the number of safeguards within which these items are organized has nearly doubled, from eleven in 2022 to twenty in 2025. The range of scores continues to be quite wide, with nearly 55 percentage points separating the highest-ranking state this year from the state in last place. As the dataset increases in size and continues to be tracked through time, many more trends and dynamics in the data can be discovered.

But one clear finding can be gleaned from these initial years of the project: the American landscape of religious liberty protections really does represent significant diversity. In 1932, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said that one benefit of American federalism is that it allows each state to "serve as a laboratory," an environment where different laws and policies can be tried and compared with other states.

We see something like this in the findings of the RLS project. The index covers safeguards that are common across many states and one that only exists in a single state. Sometimes new protections are added because states pass new laws, and sometimes states remove protections either because the political climate has changed or because the protections are judged to be problematic. In all these ways, we find that the states are laboratories of religious liberty where different protections for free exercise can be implemented and tested.

In this kind of federal environment, states can learn from each other, and one of the major goals of the RLS project is to raise awareness of what different states are doing. There are positive lessons to be learned from this experimentation, as states that have been at the vanguard of protecting religious liberty can serve as exemplars for states that have lagged behind. And as we have seen consistently in every year of the project, there is room for improvement for every state, even those that rank highest. Each of these fifty laboratories of democracy thus has something to learn from and to teach the others. It is with this commitment to mutual edification and improvement that the findings of the 2025 Religious Liberty in the States index are offered. We look forward to sharing the findings and continuing this important work.



Jordan J. Ballor, Dr. theol., Ph.D.

Executive Director

Center for Religion, Culture & Democracy First Liberty Institute The new number one state in 2025, **Florida** protects 75 percent of the religious liberty safeguards.

TOP FIVE			
			SCORE
7	1	Florida	<b>74.6</b> %
	2	Montana	70.6%
•	3	Illinois	68.8%
	4	Ohio	66.9%
4	5	Mississippi	66.4%

воттом	FIVE		
			SCORE
	46	Vermont	29.3%
	47	Nebraska	29.1%
*	48	Michigan	27.4%
	49	Wyoming	23.3%
	50	West Virginia	19.6%

In last place for the third year in a row, **West Virginia** made some progress by passing a Religious Freedom Restoration Act in 2023.

Recent legislation protecting the conscience rights of heath-care workers has contributed to Montana's success as the most improved state over the life of the RLS index.

MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2022	
	PERCENT CHANGE
Montana	30.8%
South Carolina	29.6%
Florida	16.6%

Despite Mississippi's strong fifth-place finish this year, its score has fallen significantly since 2022 due to its lack of newly measured protections that other states have implemented.

MOST DECLINED SINCE 2022		
	PERCENT CHANGE	
Mississippi	-15.4%	
Kansas	-15.0%	
Pennsylvania	-12.3%	



### MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2024

Idaho's score
increased because
it has some of the
newly measured
protections in
the categories of
health care and
family, making it
the most improved
state this year.



hen Americans think about religious liberty, our minds naturally turn to the protections offered by the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Because of the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990), this amendment offers less protection today than it did in the past. While some federal laws protect religious freedom, there are many areas in which states are free to protect, or not protect, religious liberty. Religious Liberty in the States (RLS) is concerned with these areas.

Now in its fourth annual edition, RLS considers forty-seven distinct legal protections that states have adopted to protect religious liberty. These legal protections, which we refer to as "items," are aggregated into twenty "safeguards," which we average to produce one index score per state. The index allows us to rank states and to track changes in religious liberty protections over time. Source data, including hyperlinked citations to state statutes, are published online at **religiouslibertyinthestates.com**. This permits legislators, activists, and interested citizens to examine in detail how well their states protect religious liberty and to find existing examples of statutes they could adopt to better guard what many Founders called "the sacred rights of conscience."

