

Background Information for the BGM Executive Committee:

On January 20, 2025, we received an invitation from the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC) to learn about a legal action involving religious freedom, immigration, and potential actions from the incoming Administration. The BJC discussed how we might engage as a plaintiff in this case.

The International Coalition for Advocacy and Protection (ICAP) at Georgetown University Law Center is submitting a lawsuit challenging any potential rescission of the “sensitive locations” policy. This policy currently limits ICE’s authority to conduct immigration-related arrests in places of worship. ICAP is engaging with national denominations, regional denominational bodies (such as synods, dioceses, etc.), ecumenical networks (such as state councils of churches), and individual congregations that may be willing to be named plaintiffs in the case.

The lawsuit is a stand for religious liberty in response to potential changes in the Department of Homeland Security’s “sensitive locations” policy, advocating on behalf of churches. They are specifically asking the American Baptist Churches to consider being a plaintiff, as individual churches may be reluctant to file a complaint due to concerns over attracting attention and becoming a potential target for ICE. The lawsuit was filed this week.

ABCUSA is a founding member of the BJC and it is one of the auxiliary organizations covered by our tax exempt status.

We have received inquiries to share the reasons ABCUSA did not participate in the lawsuit as well as urging us to file an amicus curiae brief, which is one of the ways we can be involved. In the past we have filed lawsuits and submitted an amicus curiae brief in matters that involved immigration, separation of church and state.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has joined a lawsuit with a coalition of Quakers as a plaintiff urging the current administration not to allow ICE to raid churches. Link to article. <https://baptistnews.com/article/cbf-joins-quakers-in-lawsuit-against-ice-raids-in-churches/>

Attachments:

- Cover Letter for the Executive Committee
- Invitation from BJC
- 01.22.2025 Meeting to Discuss Possible Religious Freedom Litigation Notes
- Denomination Association Questionnaire 1.25.25
- Individual Church Questionnaire 1.20.25
- ICAP Sensitive Locations Engagement Letter Template

- ABC Policy - CHURCH-AND-STATE
- Complaint submitted by ICAP
- Letter to the denomination

Resources:

- [ABCUSA Invites American Baptists to a Time of Prayer; Lifts Up American Baptist Policy Statements – American Baptist Churches USA](#)
- [Resources to Address Recent Immigration Policy Changes - American Baptist Home Mission Societies](#)
- [Letter from the Office of the General Secretary https://www.abc-usa.org/2025/01/abcusa-invites-american-baptists-to-a-time-of-prayer-lifts-up-american-baptist-policy-statements/](https://www.abc-usa.org/2025/01/abcusa-invites-american-baptists-to-a-time-of-prayer-lifts-up-american-baptist-policy-statements/) (also attached)