

Friend or Foe Christmas Campaign Battles Intimidation, Censorship

Liberty Counsel has launched its fifteenth annual Friend or Foe Christmas Campaign. The campaign educates, and if necessary litigates, to make sure that Christmas and Christian themes are not censored.

Liberty Counsel has been actively monitoring cases across the country where there is intimidation by officials and groups to remove the celebration of Christmas in public and private sectors. These threats include atheist groups seeking to ban nativity scenes from public property, senior living centers that prohibit residents from singing Christmas carols, public schools that ban students from wearing the Christmas colors of red and green, school officials who censor religious words from Christmas carols and retailers which profit from Christmas while pretending it does not exist. Liberty Counsel has successfully educated and reversed these anti-Christmas actions in all of these situations.

Liberty Counsel provides a memorandum to offer guidance to public officials and schools regarding the public celebration of religious holidays. For example, publicly sponsored nativity scenes on public property are constitutional if there is a secular symbol of the holiday in the general context. Privately sponsored nativity scenes or religious symbols are also permissible on public property that has been opened to the general public for expressive activity. No secular symbol is necessary in the context of private speech on public property.

Classroom discussion of the religious aspects of the holidays is permissible in public schools. A holiday display in a

classroom may include a nativity scene or other religious imagery so long as the context also includes secular symbols. A choral performance also may include religious and secular holiday songs. If the students select their own songs independent of the direction of school officials, there is no requirement that the songs include secular selections. Students may distribute religious Christmas cards to their classmates during noninstructional time, before or after school or between classes. If the students are not required to dress in uniform, then they may wear clothing with religious words or symbols or religious jewelry.

“Censoring Christmas or Christian themes is not only insensitive but often unconstitutional,” said Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel. “Censorship is patently obvious when other holiday themes are permitted but Christmas, or references to God or Jesus, are not. Celebrating or acknowledging Christmas is legal in public schools and in public venues.” {eo}

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