Florida is an exemplar for how state legislators can improve their state's protection of religious liberty. When we began the project, Florida protected a respectable 58 percent of the eleven safeguards we considered in 2022 and was ranked sixth in the nation. Today, it protects 75 percent of the twenty safeguards we consider and ranks first. Most of its improvement derived from legislation strengthening its medical conscience protections in 2023 and legislation protecting houses of worship from discriminatory treatment during pandemics and other emergencies in 2022.

#### States Should Protect Religious Liberty When They Can

The political dynamics in the federal government have changed dramatically in the wake of the 2024 election. The current administration is friendlier to religious liberty than the previous one. Some people may think this makes state legislation protecting religious liberty less important, but this emphatically is not the case. Even though Religious Liberty in the States is a relatively young project, the data show that it is important to pass safeguards to protect religious liberty when the political climate is favorable.

Since RLS began, we have seen significant improvement in states whose legislators prioritize religious liberty. For instance, Idaho's RLS score increased seven points from 2024 to 2025, Arizona's score increased six points, and Tennessee's increased five points. Over the life of the project from 2022 to 2025, the most-improved states were Montana (thirty points), South Carolina (thirty points), and Florida (seventeen points). Indeed, Florida has become the state most friendly to religious liberty with a score of 75 percent.

On the other hand, although still among the top five states, Illinois fell from its first-place position in RLS 2023 and 2024. It now protects only 69 percent of the safeguards we consider, whereas in 2022 it protected 81 percent of them. We add new religious liberty protections to the index as we discover them, as long as they have been implemented in at least one state. Religious liberty now seems more tenuous in the Land of Lincoln than it did when we started this index, not because the state repealed protections but because it has not implemented new protections that other states have.

Comparing third-ranked Illinois with thirty-fourth-ranked Colorado illustrates the danger of complacency in protecting religious liberty. Almost all of Illinois's religious liberty protections were adopted between 1934 and 1998, a time when the state was far more conservative. Indeed, Republican presidential candidates won the state in eight of ten elections between 1952 and 1988, but they haven't come close in the last eight elections.

If Illinois was moderately conservative in the late twentieth century, Colorado was a bastion of political conservativism. Between 1952 and 2004, Colorado voted Republican in twelve of fourteen presidential elections, and Republicans routinely controlled both houses of the state legislature. The social environment was also quite friendly toward religious liberty. Yet the state legislature did not pass much religious liberty legislation during this period, which helps account for the state's abysmal forty-third-place finish in RLS 2024 and thirty-fourth finish in RLS 2025. It rose in the rankings not because it passed new religious liberty legislation, but because it had one of the new protections we added (euthanasia refusal). Despite its improved ranking, Colorado still protects only 34 percent of the safeguards we measure.

To be clear, we are not saying that only conservatives protect religious liberty. Indeed, in the twentieth century Democrats and Republicans were able to come together to protect the first freedom. For instance, in 1993 Congress enacted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) without a recorded dissenting vote in the House and by a vote of 93–3 in the Senate, and the act was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. Today, some "blue" states continue to rank highly, and some "red" states rank poorly.

We urge legislators in all states to better protect religious liberty.

#### What's New in RLS 2025

RLS 2022 considered twenty-nine specific protections, RLS 2023 considered thirty-four, and RLS 2024 considered thirty-nine. For RLS 2025 we have added eight items (for a total of forty-seven) and four safeguards (for a total of twenty). New items added for RLS 2025 include medical conscience protections that permit individuals to opt out of the disposing of abortion remains and participating in euthanasia. Another new item protects counselors from advising clients about goals, outcomes, or behaviors that conflict with the counselor's sincerely held principles.

