

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 294

BY REPRESENTATIVES FIRMENT, AMEDEE, BACALA, BAYHAM, BERAULT, BILLINGS, CARLSON, CARRIER, CARVER, CHENEVERT, COATES, COX, CREWS, DESHOTEL, DEVILLIER, DEWITT, EDMONSTON, EGAN, GALLE, GLORIOSO, HORTON, MIKE JOHNSON, KERNER, MCCORMICK, MCFARLAND, MELERINE, OWEN, SAWYER, SCHAMERHORN, SCHLEGEL, SPELL, ST. BLANC, THOMPSON, VILLIO, WILDER, AND WYBLE

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 14:19(A)(1)(b)(i) and (2) and (B)(introductory paragraph) and  
3 (1) and to enact R.S. 13:5233.2, relative to the exercise of religion; to limit liability  
4 of persons protecting the right of religion; to provide for definitions; and to provide  
5 for related matters.

6 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

7 Section 1. R.S. 13:5233.2 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

8 §5233.2. Protection of freedom of worship; limitation of liability

9 A. The Legislature of Louisiana finds that churches or other places of  
10 worship are private property dedicated to the free exercise of religion, that religious  
11 assemblies are protected by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution  
12 of Louisiana, and that the right to exclude disruptive and potentially violent  
13 individuals may be necessary to facilitate the free exercise of religion. The  
14 Legislature of Louisiana further finds that clarification of existing statutory authority  
15 is in the furtherance of justice and the free exercise of religion.

1           B. Any religious leader, authorized security team member, or person who is  
2           lawfully on the premises of a church or other place of worship may request that a  
3           person leave the premises if the person is committing criminal trespass pursuant to  
4           R.S. 14:63 or is engaged in a substantial disruption. A verbal request to leave the  
5           premises shall constitute notice to the person that he is not authorized to be present.

6           C. Any person who is lawfully on the premises may use reasonable and  
7           apparently necessary force when used in accordance with the following:

8           (1) To prevent a forcible offense against a person who is lawfully on the  
9           premises.

10          (2) To physically remove a trespassing person who refuses to leave the  
11          premises following a request made pursuant to Subsection B of this Section.

12          (3) When done in accordance with R.S. 14:19.

13          D.(1) When force or violence is used to prevent criminal trespass or the  
14          disruption of worship services, or any other activity at the church or other place of  
15          worship, the use of force by a person who is lawfully on the premises shall be limited  
16          to an amount reasonably and apparently necessary to terminate the trespass or  
17          substantial disruption, or force proportionate to that used by the person committing  
18          the trespass or causing the disruption.

19          (2) Nothing in this Section shall be construed to authorize the use of deadly  
20          force except where otherwise allowed by law for purposes of self-defense.

21          E.(1) Any person who is lawfully on the premises who uses reasonable and  
22          apparently necessary force pursuant to this Section and the organization which owns  
23          or leases the premises for religious activities shall not be liable in tort to any person  
24          for the use of such force.

25          (2) A request made pursuant to Subsection B of this Section shall constitute  
26          an affirmative defense against any criminal or civil action brought against a person  
27          who was lawfully on the premises and used reasonable and apparently necessary  
28          force to terminate a trespass.

1                   (3) The provisions of this Subsection do not apply if any of the following  
2                   occur:

3                   (a) The use of force was grossly disproportionate to the force used by the  
4                   criminal trespasser.

5                   (b) Deadly force was used unlawfully and unnecessarily.

6                   (c) The person who used force was engaged in any unlawful conduct.

7                   (4) In any civil action arising from the use of force against a trespasser  
8                   pursuant to this Section, a defendant who is either a person who was lawfully present  
9                   on the premises or a religious organization may file a motion asserting immunity  
10                  from suit. Upon the filing of the motion, the court shall conduct a pretrial immunity  
11                  hearing. If the court determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the  
12                  defendant is entitled to immunity, the court shall dismiss the action.

13                  F. Nothing in this Section shall be construed to do any of the following:

14                  (1) Prohibit the lawful, peaceful protest outside the premises of a church or  
15                  other place of worship that does not obstruct access to the premises.

16                  (2) Supercede any other provision of law related to self-defense.

17                  (3) Limit the authority of law enforcement.

18                  (4) Limit constitutional free speech or free exercise of religion.

19                  G. For the purposes of this Section, the following terms have the following  
20                  meanings:

21                  (1) "Church or other place of worship" means any building, structure, or  
22                  outdoor private property that is owned, leased, or otherwise lawfully possessed by  
23                  a religious organization that is used for organized religious worship or other religious  
24                  activities.

25                  (2) "Religious leader" means a pastor, minister, priest, deacon, rabbi, imam,  
26                  trustee, elder, or any other person formally recognized by a church or other place of  
27                  worship as having authority to maintain order during a religious service.

28                  (3) "Substantial disruption" means conduct that does any of the following:



1           B. For the purposes of this Section, there shall be a presumption that a  
 2           person lawfully inside a dwelling, place of business, church or other place of  
 3           worship, or motor vehicle held a reasonable belief that the use of force or violence  
 4           was necessary to prevent unlawful entry thereto, or to compel an unlawful intruder  
 5           to leave the premises or motor vehicle, if both of the following occur:

6           (1) The person against whom the force or violence was used was in the  
 7           process of unlawfully and forcibly entering or had unlawfully and forcibly entered  
 8           the dwelling, place of business, church or other place of worship, or motor vehicle.

\*       \*       \*

---

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

---

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_