

California State Senate

SENATOR
BRIAN W. JONES

THIRTY-EIGHTH SENATE DISTRICT

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Greg Cox, Chairman
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101



Dear Chairman Cox,

Earlier today I sent a letter similar to this asking that the Governor take immediate steps to allow churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and all places of worship to immediately re-open in California.

I am also asking the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to take that same action at the county level.

The shutdown orders that have been issued are beginning to be challenged, modified and overturned in state after state.

Liberty Counsel, representing churches and churchgoers throughout the nation, has issued this memo (copy also attached) summarizing recent decisions overturning orders shutting down houses of worship:

<https://lc.org/PDFs/Memo-ReOpen-Church.pdf>

The memo concludes: ***"The government is not empowered to command under criminal or civil penalties religious worshippers when and how they should worship. Indeed, this sacred right preexisted government and therefore supersedes any dictates such government may issue. These rights are protected by both the Constitutions of the United States of America and every state constitution, and are also protected by federal and state laws."***

I encourage you and your legal advisors to review the memo from Liberty Counsel. I believe you will see the wisdom in lifting any county shutdown or restriction orders.

Churches, like any "essential" service are more than capable of planning for and observing CDC guidelines on social distancing and cleanliness.

As a protected right in the First Amendment to our Bill of Rights, religious facilities should have been deemed "essential" in the first place and not required to close, however they should be among the first encouraged to re-open.

In such a perilous time that we are facing with the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging people to pursue their freedom of religious assembly is the correct and compassionate thing to do.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian W. Jones", written over a horizontal line.

Brian W. Jones
Senator, District 38

cc: The Honorable Jim Desmond, Nathan Fletcher, Kristin Gasper and Dianne Jacob, Members
San Diego County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Bill Gore, San Diego County Sheriff
The Honorable Summer Stephan, San Diego County District Attorney
Mayors of cities within San Diego County