#### 2025 Safeguards (\* new this year)



#### Government

Religious Freedom Restoration Act

**Absentee Voting** 

Nonparticipation in Weddings by Public Officials



#### **Health Care**

General Conscience Protection

**Abortion Refusal** 

Sterilization Refusal

Contraception Refusal

Euthanasia Refusal\*

Recusal of Counseling Provider\*

Health Insurance Mandates



#### **Economic Life**

For-Profit Business Nonparticipation in Wedding Ceremonies

No Religious Discrimination in Financial Services/
Insurance Provision\*



#### **Religious Life**

Clergy as Mandatory Reporters

Ceremonial Use of Alcohol by Minors

Houses of Worship Protected from Closing

Nonparticipation in Weddings by Clergy

Religious Entity Refusal to Participate in Weddings



#### **Family and Education**

Immunization
Requirement Exemption

**School Protections** 

No Religious Discrimination in Foster Parent Eligibility\*

## Items and Safeguards Over the Years

	ITEMS	SAFEGUARDS
2022	29	11
2023	34	14
2024	39	16
2025	<b>47</b>	20

We have also included laws prohibiting financial and insurance companies from discriminating against clients because of their religious commitments. Finally, we have included laws protecting the rights of parents to opt their children out of sexual education, the right of student athletes to wear religious attire, and the right of current or prospective foster parents not to affirm, accept, or support any government policy regarding sexual orientation or gender identity that conflicts with their sincerely held religious or moral beliefs.

We've also recategorized the safeguards into five areas: Government, Health Care, Economic Life, Religious Life, and Family and Education. Health care continues to have the most items (just over 50 percent) but only comprises 35 percent of the index weight because many health-care items are closely related. Meanwhile, the government category, though having only three of the forty-seven items, comprises 15 percent of the index weight.

There is no single, objective way to weight all items and safeguards, but we believe our current categorization and weighting convey a reliable measure of how well states protect religious liberty. We welcome other perspectives, though, and our data is publicly available for anyone to take and weight as they see fit. Because we make our database available online, people can assign different weights to safeguards or items to recalculate the index based on their own judgment. If you have feedback or have ideas for new items and safeguards that could be included, please contact us at m.hall@crcd.net.

#### 2025 Safeguards

RLS approaches religious liberty from the perspective that people of any faith should be able to live according to their sincere beliefs in all areas of life. For that reason, we have not limited our analyses to activities that typically occur within houses of worship or activities of the clerical professions. We have defined religious exercise broadly, and we intentionally include items that are more likely to

#### **Errata**

State scores usually change because states pass new protections or because they have or do not have the new items added to that year's index. On a rare occasion, we discover that we missed or mischaracterized a protection. This year, one of our excellent research assistants convinced us that New Mexico did not have the broad general medical conscience protection for which we gave it credit in 2022, 2023, and 2024. The statute that we had previously read to be a general conscience protection, "Obligations of health-care practitioner" (24-7A-7), does contain broad language, but it applies only to advance medical directives. As such, New Mexico receives credit for the euthanasia refusal safeguard in 2025 but loses credit for lacking the general conscience safeguard and protections concerning abortion, sterilization, and contraception. This correction led to a 19 percent decrease in its score from 2024 to 2025.

When such an error occurs, and fortunately they are uncommon, RLS records it on an errata page on our website, notes it in the database, and changes the database to reflect the protection we missed or inadvertently included. These changes permit researchers using our database to make accurate comparisons over time. However, we consider past annual reports and state scorecards to be published, and so we do not correct and republish them when errors are discovered later. As such, when we say, "New Mexico's score fell 19 percent," we mean this with respect to last year's reported RLS 2024 score, not with respect to what its score should have been. Still, we hope such a large drop will draw the attention of New Mexico's legislators to current gaps in the state's general conscience provision and other important religious liberty protections that it lacks.

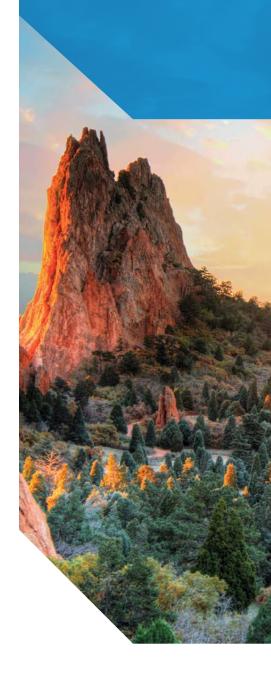
protect religious minorities than majorities. For instance, we include statutes that require students to be excused from school to observe religious holidays and statutes that permit student athletes to wear religious attire, which are protections exercised primarily by non-Christians.

