

Maryland County Ends Lord's Prayer During Meetings

A Maryland county has stopped reciting the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of its meetings following criticism from atheists. The Wicomico County Council is now seeking to avoid legal risks, explaining that the issue began after a member read the Bible out loud during a September meeting.

"This decision was made by Council President John T. Cannon after receiving legal guidance indicating that the United States District Court for Maryland and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit have ruled against council-led sectarian prayer," the Council said in a statement, as reported by WBOC. "Legal counsel advised that any challenge to this precedent would likely require litigation through the U.S. Supreme Court level, with no reasonable expectation of success in the Maryland courts or Fourth Circuit."



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"This decision reflects a difficult but necessary response to existing legal realities and is not one the Council President, nor members, undertook lightly," the Council added.

County Executive Julie Giordano condemned the decision to pull the prayer, stating, "We bent the knee for one person at the expense of 104,000 people. I don't think we would've been sued. We've looked at the legal ramification[s] of having the Lord's Prayer at the beginning. It would definitely be an issue if we were forcing people to say the Lord's Prayer, but you have the choice."

The issue stems from an October letter from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, urging the Council to "respect the views of all constituents and attendees by ceasing beginning

meetings with the Lord's Prayer and remind its members that proselytizing attendees is inappropriate and constitutionally concerning."

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