THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE
FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

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CLOSING COMMENTS

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CHARLES HAYNES: We're going to take the next 30 minutes or so to hear any closing thoughts you have, and then Melissa and I will wrap up this conversation.

Melissa, do you want to come up here? We can pass mics around, and we can moderate together. It's a daunting task to wrap anything this big up, but let's try.

MIKE TIMPANE: I'm Mike Timpane with the Aspen Institute, but in the spirit of full disclosure, you should know a little more about me. I was the president of Teachers College, Columbia University, for 10 years or so in the '80s and '90s, and I've also been involved in federal and national educational policy formation for about 40 years in this city. And I also paused somewhere along the way and was a school-board member right here in Arlington, Virginia, for four years. I want you to know the perspective I bring to this.

I have several things I'd like to say. First, I am tremendously both enthusiastic and pessimistic – (scattered laughter) – about what I've heard here. For whatever it may be worth to you, from someone who has been angling around this world of education policy for 35 or 40 years, this is the first time I have been to a session on this subject. This is undoubtedly the first education conference I have been to that I can remember at which I did not previously know a single person. I say that so you can understand my reactions, why I am both enthusiastic and pessimistic and where I think, perhaps, the discussion could go.

I'm enthusiastic because the conceptualization and the development of practice and of training that has occurred in this field had somehow escaped my notice all these years, and it really is very exciting to know what you all have been about, and how much you have accomplished and how far you have brought the issue.

But that brings me to my second point: Based on my experience, where do I think the issue can go? I was the big, bad guy at the top of a school of education, and I can only reinforce and maybe explain a little bit about why everything that our two previous panelists said is the way it is, about how hard it is to make progress in the world of teacher education on this issue.

Nothing and nobody ever suggested to me in 13 years as dean and president that I should pay any attention to this issue. There were no policy incentives or rewards or sanctions; there were no professional pressures on me or on any of my faculty. In fact, it was a little bit of a wonder to most of my faculty that they had a religious person as their president.

So that is the culture and that is the bureaucracy of the issue. We were – as Sam Swofford knows better than I – tied in by the certification and accreditation requirements, and all the pressures were to add very conventionally, if at all, to those. That's one reason for my pessimism.

The second thing is on the policy front. I would just observe that, in my opinion, you've got plenty of powerful arguments for what you want to do. Your arguments are a lot better than most of the arguments I've heard over my career – (scattered laughter) – for various policy suggestions.

But federal policy pays – as Sam said – zero attention to this issue, and that is a negative factor, because it imposes all sorts of other things, whether it's standards of learning, the conduct of Title II or whatever. That actually makes your job more difficult. So to not be involved in the policy process is to lose ground because other matters are forcing it out. So I just hope there's a way that you, in your deliberations, can begin to think about how to develop policy strategies to move the issue forward because the issue is very rich, and I think it's time to move in the policy direction.

The last thing I would say has to do with the superintendent from Long Island who yesterday gave a wonderful example of something else that is needed, and that is leadership. I can't think of a college president, of a school of education dean or president, of a high officer in a leading national education association or of a congressman or senator or other politician who has indicated any great willingness to provide leadership on this issue. We need people, in a political sense, bigger than us – (chuckles) – in contact with other domains and audiences than we are in contact with to have a little of the courage – (chuckles) – that you've implied the teachers have to have to take on this issue if it's going to move, and diminish my pessimism.

Thank you for listening to me.

MR. HAYNES: That's very helpful.

MS. ROGERS: Yes, thank you so much.

MR. HAYNES: I see Kim and Emile and Jay. So we'll take turns.

KIMBERLY PLUMMER: I'm going to be very quick, because Jennifer pretty much encapsulated, I think, what we classroom teachers are feeling. I just want to caution you – Charles, you've heard me express this concern throughout the years – but Eric and Jennifer and I were saying that we come to these functions and they enrich us as people, and they enrich us as classroom teachers; the sad thing – and we all agreed with this – is that when we return home to California and Utah, we have no one to talk to because this is such a complicated and rich conversation. And then we feel deflated.

