

Public Outcry Restores Censored Christmas Carols

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys sent a letter last week to the Wausau School District in Wausau, Wisc., after administrators left teachers with little option but to cancel a number of Christmas choir performances because administrators severely restricted their ability to include traditional **Christmas** carols. The school board reversed that decision late last week and restored the holiday concerts.

“Schools should not have to think twice about whether they can allow students to sing Christmas carols in a holiday production,” says litigation counsel Rory Gray. “Courts have unanimously upheld their inclusion—even when songs deal with Christian themes that are naturally a part of the holiday.”

Recently, a district attorney suggested that the Master Singers, an advanced choir at Wausau West High School, would need to exclude all religious Christmas songs from their numerous holiday performances or perform four other types of songs for every religious Christmas song included in the concert.

As a result, the Master Singers temporarily disbanded. Music educators at the elementary level also postponed a number of choir concerts until the spring. The school board later voted to give authority over the concerts back to music educators and school principals.

The Alliance Defending Freedom letter explains that “every federal court to examine the issue has determined that including Christmas carols and other religious music in school choir programs fully complies with the First Amendment.” The letter notes that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit has ruled “that there is no constitutional objection

to students in public schools learning and performing religious songs ‘presented objectively as part of a secular program of education.’”

The letter also explains, “Federal courts have recognized that the vast majority of high-quality choral music is religious in nature. As a result, they have refused to second-guess music educators’ curricular choices and place numerical quotas on the religious pieces that school choirs may perform.”

“Misinformation about the **First Amendment** is frequently what leads to censorship of constitutionally permissible and culturally significant songs performed during Christmas concerts,” adds senior legal counsel Jeremy Tedesco. “Americans are free to communicate what Christmas is about during the Christmas season, and that includes singing Christmas carols at public schools.”

A December 2011 Rasmussen poll found that 79 percent of American adults believe public schools should celebrate religious holidays.