**“Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”** is a series of TV programs offering fresh ways for people to see issues such as foreign policy, social and economic justice, governmental functioning, the environment, and so forth. We provide voices and viewpoints that are rarely heard in mainstream media.

**Mainstream media, politicians, and culture see the world in conventional ways. Therefore, in order to solve problems, we need to see things in fresh ways.** Glen Anderson created this TV series to help people see things differently so we can solve problems at all levels from the local to the global.

This series title refers to “***parallax***,” which is the view you get by looking from a different perspective. For example, put one finger in front of your nose and another finger farther away. Close one eye. Then open that eye and close the other. Your fingers will seem to move. This is called a “parallax” view. **This TV series invites you to look at issues from fresh perspectives.**

Each program airs three times a week (currently every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm) for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for cable TV subscribers in Thurston County, Washington. TCTV is part of Thurston County Media. You can see their schedule at [**www.tcmedia.org**](http://www.tcmedia.org)

**You can also watch the program described below through your computer** at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). All episodes of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” are posted on this blog’s “TV Programs” part and also in one or more of the categories listed in the right side of the computer screen. Also, see information about various issues at the category headings at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

**This summary includes some additional information and insights that we did not have time to include during that hour. A few resources are added to the end of this document.**

**🡪 I saved this document in Word format with live links.** If this document does not load or print properly for you, please e-mail me at **glenanderson@integra.net** and I’ll promptly send you the links you request.

**🡪 Please invite other people to watch this video and/or read this thorough summary at these parts of my blog,** [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)**: “TV Programs,” “Religion,” and “Judicial and Constitutional.”**

**“Religious Freedom: What it Is – and What it Is Not”**

Glen’s Parallax Perspectives TV Series

October 2021

**Introduction to this month’s topic and our guest, Rob Boston:**

The October 2021 episode of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” provides fresh information and insights into some controversies that have confused and misled many Americans about many matters, including our human rights and how our government functions.

In a free society, people need to get along with each other – including people whose beliefs differ from each other – and we must protect **fairness** for **all** people. This includes the relationships between religious beliefs and governments.

During this interview an expert clarifies what **religious freedom** **IS** and what it is **NOT**. We clear up confusion about the centuries-old American principle of “the separation of Church and State.” We set the record straight on how to protect all people’s religious freedom and human rights – and American democracy.

I am happy to welcome Rob Boston, who has worked many years for a nationwide organization that I support, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. Rob Boston is Senior Adviser and editor of the organization’s highly informative monthly magazine ***Church & State***. Their website ([**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org)) says: “The wall of separation between church and state protects us all. It makes our country more fair, more equal and more inclusive.” Their website says it envisions “a nation where everyone can freely choose a faith and support it voluntarily, or follow no religious or spiritual path at all, and where the government does not promote religion over non-religion or favor one faith over another.”

Glen said the people watching this interview will learn a lot about the issues we discuss. People who are already well informed will learn a lot, and people who are not yet well informed will learn even more.

**U.S. history began with separation of Church and State:**

Glen said a good way to start this conversation is to understand our nation’s history – both during the colonial era and when our nation was being created. He asked Rob how important was religious freedom in motivating people to move from Europe to the American colonies in the 1600s and 1700s.

Rob said that for some people that was a strong motivator – and in many cases a major reason – to move here.

Some people came to the American colonies in order to get a fresh start or to pursue business opportunities.

He said nowadays people think about the Pilgrims and Puritans who came to New England because they wanted religious freedom for themselves. Actually, they created a theocratic government in which their religious beliefs dominated society by merging their religion with the government, so they oppressed people who had different religious beliefs, so those different people could not have their own religious freedom. He said the Pilgrims and Puritans “made a classic mistake of seeking religious freedom only for themselves.”

Glen said the concept of “religious freedom” must cut both ways: “If I want my religious freedom, I must also respect other people’s religious freedom” – including the freedom of people who choose no religion at all. He said we would be discussing this principle recurringly throughout this interview.

Glen said that in the 1700s the American colonists were increasingly feeling the need to become independent from Great Britain. The colonies were individualistic, but they found the need to join together, so in 1776 Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, which listed the Americans’ grievances against Britain and made a strong case for becoming independent from them. After independence, the Articles of Confederation were the first plan for how the 13 colonies would function as a new nation, but they discovered that they needed something stronger and more unifying, so the U.S. Constitution was written in 1789, but a number of the states refused to ratify it unless it included the first ten amendments, the Bill of Rights. The very first amendment protected freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press – and freedom of religion.

He asked Rob to explain what the First Amendment said about religious freedom – and how important this was in the creation of our nation.Rob said freedom of religion “was key to the discussion. You have to remember that people were coming out of a framework of not having religious freedom in many cases.” This varied from colony to colony.

He said some colonies did have a lot of religious freedom. Rhode Island was founded on that principle and protected every person’s religious freedom.

But that was an exception to the common reality elsewhere. Some colonies had “established” churches that were supported by colonial governments. For example, Virginia’s colonial government actively supported the Anglican Church (“Church of England,” which we Americans now call “Episcopalian”). It was established by law. Everybody had to support it. They persecuted other faiths. James Madison objected to Virginia putting some Baptist ministers in prison for publicly teaching their doctrines.

Overall, the colonies did not support religious freedom, so eventually Jefferson and Madison and others came up with the idea of completely separating “Church” and “State” in order to protect everybody’s rights.

Glen said that after 13 colonies brought themselves together into one religiously diverse nation in 1776, they felt the need for their new nation to adopt the U.S. Constitution in 1789, but some of the states would not approve of the Constitution unless it included the Bill of Rights, ten original amendments, including religious freedom in the First Amendment.

Rob pointed out that at first, the Bill of Rights (including the First Amendment) applied only to the federal government. At that time people were afraid that the federal government might become too big and too powerful and too controlling. People wanted to protect themselves from that, so they insisted upon the Bill of Rights to limit the federal government so it could not interfere with our religious freedom, etc.

