



CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS FOUNDATION

September 5, 2019

CONGRESSIONAL ADVISORY MEMBERS

Senator James Lankford
Congressman Mark Walker
Congressman Rick Crawford
Senator John Boozman
Senator Marsha Blackburn
Senator Kevin Cramer
Congressman Robert Aderholt
Congressman Brian Babin
Congressman John Carter
Congressman Mike Conaway
Congressman Jeff Fortenberry
Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler
Congressman Jody Hice
Congressman Richard Hudson
Congressman Bill Huizenga
Congressman Doug Lamborn
Congressman Chris Smith
Congressman Glenn Thompson
Congressman Tim Walberg
Congressman Joe Wilson
Congressman Robert Wittman

Hon. Mike Turzai
139 Main Capitol
PO Box 202028
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2028

Re: Fields v. Speaker

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation. The Foundation serves nearly 100 members of Congress who are part of the Congressional Prayer Caucus (the names of those members of Congress who serve on the Congressional Prayer Advisory Team are listed on the left).

In addition, the Foundation serves a network of Legislative Prayer Caucuses in nearly 40 states, which has over 1,000 state senators and state representatives as members. These leaders are working together to preserve the integrity of our founding principles and to protect First Amendment rights for all.

The purpose of this letter is to honor and thank you for your stand on behalf of our nation's Founding Principles. It took courage to take a stand to keep up the long-honored tradition of opening the sessions of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives with prayer. It took even more courage to withstand the criticism of others when prayer-givers mentioned the name of our Lord and Savior in their prayers, and you demonstrated patience and long-suffering when atheists challenged your refusal to allow them to pray. We believed your cause a good one, which is why we supported it with an amicus brief, a copy of which is enclosed.

Your courage, patience and long-suffering bore fruit through Judge Ambro's excellent decision. Judge Ambro correctly analyzed the proper Supreme Court decisions, selected the proper test, and supported his position with excellent legal scholarship. His best work, in our opinion, was on page 20 of the Slip Opinion, where he hopefully put to rest the argument of the atheist groups that they, too, are a religion, and therefore must be given an opportunity

to open legislative sessions with prayer. As Judge Ambro wrote:

[T]he policy of the Pennsylvania House does not transgress the rule against favoring “one religion over another, or religion over irreligion.” *McCreary Cty. v. ACLU of Ky.*, 545 U.S. 844, 875 (2005). That is because “whether atheism is a ‘religion’ for First Amendment purposes is a . . . different question than whether its adherents believe in a supreme being.” *Kaufman*, 419 F.3d at 681. And only the latter question — the existence of a high power to whom one can pray for divine guidance in lawmaking — is a necessary element of traditional legislative prayer. The nontheists here may be members of “religions” for First Amendment purposes, but, because they do not proclaim the existence of a higher power, they cannot offer religious prayer in the historical sense. *Slip Op.* at 20.

Thanks again for your principled stand. We pray that you continue to have courage, strength and stamina in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lea Carawan".

Lea Carawan
Executive Director
Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation
National Strategic Center