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December 8, 2011

VIA ELECTRONIC AND U.S. MAIL

[stephanie@ffrf.org](mailto:stephanie@ffrf.org)

Stephanie A. Schmitt, Esq.  
Freedom from Religion Foundation  
P.O. Box 750  
Madison, WI 53701

Re: Prayer at Veteran's Day Assembly

Dear Ms. Schmitt:

This firm serves as counsel to Spartanburg School District Three and, in that regard, I have been asked to respond to your November 17, 2011; letter addressed to District Superintendent Dr. Jim Ray, in which you inquire about a Veterans Day ceremony at Clifdale Elementary School during which a prayer was given by an elementary school student. As you note, the ceremony occurred during the school day, with both faculty and students present. Your letter continues to advise that such a prayer is inappropriate in that it constitutes government endorsement of religion in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. It is my understanding that your letter was the result of a complaint from a District resident.

I have spoken with Superintendent Ray, who has confirmed that, during the November 11, 2011 Veterans Day assembly at Clifdale, a student did offer a Christian prayer. Prior to your letter, Dr. Ray was not aware of that occurrence, nor had he been contacted by any person complaining about the matter. Nonetheless, Dr. Ray is aware of the prohibitions on such prayers at school-sponsored events, and has met with the Principal of Clifdale to make certain that there is no misunderstanding about proper protocol in the future, such as having a student offer a moment of silence.

On behalf of Spartanburg School District Three, I can assure you that the District does not encourage nor condone conduct by any employee or official that would make any

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student feel like an outsider or otherwise feel uncomfortable. The District has a longstanding practice of providing information to teachers and other school employees regarding religion and the public schools, as required under South Carolina law and in accordance with guidance provided by the United States Department of Education. See U.S. Department of Education Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (issued Feb. 7, 2003) [www.ed.gov/inits/religionandschools/prayer\\_guidance.html](http://www.ed.gov/inits/religionandschools/prayer_guidance.html); South Carolina Code Ann. § 59-17-140 (Supp 2000).

I trust that this information adequately responds to the concerns as set forth in your letter to Dr. Ray. However, if you have questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea E. White" followed by a stylized flourish or initials.

Andrea E. White

c: Dr. Jim Ray, Superintendent