



Religious LIBERTY

The renowned Spanish philosopher and writer George Santayana once made this profound observation: “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Sadly, conflict continues to rage around the world in the name of religion. The escalating struggle between gay rights and religious liberty is a prime example of this ongoing tension.

Religious liberty is a God-given right that is demonstrated in the principle of separation of church and state. Shock flooded those who heard the words of Senator Rick Santorum, a U.S. presidential candidate at the time of this writing and a devout Catholic, when he made the following statement: “Protestantism is absent in America today.” Frankly, he’s absolutely correct, and this should be self-evident to all who have some degree of familiarity with history and a genuine appreciation for and grasp of biblical prophecy.

On September 24, 2015, Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope, made an unprecedented appearance and speech at a joint session of the U.S. Congress. As Seventh-day Adventists and loyal Americans who place value on the Constitution, this should alarm us. It is an indication of the soon fulfillment of the prophecy made nearly 2,000 years ago in Revelation 13:2-4: “And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. ... And all the world wondered after the beast. ... And they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?”

Religious liberty cases in the Carolinas vary from year to year. Currently, we are seeing an increase in the number of church members being denied unemployment benefits based on their employer’s claim that the member was guilty of misconduct because he or she refused to work on Sabbath. Observing the Sabbath should never be considered misconduct or a valid reason to deny someone their unemployment benefits.

The Religious Liberty Ministry of the Carolina Conference works collaboratively with the Southern Union Conference Office of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty to resolve issues for members. There have also been a number of church members who asked for assistance in obtaining exemption from mandatory immunizations at work. While the church does not teach or hold that

members should refrain from immunizations, religious liberty staff try to assist those members as well, when appropriate.

Help is available for church members who face religious liberty issues. The sooner you contact our religious liberty department for help, the better your chances are for resolving the issue. We do not want any church member to feel they have to handle a Sabbath work problem on their own.

Additionally, during this quinquennium, religious liberty was able to assist Carolina Conference members in receiving over \$60,000 through mediated settlement offers. These religious discrimination issues were all resolved without the involvement of attorneys or costly court battles, which is always the preferred method of resolution.

The primary principle we stand for heralds religious liberty as a freedom to worship or not worship according to our consciences; to profess, practice and propagate our beliefs and values or to change them. We believe that as citizens of the United States and as members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Carolinas, religious liberty embodies the essence of the golden rule — to treat one another as we would wish to be treated.

LESLIE LOUIS

Director

BABETTE CROFFORD

Administrative Secretary

Year	Resolved Cases in the Carolinas
2011	13
2012	14
2013	7
2014	5
2015	9