

Public Library Denies Access for Religious Meetings

Although churches got a reprieve from an eviction order that would force their **worship services** out of New York City public schools, organizers of religious meetings on the West Coast are facing their own First Amendment battle.

Liberty Counsel has filed a federal lawsuit against the Public Library of Seaside, Ore., for denying access for an educational meeting that included religious content.

The library meeting area is offered free of charge for nonprofit groups. However, Liberty contends that the library's policy discriminates on the basis of religious content and viewpoint, stating, "Meeting rooms shall not be used for ... religious services or **proselytizing**."

Liberty Counsel's application for use of the meeting room was denied. The only reason offered: the organization's intention to provide educational training from a religious perspective. The library staff said they saw no reason to re-apply for similar use, because the application would also be denied because of the religious restriction.

The library policy violates the **First Amendment** by discriminating against the religious viewpoint of the speaker.

"Of all places, a public library is supposed to welcome multiple viewpoints," says Mathew Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. "This policy violates the First Amendment because it censors religious viewpoints. It is astounding that public libraries continue to have these types of unconstitutional policies."