Some concerned citizens worry that religious liberty protections allow people of faith to cause great harm to others in the name of religion. This might be the case if religious liberty were seen as a trump card that must win every time. But this is not our view, and it is not the position of any religious liberty advocacy group of which we are aware. On rare occasions, governments have a compelling interest in preventing someone from acting on a sincerely held religious belief. For example, states rightly prohibit female genital mutilation, even if done for religious reasons. But the instances where government has such a compelling interest are rare, and we do not think they apply to the protections we measure in RLS 2025.

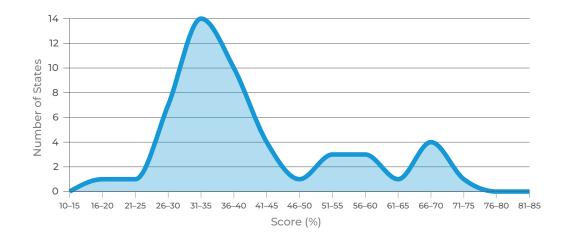
#### **Overview of Results**

Table 1 (pages 6–7) presents the fifty states ranked by their overall index score and a summary of the safeguards that comprise each state's aggregate score. Scanning this table or figure 1 below illuminates a number of broad observations about statelevel provisions for the free exercise of religion as of December 31, 2024.

- → States differ greatly. The front-runner with 75 percent, Florida, is 55 percentage points higher than West Virginia, which has adopted only 20 percent of the possible safeguards.
- → Thirty-eight states are doing less than half of what they could be doing. Especially noticeable in the distribution of states across the range of observed scores (as shown in figure 1) is that most states adopt fewer than half of the potential safeguards.
- → Every state has room for improvement. Even Florida is missing ten of the specific protections we consider. Using the table on pages 6–7, a state's citizens, activists, and legislators can easily see which laws their state lacks, and by using our website they can view laws in other states that offer protections their state does not.



#### FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF STATES BY RLS 2025 SCORE



## Distribution of States by Religious Liberty Score

# 2025 Stat Ranking: Scores, and Data Summar

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Absentee Voting

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No Discrimir	

Clergy as Mandatory Reporters

of Alcohol by Minors

Houses of Worship Protected from Closing	Nonparticipation in Weddings by Clergy
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Immunization Requiren
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Religious Entity Refusal to Participate in Weddings

School Protections	

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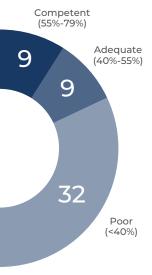
No Religious Discrimination in Foster Parent Eligibility

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	RANK	STATE	SCORE	GO	VERNM	IENT		 HEA	ALTH CA	RE			ECON LI	NOMIC IFE		REL	IGIOUS	LIFE		E	FAMILY 8	'n
7	1	Florida	74.6%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•		•
	2	Montana	70.6%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
•	3	Illinois	68.8%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	4	Ohio	66.9%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
4	5	Mississippi	66.4%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	6	Arkansas	62.9%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
-	7	South Carolina	60.8%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	8	Washington	60.7%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•	•	•••	•
	9	Utah	60.1%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
_	10	Tennessee	54.5%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	11	Arizona	53.5%	•	•	•	•	•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
7	12	Maryland	51.3%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•		•
	13	Idaho	48.1%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•	•		•
k	14	Delaware	45.6%	•	•	•	•		•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	15	Hawaii	44.7%	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•		
	16	North Dakota	44.5%	•	•	•	•	•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•		•
	17	Alabama	41.8%	•	•	•	•		•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	18	Minnesota	40.1%	•	•	•	•	•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
-	19	Maine	39.9%	•	•	•	•			•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•	•		
K	20	Rhode Island	39.5%	•	•	•	•		•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
-	21	Kentucky	39.3%	•	•	•	•		•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	22	Oklahoma	38.9%	•	•	•	•	•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
T.	23	Louisiana	38.3%	•	•	•	•	•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•	•	•••	•
1	24	Missouri	37.3%	•	•	•	•	•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	25	Connecticut	37.1%	•	•	•	•		•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•

