

## Lesson 4: You are Thomas Jefferson's Speechwriter

**Recall:** On New Year's Day in 1802, President-elect Jefferson wrote a letter in reply to the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut who had offered three months earlier their most sincere congratulations on Jefferson's electoral victory. The Danbury Baptists also used that October letter to reaffirm the importance of religious liberty to the emerging nation.

**Explanation:** You are named the president-elect's chief speechwriter. Jefferson asks you to read the letter "To Thomas Jefferson from the Danbury Baptist Association" which he received in the Fall. He then asks you to read his letter of response "Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists" and suggest revisions. Specifically, he seeks your counsel on how to craft the response so that it is in accord with the First Amendment's establishment clause. Provide your revisions to his letter below.

Gentlemen	Notes
The affectionate sentiments of esteem and approbation which you are so good as to express towards me, on behalf of the Danbury Baptist association, give me the	
highest satisfaction. my duties dictate a faithful and zealous pursuit of the interests	
of my constituents, & in proportion as they are persuaded of my fidelity to those	
duties, the discharge of them becomes more and more pleasing.	
Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his	
God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate	
powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with	
sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their	
legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting	
the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Thurch $\&$	
State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the	
rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those	
sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no	
natural right in opposition to his social duties.	
I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection & blessing of the common father	
and creator of man, and tender you for yourselves & your religious association,	
assurances of my high respect & esteem.	
Th Jefferson	
Jan. 1. 1802.	
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-35-02-0331

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html