

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 · MADISON, WI 53701 · (608) 256-8900 · WWW.FFRF.ORG

May 16, 2011

**SENT VIA FAX AND U.S. MAIL**  
**(907) 789-5291**

JM Donaghey  
Postmaster  
PO Box 39998  
Juneau AK 99803-9998

Re: Psalm 23 Posted on Customer Counter

Dear Postmaster:

I am writing on behalf of a concerned Juneau resident and taxpayer, and other Alaska members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), to alert you to a violation of postal regulations and the U.S. Constitution. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization representing 16,500 members across the country, including members in Alaska. Our purpose is to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church.

It is our information and understanding that a religious verse is placed under the glass on the customer counter at the post office located at 709 W 9<sup>th</sup> St in Juneau, Alaska. This verse is Psalm 23, which reads:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

This biblical verse is in clear view of all postal patrons. Please find enclosed three pictures of the verse on the postal counter.

This display violates post office regulations and the U.S. Constitution and must be removed immediately.

United States postal regulations prohibit the display of religious symbols, other than stamp art, on postal property. POM § 124.55(e) states in part:

“Bulletin boards and other posting space in the Post Office lobbies and other public access areas may not be used for posting or display of the following: ... Religious symbols or matter including but not limited to nativity scenes and the Star of David.”

Furthermore, displaying Psalm 23 violates the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. “The defining principle of Establishment Clause jurisprudence is that ‘First Amendment mandates government neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion.’ ” *McCreary County v. ACLU*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005) (quoting *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968)). By displaying this biblical verse on its grounds, the Juneau Alaska post office branch is illegally demonstrating a preference for religion, specifically Christianity.

We ask that you immediately remove the Psalm posting from postal property. We further request that you inform us in writing of the steps you are taking to remedy this situation.

Sincerely,

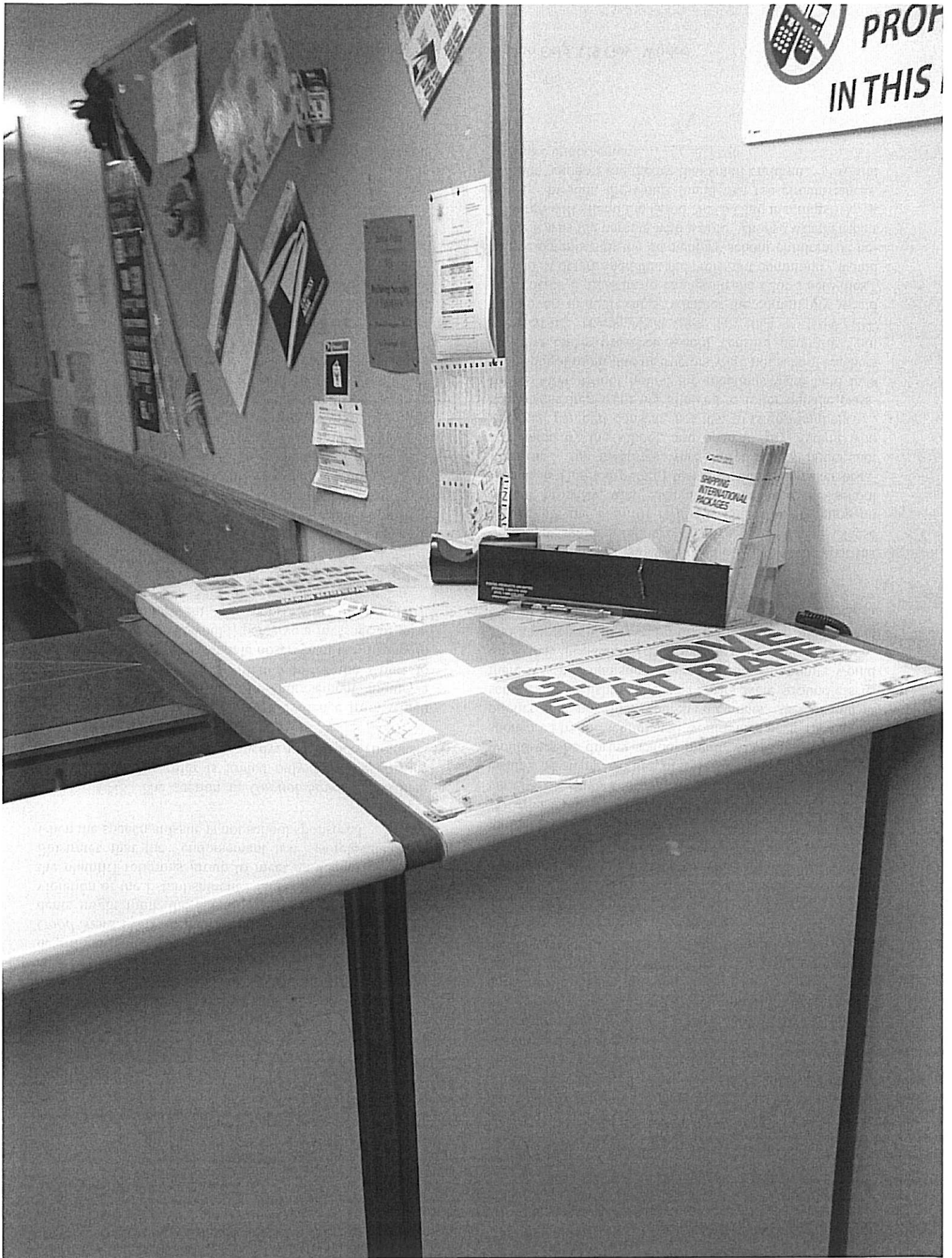
Handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca S. Markert / sas".

Rebecca S. Markert  
Staff Attorney

Enclosure



PROPH  
IN THIS



SHIPPING  
INTERNATIONAL  
PACKAGES

LOWEST  
FLAT RATE

NOTICE

CALENDAR

NOTICE

NOTICE

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the  
paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art  
with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

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presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my  
head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the  
house of the Lord for ever."

Psalm 23

Live better

10  
Sila

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he leadeth me beside the still waters.

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Psa