There just aren't that many people who know anything about this in the schools. We don't have people to talk to, to learn from and guide us. I, too, was the religion lady, and when things happened at my school, my administrator came to me to tell her how it should be handled, so that says something about leadership. But I will go home, and I will contemplate and be elated, but I will also be deflated because I have no one to talk to about this. It's just too complicated; it's been too many years; it's just too difficult to explain.

My caution is this: Let's do remember the number one client – and that's the word I'm going to use – is our students. And my caution is that as we move forward – and I'm very concerned about teacher credentialing and teacher in-service and teacher training – that we remember there are a variety of people in education – and this gentleman has just illustrated it beautifully – who have no idea that this is even a topic.

I want to end with this: I teach a workshop called "Yes, You Can Teach About Religion and Still Keep Your Job." I've had controversy with the California League of Middle Schools, who wanted to deny me that at one point in time. Every time I do the workshop, it is standing room only; it's full of teachers. And every time we're done, they say, "I didn't know." And that's in California, with a framework that, as Charles has said, is generous to religion. So teachers still need those fundamentals of the framework – what they can do and strategies to do it well. So as we move forward, let's always remember that this needs to be a concerted effort and very systemic; in fact, I think that's something maybe we need to talk about in California, with the Three Rs, is once again hitting the road and getting into these districts.

MS. ROGERS: Can I ask you a question about that? It seems to me that I'm hearing you say that people aren't aware of this topic, but then when they hear about it, they're interested, they show up, they want to know. I'm wondering if it is necessary, in order to make this a topic of discussion, to have policy incentives? To get people to show up, does it have to be in the system, or can it be something that's just offered but isn't "incentivized" by policy?

MS. PLUMMER: I think everything needs to be in the system, at this point, in light of the standards, the skills, the testing, because even in-servicing is driven by funding, and it's driven by immediacy.

MS. ROGERS: Okay, but let's unpack that. Funding is one issue. When I think about that, it could be private funding or public funding, but is it necessary to have the policy requirement incentive there?

MS. PLUMMER: Yes, yes, absolutely.

MS. ROGERS: It is necessary. It has to be a matter of , You must go do this.

MS. PLUMMER: Yes, yes.

MS. ROGERS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. HAYNES: All right. I think we'll go up to Emile and then come back over here. We'll just go back and forth on this.

EMILE LESTER: Emile Lester, College of William and Mary. I think this was a wonderful conference. I learned a lot. My specialty is moral and political philosophy. When I came here I knew that a good deal of what moral and political philosophers do is completely irrelevant to the real world. (Scattered laughter.) I leave and, what I've

learned here is that, well, what moral and political philosophers do is irrelevant to the real world in ways that I didn't even contemplate before I came here. (Laughter.)

But one way that I think moral and political philosophy is relevant and can make a contribution but that was omitted, to a certain extent, in the discussion over the last two days is that it can tell us what sorts of rights children have in the religion and education issue. It can also tell us what sort of rights parents have and what sort of limitations there are on parents' rights.

It seems to me – and perhaps I'm getting this wrong – that the tenor of a lot of comments is that parents have either an exclusive or a primary responsibility for raising their children and teaching them about religion, and that schools and teachers need to do whatever they can to cater to and accommodate parents' wishes. I think this is a bit of a controversial or problematic assumption. Consider, for instance, a fundamentalist Protestant parent who tells his teenage son, who has homosexual desires, "If you act on these desires, you're going to Hell. If you leave your fundamentalist Protestant community, you're going to Hell, and I'm not going to let you learn about any other communities whatsoever." It seems in this case that a liberal, democratic society not only has a right, but in fact a duty, to do something to protect and accommodate the child's rights in this case.

MR. HAYNES: Emile, could you say what you mean by do something? You mean, if the child goes to a public school; you don't mean to say that they must go to a public school.

