

HB 1194 -- HOUSES OF WORSHIP

SPONSOR: Pouche

This bill establishes the "Protecting Religious Assembly in States of Emergency (PRAISE) Act".

The bill specifies that during a state of emergency declared by the Governor or through orders issued by the Department of Health and Senior Services regarding infectious, contagious, communicable, or dangerous diseases, neither the State nor any political subdivision can impose restrictions on a religious house of worship with the intent to make, or the effect of making, religious services impractical. Such orders cannot prohibit religious services that are held on private property.

An exception is made for emergency evacuation orders that apply generally to the area, but once the imminent danger has passed, religious services will be allowed to resume.

If the State or any of its political subdivisions impose restrictions on religious houses of worship during an emergency, affected religious houses of worship can bring a civil action for relief. Relief sought can include injunctive orders, compensatory damages, nominal damages, declaration of violation, and punitive damages.

This bill is the same as HB 2035 (2024).