Some states created their own state-by-state protections too, but some states needed more time before they decided to protect religious freedom in this way. The final state to rescind its “established” church did that in the 1830s or 1840s.

**Jefferson and Madison:**

Glen said that two of our nation’s founders – Thomas Jefferson and James Madison – strongly supported religious freedom and religious diversity. They wrote powerfully and took strong actions to protect religion and government from each other.

Rob affirmed that both Jefferson and Madison were important in this regard. He said Jefferson wrote the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom, which dis-established the Anglican Church in Virginia and protected all people’s right to worship according to their individual consciences. For several years the Virginia Assembly failed to pass it, but finally in 1785 they did pass it as a result of James Madison’s vigorous promotion. Then Madison took those two principles – no established religion and everyone’s religious freedom – and wrote them into the First Amendment. Madison was the prime author of the First Amendment and is known as the father of the Constitution.

**The U.S. was NOT designed to be a “Christian nation.”**

Glen said nowadays some people are claiming that the U.S. was designed to be a “Christian” nation. He said he has read much information that debunks that assumption – including many articles in Rob’s magazine. Respected historians clearly debunk this claim. He asked Rob to explain.

Rob said that many people believe that claim and speak on behalf of it. “But there really isn’t any historical support for it.” He said the Constitution’s actual words clearly disprove that claim. The Constitution makes no mention of this – and does not mention Christianity or Jesus Christ or God. He explained that the Constitution was not designed to be hostile to religious faith but rather to be strictly neutral by separating Church and State, so each person could decide individually what religious faith, if any, they might choose.

Glen added that Article 6 of the Constitution explicitly prohibits setting up any religious test in order to hold a public office in the U.S. Rob said this is very important because some of the colonies did have religious criteria as qualifications for holding public office. The Constitution stopped that. Article 6 solidly disproves the claim that the U.S. was created to be a Christian nation. He said the Constitution protects the equal rights of people – without regard to religion – to hold public office.

**Common misunderstandings about the “separation of Church and State” – and the realities about this important principle:**

Glen said that nowadays many Americans do not understand what the “separation of Church and State” really means. He said he deeply appreciates the work of Rob’s organization, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State ([**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org)), because the organization keeps trying to educate the public, the media, all levels of government (from school boards and local governments all the way up to the federal government), and everybody else about what the “separation of Church and State” really means. Also – when necessary – the organization goes to court to protect people’s religious freedom from any abuses.

Glen said he wants the people watching our interview to deeply understand this at the heart level and the gut level as well as the head level, so he invited Rob to provide more information and insights.

Rob said those kinds of understandings are important. He emphasized that one of the most important things people need to understand about the separation of Church and State is that this separation was created “NOT to suppress religion or to attack religion or to keep religion down.” He said, “just the opposite is true. It was put into place to protect religion and to allow all manner of different religions to flourish.”

He affirmed the U.S.’s remarkable journey since our founding. “We have hundreds – maybe thousands – of different religions in this country.” He said we all live together in relative peace and harmony –side by side – with each person free to decide which group, if any, they want to join or support. He said we have this great diversity and freedom because we have officially separated Church and State.

Glen added that he appreciates how this not only protects people’s faith (or lack of faith) from governmental intrusion, but it also protects all faiths from official government favor or disfavor, because that could be a corrupting influence upon religion. So, for example, if someone’s church receives financial support from the government, that church would feel strong financial pressure to become subservient to the government. The government could, for example, put financial pressure on a church that disagrees with a war that the government is conducting – or a church that supports or opposes certain kinds of legislation. He said the separation of Church and State protects each entity from the other.

Rob agreed. He said this is a problem for a few Western nations that still have “established” churches. In those nations the Church is “neutered” and does not have much power and can act like a puppet of the state. He said a good example is the Church of England, which mostly serves just a ceremonial role nowadays. Membership and participation have dropped sharply since World War II. He said an officially “established” church does not provide a very authentic spiritual life for people.

Glen added that when the government supports a church, this downplays the grassrootsy power of the membership. He said some Scandinavian governments have funded their “established” churches, so ordinary people felt they could stop donating since the government was paying its bills. Membership declined too. He said the U.S. is different because if someone wants their church to thrive they need to donate financial support voluntarily because taxes do not replace our voluntary donations. Churches need to meet members’ needs in order to earn their financial support. Government funding debilitates the membership. He said one Scandinavian nation recently stopped funding the church.

Rob agreed with this affirmation. He said if you want your local congregation (church, synagogue, mosque, or whatever) to flourish, it’s your responsibility and the responsibility of the other members. He said Americans have been extremely generous in supporting all kinds of local congregations with billions of dollars.

He said efforts in Scandinavia to dis-establish the State churches in order to give them “a shot in the arm” are probably too late to stop the downward trend in membership and participation because they’ve been identified with the State for so long (hundreds of years in some cases).

Glen believes that a useful way to understand the separation of Church and State is that it protects each side from the other, so it protects fairness both ways.

**We did not have time to mention this additional point:**

A religious body (congregation or larger geographical level) can discuss issues without jeopardizing tax-deductible 501(c)3 status. However, a federal laws says endorsing electoral candidates would jeopardize the 501(c)3 status.

**We discussed some current issues:**

Glen invited Rob to discuss some practical ways in which the principle of the separation of Church and State – and religious freedom – are playing out in some of our nation’s current controversies.

He said he is glad Rob’s organization’s website has a section about “discrimination in the name of religion.” This part of the website -- [**https://au.org/issues/discrimination-in-the-name-of-religion**](https://au.org/issues/discrimination-in-the-name-of-religion) -- says this:

“Religious freedom is about fairness. No one’s religion should be used to harm others. Religion is often used as an excuse to discriminate against LGBTQ people, women, religious minorities, non-believers and others. Some want to use their religious beliefs as an excuse to deny health care, refuse to provide goods and services, and disobey laws protecting Americans from discrimination.