MR. LESTER: Right. If they choose to go to a public school.

MR. HAYNES: Then in the public school, are you saying in a proactive way, or are you saying in just the exposure to what the school does? The school has some responsibility to expose the student to alternative views? Or is it more proactive than that? If the school sees problems, they should address them?

MR. LESTER: Yes.

MR. HAYNES: Which one? Is it more proactive or just exposure that you're talking about?

MR. LESTER: I think the exposure is obviously the important part. If you, let's say, expose this fundamentalist Protestant student to other religions, ones in which homosexuality is tolerated or seen as legitimate, then you've done something to accommodate the child's rights in this case.

In an ideal world, I'd like to see the schools being a little bit more proactive in that, perhaps. I think, at a minimum, there needs to be this exposure, and this is an important justification of a comparative religions education that I think needs to be added on to what Warren Nord talked about.

And in British academia and in British public culture, to the best of my awareness, there is a greater awareness, there's a greater discussion of parents' and children's rights issues, and I think there needs to be a greater discussion in American academia and perhaps also in American schools and the American public about what exactly are parents' rights. Why do they have these rights? What are the limits? What are children's right in education, especially when it comes to religion?

MR. HAYNES: Thank you.

TOM HUTTON: Hi, I'm Tom Hutton from the National School Boards Association. Picking up a couple of comments that were made here about leadership and incentives for this kind of thing to happen: I don't have good answers for it, but I'd like to raise some red flags. We've heard warnings repeatedly during the last two days about the care and precision with which this kind of undertaking needs to be handled, for legal reasons, for educational reasons, for political reasons. Education and religion are highly politicized, even more so when they intersect – see the No Child Left Behind prayer guidance. Given that, I have some real concerns about how well thought out this is if you then talk about the need to create some kind of incentive to get this thing through. How well thought out is it when it is imposed as a new requirement on school boards, despite all we've heard about hemorrhaging budgets around the country and the overwhelming challenge of meeting No Child Left Behind requirements. What is proposed in terms of the kinds of incentives and mandates has to be thought through very, very carefully to avoid this becoming a real problem for schools and school boards.

I also think Barrett Duke's comments yesterday were an important cautionary note. I think one of the premises of Charles' and Dr. Nord's book was that the silence on religion is viewed as hostility. There are a lot of communities, I suspect, where doing this in the right way may be perceived by some religious groups as more hostile than the status quo, and that's something to be very cautious about.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you; that's very helpful.

Okay, we'll go to Jay. He's been waiting a while.

JAY LAMB: Jay Lamb. I teach at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax, Virginia.

Ever since the conference started, I've had this feeling that Jennifer expressed, the sense of being in the room with all the grownups talking about you. Teachers have been one of the topics most talked about here, and we haven't had very many teacher voices, on panels or otherwise. And maybe this isn't the time for that; maybe that's something that will come later. But I've been sort of wondering why I was here and what the ultimate purpose of this meeting is. It can only be, I hope, that we're going to focus on what can be done. There are so many limitations.

The other voice that isn't here, by the way, for the most part, except for Dr. Swofford, is the voice of the highest level of the school administration in each state. They

are facing many problems – budgets, No Child Left Behind, all the things that prevent them from giving resources to any really big, new initiative. So I'm thinking we need to focus on what can be done.

What can be done, I think, has more to do with teachers. One thing – please keep in mind – is that teachers are very fallible. I'm a social studies teacher. I'm certified to teach at least six different things with expertise, and I know I could never teach Islam as well as Susan Douglas could, and I know I cannot teach government as well as a professor at any university could. Yet I'm teaching all these different classes all the time at the drop of a hat.

That said, as Kimberly mentioned, I'm more than willing to pick up new expertise, but you have to always be aware that I'm always learning, I'm always correcting my errors, and that's the way teachers are going to be if we begin to do things that are going to allow them to teach more religion in their world history classes or more religion in world religion elective classes. That's just the way it's going to be, and so errors are going to be made, teachers are going to say things they shouldn't, and that's going to be part of the evolving process of whatever happens here.

