

Reference Document

"Thank Jehovah for Your Free Government Food"

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video.

Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — Sourced from official government documents, federal regulations, court records, official Watchtower/JW.org publications, or direct on-the-record statements
- **SECONDARY** — Sourced from investigative journalism, established advocacy/research sites, or reputable news outlets

SECTION 1: The Farmers to Families Food Box Program

Claim: The USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program launched in May 2020 and ran for a full year, ultimately distributing more than 173 million boxes worth over five billion dollars.

- Source: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service — Farmers to Families Food Box program page
- URL: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/farmers-to-families-food-box>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official USDA program page

Claim: The USDA would pay contractors to buy produce, dairy, and meat directly from farmers, pack it into family-sized boxes, and get those boxes to food banks, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations to hand out to people in need.

- Source: USDA press release, June 23, 2020
- URL: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/06/23/usda-farmers-families-food-box-program-reaches-20-million-boxes>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official USDA press release

Claim: Faith-based organizations participating in federal food programs are prohibited from mixing religious activities with the distribution — no worship, no religious instruction, no proselytizing.

- Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service — Prohibition Against Explicitly Religious Activities
 - URL: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/prohibition-against-explicitly-religious-activities>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official USDA guidance document
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Claim: Federal regulation 7 CFR Part 16 is explicit: organizations 'must not require program beneficiaries or prospective beneficiaries to participate in explicitly religious activities in order to receive' federally funded services.

- Source: Electronic Code of Federal Regulations — 7 CFR § 16.4
 - URL: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-A/part-16/section-16.4>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Federal regulation, current text
 - Key quote / Direct text: "Organizations that receive direct Federal financial assistance under a social service program must not require program beneficiaries or prospective beneficiaries to participate in explicitly religious activities"
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SECTION 2: The Letter and *The Counter* Investigation

Claim: The story broke in September 2020 in an investigative piece by the food journalism outlet *The Counter*. A woman named Heather — an inactive Jehovah's Witness — picked up a food box on behalf of her grandmother from a local JW congregation.

- Source: H. Haddon, *The Counter*, September 2020
 - URL: <https://thecounter.org/churches-usda-covid-19-food-boxes-boundaries-church-and-state/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Investigative journalism, named reporter, established outlet
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Claim: The box had been distributed by Travel Well Holdings — an airport kiosk company, not a food distributor — which had received a twelve-million-dollar government contract to assemble and deliver Farmers to Families boxes.

- Source: Investigate Midwest, October 8, 2020
 - URL: <https://investigatemidwest.org/2020/10/08/usda-continues-to-fund-companies-with-no-food-service-experience-to-help-feed-needy-families/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Investigative journalism
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Claim: The letter was on letterhead from the Jehovah's Witnesses Disaster Relief Committee. It credited Jehovah for the food, asked recipients to keep the distribution confidential, and encouraged members to accept a box even if they didn't need the food.

- Source: JW Disaster Relief Committee letter as reproduced in *The Counter*, September 2020
 - URL: <https://thecounter.org/churches-usda-covid-19-food-boxes-boundaries-church-and-state/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Photographic reproduction of the original letter published by *The Counter*
 - Key quote / Direct text: "All praise and honor goes to our great God Jehovah for his abundant provisions to us"
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Claim: The federal contract requirement stated: 'Offeror must self-certify that nonprofits have capability to ensure that only needy people, or the food insecure population, will receive the food boxes through this program.'

- Source: USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program contract solicitation
 - URL: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/farmers-to-families-food-box>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Federal contract language
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Claim: Robert Hendriks — the U.S. spokesman for Jehovah's Witnesses — confirmed the letter existed, blamed a rogue local branch, and stated that non-members could receive boxes if they attended Bible study or services.

- Source: Robert Hendriks, on-the-record statement to *The Counter*
 - URL: <https://thecounter.org/churches-usda-covid-19-food-boxes-boundaries-church-and-state/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — On-the-record statement from official JW spokesman, published in investigative report
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Claim: *The Counter* documented multiple churches doing similar things — attaching Bible verses to boxes, holding 'salvation' events at distribution sites, praying over every recipient, soliciting donations while handing out government food.

- Source: H. Haddon, *The Counter*, September 2020
 - URL: <https://thecounter.org/churches-usda-covid-19-food-boxes-boundaries-church-and-state/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Investigative journalism documenting multiple faith-based organizations
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SECTION 3: The Babylon the Great Doctrine

Claim: Jehovah's Witnesses teach that they are the only true religion on earth and that all other religious organizations are part of 'Babylon the Great' — identified as a corrupt world empire of false religion.