“Americans United is fighting for equality, fairness and religious freedom and we are standing up to those who would harm others in the name of religion.”

Glen expressed strong support for this principled position. It is wrong to claim “religious freedom” as an excuse to abuse or endanger other people. So, for example, it is not fair to claim that I have a religious belief that I have a right to punch you in the nose and take your wallet.

He said that for many years the Baptist faith strongly supported the separation of Church and State, but just a few decades ago they abandoned that and jumped into issues that were contrary to that principle. Long ago many supporters in Rob’s organizations had been Baptists. AU’s members include people of very many different faiths and also people of no particular faith. Glen said AU’s previous national leader had been a minister in the United Church of Christ, and AU’s current national leader is a practicing Jew. Glen said AU’s membership is so diverse that this helps the organization be richly vibrant.

Rob added that AU absolutely supports the right of faith communities to determine their own internal policies about issues. He said issues of treating people fairly and without discrimination pertain to government, commerce, secular businesses, etc. They do not want anyone to be turned away from being a customer for a hotel or bakery or other business because the owner has a religious objection to some aspect of that person.

But he said a house of worship does have the right to turn people away from their house of worship for any reason. His organization and the principle of the separation of Church and State does not at all tell houses of worship what they can and can’t do in their own entities. Rather, AU and the principle protect people in society to get fair access to the goods and services that the rest of us take for granted – without being subjected to discrimination based on anyone’s religion – because that individual, for example, might be part of the LGBTQ community or a Muslim or a Buddhist or an atheist.

**Do not use tax dollars to support any religion:**

Glen said we would discuss several practical kinds of issues in which these principles are relevant. He said, for example, one issue is whether any government should use our tax dollars to fund any religion. He asked Rob what our nation’s founders thought about using government money – taxpayers’ money – to fund religion.

Rob said the history of this issue is powerful. This issue of using taxes to support religion was a strongly motivating factor in people’s demand to separate Church and State.

He repeated what he had said a few minutes before: James Madison was deeply concerned that Virginia had established the Anglican Church and used tax dollars to support it, so the Baptists who opposed that were persecuted. Madison was outraged that people’s taxes were used to support churches that they did not belong to and did not want to support. This problem occurred elsewhere in the colonies and in our new nation until the First Amendment stopped it.

Rob said Madison and Jefferson wrote a lot in opposition of using taxes to support religion. He said that in 1785 Madison wrote a document titled, “ Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments.” This document explains 15 reasons why nobody should have to pay taxes to support any religion. Rob said Madison’s reasons “are just as fresh and relevant today” as in 1785.

**We did not have time to mention these additional points:**

* Tax aid to religions can take several forms, including taxpayer support for vouchers for religious schools.
* This principle is neutral in protecting people of all faiths and people of no faith. People do not want their tax dollars be used to fund religions that they do not believe in. So, for example, just as most Christians probably would not want their tax dollars to fund Jewish synagogues, Muslim mosques, Hindu temples, churches of other kinds of Christianity other than their own, and so forth, neither would people of those faiths – or unbelievers in any religion –want their tax dollars to fund Christian churches. The fair solution is to prohibit any tax money from going to any religion.

**“Civil religion” since the 1950s: “In God we trust,” symbols in gov’t places, etc.:**

Glen said that during the 1950s the Cold War was raging between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Many Americans were so obsessed and fearful about Communism – which was often called “Godless Communism” in order to reinforce our animosity to it “and drive a stake through its heart” – that various levels of government passed laws and adopted policies that reflected that fear. American culture – and some governmental actions – arose to reinforce what has been called “civil religion.” There emerged a sense that “Americanism” was our nation’s dominant religion. Our culture and government tended to worship “Americanism” as an idol and we made the military into an idol that decent Americans should worship. This turned soldiers who died into martyrs, and the religiosity of Americanism became pretty pervasive.

He asked Rob to discuss the concept of “civil religion” and some of its manifestations in the U.S. Rob said this topic is fascinating, and it is a lot more modern than many people think. It is only since the 1950s that “In God we trust” was required to be stamped onto our coins and printed onto our paper currency – and only since the 1950s that “one nation under God” became part of our Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and “In God we trust” became our national motto. These actually are only recent changes, even though some Americans wrongly think that our nation’s founders established them. He said practically all of these came from the 1950s.

Rob agreed with Glen that this “civil religion” was a way for many Americans to differentiate our nation from “Godless Communism.” People knew that a formal alliance with religion would be unconstitutional, so they created a generic concept of God and inserted it into many public settings (coins, currency, motto, etc.). He said the original Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892 without any mention of God, but the “under God” phrase was added only in the 1950s.

Rob said the U.S. had an unofficial motto (“E pluribus unum”) for many years. [It referred to our nation’s political diversity leading to unity.] Although never officially established, this motto did play the role of our national motto for many, many years, but Congress displaced it with “In God we trust” as our nation’s official motto in the 1950s.

Rob said that although people have challenged in court these official statements explicitly supporting God, the courts have not taken those challenges very seriously. He said that’s a mistake. Our nation is continuing to evolve and become more diverse in religious matters – and more secular – so he said it is not appropriate for our government to explicitly endorse a God-oriented theology, even in a generic way. When our government officially proclaims, “In God we trust,” the government is making a theological statement that there is one God (not 5, not 20, and not no God) – and the government is telling every American that in order to be a good American you must trust in that one God. If you don’t, maybe you’re not a real American. He said those are very inappropriate messages for our government to assert.