I think that's about it. Thank you.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Jay.

Over here, you've been waiting awhile.

MIKE HILL: I'm Mike Hill. I'm with the Association of State Boards of Education, and I'll presage my comments with the fact that looking and talking to people around the room, I must be the token heathen who's been invited to this. I want to thank you for the internal dialogue that I've had over the last couple of days, but I would also like to say that I think you need to recognize – and I'm reiterating what some other people have said – the sea change that has occurred in education as a function of No Child Left Behind. The emphasis on reading, math and science overwhelms everything. We just spent a year looking at what we call the lost curriculum, which is arts and humanities; and if arts and humanities are lost curriculum, I would suggest to you that issues around religion are so far back in the wilderness that they're not even lost at this point in time.

MS. ROGERS: They're the ones left behind. (Laughter.)

MR. HILL: They're very much the ones left behind. That's good; I like that.

The other thing I feel the need to express is that I was extremely comfortable and am extremely comfortable, from the heathen perspective, with all of the conversations we've had, except the luncheon conversation. I have a great deal of difficulty with either the implicit or explicit juxtaposition of belief and scientific method, and I would ask you to have a conversation about that.

MR. HAYNES: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mynga, we'll come up to you and then we'll go back over across the table. Please make your comments as brief as you can because I don't want to keep you too long, and Melissa and I want to also wrap up. Thanks.

MYNGA FUTRELL: During a previous session there was one mention of the concept of priority, and I think that's a lot of what we're talking about when we're getting into this issue. I'd like to go to the godsend Jennifer mentioned and tell you about it from my personal experience. My exposure to some of the elements of teaching about religious liberty and the concept of the religious liberty was, for me, a godsend – not in the classroom, but for getting into this issue. I find it's a wonderful way to frame the issue. It is something that you can deal with. It increases not only the teacher's sensitivity toward all but the teacher's comfort with our governmental restrictions on this issue. Six years ago I would never have dreamed I would have had anything to do with this discussion. I was a curriculum person. I'd never worked in religion. I never dreamed I would have anything to do with that. As soon as I found out I was assigned a project, I ran out and took a world religions class and I went to the Three Rs. So if we have priorities to be done and we only do so much, I would say framing this issue around the liberty of conscience and letting teachers know where they can put on that First Amendment hat, how far they can step this way, that way, so forth, will help them be able to look at their youngsters in their professional way, because really what they are doing is walking on marbles. We've got to take them away from walking on marbles and give them something so they can stand and create a level playing field for their youngsters.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you very much. Susan, and then we'll go to the back. We'll wrap up with the comments in the back.

SUSAN MOGULL: Susan Mogull. Given the difficulty of training everybody, I think the one place we could make progress is in getting materials in the textbooks that are correct and accurate in dealing with world religions. This is certainly a problem in treating Judaism from a Christian perspective, for instance, but it's a problem with a lot of the religions and the way they are presented. And we know we say the textbook is not the only teacher tool, but it certainly is the main one in this context.

MR. HAYNES: That's very helpful. David.

DAVID LEVENSON: David Levenson from Florida State.

I think there are some things we can do that are perhaps the way to getting around some of the problems that have been mentioned. One is the summer teacher institutes. Those can be enriching, not just for people teaching stand-alone religion courses, but also for teachers who talk about religion in other classes. I think also continuing to disseminate and refine guidelines about how to do it right is important. All the teachers I've worked with over those three summers were very concerned about how to do it right.

I think the other thing that we noted was the issue of standards, because many of the FCAT (Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test) standards, many of the things that the students are being asked to do on the test, can be accomplished through religion classes. In Florida, they're going to continue to teach both world religions and Bible classes, and one of the things to talk about is ways in, say, a Bible class one can meet some of the standards that have to do with literary analysis, for instance, or point of view, or worldview in the world religion classes. So I think to look at those standards and to see what we already have and to see ways that what we're doing already can accomplish some of that is another positive thing. I see this working in Florida very well with the Holocaust Institute that we have, because in Florida you have to teach about the Holocaust and about slavery, and we've got institutes all over the state on those, and they are very successful.

