

Atheist Group Files Federal Suit Against Perry's Prayer Day



AP Images/Robert Gay

Until now, Texas Gov. Rick Perry had merely been mocked, opposed and otherwise persecuted for suggesting that we fall to our knees and cry out to God to restore the land. Now, a federal lawsuit has been filed to try to stop Perry's "Day of Prayer and Fasting," also known as The Response.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a federal lawsuit on Wednesday in the Southern District Court of Texas in Houston. The lawsuit seeks to block Perry from participating in the prayer rally at Houston's Reliant Stadium on Aug. 6. The suit also asks the federal court to declare Perry's initiation, organization, promotion and participation in the event unconstitutional. The FFRF is even going so far as to propose a restraining order after a hearing date is set.

"We always say 'Beware prayer by pious politicians.' Nothing fails like prayer. It's the ultimate political cop-out," says Annie Laurie Gaylor, who co-directs FFRF with husband Dan Barker, a former evangelical minister who is now an atheist.

"The answers for America's problems won't be found on our knees or in heaven, but by using our brains, our reason and in compassionate action. Gov. Perry's distasteful use of his civil office to plan and dictate a religious course of action to 'all citizens' is deeply offensive to many citizens, as well as to our secular form of government."

Steve Riggle, senior pastor at Grace Community Church in Houston, continues to support The Response, the non-

denominational, apolitical Christian prayer meeting that draws from the second chapter of Joel. The event calls for a people to return to the Lord with all their heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.

“This lawsuit attempting to bar Gov. Perry from participating and even endorsing was filed by some of the same people who filed the lawsuit and forced the removal of the Bible outside the courthouse a few years ago,” Riggle says. “It’s time to stop this nonsense. The best way is for all of us to show up in mass.”

A judge may be assigned to the case by the end of the week.