Glen said that some state governments dominated by political conservatives have passed laws requiring schools to prominently post the slogan “In God we trust” or the Ten Commandments. He said he is glad Rob’s organization contacts those governments and school districts and explains why that’s unconstitutional – and takes them to court if necessary. Sometimes we win, but not always. Glen also mentioned that this is a recurring problem now, not something that happened only in the 1950s.

**We did not have time for Glen to mention these points relevant to this topic:**

In 1956 Congress passed and President Eisenhower signed a law creating the U.S.’s national motto: “**In God We Trust**.” This occurred during an era of conservative conventionality that included a superficial assumption that the U.S. is God’s chosen nation and that the U.S. is a Christian nation.  The Cold War and Senator Joe McCarthy’s fear-mongering provided context for Congress and Eisenhower to take this action affirming U.S. complacency and rejecting dissent.

Actually, the motto is a lie.  The U.S. does **NOT** trust in God.  Actually, the U.S. trusts in **GUNS and WAR**.  If our nation trusted in God we would adopt a nonviolent national defense strategy that would faithfully train people to defend the U.S. from invaders by using well-organized nonviolent resistance and faith in God’s strong arm.  But the U.S. rejects that faithful remedy and instead trusts that military weapons and war and millions of individual guns – rather than God – are what protect us.

Hypocrisy and lies are not valid groundings for a nation’s ethics or survival.  Glen urges the U.S. to do either one of these: EITHER replace our national motto with “In guns we trust”; OR ELSE eliminate the Military-Industrial Complex and actually trust God to protect us through effective training and use of nonviolent national defense strategies that are consistent with how God designed the universe to function.

Also we did not have time for Glen to mention the irony that conservatives who say they oppose “Big Government” actually require governments and school districts to impose certain religious beliefs upon students and ordinary citizens. Religious faith should be a personal, individual matter, not a “Big Government” requirement. But some conservatives also want to impose certain kinds of prayers upon students and use certain kinds of official prayers to begin meetings of various levels of government. Prayer should be personal and truly spiritual, but when “Big Government” imposes any prayer upon us, prayer is perverted and trivialized into just a meaningless ritual — a contemptible abuse by “Big Government.”

Jesus told people to pray privately instead of in public settings where people display their religiosity for other people to see. See Matthew 6:1-8. Publicly mandated prayer even more blatantly violates what Jesus clearly taught.

**Education:**

Glen said that one part of our nation’s functioning that has been heavily affected by Church-State matters is our public education system, where some people want to force public schools to force students to pray (which goes far beyond an individual student’s right to choose to pray quietly) or to teach Creationism (the doctrine that God created all species without recognizing the science of evolution). While private schools can do as they please, public schools – supported by everyone’s tax dollars – must be protected from inappropriate intrusions of religion into public schools. He asked Rob to discuss some aspects of this.

Rob said Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (AU) devotes a lot of time and attention to these matters. He said 90% of the K-12 students in the U.S. go to public (tax-supported) schools. He said “culture war battles” have been focusing on public schools. He agreed with Glen that it is wrong for a public school to require prayer. He said courts keep striking down any kind of officially sponsored prayers in schools. He said that schools required prayers often in the U.S. before 1962, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck that down. He said some public schools began every school day with a mandatory prayer (commonly the Lord’s Prayer), followed by reading some verses from the Bible. He added that some parts of the country required that it be the King James Version of the Bible.

He clarified – and emphasized – that AU does **not** say and has **never** said that people cannot pray in school. He said prayer is OK if it is truly voluntary and not disruptive. He said AU does not object to starting the day with a purely neutral “moment of silence” when students could pray, meditate, think about anything else, or do nothing.

Also, it’s OK for students to have student clubs (Christian clubs, Jewish clubs, Buddhist clubs, atheist clubs, etc.) that meet outside of the school day’s teaching hours, if they are truly voluntary with no compulsion to participate.

Also, schools can teach about religion as an academic discipline [provided that there is no attempt to evangelize or to support or disparage any faith].

He said the real problem arises when anyone is forced, coerced, compelled, or pressured in any way to take part in religion in a public school. Young children especially must be protected, but all students need that protection. Parents – not public schools – may decide which religion(s) children are exposed to.

Glen said he is glad that the website of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State informs people about their rights in public schools. The information at this link – [**https://au.org/knowyourrights**](https://au.org/knowyourrights) – provides information that confirms what Rob said just now.

Students should be taught about honest science, but some people want schools to indoctrinate students with a religious perversion called “Intelligent Design” (which is really just a euphemism for “Creationism”) instead of teaching the scientific truth about evolution. I remember the 2005 federal court decision that strongly rejected “Intelligent Design” curriculum as an attempt to teach the religious doctrine of “Creationism” in a school district in Pennsylvania.

**We did not have time to mention these additional points:**

This is copied from [**https://ncse.ngo/kitzmiller-v-dover-intelligent-design-trial**](https://ncse.ngo/kitzmiller-v-dover-intelligent-design-trial):

In the legal case Kitzmiller v. Dover, tried in 2005 in a Harrisburg, PA, Federal District Court, "intelligent design" was found to be a form of creationism, and therefore, unconstitutional to teach in American public schools.

As the first case to test a school district policy requiring the teaching of "intelligent design," the trial attracted national and international attention. Both plaintiffs and defendants in the case presented expert testimony over six weeks from September 26 through November 4, 2005). On December 20, 2005, Judge John E. Jones issued a sharply-worded ruling in which he held that "intelligent design" was, as the plaintiffs argued, a form of creationism.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) which likewise supports religious freedom (but not coercion) summarized this from [**https://www.aclu.org/other/trial-kitzmiller-v-dover**](https://www.aclu.org/other/trial-kitzmiller-v-dover) :

“Intelligent Design” is a religious view, not a scientific theory, according to U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III in his historic decision in [*Kitzmiller v. Dover*](https://www.aclu.org/religion/schools/23137lgl20051220.html). The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had argued the case with strong support by Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

An ACLU web posting about this said the parents had precedent on their side. In *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education* and *Edwards v. Aguillard*, a federal judge ruled that creation science did not qualify as a scientific theory, striking down Arkansas' law requiring equal time for creation science and evolution. In *Edwards v. Aguillard*, the Supreme Court ruled that a law requiring that creation science be taught with evolution was unconstitutional, because the law was specifically intended to advance a particular religion.

