

Why the Texas Governor Wants Crosses on Police Cars

The governor of Texas supports police putting cross images on their patrol cars, saying they are part of U.S. historical practices, and symbols of service, his office said on Friday.

Governor Gregg Abbott, a Republican, offered his support for the crosses in a brief filed to the state's attorney general. He was responding to a sheriff's office in Brewster County that received a complaint about images of a Christian cross with a horizontal thin blue line displayed on its patrol vehicles.

"In addition to its religious significance, the cross has a long history in America and elsewhere as a symbol of service and sacrifice," Abbott wrote, adding in his opinion, the display does not violate U.S. constitutional provisions preventing the establishment of religion.

The governor's office did not respond to a request if Abbott also supported the display of other religious symbols on patrol cars.

Abbott said the cross has been used at revered places including the Arlington National Cemetery to honor the sacrifice of members of the U.S. Armed Forces and on military medals.

"The symbol of the cross appropriately conveys the solemn respect all Texans should have for the courage and sacrifice of our peace officers," Abbott wrote.

At the end of last year, the Brewster County Sheriff asked state officials if his deputies in the sprawling and sparsely populated west Texas county could keep the cross decals displayed on the rear windows of their patrol vehicles.

The request followed a complaint by the Freedom From Religion Foundation which called on the sheriff to remove the crosses, arguing no government official has the right to promote his or her religious belief on government property. {eo}

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