

Satanists Set to Open Meeting Over City With Demoniac Prayer

Members of a satanic group will give the opening prayer at an upcoming Phoenix City Council meeting on Feb. 17.

The group says it doesn't intend to do anything offensive. They say they don't believe in a literal Satan, but see the biblical Satan as a metaphor for rebellion against tyranny.

City attorney Brad Holm says the government cannot exclude a religion from praying.

"Consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's direction, the city cannot dictate religious viewpoints or the content of a prayer," Holm said. "In addition, government may not exclude a denomination or a religion from praying under these circumstances."

Mayor Greg Stanton said while he disagrees with the message of Satanism, the First Amendment protects their right to deliver the invocation.

"As offensive as that message may be, the Constitution demands equal treatment under the law," Stanton said in a statement.

In the past, the invocation has been delivered by Christians, Jews, Muslims and Sikhs, among others.