



Opinion  
Letters to the Editor

# The Supreme Court's religious liberty wins are civil rights wins

Readers on church and state  
37 minutes ago

Share icons



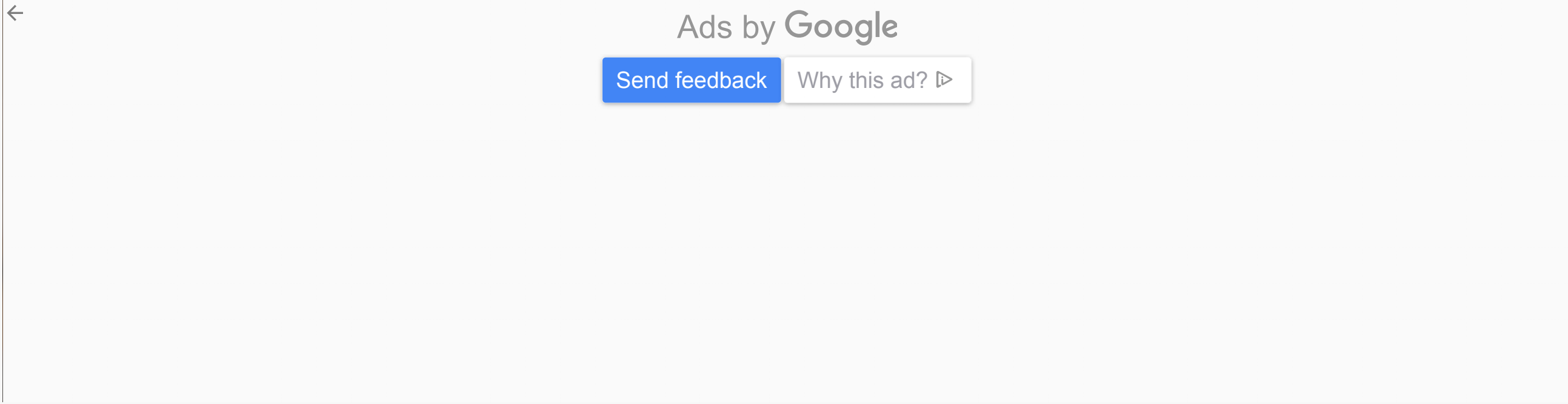
(Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

The April 10 front-page article "[Big losses for civil rights at high court](#)" undermined its claim that the Supreme Court is "sharply conservative." The article said that since Justice Amy Coney Barrett joined the bench, the court has ruled conservatively in 54 percent of cases — hardly evidence of the "extreme partisanship" it claims to reveal.

The conversations animating the Editorial Board, delivered to your inbox every Tuesday

The article also bizarrely excluded religious liberty from the fight for civil rights. The reality is that religious liberty wins are civil rights wins, and very often for women and minorities.

Consider the parents my firm represented in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*. The Muslim, Jewish and Ethiopian Orthodox moms did not forfeit their status as women or minorities — and their rights are no less civil rights — because they are religious. Also, women and minorities — along with disabled, poor and disadvantaged people of any background who are served by Catholic Charities — were the clear winners when the court ruled 9-0 in favor of our clients last year in *Catholic Charities Bureau v. Wisconsin*. The same is true of the foster kids who can find loving homes after our 9-0 religious liberty win in *Fulton v. Philadelphia*, or the gender dysphoric children who can access talk therapy after the court's 8-1 ruling in *Chiles v. Salazar*.



The article lamented these cases as letting religion "push into public life." But that framing is backward. Religion is a natural part of public life precisely because free citizens are allowed to seek truth with one another. The court's protection of religious freedom is a victory for civil rights — and a benefit to us all.

