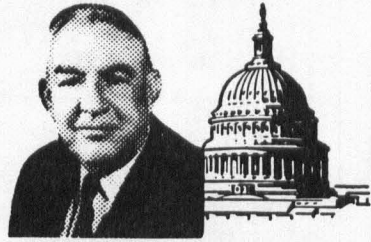


**SENATOR  
SAM ERVIN**  
☆ **SAYS** ☆



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WASHINGTON - - The diversity of religions in America and the strength of character that religions have given to our people make it imperative that we retain religious freedom as a way of life. My opposition to the Dirksen school prayer amendment is based upon this belief and the clarity of the First Amendment which governs this subject today.

Religious freedom in America can be kept only in the manner pointed out in the First Amendment, without prefix or suffix. It declares, in effect, that the state must not undertake to control religion and religion must undertake to control the state. Man's struggle for religious freedom points to the wisdom of this policy.

At the heart of the debate over the Dirksen Amendment is the delegation of powers to school boards to determine as an arm of the government how religion shall be conducted in the schools. This poses once more all the problems which the First Amendment sought to forbid. In essence, it leaves open the way for school boards and groups within school boards to strive to impose particular religious beliefs upon schoolchildren attending public schools. The Dirksen Amendment, in short, seeks to disturb "a thing at rest".

I say this because I covet freedom of religion for all men.

I look at the universe and behold with wonder the lifegiving sun, which rises in the east at morn, travels across the sky by day, and sets in the west at eventide; the galaxies of stars, which twinkle in the infinite heavens, the clouds, which bring the soil-refreshing rain; the majestic mountains with hills at their knees; the rivers, which water pleasant valleys and fertile plains and run endlessly to the sea; the tall trees, which lift leafy arms heavenward to pray; the arbutus and dogwood, which brighten springtime, and the marigolds

and roses, which ornament summer; the glory of the leaves and ripened crops of autumn; the crystal snowflakes, which descend so gently in winter; and the other beautiful things past numbering, which adorn the earth.

I note with awe the order and regularity of the processes of life and nature as the tide ebbs and flows, as the harvest succeeds the seedtime, and as the heavenly bodies move in their orbits without mishap in conformity with natural laws. I observe with reverence that, despite the feet of clay on which he makes his earthly rounds, man is endowed with the capacity to obey conscience, exercise reason, study holy writings, and aspire to righteous conduct in obedience to spiritual laws.

On the basis of these things, I affirm with complete conviction that the universe and man are not the haphazard products of blind atoms wandering aimlessly about in chaos, but, on the contrary, are the creations of God, the Maker of the universe and man.

Why then did the Founding Fathers mention religion in the First Amendment and what purpose did they have in view when they did this? The answer to these questions appears with great clarity in a statement by the late Justice Jackson:

"The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the court. One's right to . . . freedom of worship . . . and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections".

The First Amendment permits Americans to bow their knees and lift their voices to their own God in their own way. It should be kept that way.