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BREAKING! New Jersey agrees to a more inclusive oath due to FFRF lawsuit



Thanks to a Freedom From Religion Foundation lawsuit, the electoral system in New Jersey is becoming markedly more inclusive.

FFRF [filed suit a month ago](#) on behalf of a N.J. resident against the N.J. secretary of state for forcing candidates for public office to swear a mandatory religious oath in order to appear on the ballot. James Tosone, the plaintiff, had been unable to run for office in recent years because the Division of Elections would not allow him to verify his candidate form via a secular affirmation in place of a religious oath. A significant chunk of New Jersey citizens, such as Tosone, who have no religious affiliation ([almost one-fourth of the state's population](#)) were potentially affected by this policy.

Not any more. From now on, political candidates in the Garden State won't have to unwillingly take a religious oath. Things moved quite rapidly after FFRF filed its suit. Thankfully, the state of New Jersey proved willing to comply with the U.S. Constitution and resolve the issue. It agreed to create and adopt a secular affirmation for candidates. The state also [sent a memo](#) to all N.J. county clerks with updated and clear guidance on secular affirmations.

FFRF is pleased at the outcome and is filing to voluntarily dismiss the case. And Tosone is elated at the way things turned out. "I'm very happy with the state's response to my lawsuit and their commitment to follow the

Constitution's 'no religious test for public office,'" he says. "Thanks to the support of FFRF and the work of their attorneys, candidates in New Jersey now have the option of a nonreligious affirmation when submitting their affidavit to run for office."

If New Jersey fails to follow through with these fixes in 2024 , the state/church watchdog can refile the lawsuit. The dismissal will be without prejudice, which means that FFRF will not be precluded from refiling. However, it appears that state officials will do the right thing and adhere to these changes.

The policy prevalent till now had violated the rights of the plaintiff and countless others under Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution, which bars religious tests for public office, as well as the First Amendment, FFRF asserted in the [complaint filed](#) before the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. FFRF contended in its suit that "the secretary of state and the state of New Jersey have no valid reason or interest in requiring all citizens who wish to run for public office to take an oath that requires them to swear 'so help me God.'"

"We're glad that the state of New Jersey saw the error of its stubbornly noninclusive ways," says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "Residents will now not have to choose between lying or not running for office."

New Jersey Attorney Paul Grosswald filed the lawsuit, with FFRF attorneys Patrick Elliott and Samantha Lawrence acting as co-counsel. The case was filed in the Trenton Vicinage of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national nonprofit organization representing 40,000 freethinkers (atheists, agnostics and other dissenters from religion), including almost 800 current members in New Jersey, that works to protect the separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

Nota: el texto que antecede ha sido reproducido en forma íntegra de la siguiente fuente <https://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/43023-breaking-new-jersey-agrees-to-a-more-inclusive-oath-due-to-ffrf-lawsuit>