



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

July 6, 2026

The Honorable Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Your Independence Day statements regarding the Founders

Dear Senator Schumer:

I write in response to your recent Independence Day posts across¹ multiple² social³ media⁴ platforms, and to a troubling pattern that has emerged from them, in which you claim that the “founding fathers called America God’s noble experiment.” In your posts, you go on to say that you “believe in all three words to this day,” including your belief that “we are one nation under God.”

While you are certainly free to believe that, your claim that your belief is bolstered by any statement of the Founders that the United States was founded as “God’s noble experiment” is simply not true.

A comprehensive review of this phrase, “God’s noble experiment,” by my staff, by multiple journalists, and by Joanne Freeman, a Yale University historian who is an expert in early American politics and history, finds *no example* of any founder using this phrase. What we did find, however, were multiple examples of you *claiming* the founders had used this term to describe our nation. In fact, the *only* example of this term being employed by anyone – other than you – is in a 1939 review of Ray Billington’s book “The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860” by a Hillsdale College historian, a book unrelated to the founding era.

At a time when our nation’s history is increasingly being subjected to revisionist, falsified narratives by the White Christian Nationalist movement to justify their exclusionary treatment of anyone who doesn’t fit within their narrow vision of who counts as an American, it is incumbent upon us to demand better. The truth matters.

And the truth is that repeating this myth, this fabrication, is doing the work of the White Christian Nationalist movement. The truth is that the United States was founded as a bold

¹ <https://x.com/SenSchumer/status/2073391216561996128>

² <https://bsky.app/profile/schumer.senate.gov/post/3mpt4gh4iqc2q>

³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DaXzQpXuuw0/>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BReeDCgZ9/>

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experiment in *self* government. A nation built on religious *pluralism*. A nation where it “does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods or no god.”⁵

While I – and the nearly one-third of Americans who claim no religious identity – also take issue with your assertion that the United States is, or ever was, a nation “under God,” it is particularly disturbing to see any political leader attempt to bolster this tired, Red Scare-era claim with fabricated history. And though it has sadly become commonplace for Christian Nationalists like Speaker Mike Johnson to use repeatedly debunked quotations⁶ and spurious historical narratives to justify their ideology, we must refuse to allow it to become the norm.

I know that you value genuine religious freedom and pluralism. Your recent appointment of my colleague Rachel Laser to serve as a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, for example, was a vital first step toward ensuring that the Commission represented a wide range of beliefs and views. Her appointment stands in stark contrast to the appalling appointments of hate group leaders and outright theocrats made by other Congressional leaders. And that is why your continued use of this fabrication is so profoundly disappointing.

In the wake of the hijacking of America’s 250th anniversary⁷ by the Trump Administration and its White Christian Nationalist acolytes, we must be particularly vigilant to ensure that we are not doing their extreme, divisive work for them.

It is my hope that you will correct the record on this issue, retract your claim regarding the founders’ beliefs, and apologize.

Sincerely yours,



Nicholas Fish
President
American Atheists

⁵ Extract from Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Query XVII, "Religion"). Available at <https://tjrs.monticello.org/letter/2260>

⁶ Mark Wingfield, *Speaker Mike Johnson Wrongly Attributes Prayer to Thomas Jefferson*, Baptist News Global (Jan. 6, 2025), <https://baptistnews.com/article/speaker-mike-johnson-wrongly-attributes-prayer-to-thomas-jefferson/>.

⁷ Rachel Treisman, *House Democrats Accuse Trump of "Hijacking" America's 250th Birthday for His Own Gain*, NPR (July 2, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/02/nx-s1-5879162/freedom-250-report-house-democrats-controversy>.

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