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2 victories for Jesus prayers

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By Gordon James Klingenschmitt

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Two major victories for public prayer "in Jesus' name" were just declared in the Indiana and Ohio legislatures, but three new battles rage in Pennsylvania, Florida and North Carolina where legislators are considering banning "Jesus" prayers.

In Indiana, the ACLU lost another lawsuit, when the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a bad ruling by a liberal judge who had ordered praying to Jesus was illegal on the floor of the Indiana House. [The appeals court restored liberty this week](#), ruling that easily offended bystanders have no legal standing to sue, since no taxpayer dollars were spent promoting prayer.

Judge Roy Moore, who filed an amicus brief to defend the courageous former Republican Speaker Brian Bosma and current Democrat Speaker B. Patrick Bauer, [said of the victory](#): "Thankfully, the Court of Appeals in *Hinrichs* [v. Indiana Speaker Bosma] reversed the absurd prayer censorship order of the lower court, which means the Indiana House of Representatives does not have to tell its invited clergy that the name of Jesus cannot be uttered in their prayers." Undaunted, [the ACLU vowed to sue Indiana again soon](#).

In Ohio, Republican House Speaker Jon Husted reversed his temporary ban on Jesus prayers, overruling the easily offended Minority Leader Chris Redfern, who had walked out in protest when a pastor prayed in Jesus' name. When two WorldNetDaily commentaries [by myself](#) and [Janet Folger](#) exposed Redfern as a whiner, Speaker Husted was besieged by phone calls from pastors and citizens who demanded liberty be restored. After hearing [Ohio Christian Alliance](#)

director Chris Long, Speaker Husted found his backbone and restored liberty, saying: "I will not allow for our prayers to be censored – prayer is a time of reflection and guidance, a time which should not be governed by political advocacy or personal opinion." Perhaps he realized 85 to 94 percent of voters want to give chaplains freedom.

(Column continues below)

Former Ohio ACLU legal director Raymond Vasvari admitted that "government inviting a minister to speak and then vetting the prayer is akin to illegal prior restraint." (Apparently, that's why he's *former* legal director – too Christian for ACLU?)

Despite these victories, Pennsylvania legislators are considering abolishing prayer "in Jesus' name" under fear of lawsuits. This week, the anti-Jesus group Americans United (To Abolish the Church with State Sword?) intimidated four Keystone state senators, demanding they ban prayers to Jesus on the Senate floor.

These four senators might cave in just to avoid offending AU's "professional complainers." But I wonder if Pennsylvania voters will contact their senators like those courageous Ohioans? And I wonder if these Pennsylvania senators will find the nerve to win a lawsuit like the courageous bipartisan Indiana speakers did? The Alliance Defense Fund offers them pro-bono defense.

I've written my personal letter and e-mailed and phoned these four senators. Now I'm forwarding this article to every Pennsylvania citizen (especially pastors) I can. Will everybody do the same?

AU also threatened Florida commissioners in Osceola County to ban Jesus prayers, saying "they hope things will be resolved without any legal action, but they aren't sure what they will do next." I pray Floridians will encourage these commissioners to defend free speech.

In North Carolina, two town councils in Fayetteville and Cumberland County recently banned Jesus prayers. By selectively misquoting two contradictory rulings by the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, the big-city ACLU lawyers apparently confused the small-town country lawyers into frightened submission.

Yes, it's true the 4th Circuit prevented a legislature from requiring ALL prayers MUST end in Jesus' name (2004 Wynne v. Town of Great Falls). But they essentially reversed themselves in 2005, opening a big loophole (Simpson v. Chesterfield), ruling diverse prayers to "the God of Abraham, of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad" were sufficiently non-sectarian, even for government speakers, permitting diverse traditions to take turns. Chesterfield County "never insisted on the invocation of Jesus Christ by name, as the Town Council in Great Falls did," so

occasional prayers to Jesus are fully authorized.

In 1991, *Lee vs. Weisman*, the Supreme Court ruled: "The government may not establish an official or civic religion as a means of avoiding the establishment of a religion with more specific creeds. ... The State's role did not end with the decision to include a prayer and with the choice of clergyman. [They] provided a copy of the 'Guidelines for Civic Occasions' and advised him that his prayers should be non-sectarian. Through these means, [they] directed and controlled the content of the prayers. ... It is a cornerstone principle of our Establishment Clause jurisprudence that it is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers."

So censoring prayer content to enforce "non-sectarianism" (as AU and ACLU now demand) violates the Establishment Clause, creating a neutered state-religion, forcing guest chaplains to convert and pray to their false government-sanitized god, or face exclusion. That's clearly unconstitutional, revealing them as enemies of the First Amendment, as already interpreted by the Supreme Court.

I pray concerned North Carolina citizens explain this to their [Fayetteville](#) and [Cumberland](#) commissioners. Lets help these officials find their backbone, before Christians are forced underground like Chinese churches hiding from Communism. Lets take back our country, in Jesus' name.

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Gordon James Klingenschmitt is a former Navy chaplain who sacrificed his career to help change national policy, restoring the rights of military chaplains to publicly pray "in Jesus' name" – even in uniform. "Chaps" travels to speak at churches, and can be invited [via e-mail](#). He encourages readers to sign [the petition](#) to reinstate Chaplain Danny Harvey, the hospital chaplain fired for praying in Jesus' name.
