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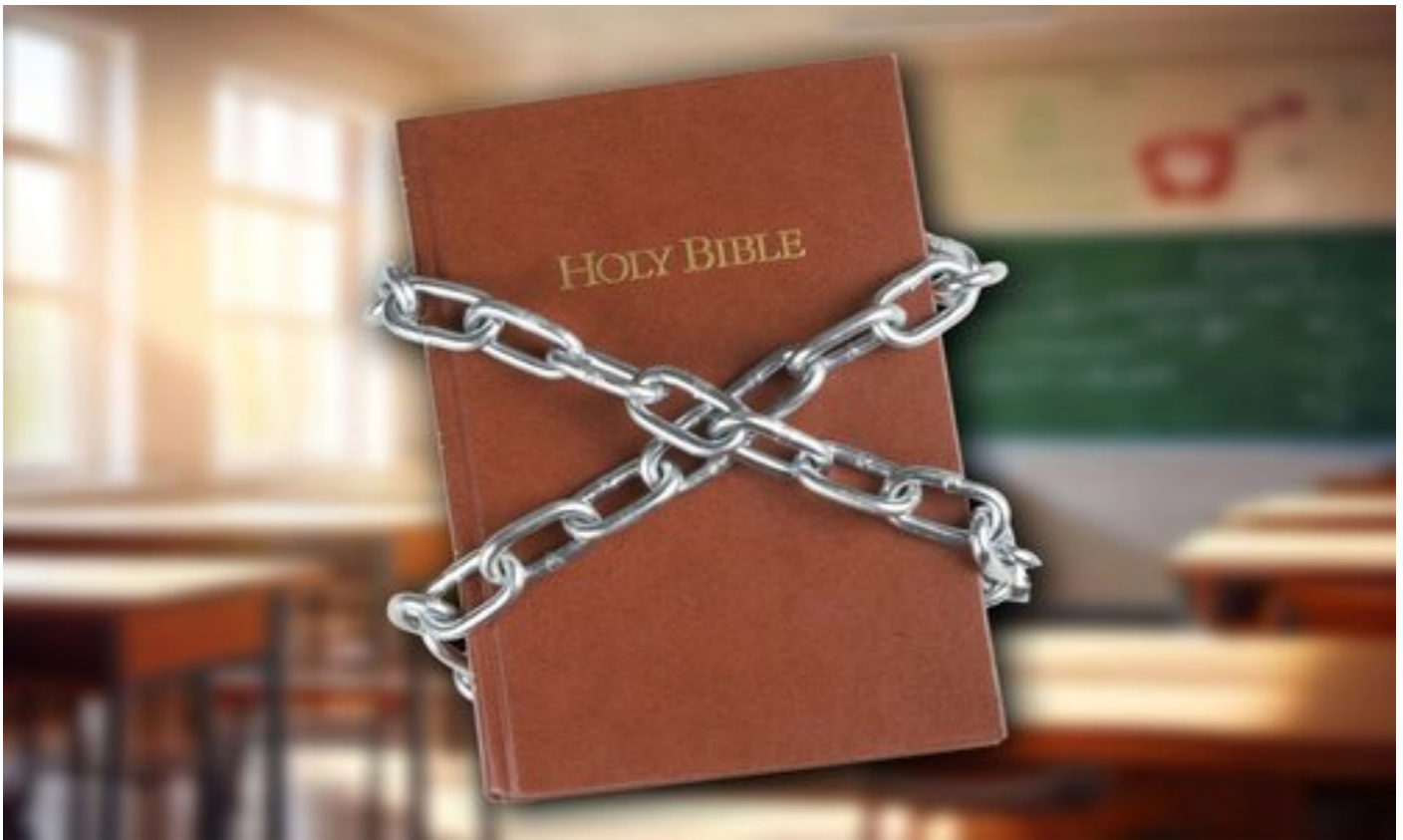
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ARTICLE

How The Progressive Left Is Legislating Christianity Out of American Life



BY PNW STAFF FEBRUARY 10, 2026

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First it was California, where Christian schools were told they must treat biblical teaching on sexuality as optional--or face loss of accreditation. Then came New York, where religious adoption agencies were driven out of existence for refusing to violate their faith. Colorado followed, forcing Christian camps and schools to adopt state-approved gender policies or shut their doors. In each case, the strategy was the same: no outright ban, no dramatic showdown--just regulations, conditions, and "standards" quietly tightened until faith-based education became impossible to sustain.

Now, that same playbook has arrived in Virginia.

House Bill 359, introduced by Democrat Delegate Dan Helmer in January, is being marketed as a reasonable update to accountability rules for private schools. In reality, it is another calculated step in a nationwide effort to bring religious education to heel--not by force, but by bureaucracy. The goal is not simply oversight. It is submission.



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Supporters claim the bill merely ensures "non-discrimination" and transparency for schools participating in Virginia's Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits Program. But the language of HB 359 reveals something far more troubling: an attempt to redefine religious conviction itself as a problem the state must correct.