Re	_	ious Libe	_	Religious Freedom Restoration Act	Absentee Voting	Nonparticipation in Weddings by Public Officials	General Conscience Protection	Abortion Refusal	Sterilization Refusal	Contraception Refusal	Euthanasia Refusal	Recusal of Counseling Provider	Health Insurance Mandates	For-Profit Business Nonparticipation in Wedding Ceremonies	No Discrimination in Financial Services/Insurance Provision	Clergy as Mandatory Reporters	Ceremonial Use of Alcohol by Minors	Houses of Worship Protected from Closing	Nonparticipation in Weddings by Clergy	Religious Entity Refusal to Participate in Weddings	Immunization Requirement Exemption	School Protections	No Religious Discrimination in Foster Parent Eligibility
	RANK	STATE	SCORE	GOV	ERNME	ENT	HEALTH CARE						ECON	٦	RELIGIOUS LIFE					F	FAMILY &	š DN	
	26	New Mexico	37.0%	•	•	•	•		:::	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
3	27	New Jersey	36.0%	•	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	••	•	••	•	•	•	•	•••	•
	28	Pennsylvania	35.3%	•	•	•	•				•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
=	29	Massachusetts	35.1%	•	•	•	•				•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	30	Oregon	35.0%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•	•	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
4	31	Texas	34.3%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	<b>32</b>	Kansas	34.0%	•	•	•	•			::	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•••	•	•••	•
	<b>33</b>	Iowa	33.8%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•	•	•	••	•	••	•	•	•••	•		•
	<b>34</b>	Colorado	33.5%	•	•	•	•				•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
_	<b>35</b>	Virginia	33.5%	•	•	•	•				•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
•	<b>36</b>	Georgia	32.8%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•		•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
舞	<b>37</b>	Alaska	32.5%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•	•••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	***	•
	38	Nevada	32.0%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•		•
	<b>39</b>	Indiana	32.0%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•••	•		•
4	40	New Hampshire	31.8%	•	•	•	•			•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	41	Wisconsin	31.3%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•		•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
	42	South Dakota	30.6%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•••	•		•
	43	California	30.5%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•	•	•••	•
-	44	North Carolina	30.3%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•
4	45	New York	29.6%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•	•••	•	••	•	••	•	•		•		•
7	46	Vermont	29.3%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	•	•	•••	•
4	47	Nebraska	29.1%	•	•	•	•		•••		•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	• •	•
3	48	Michigan	27.4%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•		•
	49	Wyoming	23.3%	•	•	•	•		•••	•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•		•
	50	West Virginia	19.6%	•	•		•			•••	•	•	••	•	••	•	••	•	•	••	•	•••	•