- Source: JW.org — 'What Is Babylon the Great?'
 - URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/questions/babylon-the-great/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication on jw.org
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Claim: Watchtower publications describe false religion as guilty of 'fornication with the kings of the earth' — consorting with worldly governments — and exploiting the common people through political alliances.

- Source: Watchtower Online Library — *Revelation — Its Grand Climax At Hand!* (1988), commentary on Babylon the Great
 - URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1989284>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
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Claim: Watchtower publications describe false religion as driven by 'power, property, and wealth' and guilty of 'corruption, dishonesty, and immorality.'

- Source: Watchtower Online Library — *Revelation — Its Grand Climax At Hand!* (1988), Chapter 27
 - URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1101988030>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication, verbatim language
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Claim: Watchtower teaches that the organization is Jehovah's sole channel of communication on earth — that obeying the Governing Body is the same as obeying Jehovah himself.

- Source: Watchtower Online Library — *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2013
 - URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2013285>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
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SECTION 4: The Political Neutrality Doctrine

Claim: Jehovah's Witnesses teach strict political neutrality — no voting, no running for office, no lobbying, no participation in governmental systems. They teach that human governments represent the 'wild beast' of Revelation.

- Source: JW.org — 'Why Do Jehovah's Witnesses Maintain Political Neutrality?' (FAQ)
 - URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/political-neutrality/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official JW.org FAQ page
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Claim: In some countries, JW members have faced imprisonment, torture, and death rather than comply with political requirements — including in Malawi, where Witnesses were persecuted for refusing to buy a Malawi Congress Party membership card.

- Source: Watchtower Online Library — 'Shocking Religious Persecution in Malawi,' *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1968
 - URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1968081>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication documenting the Malawi persecution
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SECTION 5: The United Nations NGO Registration

Claim: Jehovah's Witnesses have taught that the United Nations is the 'image of the wild beast' described in Revelation — a counterfeit kingdom, a satanic attempt to unite the world under human government.

- Source: JW.org — *God's Kingdom Rules!*, chapter on the wild beast
 - URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/gods-kingdom/the-wild-beast/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
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Claim: Watchtower publications have condemned the UN in explicit, sustained theological terms across multiple decades.

- Source: Watchtower Online Library — *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1984
 - URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1984324>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
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Claim: In 1992, the Watchtower Society quietly registered as an associated NGO of the United Nations Department of Public Information. They stayed registered for nearly ten years, withdrawing in October 2001 only after a reporter at *The Guardian* discovered it.

- Source: JWfacts.com — 'Watchtower and the United Nations'
 - URL: <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/united-nations-association.php>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Established JW research/advocacy site with reproductions of original UN documents
 - Note: Primary documentation includes reproductions of the original UN NGO registration records and correspondence.
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Claim: *The Guardian* published a story exposing the Watchtower Society's NGO registration with the UN.

- Source: *The Guardian*, October 8, 2001
 - URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/08/religion.uk>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Major international news outlet
 - Note: *Verify link is live before production. Backup source: <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/united-nations-association.php>*
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Claim: To be accepted as an associated NGO of the UN's Department of Public Information (now Department of Global Communications), an organization had to formally agree to 'support and respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.'

- Source: United Nations Department of Global Communications — 'Formal Association with the Department of Global Communications' (official criteria page)
 - URL: <https://www.un.org/en/civil-society/page/formal-association-department-global-communications>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official United Nations website, current criteria page
 - Note: *The criteria page lists the requirements for formal association, including: 'Support and respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,' operate on a not-for-profit basis, and be an established civil society organization. These criteria have not changed in substance since 1991.*
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Claim: Watchtower's explanation was that they needed the NGO status to access UN library resources — a claim the UN itself later contradicted, stating in writing that library access had not required NGO registration.

- Source: 4Jehovah.org — 'The Watchtower and the United Nations'
 - URL: <https://www.4jehovah.org/the-watchtower-and-the-united-nations/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Reproduces the UN's written response contradicting Watchtower's library-access claim
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SECTION 6: What They Said While It Was Happening

Claim: JW.org published a series of articles during the COVID pandemic about their disaster relief work under the heading 'How Your Donations Are Used,' describing 800 Disaster Relief Committees formed globally.

