



CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS FOUNDATION

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Congressman Robert Wittman

June 28, 2017

The Honorable Ben Baker
Mayor
203 E. Main Street
Neosho, MO 64850

Dear Mayor Baker:

It has come to our attention that the Freedom From Religion Foundation is concerned about a cross in Big Spring Park, and that they are invoking an erroneous interpretation of the Establishment Clause to call for the cross's removal.

As you undoubtedly know, America's Framers intentionally integrated God with American government through our Declaration of Independence, laws and policies, and by instituting the practice of regularly inviting God into the public square through prayer. Our Founders promoted religion and morality in schools, our military, and throughout the American way of life. To paraphrase George Washington's words, religion and morality are indispensable supports of our constitutional Republic.

There have been over 130 Presidential calls to prayer, and in 1952 President Harry Truman signed a law making the National Day of Prayer an annual event. The Library of Congress records that within a year of his inauguration, President Thomas Jefferson began attending church services in the U.S. Capitol where the Marine band played the hymns. To Jefferson this worship in a public building was acceptable because it was voluntary.

Since inception, America's leaders have supported the role of religion in government; while being careful to not establish a national religion (the First Amendment states, of course, that CONGRESS shall not establish a religion – Massachusetts had state-supported religion for nearly 40 years after ratification of the First Amendment). Although no State now uses public tax dollars to finance worship services, Florida's unashamed reference to God as the Originator of constitutional liberty is certainly appropriate (and encouraged!)

Jim Davids, the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation's new Special Counsel, who served in the U.S. Department of Justice under President George W. Bush, offers additional guidance. "The Constitution does not require that all references to religion and symbolism with religious roots must be removed from public buildings and grounds. This would mean that our national motto, 'In God We Trust,' could not be displayed and that symbols like doves and olive branches would have to be scrubbed from public places and state seals."

As a Christian organization, and in the spirit of our Founders, we believe all people deserve honor and respect because they are created in the image of God and have certain inalienable rights that include the freedom to choose to not worship God. That being said,



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we also realize it is imperative that elected officials maintain the integrity of our Founding Principles and protect First Amendment Rights for all.

I represent the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization created to unite, inspire, equip and mobilize government leaders around an offensive strategy that partners prayer with legislative and citizen action to protect our Judeo-Christian heritage and religious freedom. What began with a few Members of Congress, with the help of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, is now an unprecedented, nationwide movement of praying legislators and citizens that is sweeping the nation.

The Missouri Legislative Prayer Caucus is aware of the decision facing you, as well as the efforts of the FFRF to influence your decision. Legislative Prayer Caucuses have been formed, or are in process in 31 states, and represent over 750 elected officials. Legislative Prayer Caucuses are patterned after the bi-partisan, bi-cameral Congressional Prayer Caucus, an official Caucus of the U.S. Congress with nearly 100 members, and co-chaired by Senator James Lankford and Congressman Mark Walker. These Prayer Caucuses were formed to promote prayer, pursue common legislative objectives as well as allow for quick and unified action to defend faith and religious freedom against the concerted effort to remove God and faith from the public square.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with you in this effort. We are grateful for you and your vital work.

Feel free to contact us if you need further support.

Standing with you,

Lea Carawan
Executive Director