# Score Distribution

FIGURE 2: STATES'
ABSOLUTE SCORE
DISTRIBUTION



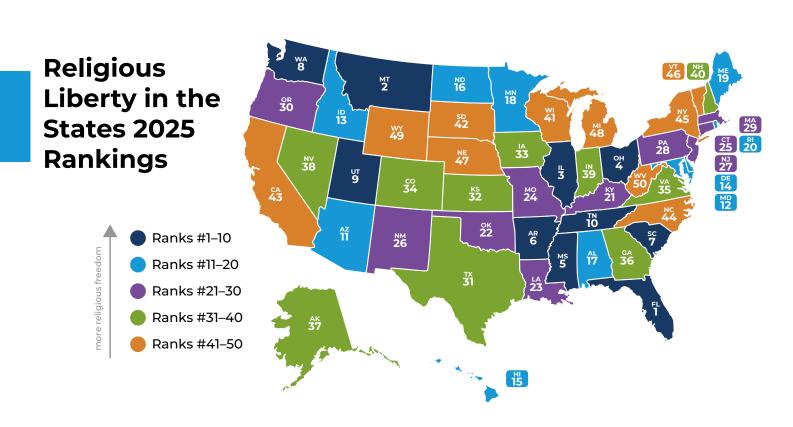
As mentioned above, after two years as the reigning champion, Illinois has fallen from first to third place. Unfortunately, Illinois's score dropped 12 percent from 2024, but it still has an index score of 69 percent. All but two of Illinois's protections were passed in the twentieth century. In fact, the state has added only two new protections in the twenty-first century and has even attempted—unsuccessfully so far—to remove some protections. This history prompted the CRCD to commission a 2024 report exploring Illinois's surprising level of religious liberty protections.<sup>1</sup>

Florida and Montana are now in first and second place with scores of 75 and 71 percent, respectively. Alaska, Montana, Tennessee, Idaho, and Arizona improved the most from 2024 to 2025. Although we focus primarily on how the states rank relative to each other, that's a measure that by definition very few states can win. So we also think states should be recognized for their absolute score and not just their relative one. But as you can see in figure 2 to the left, in absolute terms there is significant room for improvement since no states score above 80 percent.

Figure 4 (page 9) breaks down the overall change in six states' scores between 2022 and 2025. States with declining scores between 2022 and 2025 did so almost solely because they did not have new safeguards considered by RLS. Some states improved because they already had protections we added into RLS 2025. But legislators in Florida, Montana, North Dakota, South Carolina, and Utah should be given credit for passing laws in 2024 to better protect religious liberty in their states.

1. Caleb Ridings, "The Illinois Antinomy: The Story Behind America's Unexpected Free Exercise Vanguard," *Journal of Global Justice and Public Policy* 11 (forthcoming).

#### FIGURE 3: RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN THE STATES 2025 RANKINGS



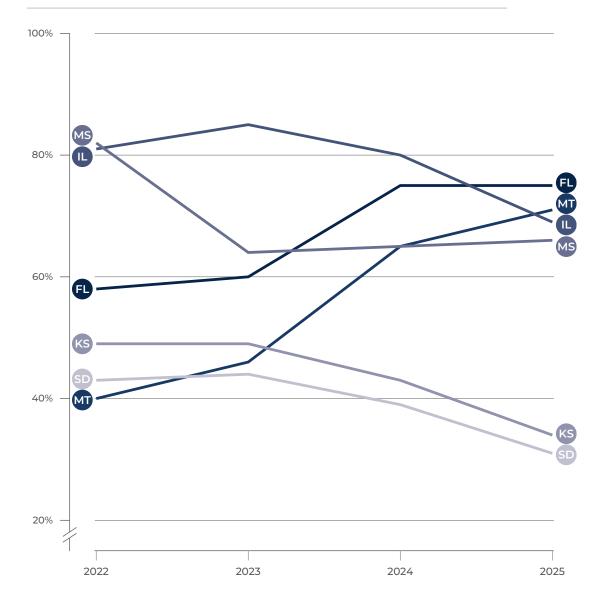
#### **Evaluating Safeguards and Protections**

RLS gives equal weight to each of its twenty safeguards. We acknowledge that some laws offer more substantive protection than others. If we had to recommend between a state adopting a Religious Freedom Restoration Act and a law requiring absentee ballots to be given for religious reasons, we would counsel the former as more significant. But we hope that all states adopt both protections and the other items we measure. Since our study began, North Dakota (2023), West Virginia (2023), Iowa (2024), Utah (2024), and Georgia (2025) have passed Religious Freedom Restoration Acts. We encourage all states to pass one.

Practically, it might not be feasible to pass a Religious Freedom Restoration Act in some states, but legislators interested in better protecting religious liberty might introduce bills that offer narrower protections. On the RLS 2025 website we provide links to every statute protecting religious liberty that we consider.

