

Court Allows Rick Perry to Participate in Prayer Rally



AP Images/Richard Vogel

After withstanding much persecution, Texas Gov. Rick Perry will be allowed to attend his scheduled prayer and fasting event next week. A federal judge on Thursday dismissed a group of atheists' lawsuit filed against Perry.

Wisconsin-based

Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a lawsuit this month claiming that the governor's participation in The Response: A Call to Prayer for a Nation in Crisis was unconstitutional.

Although the

group did not want to block the prayer event—scheduled to take place Aug. 6 at Houston's Reliant Stadium—lawyers sought to stop

Perry from taking part. They argued that the participation of the

governor, who may still seek a presidential bid, would violate the

First Amendment's requirement of separation of church and state.

Judge Gray H.

Miller, of Federal District Court in the Southern District of Texas,

ruled that the group did not have standing to sue, citing a 7th

circuit ruling in favor of President Obama promoting the

National Day of Prayer.

"We are pleased with the Court's ruling, and Governor Perry looks forward to participating in a day of prayer for our nation," Perry's spokesman Mark Miner told ABC news in an e-mail.

Liberty Institute, which filed a motion to intervene in the case, argued in court Thursday on behalf of the American Family Association, which is planning and promoting The Reponse.

"This is a complete and total victory for freedom and the First Amendment," says Kelly Shackelford, president/CEO for Liberty Institute. "The judge rightly dismissed this case and the national prayer event will go on as planned. This was an attack on the First Amendment rights of every American, and it failed miserably."

Tim Wildmon, president of the American Family Association, says: "The swiftness of the court's decision shows how ridiculous this case is. AFA is very thankful for Liberty Institute for handling this case and championing religious freedom for America."