- Source: JW.org — 'Global Relief for a Global Pandemic' (How Your Donations Are Used series)
 - URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/series/how-your-donations-are-used/Global-Relief-for-a-Global-Pandemic/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official jw.org publication
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Claim: Those JW.org articles carried the line: 'We avoid the methods used by many churches.'

- Source: JW.org — 'How Do Jehovah's Witnesses Use Donations?' (FAQ)
 - URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/how-do-jw-use-donations/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official jw.org FAQ page
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Claim: The 'How Your Donations Are Used' series on jw.org continued to be published, with descriptions of food distributed to brothers and sisters, while some JW congregations in California were distributing federal food boxes with letters crediting Jehovah.

- Source: JW.org — How Your Donations Are Used series index
 - URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/series/how-your-donations-are-used/>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official jw.org publication series
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SECTION 7: The Donation Loop

Claim: Multiple members in online forums and private conversations have reported being encouraged, after receiving food boxes, to donate whatever they saved on their grocery bill that week back to the Worldwide Work.

- Source: Community accounts — online forums and private conversations
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Community testimony, not official publications
 - Note: *The script explicitly flags this as anecdotal community testimony, not proven organizational policy. No official Watchtower publication has been identified confirming this practice.*
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SECTION 8: The Trump Letter Parallel

Claim: The Trump administration began inserting its own signed letter into Farmers to Families food boxes — White House letterhead, both English and Spanish, crediting the Trump administration for the food.

- Source: ProPublica — 'Now, in Government Food Aid Boxes: A Letter From Donald Trump'
 - URL: <https://www.propublica.org/article/now-in-government-food-aid-boxes-a-letter-from-donald-trump>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Major investigative journalism outlet
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Claim: Food banks across the country were outraged and many removed the Trump letters because the boxes were going out just weeks before a presidential election.

- Source: *The Washington Post*
 - URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/10/01/food-bank-trump-campaign-literature/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Major national newspaper
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Claim: Nobody was sanctioned. The program ended in May 2021 with what Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack called 'a lot of problems.'

- Source: *The Counter* — coverage of Biden administration's handling of the food box program
 - URL: <https://thecounter.org/biden-administration-usda-food-box-program-covid-vilsack/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Investigative journalism
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SECTION 9: Additional Supporting Sources

EXJW Analyzer — JW History and Research Tools

- URL: <https://exjwanalyzer.com>
 - Contains: Research tools, case documents, and supplementary materials for EXJW Analyzer videos
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The Counter — Full Investigation: Churches and USDA Food Boxes

- URL: <https://thecounter.org/churches-usda-covid-19-food-boxes-boundaries-church-and-state/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Investigative journalism
 - Contains: The full original investigation documenting JW and other churches' conduct during the food box program, including the Disaster Relief Committee letter, the Hendriks statements, and the broader pattern across denominations
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United Nations — History of Cooperation between DPI and the NGO Community

- URL: <https://www.un.org/en/civil-society/page/history-cooperation-between-dpi-and-ngo-community>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official UN website
 - Contains: Official UN description of the DPI/NGO association criteria, including the requirement that associated NGOs 'undertake to support the work of the United Nations and to promote knowledge of its principles and activities.' Cites ECOSOC Resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.
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United Nations Press Release NGO/303, December 16, 1997

- URL: <https://press.un.org/en/1997/19971216.ngo303.html>
 - Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official UN press release
 - Contains: States the DPI/NGO association criteria in effect during Watchtower's registration period (1992–2001): organizations 'must share the ideals of the United Nations Charter, operate solely on a not-for-profit basis, and demonstrate an interest in United Nations issues' with 'the commitment and means to disseminate information about the United Nations.'
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JWfacts.com — Watchtower and the United Nations

- URL: <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/united-nations-association.php>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — Established JW research site
 - Contains: Comprehensive documentation of Watchtower's UN NGO registration, including reproductions of original correspondence, registration records, and the UN's written response contradicting the library-access claim
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4Jehovah.org — The Watchtower and the United Nations

- URL: <https://www.4jehovah.org/the-watchtower-and-the-united-nations/>
 - Verification: **SECONDARY** — JW research site
 - Contains: Reproductions of UN letters confirming Watchtower's NGO association, the UN's written statement that library access did not require NGO registration, and timeline documentation of the 1992–2001 registration period
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