So I think there are a lot of things we can do. Our goal is to have properly trained teachers, and have all sorts of administrators and politicians agreeing. That seems very far away. But there are a lot of things that we are doing that we can continue to do that can be successful.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, David.

EVELYN HOLMAN: Evelyn Holman. I think you need to continue to do what you're doing, get your materials out. I agree with Kim that you probably have to go on the road again, Charles, with Buzz and get out there – or clone yourself.

MR. HAYNES: Too old now.

MS. HOLMAN: I don't know how you do all that, but I think that, first of all, reassurance is important.

Let me emphasize this: You've had several people in this room talk to you about the No Child Left Behind Act. Do not dismiss it. You no longer can shut the door as a teacher. In the next few years, when I hope I'll be retired, you will have direct testing and identification of teachers by the federal government all the way down, on every grade level, and so a teacher who is not doing well on a test will be out. The emphasis, of course, is on the English and the math; other tests are coming out. But academic freedom, the freedom you've had in the past, that I've had in the past, is gone. Superintendents no longer have the authority they had just three years ago. The politicians – bless their hearts, both Democrats and Republicans – supported the No Child Left Behind Act because they wanted accountability. Well, be careful what you ask for. They're really driving out liberal education.

MR. HAYNES: One final comment, and then we're going to wrap up.

AUGUST BULLOCK: August Bullock, Prince William County Schools. The statement "what's treasured is measured" speaks to, I think, maybe a direction that we might want to look at. There are so many things that are challenging schools, things that

we are embracing, and contrary to the initial start of this conference, we really do take religion and everything we do seriously. It's just that there are so many things that are on our plates and continue to come.

Having said that, those things that are prioritized are things that are measured, that we are held more than accountable for, I think, as was just alluded to. Perhaps a dialogue with some of the different agencies that develop some of the standards, the assessments of standards and with some of the agencies such as the social studies curriculum coordinators out of Alexandria or even language arts, or national associations, because they are also reformulating some guidelines for teachers to work with. All those things will be measured.

That is a way to add another level of motivation and awareness among all schools about how to move religion along, because, again, what is treasured is measured.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you so much. I'm so glad you stayed for this last part because it has been very helpful to me. I said at the beginning that I entered this in the mid-1990s as a church-state lawyer doing a lot of other church-state issues, so this has been immensely educational for me to hear you talk about this issue and your concerns.

Just a few comments as possible things to think about. Again, I offer these sort of tentatively because you know so much more about your systems than I do. It seems to me there's resounding appreciation for the programs Charles and Buzz have put together through the years, and I take my hat off to both of them for what they've done, and to you for your help in shaping these programs.

It's wonderful that there are programs that everybody seems to endorse. I think the question is: How do you replicate programs like that, mass market them and "incentivize" them? That seems to me to be one of the major issues here. I'm hearing from you that that's necessary is a policy-related incentive, and that we need to think about how to do that. Of course, with education, it's decentralized, and that's a difficult thing. You can't just do it once and have it done. You have to do it in each community.

I also take seriously the caveats that have been put on the table. I think the caveat – and I hope I'm interpreting this correctly – is that if you put in an incentive for teaching about religions, the fear is that somebody is going to add a school prayer provision or a constitutional amendment, and all of a sudden, you've got something that's been hijacked and people can't agree anymore, and some may even have to fight it.

Perhaps you can tell me what degree of work has been done on a model incentive or model rewards. In Washington, when I used to work on free exercise issues, we had very diverse coalitions and we had to get people's political agreement that they would endorse this particular language and this incentive, and no one would add to it and no one would subtract from it without full consensus of the groups. It was hard to reach that agreement, but once we did, we had people all the way from the Traditional Values Coalition to the ACLU hold hands. Then when politicians said, "We want to lard this up with that and that," the coalition members said, "I've got an agreement that would

prevent me from supporting that." That kept political mischief from happening. It's not easy to do, but it is possible. So I wonder about that, and I offer that for people to think about.