States are far more likely to pass some protections than others. States either do not have mandates that require health-insurance plans to cover contraception,

FIGURE 4: CHANGE IN SIX STATES' SCORES



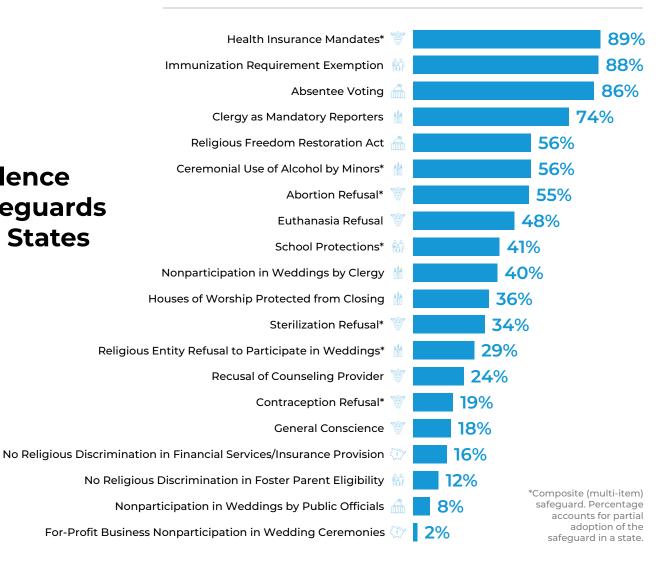


## in Six States' Scores

abortion, and sterilization or, if they do, most (89 percent) include a religious accommodation so that organizations that have religious objections to covering such procedures are not compelled to do so. Every state in the union requires children to be vaccinated before attending public (and sometimes private) schools, but the vast majority (88 percent) provide exemptions for families that have religious objections to vaccinations. And most states (86 percent) either provide absentee ballots for any reason or permit absentee ballots for individuals who have religious commitments that prevent them from voting in person.

The least widely adopted protections include guaranteeing that medical professionals and organizations with religious objections to providing contraception will not be compelled to do so. Very few states permit public officials who may be asked to participate in a wedding ceremony to decline to do so for religious reasons. Finally, only one state (Mississippi) permits for-profit businesses to decline to participate in wedding ceremonies to which their owners or employees have sincere religious objections.

#### FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF ADOPTED SAFEGUARDS



## **Prevalence** of Safeguards in the States



#### CONCLUSION

eligious liberty has been one of the hallmarks of free and prosperous societies. It was important to America's Founders and remains important today, especially as the US becomes increasingly fragmented among religious and nonreligious groups. Working toward a robust conception and protection of religious liberty should be a priority for legislators in every state. Even states that consider themselves friendly toward religious belief and practice have room for improvement.

RLS is an academic project that adheres to the highest standards of scholarly research. From its beginning, it has been committed to transparency and the best practices for social-scientific research. This has involved forming a well-qualified advisory council, rigorous peer review and external feedback, and adoption of robust research policies. Details about the project's academic standards and methodology are available at our website.

But we also hope that legislators and concerned citizens will use our findings to identify ways their states can better protect religious liberty. Our website contains links to every statute we consider, which might serve as a guide to anyone who would like to advocate for protections his or her state lacks. RLS project leaders, CRCD staff, and First Liberty attorneys are eager to work with anyone pursuing state-level protections for religious freedom.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**



