

Atheists Still Not Gleeful About Christmas

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys sent a letter Tuesday to the Chambersburg Area School District after an atheist group complained about the selection of songs included in an annual Christmas performance by the Chambersburg Area Senior High School's Glee Club.

"Schools should not have to think twice about whether they can allow students to sing Christmas carols in a Christmas production," said Senior Counsel David Cortman. "The **First Amendment** protects the freedom of the school to allow the singing of carols—even ones that deal with Christian themes that are naturally a part of the holiday."

The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent the Chambersburg Area School District in Pennsylvania a letter after the atheist group received a complaint from a community member in December. The CASHS Glee Club performed "The Song of Christmas," which features excerpts of Christmas carols, other music selections, narration, and a Nativity.

The Alliance Defending Freedom letter explains that "students may hear and sing religious Christmas carols during school activities such as choir and Christmas programs without offending the Constitution." The Supreme Court has ruled that "some government involvement with religion does not violate the Establishment Clause if it has a secular purpose and effect."

The letter also notes that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit has determined that "public performance may be a legitimate part of secular study."

“Therefore,” the letter explains, “school officials may constitutionally present Christmas songs and carols that contain religious references when included with a variety of secular songs and carols.”

“A small group of Grinches should not be allowed to censor constitutionally permissible and culturally significant songs performed during a Christmas program,” said Legal Counsel Matt Sharp. “Americans should be allowed to communicate what Christmas is about during Christmas without fear of a lawsuit.”