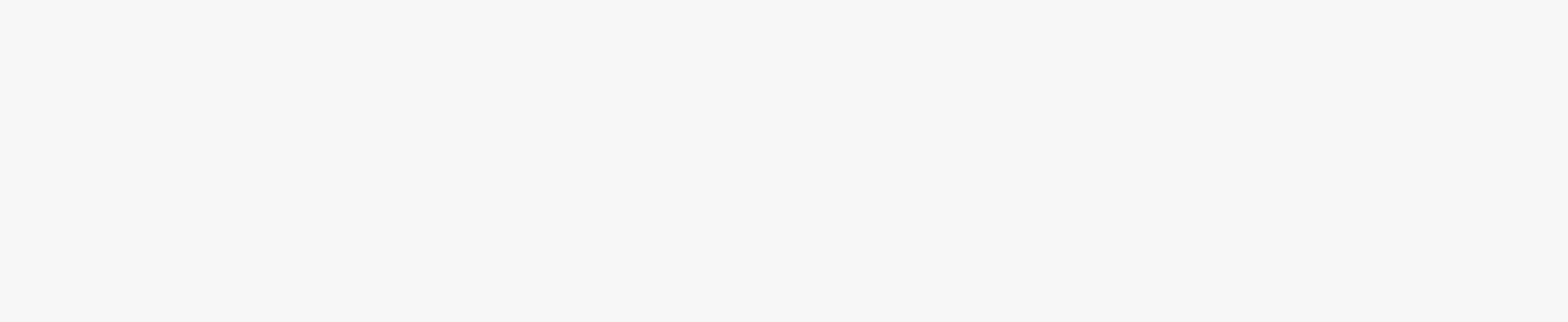
Mark Rienzi, Washington

The writer is president of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

The April 10 front-page article "[Big losses for civil rights at high court](#)" claimed to measure the Supreme Court's civil rights record, but it offered instead a progressive scorecard. When it comes to civil rights — particularly those guaranteed under the Constitution — there is far more to the story.

The article noted that the court has ruled in favor of religious liberty claims 98 percent of the time over the past five terms. Unfortunately, the article framed this as a mark against the court. The free exercise of religion, free speech and due process are not fringe legal novelties; they are core constitutional rights. Defending them is a civil rights achievement, not a civil rights failure.

Consider recent cases. In *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, the court not only vindicated a football coach's right to pray after games but also buried the *Lemon* test, which effectively pushed religion out of the public square. In *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, the court upheld the free-exercise rights of parents to opt their children out of instruction using LGBTQ+ materials. In *Mirabelli v. Bonta*, it recognized parents' free exercise and due process rights to be informed when schools facilitate a child's social gender transition. And in *Chiles v. Salazar*, the court ruled that the government cannot force counselors to follow a state-mandated script when working with minors struggling with gender identity in a straightforward free-speech ruling that also protects families.



These were civil rights wins for faith, speech, conscience and the idea that parents, not the state, are the primary educators and protectors of their children.

