

Organization Sues City of Boston for 'Anti-Christian' Policy

Liberty Counsel filed a lawsuit today against the city of Boston and one of its officials for censoring the Christian flag of Boston resident Hal Shurtleff and his Christian civic organization, Camp Constitution. The city regularly extends to civic and cultural organizations the freedom to raise their flags on the city hall flagpoles to commemorate whatever events are important to the organizations.

However, when Camp Constitution asked the city for a permit to raise the Christian flag on Boston City Hall flagpoles to commemorate Constitution Day (Sept. 17) and the civic and cultural contributions of Boston's Christian community, the city officials denied the permit based on a secret, unwritten and unconstitutional "policy" of refusing religious flags.

Shurtleff began the permitting process for Camp Constitution's event in July 2017 and offered the city several proposed dates for that September. The city stonewalled. Yet after several follow-ups, the commissioner of property management revealed the city's secret, anti-Christian policy, as the reason for denial:

"I am writing to you in response to your inquiry as to the reason for denying your request to raise the Christian Flag. The City of Boston maintains a policy and practice of respectfully refraining from flying non-secular flags on the City Hall flagpoles. ... According to the above policy and practice, the City of Boston has respectfully denied the request of Camp Constitution to fly on a City Hall flagpole the 'Christian' flag, as it is identified in the request, which displays a red Latin cross against a blue square

bordered on three sides by a white field. The city would be willing to consider a request to fly a non-religious flag, should your organization elect to offer one.”

The city’s denial is unconstitutional because its past and current written policy and practice (and permit application) provides that Boston City Hall flagpoles are available for privately-selected flags to be flown upon request of virtually any private association or activity. Previously allowed flag-raising events include ethnic and other “cultural celebrations,” corresponding with the raising of the flags of various countries or causes, and announcements of the same on the website. Approved flags flown at such events include those of Albania, Brazil, Ethiopia, Italy, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico and Mexico, as well as of Communist China and Cuba. The flag of the private “Chinese Progressive Association” has been raised. The “Juneteenth” flag has been raised by the private National Juneteenth Observance Foundation. A rainbow flag has been raised by the private organization Boston Pride. Even a “transgender” pink and blue flag has been raised. Since these have all been allowed, the city cannot deny Camp Constitution’s permit request to fly the Christian flag.

In the lawsuit, Shurtleff and Camp Constitution seek an injunction requiring the city to allow the Christian flag-raising event that it denied in 2017, to coincide with the 2018 observance of Constitution Day, which will celebrate the civic and social contributions of the Christian community to the city of Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, religious tolerance, the Rule of Law and the U.S. Constitution, and will include historical and contemporary presentations, such as the need for racial reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

“Government officials cannot single out a religious viewpoint for disfavored treatment to a public forum that is open to non-religious viewpoints,” said Mat Staver, founder and

chairman of Liberty Counsel. “The First Amendment protects the religious expression of all, and it prohibits the open hostility to religious viewpoints.

“The Massachusetts Constitution recognizes that ‘the happiness of a people and the good order and preservation of civil government essentially depend upon piety, religion and morality,’ and the Boston City Flag—flying on the same flagpoles denied to Camp Constitution—includes the Latin inscription, ‘God be with us as he was with our fathers.’ The city’s censoring of religious viewpoints is not only unconstitutional, but also violates the historical and deeply held values of Boston, the Commonwealth and the country.”
{eoa}

For the original article, visit .