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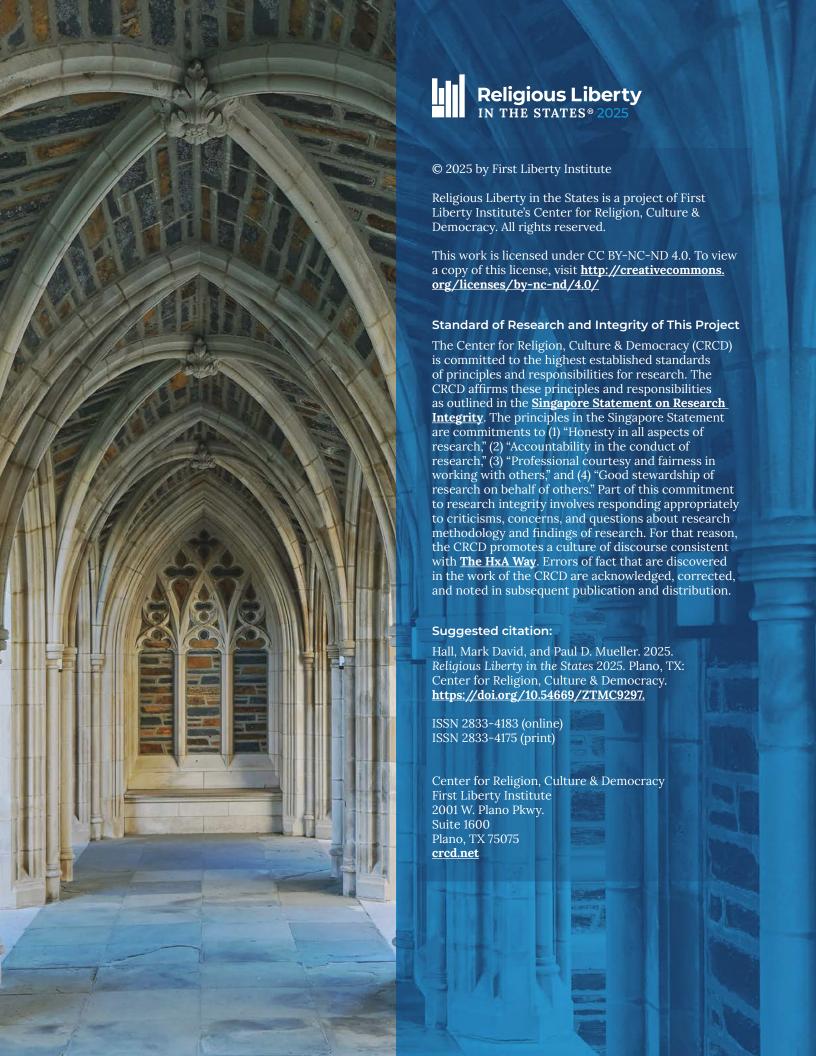
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**First Liberty Institute's Center for Religion, Culture & Democracy (CRCD)** envisions democratic societies that affirm the essential role of religious convictions, peoples, and institutions in cultivating free and flourishing communities. To achieve its vision, the CRCD supports the creation and promotion of high-quality scholarship, publications, programming, and resources that affirm the importance of religion as a public good for strengthening social bonds and reinforcing foundational freedoms. First Liberty Institute is the nation's largest legal organization exclusively defending religious liberty for all Americans. First Liberty believes that every American of any faith—or no faith at all—has a fundamental right to follow their conscience and live according to their beliefs.









#### RESOURCES

Scan to access the full data, view an interactive map, download individual state scorecards, and more



#### Religious Liberty In The States.com

Individual state scores and printable scorecards are available at:
ReligiousLibertyInTheStates.com/States

Links to laws considered in RLS 2025: ReligiousLibertyInTheStates.com/Safeguards (click on individual safeguards to access links)

Details about the methodology are available at:
ReligiousLibertyInTheStates.com/Methodology

Frequently Asked Questions: ReligiousLibertyInTheStates.com/FAQ

#### Past Reports and Datasets

2024 website: 2024.ReligiousLibertyInTheStates.com

2024 report: doi.org/10.54669/PNAQ6811 2024 dataset: doi.org/10.54669/VDSW7515 2023 report: doi.org/10.54669/LYVG2975 2023 dataset: doi.org/10.54669/YEWY2261 2022 report: doi.org/10.54669/DRYP4816 2022 dataset: doi.org/10.54669/GJSE4026

