



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 11, 2011

Texas Gov. Rick Perry Issues National Call to Prayer

In his invitation on the [Response website](#), Perry declared, “America is in crisis: we have been besieged by financial debt, terrorism, and a multitude of natural disasters. As a nation, we must come together and call upon Jesus to guide us through unprecedented struggles, and thank Him for the blessings of freedom we so richly enjoy.” The Texas Governor called on Americans to join him in asking for “God’s forgiveness, wisdom and provision for our state and nation. There is hope for America. It lies in heaven, and we will find it on our knees.”



While Perry and organizers emphasized that the event is not political in nature, an atheist group called the [Secular Coalition for America](#) called on elected officials to shun the event because of its Christian leanings. “The last thing our officials should do in times of national struggle is promote a divisive religious event that proposes no real solutions to our country’s real-world problems,” said the group’s director Sean Faircloth. “Calling upon all Americans to embrace Perry’s personal belief system is an insult to the millions of upstanding citizens who practice religions other than evangelical Christianity, as well as the millions of secular Americans who contribute to society without pushing their views on others. Religion should be a private matter, especially for elected officials in a secular government.”

Similarly, the Rev. Welton Gaddy of the [Interfaith Alliance](#) told [FOX News](#) that Perry’s call to prayer “raises serious concerns about his commitment to the boundaries between religion and government. It has been my experience that when elected leaders invoke religion in this way, it almost always has more to do with furthering a political agenda than a religious one.”

But Catherine Frazier told FOX that Perry had emphasized the non-denominational nature of the event, and that while it would be specifically Christian in nature, “there are many Americans that believe this to be an important issue — Americans of all faiths.” She added that “the governor believes in the power for prayer and believes it is important that we as a nation join together and pray for wisdom and guidance in finding solutions to the problems that we face.”

While opponents were quick to accuse Perry of using the event for political motives, his defenders pointed out that this is not the first time the Governor has appealed to the Almighty. FOX recalled that last April Perry “called on all Texans to pray for rain for three days as most of the state battled an extreme drought that led to massive wildfires that scorched more than a million acres this year, claimed the lives of two firefighters, and destroyed nearly 400 homes.” Similarly, last year he joined with “three other Gulf Coast state governors — Bobby Jindal in Louisiana, Haley Barbour in Mississippi, and Bob Riley in Alabama ... for a day of prayer more than two months after the BP oil spill.”

Predictably, among Perry’s most vocal political critics was the Texas Democratic Party, whose spokeswoman Kristen Gray insisted that the Governor “is the last person who should be talking about what’s right for our country. When campaigning, he claims he will fully fund our schools, protect the



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elderly, and balance the budget, but the ... state GOP budget broke every one of those promises. A budget is a moral document about our priorities, but it's obvious the governor is a shameless opportunist whose real priority is whatever furthers his own career ambitions."

But Frazier insisted to FOX that the Governor "is proud of what Texas has done to balance its budget without raising taxes," adding that "voters made it clear in November what they want their elected officials to do and they made it clear they want the government living within its means."

Among the organizers of the Texas prayer event, according to the Response website, are Don Wildmon, founder of the [American Family Association](#) (AFA), which is listed as the event's host organization; Buddy Smith, AFA's executive vice president; as well as several members of the staff and senior leadership of a Kansas City-based ministry called the [International House of Prayer \(IHOP\)](#).

In their explanation of the reasoning behind the day of prayer and fasting, the organizers said that Americans "must come together, call upon Jesus to guide us through unprecedented struggles, and thank Him for the blessings of freedom we so richly enjoy according to His grace, mercy, and kindness towards us." They stressed that the "historic crisis facing our nation and threatening our future demands a historic response from the church. We must, as a people, return to the faith and hope of our fathers."

Noting that God specifically calls His people in times of trouble "to gather together and call on Him with one voice, one heart, and a unified desire," they said that the "power of unified prayer from a humble gathering of the saints is found in the hope that He might answer us, and turn the tide of trouble and threats that stand against us."

Photo of Gov. Rick Perry: Gage Skidmore



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