



## Statement In Support Of Rep. Athena Salman

April 20, 2017

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Today, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and our Greater Phoenix chapter stand in solidarity with Representative Salman. Religious freedom is a cherished American ideal. It guarantees that everyone's tradition, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Native American, Sikh, Hindu, or humanist, must be treated equally. Yesterday, Rep. Salman was not treated equally and the Arizona House of Representatives betrayed religious freedom and the pluralism and diversity that is at the core of America's strength.

Rep. Salman's words yesterday demonstrated that an atheist can invoke a higher authority, and can offer a unifying message to solemnize the people's work. But rather than respect her and her message and take her words to heart, some Members of the House shamed her and disparaged her beliefs by replacing her invocation with a Christian prayer.

The actions on the House floor yesterday sent a clear message to Rep. Salman, as well as to other Arizonans who are atheist, humanist, agnostic, or of minority faiths: their beliefs regarding religion are unwelcome in the House of Representatives.

We applaud Rep. Salman for having the courage to stand before her colleagues and offer the prayer from her tradition, knowing that her religious views are in the minority. We thank her for taking a stand for religious freedom and diversity in Arizona.