

Task Force: Recommended by the Task Force on Anti-Semitism,
Law and Holocaust, October 25, 1993.

Executive Committee: Amended and recommended, November 10, 1993.

Board of Directors: Approved, November 17, 1993.

Statement by the
Milwaukee Jewish Council for Community Relations
Concerning the
Role of Religion in Public Affairs in Wisconsin

The Milwaukee Jewish Council for Community Relations (MJCCR) has long supported the involvement of members of all religious communities in the arena of public affairs, and the inspiration derived from religious values as an underlying set of values for working to improve the quality of life in our communities.

Our concern arises over the efforts by certain groups to impose on others a narrow and intolerant definition of a sole correct 'religious' position on various matters of social and economic justice. No one can decide for others what the one true faith position is. Rather it is a fundamental aspect of our society to accept the diversity of philosophies we have. The positions advocated by these groups are an effort to claim that only a narrow range of beliefs and public policy positions are the true position for a truly religious person. We reject that concept.

Only negative consequences will occur from this triumphalist approach, when any group promotes the message that its beliefs are the only valid ones and that these beliefs need to be imposed on others.

Furthermore, we believe that our society is best served by recognizing its diversity, both within the organized religious community as well as outside it. Our society includes people of many faiths, even people who profess an absence of faith. All Americans have the right to be respected, to privacy, and to freedom of religion and expression. There is no viable way to create expressions of religiosity by official governmental bodies. Rather, we need to promote the values of tolerance and mutual respect.

Therefore, the Milwaukee Jewish Council for Community Relations:

- reaffirms its commitment to a pluralistic, tolerant society.
- reaffirms its commitment to a strict separation of church and state.
- opposes efforts by any group to claim sole right to define a narrow, triumphalist and intolerant religious

position on an issue.

- opposes efforts by any group to manipulate governmental bodies to impose a specific set of religious beliefs on others, including official spoken or silent prayers at public school graduation ceremonies, official spoken or silent prayers at meetings of local school boards, etc.