

Public Policy Position**RLLS Statement re: Disruption of Church Services and Protection of Religious Liberty Rights**

The Religious Liberty Law Section is a voluntary membership section of the State Bar of Michigan, comprised of 263 members. The Religious Liberty Law Section is not the State Bar of Michigan and the position expressed herein is that of the Religious Liberty Law Section only and not the State Bar of Michigan. To date, the State Bar does not have a position on this item.

The Religious Liberty Law Section has a public policy decision-making body with 8 members. On January 28, 2026, the Section adopted its position after an electronic discussion and vote. 7 members voted in favor of the Section's position, 0 members voted against this position, 0 members abstained, 1 member did not vote.

Support**Explanation:**

The Religious Liberty Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan solemnly condemns the recent disruption of a worship service at Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, where demonstrators entered the sanctuary during the course of a religious service and effectively halted worship.

Our nation was founded upon the recognition that religious liberty is not merely one freedom among many, but a foundational liberty on which all others depend—the freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience without fear, intimidation, or interference. The Founders enshrined this liberty not just in principle, but in the text of the First Amendment, which protects the free exercise of religion and forbids government from prohibiting the free exercise thereof. A worship service held in a house of worship is the quintessential exercise of that liberty.

Protest and the expression of political grievances are central features of a free society. Americans may—and should—engage robustly in the marketplace of ideas, challenge public policy, and petition government for redress of grievances. But the right to protest does not extend to commandeering another's religious assembly, interrupting prayer, or forcibly intruding into sacred space to silence the worship of others. When protesters invade a sanctuary mid-service and impose their message upon a congregation, they obstruct others from exercising their most fundamental liberties.

Such conduct not only violates basic norms of civility and respect; it also risks contravening federal and state laws that protect the freedom of worship and guard against intimidation and interference.

with religious assemblies. Actions that prevent a congregation from worshiping in peace undermine the very pluralism that sustains our constitutional order.

The Religious Liberty Law Section affirms that all persons bear the image of God and that every human being—whether migrant or native, immigrant or citizen—deserves dignity, compassion, and justice. Advocates for reforming immigration policy or seeking accountability for government actions have legitimate paths for their advocacy. Those paths must, however, respect the rights of others and be pursued through lawful, peaceful channels outside of houses of worship. The sanctity of religious assembly cannot be contingent on ideological accord.

Accordingly, the Religious Liberty Law Section calls upon civic leaders, faith communities, and all people of goodwill to reaffirm:

1. That the freedom to gather for worship is inviolate and must be protected against physical disruption and intimidation;
2. That lawful, peaceful protest belongs in appropriate civic spaces, not in the pews of God's people;
3. That respect for the rule of law and for constitutional rights is essential to the flourishing of both religious liberty and civic peace.

May our public life be marked by reverence for God, love of neighbor, and a steadfast devotion to the liberties secured by our Constitution.

Jeffrey F. Paulsen, 2025-2026 Chair, on behalf of the SBM RLLS Council

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