

Will NY House Pass Bill Allowing Churches to Meet in Schools?

In what marks at least a temporary victory for **religious freedom**, New York's Senate has passed a bill to reverse the controversial New York City school district's ban on allowing churches to rent facilities for **worship** services.

However, the fight isn't over. The state House still has to pass the legislation, which was sponsored by Sen. Martin J. Golden, R-Brooklyn, and the governor has to sign it into law. If that doesn't happen fast, the some 160 churches that meet in New York City public schools will be evicted on Feb. 12.

Golden said the legislation is about equal access. But the *New York Times* quoted Assembly speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan, as saying, "It would open up the schools to anybody. It might include the Klu Klux Klan."

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has faced protestors for his move to **evict houses of worship** from public schools. And New York City Councilman Fernando Cabrera says the policy is nothing short of discrimination.

"Treating houses of worship equally with other community groups helps our communities," says Cabrera. "Evicting them hurts people and neighborhoods by denying them the social and spiritual services they desperately need, which in my district includes tutoring services, soup kitchens and more. Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Walcott need to listen to what the citizens of this city want."

Two-thirds of Americans believe public schools should rent to churches and other community groups, according to a new study by LifeWay Research.

“Historically schools have been welcoming locations to churches, especially in larger urban centers where schools are in the heart of the communities,” says LifeWay Research president Ed Stetzer. “A trend of banning church use of public schools could have significant implications.”