

Atheists Demand Christians Stop Praying at Town Meetings

Atheists in California are trying to remove prayer at the opening of public meetings in a California city.

Alliance Defending Freedom sent a legal memo to Chico, Calif., Thursday after the Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter demanding the city stop opening public meetings with a prayer.

The city's policy allows various members of the community to offer the prayers. Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys are currently defending a New York town's similar prayer policy at the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Americans today should be as free as the Founders were to pray," says senior counsel David Cortman. "The Founders prayed while drafting our Constitution's Bill of Rights, and the Supreme Court has ruled that public prayer is part of the 'history and tradition of this country.' The city of Chico, therefore, is on extremely firm ground to allow prayer before its public meetings."

The letter explains, "Fortunately, Chico can not only look to the historical example of the U.S. Congress and clear Supreme Court precedent, but this past Spring the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has expressly reaffirmed the right of Cities to open their public meetings with a prayer."

The letter additionally points out that the Ninth Circuit "went further to clarify the Cities need not censor the content of the prayers or prevent people from offering prayers that are distinctive to their own faith traditions."

"A few people should not be able to extinguish the traditions of our nation merely because they heard something they didn't

like,” adds senior counsel Brett Harvey. “Because the authors of the Constitution invoked God’s blessing on public proceedings, this tradition shouldn’t suddenly be considered unconstitutional. It’s perfectly constitutional to allow community members to ask for God’s blessing according to their conscience.”