

Andrew Horn of Amherst, NH
Testimony
Oppose
HR 34

“We cannot protect the Constitution by gutting the First Amendment.”

I am not here to attack anyone’s faith, and I am not here to apologize for America’s security. I am here because I love this country enough to tell the truth: House Resolution 34 does not protect us. It betrays us.

The Founders did not write the First Amendment as a suggestion. They wrote it because they knew that the moment the government starts ranking religions by “threat level,” nobody’s freedom is safe. Today the resolution says Sharia is the danger. Tomorrow it could be Catholic canon law. Next year it could be Jewish courts handling divorce. Eventually, it is your church, your synagogue, your mosque, or your decision not to believe at all. When the state gets to decide which religious practices are “existential threats,” we all become suspects in our own homes.

This bill wants you to believe that millions of American Muslims, your neighbors, your doctors, the parents sitting next to you at PTA meetings, are secretly plotting to overthrow the Republic. It asks you to treat an entire faith community as a fifth column because of the actions of extremists they have already condemned. That is not security; that is profiling. That is not law; that is fear mongering.

We have been here before. We have seen what happens when we let fear write laws. Japanese internment. The McCarthy hearings. Surveillance of Black churches and Civil Rights groups. Every single time, we look back and ask, “How did we let that happen?” The answer is always the same: we traded liberty for the illusion of safety, and we ended up with neither.

Here is the truth HR 34 ignores: Religious arbitration, whether it is Islamic, Jewish, or Christian, has existed in America for centuries. It only works when it is voluntary, and it is always subject to constitutional limits. You cannot “amputate hands” in Minnesota or New York because American civil law forbids it. Period. The bill creates a problem that does not exist to solve a crisis that is not happening, all while shredding the very document that keeps us free.

So here is my vision for New Hampshire.

I believe in a Granite State where a Muslim kid in Manchester does not grow up wondering if his state thinks he is the enemy.

I stand for a country where we are smart enough to know that fighting terrorism does not mean terrorizing our own citizens.

I know we will reach the day when we realize that my freedom to pray is bound up with your freedom to pray, or not, and when we defend your rights, we are really defending our own.

We cannot drive out fear by frightening one another. We cannot heal our divisions by tearing ourselves apart. And we cannot protect the Constitution by gutting the First Amendment.

Vote this resolution down. Not because you are soft on security, but because you are strong enough to know that America's strength has never come from excluding people; it comes from including them, from saying "We the People" and meaning all of us.

Justice is not a destination we reach by standing still; it is built by those who refuse to stop moving forward. Stand up. Speak out. Vote no. Because in America, we do not banish our neighbors; we protect them. That is how we stay free. That is how we stay strong.