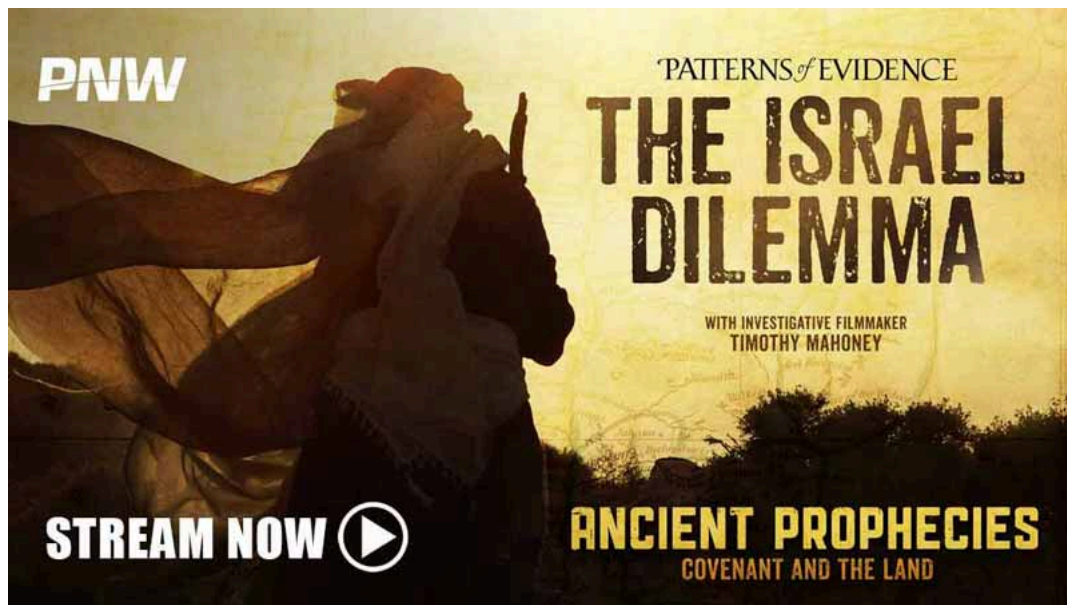
The most dangerous maneuver in the bill is its redefinition of "public funds." Tax credits--money that never enters government hands--are suddenly treated as state funding. This legal sleight of hand gives Virginia leverage over private Christian schools simply because low-

income families rely on scholarships funded by private donations. In effect, the state is saying: If your families need help, your faith comes with strings attached.

Once that threshold is crossed, the coercion begins.

Under HB 359, Christian schools would be prohibited from operating according to their biblical beliefs about sex and gender. Admissions policies, student conduct codes, and access to programs would all have to align with state-approved views on sexual orientation and gender identity. What Scripture teaches plainly would be relabeled as discrimination.

Perhaps even more alarming is the requirement that schools provide a "meaningful and nonpunitive opt-out" from religious instruction and worship. Bible classes. Chapel. Prayer. These are not side offerings in Christian education--they are the foundation. To force a Christian school to allow students to opt out of Christianity itself is not tolerance; it is an attempt to hollow out faith from the inside.



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The bill also mandates alignment with Virginia's Standards of Learning and opens curricula to government inspection. This is not neutral oversight--it is ideological standardization. It ensures that even private religious schools must ultimately teach within boundaries set by the state, not by conscience, conviction, or community.

And the enforcement mechanisms are brutal. Schools found in violation could face civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per incident or be barred from enrolling scholarship students for five years. For many schools, that would be a death sentence. Not because parents no longer want Christian education--but because the state has made it unaffordable unless families abandon it entirely.

This is no accident. HB 359 was introduced in direct response to the expansion of school choice under Governor Glenn Youngkin. When parents were given more freedom to leave failing or ideologically hostile public schools, the left did not ask why families were leaving. Instead, it moved to ensure that no meaningful alternative could exist.

We have seen this movie before. In California, regulators used accreditation rules to pressure Christian colleges into conformity. In Washington state, religious schools have faced threats for maintaining biblical hiring standards. In Massachusetts and Oregon, licensing and nondiscrimination rules have been weaponized to push faith-based institutions out of public life altogether.

The message is always the same: You may believe what you want--until your beliefs affect how you operate.

For families of faith, this moment demands clear eyes. Religious liberty does not disappear all at once. It erodes through compliance forms, grant conditions, and carefully worded statutes that sound benign until enforced. The state does not need to ban Christianity from the classroom if it can regulate it into irrelevance.

HB 359 is still in committee. But its intent is already unmistakable. It is not about protecting students--it is about reshaping them. It is not about accountability--it is about control. And it is not isolated to Virginia.

"They will not stop" is no longer a slogan. It is a warning. The only question left is whether Americans who value genuine religious freedom will recognize the strategy in time--or wake up one day to find that faith-based education still exists in name only, safely managed, carefully monitored, and finally, no longer free at all.

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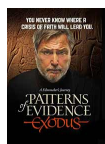
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