

THE MORAL STATE OF AMERICA

The moral state of America is in deep trouble. That's not an opinion—it's what the American people believe.

In March, a Marist poll, conducted for *Deseret News* titled, "Faith in America," found that 72 percent of Americans think the nation's moral compass is pointed in the wrong direction.

In June, a Gallup poll revealed that a record-high 50 percent of Americans rated the overall state of moral values as "poor," and another 37 percent said it was "only fair." The public is also pessimistic about the future: 78 percent say morals are getting worse.

Why is this? The American people intuitively know that religious beliefs and practices are an important ingredient in the formation of a moral society.

The Marist poll found that 70 percent of Americans believe in God (more than half citing God as described in the Bible), and that figure jumps to 85 percent if we include those who believe in a higher power. The Gallup poll found that 81 percent of Americans believe in God, down significantly from 1944 when the figure was 98 percent.

This is not a coincidence: The increase in secularism accounts for our moral slide. The public knows it.

A Rasmussen poll taken in March found that 60 percent of voters think people who live according to their religious beliefs are good role models for the rest of us to follow; only 14 percent did not believe this; 26 percent weren't sure.

The American people know that our moral compass is going in the wrong direction, and they also know that the declining role of religion has something to do with it.

When the Judeo-Christian ethos that has undergirded our

society enervates—it used to form the heart of our moral code—it perpetuates a condition where our moral compass is directed more by individual whim than sacred tenets. That is a recipe for disaster.