The budget problems are obviously huge. I do wonder – and this is just a question for you all – how much of this work has to be done with public money, and how much of it can be private money? I also have to put a caveat there. We've got Pew in our name, so people are often confused and think we are The Pew Charitable Trusts. We are a grantee of Pew. I would like to be able to say that I could put down all kinds of money to pay for these programs, but we could not bring that kind of money to the table. But I do wonder if something can be paid for privately, and then you can say, "You don't have to pay for it; you just have to create an incentive for it"; can that work? It's a question.

The other caveat you raised, about arts and humanities, the things that are falling off the table because of No Child Left Behind: that just heightens for me the need to think about how we can build this kind of emphasis into what is left on the table. Mynga's suggestion rings a bell with me: When you're talking about the First Amendment , how much can you build into a government class, which I assume would still be on the table? Can you bring these issues into the existing curriculum rather than trying to get new things into the curriculum when old things are getting pushed off the table? Obviously we're talking about a difference between ideals and pragmatism here, and I'm talking more pragmatically than I am idealistically. But I think that's probably the appropriate way to wind up this conference.

I want to tell you how much I appreciate your dedication in coming here. I looked down the list last night and was so impressed by the people who have joined us. And to the teachers, I want to say thank you. I in no way wanted you to feel like children in the room, because I have so much respect for you. I have to confess, I was a teacher for the very shortest amount of time, and I decided I had to go do something easy, like law. (Laughter.) What you do every day is so challenging, and I have immense respect for you. I did view this conference as a way to survey what's out there and to begin an effort that I hope will continue to have your dedication and involvement. I know this is a very tough time for teachers, too. It was very tough for us to get teachers here because of your schedules, so I want to thank you.

Let me turn it over to Charles.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you, Melissa. This conference has been a wonderful collaboration – and this last session has been a very helpful summary. I'm glad David Levenson was a little upbeat, too. There are things we can do.

From my perspective, some of the comments can be translated this way: "You can do this," or, "You shouldn't do this." I would hope we will say "we" more often in this conversation. I appreciate the Charles and Buzz replication/cloning idea, but the truth of the matter is that it really has to be "we" to move forward in the areas that we think are important. Fortunately, some of you are doing that in your various ways.

As far as teachers being present, if you look closely at the program, you will see that teachers are well represented on the panels. You may not have known that, because, for example, Christopher is a teacher, although he has a little different role now, he taught in this area. We thought of that. We wanted teachers fully represented here. I thought of Axel as a teacher, and then I realized he had just moved on to teacher education. So I understand that in some cases it doesn't look like we thought of it, but we really wanted teachers on as many of the panels as possible. I think that with Jennifer and Kim and Eric and Christopher and Axel we tried. It's very, very important for teachers to feel that they have a real voice in this conversation.

Some of the panels were too big, and some of you no doubt will tell us that in the aftermath. We really thought we could not make them smaller in some cases, and that was a decision made with the recognition that you give up some things when you have so many voices you're trying to get in.

Having said that, I think the religion doorway is not the best or the easiest doorway to go through in education. It wasn't in the '70s, it's wasn't in the '80s and it is not today. It does not have a natural constituency.

I will add, though, that the executive director of the National Council for the Social Studies [http://www.ncss.org/] is sitting right here. Someone from the National School Boards Association [http://www.nsba.org/site/index.asp] is sitting here. ASCD [http://www.ascd.org/] (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) has been part of this conversation, has had a lot to say about this and is committed in this area. So there is a "we" here, and there are some important associations that are thinking about this and have been for a long time. NCSS has a statement on this that goes way back, and there are folks in these associations, and some in leadership positions, who understand that these are issues that need to be addressed. As I said, the religion doorway is a tough one, it's not the easiest one, it may not even be the best one to go through in education; nevertheless, there is support.

