

Yes, the Bible Is Constitutional, Attorneys Assure Penn State

Penn State University has decided to remove Bibles from guest rooms after receiving a complaint from Freedom From Religion Foundation.

Alliance Defending Freedom sent a letter Thursday to the university, encouraging it to reverse its decision. ADF recently sent a similar letter to the U.S. Navy, which later reversed its decision to remove Bibles from guest rooms after it also received a complaint from FFRF. In February, ADF sent letters to the University of Wisconsin and Iowa State University over similar FFRF complaints.

FFRF complained that allowing groups like Gideons International, a Christian organization, to place Bibles in guest rooms violates the First Amendment. The ADF letter debunks those claims, explains that the Bibles do not violate the Constitution, and encourages Penn State to reverse its decision—as the U.S. Navy did—instead of surrendering to the atheist group’s unfounded legal threats and inaccurate demands.

“Public universities should understand that the First Amendment does not require them to purge a book from their guest rooms just because it happens to be religious. Rather, the Constitution requires them to accommodate religion,” said ADF Litigation Staff Counsel Travis Barham. “The Bibles can legitimately stay in the guest rooms because they simply represent a discreet way to accommodate the needs of traveling guests, not some sort of government effort to promote religion.”

“No court in the country has ever ruled that allowing Bibles

to be placed in the guest rooms of government-run guest facilities violates the First Amendment,” the ADF letter states. “Rather, the Establishment Clause allows private individuals and groups, like the Gideons, to place Bibles at their expense on government property. In fact, by removing the Bibles from the guest rooms, Penn State may have demonstrated the very viewpoint discrimination and hostility toward religion that the First Amendment prohibits.”

“Numerous courts across the country have affirmed the Gideons’ right to distribute Bibles in schools, and even more—including judges in the Third Circuit—have affirmed private citizens’ right to share religious literature at public schools on equal terms with those promoting non-religious literature,” the letter explains.

“By allowing Bibles to be placed in their guest rooms, Penn State was not unconstitutionally promoting religion to guests but was merely serving its guests’ needs and desires,” added ADF Senior Legal Counsel David Hacker. “We hope Penn State will follow the U.S. Navy’s example and restore Bibles to its guest rooms instead of allowing itself to be browbeaten by FFRF into taking unnecessary and potentially unconstitutional actions.”