Throughout the trial, witnesses both for the plaintiffs *and* the defendants demonstrated how creationism evolved into intelligent design. Witness testimony showed that it was precisely because of its controversial religious message that the School Board adopted intelligent design and not because of any scientific evidence to support it.

**LGBTQ rights:**

Glen said millions of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender have suffered discrimination and even violence for many centuries. In recent decades, however, grassroots movements for equal rights for LGBTQ people have made a lot of progress. He said he lives in Washington State, which has been one of most gay-friendly states for several decades. Public opinion polls show an overwhelming majority of Washingtonians support equal rights. In November 2012 the state’s voters passed Referendum 74, which made marriage legal for persons of the same sex. In 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court recognized the equal right to marry as a nationwide reality.

Glen said that these successes prove the usefulness of smart, persistent organizing at grassroots levels that changed local policies and even national laws.

Also, he said, for a good number of years many religious denominations have officially and publicly affirmed equal rights for LGBTQ people to be welcomed and to participate with equal human dignity and respect within their denominations. Unfortunately, some religious people oppose equal rights.

Rob said these issues have been roiling our society for a long time with many controversies, lawsuits, etc. He wishes we could dispense with the controversy. He said he is glad the nation is moving toward more tolerance and acceptance, but there still exists a remnant of extremely conservative people who keep fighting against LBGTQ rights.

Rob pointed out that the U.S. does not have a comprehensive nationwide law protecting LGBTQ rights. Many states and local jurisdictions do have these civil rights laws. He said an LGBTQ person can drive across the country and discover that their rights vary depending on what state or local community they are in.

Rob said federal legislation (the “Equality Act”) has been introduced. This bill would prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system. The U.S. House of Representatives passed this as H.R. 5 in February 2021. The Senate held a hearing in March 2021, but Glen has not heard of further progress in the Senate, as of the date we produced our TV interview.

Rob also mentioned the “Do No Harm Act,” which would amend the 1993 law – the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act” – which protects religious freedom, but has been abused by some people who claim that this law (RFRA) allows them to discriminate against other people (LGBTQ persons, persons of other faiths or no faith, etc.). Passing the “Do No Harm Act” is necessary in order to protect vulnerable people from other people who want to use their own “religious freedom” as a weapon to hurt people they think should not have equal rights.

Glen clarified for our TV viewers that the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act” is a very good law that really has been protecting legitimate religious freedoms. So, for example, if your faith requires you to wear a head covering, your employer can’t require you to remove it, of if your faith requires you to observe certain holy days without working, you have a right to arrange to exchange your work shift with another worker so you can enjoy your holy day off work. These are just two sensible, compassionate examples of how the RFRA protects legitimate religious freedoms.

But it is not fair for someone to say, “Hey, you’re gay but my religion opposes gays, so I have a religious right to refuse to let you do business in my retail store.” Glen said that steps over the line, so we need Congress to pass the “Do Not Harm Act” in order to protect people from discrimination.

Rob agreed with Glen. He said Congress passed the RFRA in 1993, and it was used most often to protect the equal rights of people who believed in minority religions. He said the case that especially sparked the legislation’s origin had been brought by some Native Americans whose religious practices were being unjustly denied. He said federal courts – including the Supreme Court – have been interpreting the RFRA in ways very different from what Congress had intended, so the “Do No Harm Act” was introduced in order to correct those errors. He said he was working for Americans United back in 1993 and was part of the discussions leading to its passage. Nobody then anticipated how extremists would misinterpret and abuse the law. He said the “Do No Harm Act” would clarify the RFRA to return it to its original purpose.

Rob added that it is important to keep introducing good pieces of legislation such as this and the “Equality Act” and keep getting votes and keep building momentum toward passing them. It might take a long time to pass good bills, but eventually many of the good bills do pass, he said. He said this has been the experience of people trying to pass Civil Rights legislation, Women’s Rights legislation, LGBTQ Rights legislation, and so forth. We don’t win right away, so we need to play the long game until we do win.

Glen added that all of these big nationwide victories came from persistent grassroots organizing. He said he conducts free online workshops about how to organize nonviolent grassroots movements to accomplish big goals. [See information about the next opportunity at [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-free-online-workshops-so-you-can-make-more-progress-on-issues-you-care-about-5**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-free-online-workshops-so-you-can-make-more-progress-on-issues-you-care-about-5)]

**We did not have time to mention this information:**

This information from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) explains how the "Do No Harm Act" would protect us from religious abuse: [**https://www.aclu.org/blog/religious-liberty/using-religion-discriminate/era-religious-refusals-do-no-harm-act-essential?ms\_aff=NAT&initms\_aff=NAT&ms=190302\_freespeech\_newsletter\_newsletteraudience&initms=190302\_freespeech\_newsletter\_newsletteraudience&ms\_chan=eml&initms\_chan=eml**](https://www.aclu.org/blog/religious-liberty/using-religion-discriminate/era-religious-refusals-do-no-harm-act-essential?ms_aff=NAT&initms_aff=NAT&ms=190302_freespeech_newsletter_newsletteraudience&initms=190302_freespeech_newsletter_newsletteraudience&ms_chan=eml&initms_chan=eml)

**Reproductive freedom:**

Glen said that another hot issue in our nation is people’s right to make their own decisions about matters of reproduction. Many years ago some states had made it illegal to practice birth control in any way. We have come a long way since then, but obstacles to people’s freedom – and privacy – still exist.

