

Praying Grads Risk Arrest in Tennessee

✖ Hampton High School's class president just wanted to acknowledge God in a graduation prayer. But the school's principal, Dale Campbell, wouldn't have it.

Not only would Campbell not have it—he threatened to have praying students put behind bars. Now, Liberty Counsel is coming alongside the class president to fight for her First Amendment rights at the Elizabethton, Tenn. school.

According to Liberty, Campbell said any students who pray or even attempt to pray would be stopped, escorted from the building by police and arrested. The principal has since backed away from his statement, but continues to send mixed messages in the community and among students.

Liberty Counsel is demanding that the school honor the rights of these students and not censor their viewpoints. The law is clear that students do not shed their constitutional rights at the graduation podium. Student speakers who choose to include a religious viewpoint are free to do so.

“The principal of Hampton High School has crossed the line from being neutral, which the Constitution requires, to being hostile, which the Constitution forbids,” says Mathew Staver, founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel and Dean of Liberty University School of Law. “These students have a right to include religious viewpoints in their message and even pray if that is their own decision. The school should not censor student messages solely because they present a religious viewpoint.”

Campbell could not immediately be reached for comment.