



Constitutional Debates on Freedom of Religion: A Documentary History (Primary Documents in American History and Contemporary Issues)

Gerald Long, John Patrick

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Debates over the separation or accommodation of religion and government have divided Americans since the founding of our country and continue to echo in governmental chambers today, as people argue sharply and heatedly about the exact meaning and correct applications of First Amendment clauses on religious establishment and free exercise of religion. Students can trace the history and development of these arguments, as well as the reactions to them, through this unique collection of over 70 primary documents. Court cases and other documents bring to life the controversies surrounding the issues. Explanatory introductions to documents aid users in understanding the various arguments put forth, while illuminating the significance of each document.

Patrick and Long trace the origins and changes in the nature of the debates surrounding the issue of freedom of religion using carefully chosen court cases and other documents to reflect the fact that the Court's decision has not always ended public controversy about the relationships between church and state or religion and government. Indeed, especially in recent years, the Court's decisions in some cases have exacerbated old tensions and generated new issues. The focus throughout is on the connection between the U.S. Constitution and freedom of religion. The introductory and explanatory text help readers understand the nature of the conflicts, the issues being litigated, the social and cultural pressures that shaped each debate, and the manner in which the passions of individual government officials, justices, and our presidents affected the development of policies concerning freedom of religion.

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