

Liberty Watch

CHRISTIAN GROUP ENDS DISNEY BOYCOTT

The American Family Association (AFA) has ended its nine-year boycott of the Walt Disney Co., citing new challenges in the culture wars and some positive signs of change at Disney, including the resignation of CEO Michael Eisner. The Tupelo, group was instrumental in initiating the boycott in 1996 to protest Disney's extension of benefits to domestic partners of homosexual employees, promotion of gay-related events at its theme parks, and violent and sex-filled content of movies made by its Miramax subsidiary. In June, the Southern Baptist Convention announced that it also is ending its boycott of Disney. Earlier this year, representatives from Focus on the Family and other Christian groups that had participated in the boycott agreed to meet with Disney to discuss its production of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, set to release in December. The Orlando Sentinel reported that Disney has launched a 10-month marketing campaign to get Christian support for the film.

8-YEAR-OLD'S CHRISTIAN SONG BANNED AT TALENT SHOW

A federal judge declined to overturn a New Jersey school's ban on a second-grader singing "Awesome God" at a talent show, but said he would consider the case later. On May 20, Stanley Chesler declined an emergency request to compel Frenchtown Elementary School to let Olivia Turton sing the pop song by the late Rich Mullins at Frenchtown Idol, which was held that night, the Associated Press (AP) reported. School officials claimed that

such a performance would be inappropriate at a school event. A lawsuit filed May 27 on behalf of the 8-year-old claimed the school violated her constitutional rights. The suit, brought with the support of the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), a Christian legal advocacy group based in Scottsdale, Ariz., argued that the constitutional separation of church and state does not restrict an individual's religious speech.

CHRISTIAN ATTORNEYS APPLAUD SUPREME COURT DECISION

Religious liberty attorneys are applauding a June 1 Supreme Court decision that upheld the constitutionality of a federal law requiring prisons to accommodate inmates' religious beliefs, AgapePress reported. Cutter v. Wilkinson involved two Ohio prison inmates—a witch and a Satanist—who claimed they were improperly denied access to religious literature and other ceremonial religious items. The high court overturned a lower court ruling that a 2000 law called the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act prohibited the access because it would violate the separation of church and state, the news service said. Attorney Brian Fahling of the American Family Association Center for Law & Policy said the decision will benefit Christians, “but the oddity about this, again, is the fact that we have religious freedom being protected through the agency of a Satanist and a witch.” Brad Dacus of the Pacific Justice Institute called the decision “an outstanding victory for prison ministries and people of faith,” and he expected it to enhance his group's work.