

# **Baptist advocacy group changes its name: Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty**

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The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is renaming itself the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, following a decision by the agency's directors at their annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

The name change, approved unanimously September 23, is designed to better reflect the BJC's advocacy for religious freedom and church-state separation. The pan-Baptist BJC does not deal with other public issues.

Many Baptists don't understand or appreciate the concept of church-state separation anymore, observed Jim Baucom, a Falls Church, Virginia, pastor, in remarks opening the board's meeting. Baucom suggested that BJC leaders focus their public message more on religious freedom—and then note that such freedom is underpinned by the separation of church and state.

"This is what Baptist life is all about—that we believe that we have a God that we love because we choose to love him, not because we are coerced to love him," the pastor said. "And any union between church and state leads to coercion." -

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