

WCLP and Christian Law Association Join Forces to Defend California Pastor's Right to Pray in Jesus' Name

The Western Center for Law and Policy, in conjunction with the Florida-based Christian Law Association, secured an important victory for religious expression this week when a County Board of Supervisors in Northern California agreed to rescind its policy of forbidding invocations which invoked the name of Jesus Christ.

The Board had previously sent out a notice to all persons interested in giving the invocation at upcoming Board meetings that only "non-sectarian" prayers would be permitted. That notice prohibited prayer that was "recognizably Christian, Jewish...or related to any other denomination or sect."

After receiving the notice from the Board, a local Pastor, who was scheduled to give the invocation at an upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting in June, contacted the Christian Law Association for assistance. Attorneys for the CLA, working with the WCLP as local California counsel, drafted a legal opinion letter to the Board of Supervisors. The letter informed the Board of the Constitutional rights afforded to individuals like the Pastor to pray according to the dictates of his religion and conscience, free from prior restraint and government censorship.

After receiving the letter from the Western Center for Law and Policy, the Board graciously reversed its position and pledged to permit the Pastor and all subsequent persons giving invocations to do so free from government restriction. As a result, the Pastor will be permitted to give the invocation at the June Board Meeting and to invoke the name of Jesus in accordance with the dictates of his religious beliefs.

"We applaud the Board of Supervisors' decision to do the right thing and not interfere with the Pastor's Constitutional right to include the name of Jesus in his prayer," noted WCLP President Dean Broyles. "We greatly appreciate the difficulties currently faced by many legislative bodies across America with regard to court decisions and challenges concerning the issue of legislative prayer, and are prepared to advise any City Council, School Board, or other legislative body about the important legal issues involved in these cases."

If you are an individual who has been prohibited from praying in accordance with your religious beliefs at a government invocation, or if you are a member of a legislative body who has questions about this evolving area of law, please feel free to contact the Western Center for Law and Policy via our web site at www.wclplaw.org for more information and free legal assistance.