

Students Flock to School Flag Poles to Pray for America

Alliance Defending Freedom is making available a legal memo that explains and reinforces the First Amendment freedom of students to participate in Wednesday's "See You at the Pole" event. SYATP is an annual student-organized and student-led gathering held at school flagpoles around the world that provides students with the opportunity to pray for their school, friends, teachers, government and nation.

"Students don't abandon their constitutional freedoms at the schoolhouse gate," said ADF Senior Legal Counsel Jeremy Tedesco. "They continue to have the freedom to peacefully express their beliefs while at school, and that certainly includes prayer. The **First Amendment** protects freedom of speech for all students, regardless of the students' religious or political beliefs."

In the past, some public-school officials have unconstitutionally kept students from sharing about and participating in the event, often erroneously citing the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.

The Alliance Defending Freedom legal memo explains that "students have a constitutional right to participate in SYATP through prayer and worship activities" and "have constitutional rights to inform their fellow students about the SYATP event as long as they do not materially disrupt the academic process while doing so."

The legal memo also notes that the Supreme Court has ruled that "religious speech is protected by the First Amendment and may not be singled out for discrimination." With respect to prayer specifically, the high court wrote in 2000 that "nothing in the Constitution as interpreted by this Court

prohibits any public school student from voluntarily praying at any time before, during, or after the school day.”

“The First Amendment protects the freedom of students to participate in See You at the Pole and its prayer and worship activities,” said ADF Legal Counsel Matt Sharp. “Anyone who says otherwise is misinformed. The purpose of our legal memo is to clarify the freedom of students to hold and participate in this annual event.”