

Local Governments Threatened Over Christmas Expression

As Christmas Eve approaches, the war on celebrations of Christ's birthday is still raging. Local governments in Nevada and Indiana are receiving threats for public Christmas celebrations.

The American Civil Liberties Union, or ACLU, contends that expressions of Christmas violate the First Amendment. On Friday, the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) and allied attorneys sent letters to the local governments encouraging them not to give in to the ACLU's threats. The letters explain that stifling Christmas expression is instead a violation of First Amendment protected rights.

"It's ridiculous that people have to think twice about whether it's OK to publicly celebrate Christmas. An overwhelming majority of Americans celebrate Christmas and are opposed to any kind of censorship of it," says ADF Senior Counsel David Cortman. "The misguided attacks on Christmas by the ACLU and its allies expose an even larger, more aggressive attack on anything and everything Christian."

Virgin Valley High School in Mesquite, Nev., was among those threatened. The school subsequently entered into an agreement with the ACLU to prohibit teachers and staff from saying "merry Christmas" and engaging in other Christmas activities. Teachers are reportedly not allowed to post any religious Christmas decorations and are only permitted to say "happy holidays." Christmas trees must instead be called "holiday trees."

Meanwhile, the Freedom From Religion Foundation threatened Franklin County, Ind., for displaying a 50-year-old nativity scene on county property near a Christmas tree and three

reindeer. ADF Senior Legal Counsel Bryan Beauman says, "This display is clearly constitutional as displayed, and the county should not give in to the Freedom From Religion Foundation's threats, which have no basis in the law."

A 2008 Gallup poll found that 93 percent of Americans celebrate Christmas. A 2009 Rasmussen poll found that 83 percent of American adults believe public schools should celebrate religious holidays, and 76 percent believe religious symbols, such as Christmas nativity scenes, should be allowed on public land.