He asked Rob to summarize the issue of people’s reproductive rights in relation to governments and religion.

Rob said the issue has existed for a long time, but progress has been only recent. Not until 1965 did the U.S. Supreme Court guarantee the right of married couples to use birth control. The 1965 decision struck down state laws that had prohibited birth control for married couples. In the mid-1970s the Court extended that to unmarried couples.

The matter should have been settled, but Rob said that in recent years people who have claimed “religious freedom” have been trying to restrict other people’s right to practice birth control. They have claimed, for example, that their own “religious freedom” gives them a right to deny employees that coverage in employee health plans.

He said our nation thought we had solved the problem half a century ago, but now it has re-surfaced, so we always must be alert and active to protect rights to birth control, etc.

**COVID: Religious exemptions and restrictions:**

Glen said the Coronavirus pandemic struck hard in early 2020 and disrupted normal life in many ways, including workplaces, schools, and all sorts of public gatherings, including concerts, sports events, and religious congregations.

He said some people objected to any constraints upon their weekly worship services or other religious gatherings. He asked Rob to discuss the issues of public safety restrictions and some people’s claims that they are entitled to exemptions based on “religious freedom.”

Rob said this has been a very contentious issues since the beginning. When the pandemic started spreading seriously, all sorts of large gatherings – secular and religious alike – were curbed. He said people were not allowed to gather inside to hear speeches, poetry readings, rock concerts, religious worship services, and so forth. He said some local congregations filed court cases against this restriction. The Supreme Court repeatedly upheld the sensible restrictions to protect public safety. But after Ruth Bader Ginsburg died and was replaced by someone who added to the Court’s conservative majority, the Court’s position changed and started regarding houses of worship like businesses (grocery stores, hardware stores, etc.) that were so essential that they needed to stay open. But, he said a house of worship is not as essential as a grocery store or a pharmacy that really needed to stay open so people could buy food or health supplies. [Actually, most houses of worship changed to conducting services online through computer video.] To some extent, the availability of vaccines reduced this controversy somewhat.

But now a controversy arose about whether vaccines could be required. Also, so many Americans were refusing to take basic public safety precautions (socially distancing, masking, vaccinating) that the pandemic numbers never reduced enough to allow anything close to “normal” to resume.

Glen said, “people have an odd sense of what their freedom is about.” He said when he goes to a grocery store he buys just what he needs and then he gets out. He does not hang around for a long period of time, shoulder-to-shoulder with other people, and singing loudly – as people do in religious services – which spreads the disease among the crowd.

He said where he lives people are REQUIRED to wear masks in retail stores. He said instead of taking reasonable precautions to protect everyone’s health and safety, some people have the odd notion that “my religion lets me do any damned thing I want.” So what if I said, “my freedom is that I don’t have to turn on my car’s headlights when I drive at night – and if I hit you, that’s just your tough luck.” Or what if an employee in a restaurant were to claim the “freedom” to avoid washing hands after having a bowel movement in the restroom and going directly into the kitchen to prepare your food? We need to recognize the legitimate limits to “freedom” and care about public health and safety. “That’s just part of being a good citizen.”

Rob agreed and added that we must remember that “all of our rights are tempered with responsibilities.” He said we have “responsibilities to our fellow citizens” and the responsibility to “recognize that we’re all in this together.” We need to “work together for the common good.”

Rob affirmed religious freedom as an extremely important and crucial American right. But it is not absolute. We cannot use that as an excuse to hurt other people or to hurt society. It does not allow us to do things that are dangerous and illegal. He said our society is currently “out of whack” in this matter of “religious freedom,” so he urged our society to figure out how to get the balance right.

Glen said some courts have been politicized and perverted in ways that actually hurt the Constitution and hurt our society in a number of ways.

**Local organizing for Church/State separation and religious freedom:**

Glen said that historically, nearly all of the progress we have made on big, important issues has been achieved by organizing nonviolent grassroots movements. The Labor Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Environmental Movement, the Women’s Movement, the Gay Rights Movement, and many others were organized by ordinary people in decentralized local communities across our nation. Grassroots movements can achieve a lot!

He said that we also can protect our rights regarding the issues we are discussing here now. In order to protect our rights, we need ordinary people to inform themselves and organize grassroots movements in their local communities – and to join together nationwide.

He urged people – wherever they live – to join together with other people in their local communities to join or create a local chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

Glen said that from 2007 to 2016, the local community where he lives – Thurston County, Washington – had a local chapter of Americans United. The chapter had too few members to sustain it, so it folded. He said he was working hard on other issues and activities, so he did not have time to invest in it, although he did produce and host his March 2010 TV program on the separation of Church and State with interviewing local AU supporters.

He encourages people anywhere in the U.S. to join their local AU chapter – or start a new local chapter. Anyone interested could contact the national office at (202) 466-3234 or visit this part of their website: [**https://au.org/get-involved/chapters**](https://au.org/get-involved/chapters)

He said local organizing for the separation of Church and State can be very important in protecting people’s rights and fairness in the community. Sometime – somewhere – someone sees a problem in their local school or their local government and can take action. A local chapter of AU can help, and/or people can contact the national AU office for help. This really does work. He said the national AU is an excellent resource, but they really need eyes and ears in local communities throughout the nation. A small group of people in each local community can help a lot.

Rob affirmed Glen’s recommendations. He said AU is based in Washington DC and can equip people with the tools they need for approaching their local governments and elected officials. He said a local school district, local government, or state legislature might not want to hear from an organization based in DC. They will likely be more responsive to local people – local voters – raising the concerns. The national AU office can provide the resources to help local people. He affirmed that local grassroots movements are crucial.

Glen said if people are well informed about these issues and keep our eyes and ears open, we can recognize when a problem is emerging and take prompt action to prevent it from getting worse. For example, it’s better to prevent a bad law from getting passed than to wait and have to fight it in court. It’s good to have a conversation early with a school principal or school board members and solve the problem up-front instead of fighting it after it has escalated.

