

Religion and Public Life in Alabama Media Release Points

Ask-Alabama Poll, Summer 2004

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Significant Findings

1. **Alabamians support the public display of monuments to the Ten Commandments**

- a. 69% support or strongly support the display of monuments to the Ten Commandments in public or governmental buildings.
- b. 14% strongly oppose such publicly sanctioned displays.

More than two-thirds of Alabamians would welcome the placement of a religious inspired monument such as the Ten Commandments in a public setting. This may suggest that residents in the State not only value the spiritual foundations of our political and legal institutions, but would prefer to have these keystones recognized and celebrated.

2. **Although supportive of the public display of the Ten Commandments, most Alabamians think that too much has been made of this issue.**

- a. 58% of respondents think that too much attention has been given to this issue in recent months.

The public feel torn between support for values that they treasure and becoming part of the political agenda of some political leaders. There may also be recognition that our political leaders need to be more focused on the practical policy issues facing the State.

3. There is much less support among Alabamians for displaying non-Christian symbols and sacred text in public locations.

- a. 38% of Alabamians would *strongly oppose* the public display of a verse from the Jewish Torah or Islam's Koran. Only 11% would *strongly support* such inter-faith displays.

Half of the public are not comfortable with displaying text or symbols from non-Christian faiths. It would be incorrect to suggest, however, that this opinion indicates religious intolerance. A more accurate perspective would be that Alabamians may recognize that non-Christian symbols have less direct linkage with the foundations of the state and our legal-political values and, therefore, they are less relevant as a source of inspiration and affirmation.

4. A majority of Alabamians would prefer to see religion to have more influence on politics and public life.

- a. 50% agree that the influence of religion on politics and public life in Alabama should be greater.
- b. 28% feel that the influence of religion on politics in Alabama is too great.

5. A majority of Alabamians would support a constitutional amendment banning gay and lesbian marriages, but they do not believe that discrimination against gay or lesbian individuals should be accepted.

- a. 57% of the public would support a state constitutional amendment prohibiting marriages between persons of the same sex.
- b. 51% of the public would support legislation to prohibit discrimination against gays or lesbians.

Alabamians are uncomfortable with the State endorsing marriage between persons of the same gender, and in this respect Alabama's views are similar to those expressed in much of the nation. Discomfort with gay marriage, however, does not imply that the public is willing to engage in gay-bashing or to condone discrimination against such individuals. The public, in many ways, appears to be more sophisticated and tolerant than some erstwhile political leaders.

Poll Facts

Dates of Survey: June 12 - June 27, 2004
Sample Size: 609
Estimated Margin of Error: +/- 4%
Type of Survey: Random telephone survey of Alabamians 19 or older