



## Missouri House of Representatives

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### **Missouri House Passes HB 75 to Strengthen Religious Freedom Protections**

**JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.** – The Missouri House of Representatives has given initial approval to House Bill 75, also known as the Missouri Religious Freedom Protection Act, sponsored by Rep. Cathy Jo Loy. The bill ensures that public officials cannot limit or prohibit religious gatherings, reinforcing First Amendment protections for Missourians.

The legislation was introduced in response to government-imposed restrictions on religious gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as those in St. Louis County. HB 75 ensures that no future emergency can be used to infringe upon religious freedoms while still requiring places of worship to comply with building and fire codes.

"The COVID-19 shutdown made one thing clear: our constitutional rights must never be left to government discretion," Rep. Loy, R-Carthage, said. "Prior to 2020, few would have imagined that the government could restrict our free right to religion. House Bill 75 solidifies the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, ensuring that no future emergency will be used as a justification to violate these fundamental rights."

While HB 75 prevents officials from restricting religious gatherings, it maintains an important exception: if a place of worship is knowingly used to commit or plan acts of violence or harm, restrictions may still apply.

"Government agencies exist to serve the people and uphold the law, not to override their freedoms," Loy added. "This bill removes ambiguity and makes clear that religious rights cannot be singled out for restrictions. We hope never to face another crisis that threatens our religious liberties, but if that day comes, Missouri will stand firm in protecting the free exercise of religion."

"For a lot of people, churches are places where people go for their mental and spiritual health," House Speaker Jon Patterson, R-Lee's Summit, said. "I trust our church leaders and members to balance the needs of public health with the rights of our citizens to exercise their right to practice their religion."

With a vote of 106-38, HB 75 now moves forward for further legislative consideration in the Missouri Senate.

*Representative Cathy Jo Loy, a Republican, proudly represents part of Jasper County (District 163) in the Missouri House of Representatives. She was elected to her first two-year term in November 2024. For more information, please contact Rep. Loy's office at 573-751-5458 or by email at [Cathyjo.Loy@House.Mo.Gov](mailto:Cathyjo.Loy@House.Mo.Gov).*

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