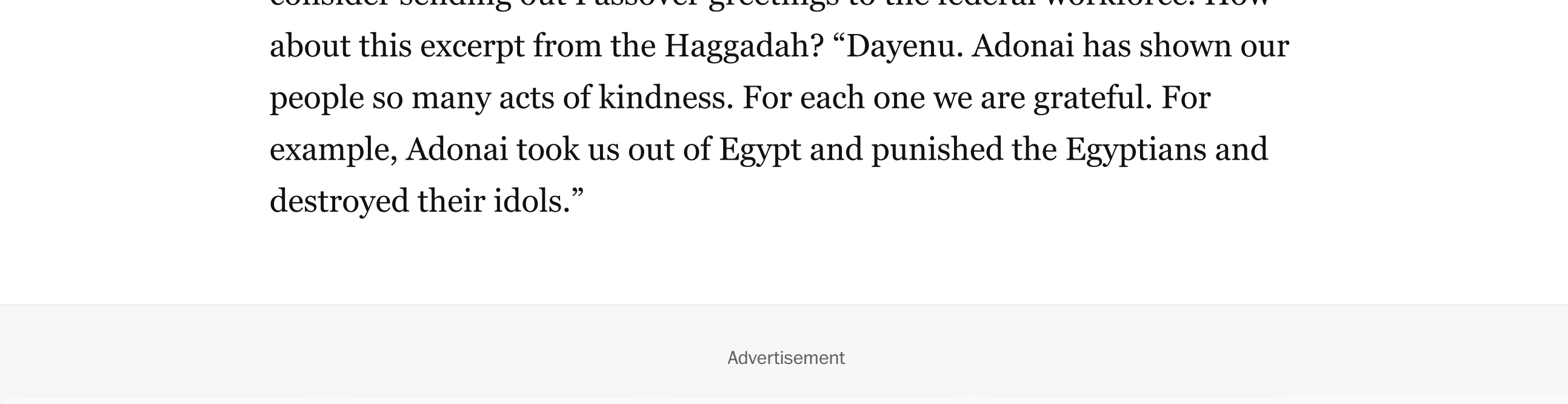
Andrea Picciotti-Bayer, McLean

The writer is director of the Conscience Project.

## Separate church and state

As a retired federal employee and Jewish woman, I was taken aback by the April 10 front-page article "[USDA chiefs' 'He is Risen' Easter email unnerves some](#)." In a subheadline, The Post noted that "the email was the latest in a string of unprecedented expressions of Christian proselytizing by administration leaders." Whatever happened to the concept of separation of church and state?

Or, in the spirit of equity, perhaps the Trump administration should consider sending out Passover greetings to the federal workforce. How about this excerpt from the Haggadah? "Dayenu. Adonai has shown our people so many acts of kindness. For each one we are grateful. For example, Adonai took us out of Egypt and punished the Egyptians and destroyed their idols."



Lois A. Engel, Washington

The headline accompanying the April 10 front-page article "[USDA chiefs' 'He is Risen' Easter email unnerves some](#)" minimized an outrage.

A non-Christian-issued email promoting a Christian holy day harms all non-Christians. (If for no other reason than that our government was and is constituted to serve all, equally.) But it harms Christians, too: Political winds can and do shift. There may come a time when the head of the executive branch isn't a Christian. If Christians want to protect themselves from that eventuality, then they need to uphold separation of church and state. Wisely, the Constitution bars government establishment of religion because doing so benefits everyone.

Daniel Fleisher, Baltimore

## What Catholicism is about

Some 2,000 words appeared in the April 4 front-page article, "[For Gen Z men, Catholic Church has its attractions](#)," and not one mention of Jesus or His teachings. But we do read of the Church providing a path to "truth, beauty, discipline and meeting a pretty girl at Mass." We do find Charlie Kirk's name five times. We do find some MAGA-coded phrases, but we don't find the word Jesus often emphasized: "love."

The article includes statistics on the losses and gains in Mass attendance and demographic changes. The "theo-bros" are likely great examples for some bishops. According to the article, "Thomas L. defined the theo-bro as 'the extremely online religious man — that usually is a convert — who experiences the faith in either a rules-based or power-based understanding rather than a service- and community-based understanding.'" That's not the "lamb" Jesus seeks in Matthew 25. That's the convert who tries to teach Pope Leo XIV what Catholicism is about.

John Valliere, Lake Frederick, Virginia

0 Comments

Most read Opinions

Three opinion cards with thumbnails and titles: Kathleen Parker, David Ignatius, George F. Will

View 2 more stories

More for you section with article teasers: ICE agent charged with assault, Ask Sahaj: Isn't it racist to insist your kids marry within their race?, Four takeaways from RFK Jr.'s contentious House committee hearings, How Trump vs. Pope Leo could impact elections, Gavin Newsom chooses the wrong side of gender politics again

Newsletter sign-up section: The Week in Ideas, Thought-provoking opinions you may have missed amid the news of the week.

Paid Promoted Stories section with six article teasers: Ask a Pro: 'I'm 65 With \$1.1M Saved. What's My Retirement Budget?', Japanese Men Rarely Need a Blue Pill. Here's Why, After 60, Leg Strength Comes From One Simple Daily Move, Skip Ozempic! These Are The Best GLP-1 Medications of 2026, Arizona Launches New Policy For 'Senior Drivers' on Friday, Assisted Living Accelerates 'The Decline.' What This S...