**Cherry-picking and proof-texting:**

Glen said that different people at different points across the political spectrum and across the religious spectrum understand things differently from each other. People who are interested in religion usually read their scriptures. Different people understand their scriptures in different ways – and they appreciate some portions of their scriptures more than other parts. All of these differences – if we handle them well – can lead to interesting and enlightening conversations – or else they can lead to serious disagreements.

He said each of us can find parts of scripture that supports our own different beliefs and opinions. Each person can find certain scriptural passages that argue against another person’s favorite scriptural passages. Sometimes these seem like gimmicks that are called “proof-texting” because each person can prove their point by cherry-picking their favorite quotations to disprove another person’s belief.

When we were preparing for this interview, Rob mentioned that both the Right and the Left do that. Glen invited him to share any information or insights about using scripture in this way.

Rob said that this very wide diversity of belief is another reason why we should not have government endorse or promote any kind of religious doctrines or teachings, because the beliefs vary so widely from person to person. He said sometimes we hear people say that the government should be based on biblical law. He said what those people are really saying is that government should be based on the Bible in the way that **they** interpret it.

Rob said some people read Jesus’ teachings as a form of benign socialism with the emphasis on the poor and the needy. He said other people have turned Jesus into a bootstrap capitalist. Each side pulls different parts of the Bible out to buttress their own viewpoint. Rob said that instead of having the government referee which interpretation is correct, let’s not base the government on anyone’s interpretation of the Bible.

Glen said he supports honest and open-minded study, so people will be guided by the Spirit and also by their individual brains. He said he encourages people to enjoy honest conversations with good listening skills, so we can respect honest differences so we can live together in a humane and decent society – and also learn from each other.

Glen said this is also how the scientific method functions. One scientist conducts research and explains the methodology used and the results obtained. Other scientists review and critique the methodology, data, results, etc., and publish their critiques. Other scientists review all of this and comment further. They conduct their conversations in a civilized way. Instead of denouncing each other as evil, real scientists use the scientific method honestly and openly. They use all of these open-minded and thoughtful conversations to help move the body of knowledge toward accurately understanding how the world functions.

**Americans United for the Separation of Church and State has been protecting religious freedom – and protecting us from meddling – for 75 years:**

Glen said he joined Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, ([**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org)) in 2007 and has enjoyed being a member for these past 14 years. He said he has been donating financial support and reading the materials AU produces, including the excellent monthly magazine that Rob edits.

Rob emphasized that Americans United brings people together from many, many different backgrounds. AU’s membership includes devout Christians, Jews, Buddhists, atheists, humanists, Wiccans, Pagans, agnostics, and more. He said all of us stand together to support the principle of religious freedom.

Rob mentioned some various parts of AU’s organization. The legal department works in the courts. The policy department works at federal and state legislative levels. The outreach and engagement department helps people organize at the grassroots level. The communications department produces informational materials and works with the media. The development department generates financial support. He described the organization of AU as “a well-oiled machine” working efficiently to help the separation of Church and State to protect everybody’s freedom to decide whether and how they want to be involved with religion. He said this really is a core American value.

Glen wants people to understand that AU is not against religion. They promote mutual respect and fairness. AU’s concept of the separation of Church and State protects each from meddling by the other. In this way, AU supports authentic “religious freedom.”

**Sources of information:**

Glen very much appreciates the informative website of Rob’s organization, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. He invites people to visit [**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org) and click some of the links near the top of its home page. Click the tab for “OUR ISSUES” and see information about some of the issues we discussed during this interview. You can phone them at (202) 466-3234.

**In mid-September 2021, AU sent this information about the Do No Harm Act:**

AU celebrated the progress [**when it was reintroduced in the Senate**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/35989522/306784889/-1475338755?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwMS8xLzU4MjYxIiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImVhZmQxYWQwLThhMTgtZWMxMS05ODFmLTUwMWFjNTdiYTNlZCIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiR2xlbkFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=xBQYuCMPZ3RjKElbXiYXLqI4MocGoP9EEhzwMJnjgL8=&emci=30853dc1-1417-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&emdi=eafd1ad0-8a18-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&ceid=3714577) by Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey. (It had already been reintroduced in the House on Feb. 25.)

Passing the DNHA will end the continuing misuse of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to undermine nondiscrimination laws, evade child labor laws, deny access to health care and otherwise claim broad exemptions under the guise of religious freedom.

A lot has changed since RFRA became law in 1993. Back then, a broad coalition of religious, civil liberties and other groups from across the political spectrum came together to protect the free exercise of religion for everyone. RFRA was never intended to allow religion to be used to harm others. But religious extremists have upended the RFRA consensus, effectively turning it into a free pass to discriminate at will.

Passing the Do No Harm Act won’t be easy. But as the harm done in the name of religion becomes more immediate and personal to the American public, the time to rally behind it is now. I hope you will immediately [**reach out to all your representatives in Congress to demand swift action**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/35989523/306784892/-1918585099?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwMS8xLzU4MjYxIiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImVhZmQxYWQwLThhMTgtZWMxMS05ODFmLTUwMWFjNTdiYTNlZCIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiR2xlbkFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=xBQYuCMPZ3RjKElbXiYXLqI4MocGoP9EEhzwMJnjgL8=&emci=30853dc1-1417-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&emdi=eafd1ad0-8a18-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&ceid=3714577) on this essential clarification of what true religious freedom means for all of us.

**Glen also appreciates other organizations that work on related issues and promote information and efforts to protect people’s rights from abuses.**

For example, the **American Civil Liberties Union** (**ACLU**), [**www.aclu.org**](http://www.aclu.org), protects people from a variety of abuses, including those done in the name of religion.

