

# AMERICANS UNITED FOR SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE



## STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

**DEADLINE: MARCH 1ST, 2016**

In 1802, Thomas Jefferson coined the phrase “wall of separation between church and state” when referring to the Establishment Clause in the First Amendment of the Constitution. This clause forbids the government from establishing an official religion, prohibits government actions that unduly favor one religion over another, and prohibits the government from unduly preferring religion over non-religion or non-religion over religion.

Write an essay that explains why the separation of church and state is integral to preserving religious freedom in America’s pluralistic society. Include at least one primary source to support your thesis. You may also reference current events, U.S. history, and your personal experiences.

### PRIZES\*

FIRST: \$500

SECOND: \$250

THIRD: \$100

**MATCHING PRIZE TO THE TEACHER WHO ADVISES THE 1ST, 2ND & 3RD PLACE WINNERS \*AND\* THE STUDENT WHO RECEIVES FIRST PRIZE WILL ALSO RECEIVE A \$500 DONATION TO HIS OR HER SCHOOL LIBRARY!**

**ALL ENTRANTS WILL RECEIVE A FREE YEAR-LONG AMERICANS UNITED STUDENT MEMBERSHIP**

## ELIGIBILITY

- ✓ Open to all United States high-school seniors and undergraduate students
- ✓ Past winners, finalists, employees and board members of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and members of their families are not eligible to participate

## SPECIFICATIONS

- ✓ 750-1,000 Words
- ✓ Double-spaced, Times New Roman
- ✓ Essays must include in-text citations and a bibliography
- ✓ Include a cover page with: full name, email address, postal address, grade level, school name and address, and name of faculty advisor that can verify the authenticity of the essay

## CRITERIA

- ✓ Adherence to guidelines and carefully proofread
- ✓ Articulate, creative, and tightly focused response that demonstrates a genuine grappling with the topic
- ✓ Observation of rules for Standard English usage (grammar, punctuation, and mechanics) in writing
- ✓ Well-researched with convincing arguments supported by specific examples

## SUBMISSION

- ✓ **Email completed essays to [campus@au.org](mailto:campus@au.org) with the subject line [Last Name], [Essay Contest] by midnight of the contest deadline.**

**- OR -**

Mail completed essays to Americans United, Attn: Essay Contest  
1901 L Street NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036