

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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November 4, 2019

SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: denise.yonts@letcher.kyschools.us

Denise Yonts
Superintendent
Letcher County Public Schools
224 Parks Street
Whitesburg, KY 41858

Re: Unconstitutional Religious Displays

Dear Superintendent Yonts:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding another unconstitutional religious display in Letcher County Public Schools. We are still awaiting a response to our October 11, 2019 letter regarding a "Jesus is my savior You cant scare me!" display in Fleming Neon Middle School and a religious message posted on an official District Facebook page.

A concerned area resident has reported that Letcher Central High School has a bible verse on display in its locker room. The display says, "But the Lord is with me like a Mighty Warrior. Jeremiah 20:11." Please see the enclosed photo.

As you are aware, the District violates the Constitution when it allows its schools to display religious symbols or messages. Public schools may not advance, prefer, or promote religion. *See Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1967); *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962). This display, as well as the previously reported displays, violate this basic constitutional prohibition by creating the appearance that the District prefers religion over nonreligion and Christianity over all other faiths.

Courts have continually held that school districts may not display religious messages or iconography in public schools. *See, e.g., Stone v. Graham*, 449 U.S. 39 (1980) (ruling that the Ten Commandments may not be displayed on classroom walls); *Lee v. York County*, 484 F.3d 689 (4th Cir. 2007) (ruling that a teacher may be barred from displaying religious messages on classroom bulletin boards); *Washegesic v. Bloomington Pub. Schs.*, 33 F. 3d 679 (6th Cir. 1994) (ruling that a picture of Jesus may not be displayed in a public school).

In recognition of the District's constitutional obligation to remain neutral toward religion, please remove all religious displays from the District immediately. Please reply in writing with the steps the District is taking to remedy these constitutional violations.

Sincerely,



Christopher Line
Staff Attorney
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Enclosure

EXIT

But the Lord is with me
like a *Mighty Warrior.*

