

Liberty Watch

Judge Orders Bible Moved From Courthouse

U.S. District Judge Sim Lake ruled Aug. 10 that a Bible displayed in a monument outside a county courthouse in Houston must be removed, United Press International (UPI) reported. Real estate broker and lawyer Kay Staley filed a lawsuit against the county, arguing that the display violates the establishment clause of the First Amendment. The 4-foot monument, which contains the King James Bible under glass, was constructed with private funds during the 1950s as a memorial to Houston philanthropist William Mosher, the Washington Times reported. Harris County argued the display primarily honored Mosher, the Times reported, but the plaintiffs said it promotes a specific religion at a government building. County Judge Robert Eckels planned to appeal the decision.

Pastors Asked to Make Invocations Generic

Pastors who give the invocation at Tampa, Fla., city council meetings can no longer use the name "Jesus," the St. Petersburg Times reported. Saying she was following the "nonsectarian rule that we must follow as a governing agency," council chairwoman Gwen Miller issued a memo telling council members that all invocations must be nonsectarian, the Times said. She also asked that council members send guest ministers a brochure from the National Conference on Community and Justice that explains how to prepare interfaith invocations.

Florida Court Refuses to Recognize Gay Marriage

In July, Florida's Second District Court of Appeals issued a unanimous opinion that voided the marriage between Linda Kantaras and "Michael" Kantaras, who was born a woman. The appeals court said it "must adhere to the common meaning of the statutory terms and invalidate any marriage that is not between persons of the opposite sex determined by their biological sex at birth." Represented by Liberty Counsel (LC), a Christian law firm that seeks to advance religious freedom, Linda said she knew of Michael's sex-change operation when they married, but after becoming a Christian believed their relationship was improper. LC chief counsel Mathew Staver called the decision "a victory for traditional marriage and common sense."