

# War on Christmas Continues as NC College Axes Christmas Trees

Alliance Defending Freedom sent a letter Tuesday to Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton, N.C., after college officials replaced the word *Christmas* with *holiday* in a student club's announcement of a Christmas tree sale designed to raise funds for charity. A college official told the club, "We cannot market your trees in association solely with a Christian event."

"It's ridiculous that anyone would have to think twice about using the word *Christmas* as part of a Christmas tree sale," said Legal Counsel Matt Sharp. "Not only is it perfectly constitutional to use the word *Christmas*, it is unconstitutional to prohibit use of it. This is another perfect example of the immense misunderstanding that far too many college officials have about what the **First Amendment** truly requires."

The student-led BEST Society is sponsoring the sale, which ends on Dec. 6. The club completed the necessary paperwork to have the event announced through numerous means on campus. The text they requested, "The BEST Society will be selling Christmas Trees," appeared correctly initially in late October, but after a few days, the text was changed to "The BEST Society will be selling Holiday Trees."

The letter asks the college to return the club's original wording to the announcements wherever they appear so that no legal action will be necessary.

"As a result of this forced changed to their advertisements," the ADF letter explains, "the BEST Society has received complaints from community members, several of whom have

indicated that they will not purchase trees from the group because of the change in wording. This has resulted in direct harm to the club's fundraising activity, the proceeds of which are being used to support Angel Tree, an organization that provides Christmas gifts to children."

The letter goes on to say, "the censorship of the BEST Society's message, and the requirement that its advertisements use the phrase 'holiday tree' rather than Christmas Tree, is a violation of the constitutional rights of the club members."

In response to Tuesday's letter from Alliance Defending Freedom, the college has indicated by letter that officials have changed all references to *holiday* back to *Christmas*.

"Referring to Christmas trees as 'Christmas trees' is perfectly acceptable and constitutional," Sharp commented. "We commend WPCC officials for doing the right thing in working speedily to correct this problem, and we hope other schools in similar situations will follow their example."