

You Won't Believe Why This Atheist Group Is Going After Anne Graham Lotz

An atheist group pressured a North Carolina sheriff's office to make changes to a prayer event with Billy Graham's daughter, Anne Graham Lotz.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) sent a letter to the Ashe County Sheriff's Office earlier this month objecting to the "Time of Prayer" event and the fact that it was being held at the sheriff's office. The group also complained that the sheriff's office was promoting the event on its website and social media pages, according to *The Christian Post*.

FFRF attorney Andrew Seidel says the group made the complaint on behalf of "a concerned local resident." He also says the sheriff's office should not associate itself with a prayer event and that the active promotion of the event is an endorsement of religion and a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

The letter demanded that the event be cancelled and that no future religious activities be held on the premises.

A lawyer representing Sheriff Terry Buchanan responded to the FFRF letter addressing several misconceptions about the prayer event.

Attorney Stacy Eggers IV explained that Lotz would be speaking in the parking lot of the sheriff's office—which does not violate the Constitution. She also pointed out that Lotz' event "is a protected free speech action."

"The sheriff's office parking lot is open to any group which may wish to hold a vigil or meeting at reasonable times and

upon scheduling such event,” Eggers wrote.

“Mr. Buchanan has received several requests from individuals regarding this policy, and he has indicated to them he would provide the space to them upon the same terms and conditions which are provided to Ms. Lotz,” Eggers continued.

No Ashe County funds were used to promote the event, according to the letter, and no county employees are required to attend.

FFRF responded with more concerns prior to the event, according to *The Christian Post*.

“(W)e are concerned that ACSO deputies and perhaps Sheriff Buchanan will be appearing at the event, on government property, in their official uniforms, and may even speak using the titles that come with their office,” Seidel wrote. “This would indeed exacerbate the appearance that the ACSO endorses Christianity, which is already imperiled given the history of the event.”

Eggers again responded, assuring the FFRF that no uniformed officer will speak or participate in the event. She added that any officer in uniform would be a result of their “normal law enforcement duties or to address public safety issues.”

FFRF praised the Ashe County Sherriff’s office in a statement: “The Ashe County Sheriff’s Office did the right thing by avoiding involving itself in a Christian prayer event and estranging non-Christian community members,” said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “The Ashe County officers should focus on their secular duties citizens trust them with.” {eoa}

Copyright The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc., All rights reserved.