

Critics Call for Removal of Veterans Memorial With References to Jesus

"Only two defining forces have ever offered to die for you: Jesus Christ and the American Soldier; one died for your soul, the other died for your freedom."

These are the words engraved on a plaque in a cemetery in Monument, Colorado. A Boy Scout and his family raised over \$50,000 to erect this memorial to honor all veterans, the boy's grandfather in particular. The marker was placed near a flagpole at the municipal cemetery, where the family purchased the plot.

Now, critics who take offense to the reference to Jesus Christ are calling for its removal.

"There is no issue with the Boy Scout or his project to honor his grandfather," said Mikey Weinstein, president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), one of the organizations that object to the memorial. "The issue is that a sectarian and Christian supremacist perspective is being promoted."

"There is no issue with the Boy Scout himself," he continued. "He was ill-advised. However, state-sponsored sectarian displays violate the principle of separation of church and state as ingrained in the Constitution."

In addition to honoring his grandfather, who served in World War II, 16-year-old Michael Carlson dedicated the memorial to his father, who served in Vietnam.

He called the project "a dream come true," according to a First Liberty Institute report. The religious freedom firm

represents Carlson in this case, and has demanded that MRFF apologize for the damage caused by their “profoundly disrespectful” attacks.

The inscription upon the headstone is private speech, First Liberty argues. As such, it “in no way suggests that the government is discriminating, excluding or failing to honor military veterans of all faiths—or those of no faith—for their sacrifice.”

“Your attack on a minor who simply intended to honor our veterans is profoundly disrespectful to all involved,” said Stephanie Taub, counsel for First Liberty, to MRFF. “The Eagle Scout intended to use his voice to honor all the brave men and women who have served in our armed forces. The memorial he created is privately designed, privately maintained and located on private burial plots in Monument Cemetery.”

Weinstein claims the sale of the plot and subsequently where the plaque was placed, was “done improperly,” because the sale was arranged after the monument was erected and had gained social media coverage. According to him, other Christian families are upset over the plaque, and are joining MRFF’s exploration of legal action.

For more on what First Liberty is doing to ensure that Carlson’s freedom of speech is protected and honor to veterans can be given freely, watch this video. {eo}

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