I also thought it was heartening to hear from Diane Moore about some of the ways in which the Harvard Divinity School initiative is going to go national and think big in terms of how it can influence this conversation, and that the AAR [http://www.aarweb.org/Default.asp](American Academy of Religion) is back in the game in significant ways. In the '70s, the AAR was a key player in this.

If you think about it and listen carefully to what was said during these two days, there are some very important and hopeful players who can make a big difference through that religion door. Having said that, I want to second what Mynga has said about the importance of religious liberty principles. At the First Amendment Center, the doorway that we will go through is religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, as protected by the First Amendment. Using that framework, we are more likely to have a lasting impact and make real change in how religion is treated in public schools. People of various faiths and people who have no religious preference want to see this done right in the curriculum under the First Amendment. Building that civic consensus is the key to making lasting change in education.

Our First Amendment Schools initiative [www.firstamendmentschools.org] – a collaboration between the First Amendment Center and ASCD – will address the issues raised in this conference. We are working with public and private schools around the nation – especially in our first 11 project schools – to create models of how to live the First Amendment in schools. And living the First Amendment includes taking religious liberty seriously in the public schools. If we care about the future of religious freedom in our pluralistic democracy, we must ensure that students learn about our religious differences and commit to protecting the rights of all people.

This links to what Emile was saying and what others of you have said about religious liberty rights, rights of conscience, parental rights and kids' rights and how that all works out. I think these are things that the schools have to think about as part of the civic mission of our schools – public schools, of course, but all schools, really. The standards movement notwithstanding, there must be a reappraisal in our nation of the civic mission of schools – the mission to ensure that schools are laboratories of democratic freedom. At the heart of our discussion about religion in the curriculum are these questions: What kinds of schools do we want? What kind of nation do we hope to be?

Our challenge in education is to do everything possible to ensure that our democratic experiment in liberty is passed from this generation to the next. Schools are the key institution for making that happen. A school-reform effort that takes religious liberty seriously will take years to accomplish. Presidents come and go and legislation changes, but educating for citizenship in this religiously diverse nation is an ongoing task.

What kind of nation are we going to be? Many of you have touched on this, talked about how we're going to live with one another, how we're going to deal with one another across our differences and continue to work for the common good. Much of what we have discussed in this conference points to the curriculum as a place to address these vital questions about our future as a people.

My office overlooks the Pentagon, and on 9/11, I saw that moment when the Pentagon exploded. That is something I will never forget, just as none of us will forget that day in our various ways. But I bring that up at the end to say this: I think we live in a time when how we live with our deepest differences and whether we'll be able to work together is really a core question for the future of the United States. To me, whatever the priorities in education and whatever the barriers and whatever the challenges, I think that we have to do everything we can to make sure that schools help us to learn about one another, how to engage one another, how to respect deep convictions, and how to protect liberty of conscience – the most important guiding principle for our life together as Americans. And if we didn't know that before September 11th, we should know it now.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you so much.

I want to recognize the staff very quickly before you leave because they have really knocked themselves out for two-and-a-half days, and for a long time before that.

Is Euraine in here?

MR. HAYNES: She's probably helping someone get a taxi or do something like that.

MS. ROGERS: She has worked so hard, but please, Marcia Beauchamp, please stand; Sandy Stencel, back here; Grace McMillan; Heather Morton, who is not here right now but has worked very hard on this; Kirsten Hunter, as well; Erik Owens, I'd like you to stand as well, he's with our Chicago staff. I'd also like to thank the audio/visual staff. Thank you.

MR. HAYNES: They're hidden back there, but I'll tell you, to have your mics come on and the music and the lights and all of that – it's not magic. It takes people. (Laughter.)

MS. ROGERS: Give them a round of applause. (Applause.)

Thank you very much, and thank you for being here. We hope it's just the beginning – or the middle – of a great conversation that will continue.

MR. HAYNES: Thank you very, very much.