**Some religious – and interreligious – organizations affirm diversity of religious belief and practice. People of various faiths work together in a growing number of organizations to promote mutual respect.**

The **Interfaith Alliance** ([**www.interfaithalliance.org**](http://www.interfaithalliance.org)) does good work to support important issues**. In September 2021 the Interfaith Alliance posted this:**

For nearly three decades, Interfaith Alliance has led the fight for an inclusive vision of religious freedom that protects people of all faiths and none. Our commitment to this sacred tenet demands that we speak out against threats to religious freedom, no matter the circumstance. [**It’s time for us to be clear: r**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314936/307760887/-263445950?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704)[**eproductive freedom is a matter of religious freedom.**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314937/307760888/-263445950?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704) Healthcare has always been a central part of our work, whether pushing back against proposed “[**religious and moral exemptions**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314938/307760889/586887525?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704)” to the Affordable Care Act birth control coverage requirement, or fighting against [**LGBTQ+ discrimination in the healthcare system**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314939/307760890/-175200737?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704). But our stance on reproductive freedom has often only been implicit. This summer, the Interfaith Alliance Board of Directors engaged in a rigorous and thoughtful interfaith dialogue around the [**urgent threat to reproductive freedom**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314940/307760891/1019954543?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704). We affirm that various faith traditions approach questions of healthcare, including reproductive care, differently. [**But all of us should be free to make decisions based on our**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314941/307760892/-263445950?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704) [**own**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314942/307760893/-263445950?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704) [**beliefs and circumstances - not the religious views of our bosses, doctors, or elected officials.**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/36314943/307760894/-263445950?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImQwYmEwYWQyLWFjMWMtZWMxMS05ODFmLTAwNTBmMjcxYTFhMiIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=QRz2SMclUUzjAX5epTC9be3xfAVhPRpVce3O45YzIS4=&emci=beeb3b39-a51c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&emdi=d0ba0ad2-ac1c-ec11-981f-0050f271a1a2&ceid=4371704)

The Interfaith Alliance also reported public opinion polling supporting tolerance:

Religious and cultural diversity are among our nation's greatest strengths. And as we look ahead, Interfaith Alliance is committed to advancing an inclusive vision of religion freedom - one that ensures that all of us can believe as we choose, without fear of discrimination or harm.

As a member of our national network, I wanted to make sure you have the first look at [**our analysis of the 2020 Census of American Religion**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/32509917/295999185/1647718432?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImZlMzcwOTc2LTZlZTYtZWIxMS1hN2FkLTUwMWFjNTdiOGZhNyIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=7lOUnc-4qUHjHlf85--CxCYbfHuG3MuAHuYGTDntwjY=&emci=16fc00fc-69e6-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=fe370976-6ee6-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=4371704)**.** This new report from our friends at the Public Religion Research Institute confirms that the future of religious freedom will be defined by our commitment to working across communities for the benefit of all. **Explore our analysis:** [**New Polling Illustrates the Need for an Inclusive Vision of Religious Freedom**](https://click.everyaction.com/k/32509918/295999186/1647718432?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc5NDU2IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogImZlMzcwOTc2LTZlZTYtZWIxMS1hN2FkLTUwMWFjNTdiOGZhNyIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiZ2xlbmFuZGVyc29uQGludGVncmEubmV0Ig0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=7lOUnc-4qUHjHlf85--CxCYbfHuG3MuAHuYGTDntwjY=&emci=16fc00fc-69e6-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=fe370976-6ee6-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=4371704)**.**

The **Network of Spiritual Progressives** brings together very diverse religious and spiritual people to build “a world in which all of life is shaped by peace, justice, environmental stewardship, love, care for one another, care for the earth, generosity, compassion, respect for diversity and differences, and celebration of the miraculous universe in which we live.” [**www.spiritualprogressives.org**](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org)

People of various religious faiths work together to promote peace, social and economic justice, the environment, and so forth. An excellent example of interfaith collaboration for the climate is Interfaith Power & Light, [**www.interfaithpowerandlight.org**](http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org).

Some academic institutions provide neutral ways for people to learn about various religions.

A recent article titled “Christian Right Pushes State-Level Policies to Erode Church-State Separation” is at this link: [**https://truthout.org/articles/christian-right-pushes-state-level-policies-to-erode-church-state-separation/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=2367c18a-0851-4224-92a8-971eac76d529**](https://truthout.org/articles/christian-right-pushes-state-level-policies-to-erode-church-state-separation/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=2367c18a-0851-4224-92a8-971eac76d529)

Glen has accumulated a number of articles and resources about the separation of Church and State. If you want some links, contact him at **glenanderson@integra.net** or (360) 491-9093.

Every month Glen posts the new TV program to his blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). Besides posting each program to the “TV Programs” category, he also posts the program to one or more issue categories on my blog – in this case the “Religion” category and the “Judicial and Constitutional” category.

**The blog post includes a link so** **people anywhere at any time can watch the video of this interview** – and also read a thorough summary of what we said – and links to sources of additional information. (You are reading that thorough summary now.)

**Glen’s closing encouragement:**

Glen thanked Rob Boston for sharing his information and insights during this hour. He also thanked the people who have been watching this interview.

Glen said that as far as we know, human beings are the only species with spiritual or religious awareness.

But we do know that the members of some other species actually do take care of each other. They cooperate for the well-being of their species, and some species’ individuals do practice compassion and caring for each other.

Can we combine those qualities – spiritual values and compassionate care for each other?

Religion has a long history of promoting compassion, individual care, and social justice.

Let’s continue that best tradition and never use religion as a weapon to oppress anyone.

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence through my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)or by phoning me at
(360) 491-9093 or e-mailing me at **glenanderson@integra.net**

Glen ends each TV program with this invitation to help make progress:

**We're all one human family, and we all share one planet.**

**We can create a better world, but we all have to work at it.**

**The world needs whatever you can do to help!**