



PROJECT BLITZ PRIMER

What Is Project Blitz?

Project Blitz is a coordinated national effort working to codify the U.S. as a Christian nation. It is part of a larger national trend to undermine church-state separation and redefine religious freedom as a sword used to harm others instead of a shield that protects people. Its strategy is to pass an increasingly ambitious set of state laws, starting with ones that require prominently displaying “In God We Trust” in public schools and escalating to laws that would permit religion to be used to discriminate.

Project Blitz’s 148-page playbook, replete with 21 model bills, strategy, and messaging guidance, is available to the nearly 1,000 state legislators across America who are involved in this movement. In the last two years, more than 130 Project Blitz bills were introduced in 35 states, with 15 bills passing. Encouraged by the Trump administration’s efforts to advance similar harmful policies at the federal level, we expect Project Blitz organizers to build on their perceived success by introducing even more bills throughout the states in upcoming legislative sessions. Already at least 45 Project Blitz bills have been introduced in 2020.

In reaction to the efforts by Americans United and allies to expose this harmful agenda, Project Blitz organizers in fall 2019 announced they were rebranding the movement as “Freedom For All” and shifting their efforts even more into the shadows to avoid scrutiny and opposition.

Project Blitz is a threat to all of us: women, LGBTQ people, public school students and families, religious minorities, the nonreligious, and virtually everyone—including many Christians—who do not share this worldview.

How Does Project Blitz Fit Into Other Christian Nationalist Efforts?

Project Blitz is the state legislative component of a nationwide political movement attempting to weaponize religion in order to roll back positive social change. Along with efforts by the Trump-Pence administration to use religion to discriminate and battles in the courts fought by Alliance Defending Freedom among others, Project Blitz is part of a full-frontal assault on the constitutional principles that government and religion must be separate to protect religious freedom for everyone, and that religious belief should not be used to harm others.

Why Is Project Blitz So Dangerous?

Two elements of Project Blitz make it stand out as a threat to be taken seriously: its strategic underpinnings and its wide network of lawmakers. First, Project Blitz employs an incremental approach to weaken and then destroy protections for anyone who does not share its far-right ideology. It starts by pushing what it believes will be less controversial measures in order to get a foothold to pass even more dangerous legislation. By starting with a flurry of what many legislators see as benign bills, Project Blitz admits it wants to force its opponents to stretch resources by playing “whack-a-mole.”

Second, Project Blitz relies on an established network of state legislative prayer caucuses to disseminate information, coordinate, share best practices, and accelerate the rate at which these bills are introduced and passed. These caucuses with hundreds of members, along with affiliated groups and individual leaders, are active in at least 36 states, providing critical infrastructure for Project Blitz.

What Kinds Of Legislation Does Project Blitz Promote?

Project Blitz's playbook gives far-right legislators a roadmap to inject a decidedly one-sided version of religion into legislation. It promotes a three-tiered framework of state bills meant to incrementally tear down any semblance of church-state separation, with each tier laying the groundwork for the next.

- It starts with bills promoting America's "Judeo-Christian heritage," which it views as having little public opposition. This phase includes bills that mandate the posting of "In God We Trust" in public schools, require the Bible to be taught in public schools, and allow public school teachers to promote religion to their students.
- Second, it moves on to proclamations and resolutions that exalt Christianity and the Bible above other religions and beliefs.
- Finally, Project Blitz's proponents hope to create broad exemptions to existing law so that their narrow set of evangelical Christian beliefs can be used to limit the rights of others. These include state Religious Freedom Restoration Acts (RFRAs), First Amendment Defense Acts (FADAs), and bills to allow taxpayer-funded, faith-based adoption and foster care agencies to discriminate against kids and prospective parents.

Who Is Behind Project Blitz?

Convened by three Religious Right groups (Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, National Legal Foundation, and WallBuilders), Project Blitz acts much like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which is notorious for doing the state legislative bidding of big business. In short, Project Blitz does for Christian nationalism what ALEC does for corporate America, according to Frederick Clarkson of Political Research Associates.

One of the key figures behind Project Blitz is David Barton, the founder of WallBuilders. He's a revisionist historian who incorrectly advocates that the U.S. was founded as a Christian nation, argues that the government should "regulate homosexuality" like cigarettes, and falsely claims that "our founding documents were based on the Bible."

How Do We Push Back Against Project Blitz?

Because the rights of millions of Americans are at risk by these laws, national and state organizations are coming together to expose this effort. Together we are raising public consciousness, building a strong base of opposition, and pushing back against these bills that threaten religious and nonreligious people alike. It is critical that lawmakers and the public hear from a range of communities affected by these laws to understand the interconnectedness of the Project Blitz strategy. Bills that may seem relatively harmless at first glance are in fact dangerous and meant to escalate to more harmful bills that would strip the rights of women, LGBTQ people, religious minorities, and the nonreligious.

*For more information, contact Sam Sokol at sokol@au.org
or Nik Nartowicz at nartowicz@au.org.*