

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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September 9, 2019

**SENT VIA FAX & U.S. MAIL:
405-521-3353**

The Honorable Kevin Stitt
Governor
Capitol Building
2300 Lincoln Blvd., Rm. 212
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Re: Unconstitutional use of Governor's Office to promote personal religion

Dear Governor Stitt:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation to alert you to serious constitutional concerns regarding an upcoming speaking event.

We wrote to you in January regarding an Inaugural Prayer Service at which you and First Lady of Oklahoma Sarah Stitt declared your intent to use your government office to advance your personal religion, to "join in with what God is doing in Oklahoma" and to "save people and bring people to Him."¹ As we emphasized in that letter, you were elected to be governor, not to be a preacher. It is inappropriate and unconstitutional for you to leverage your secular elected office in order to promote your personal religious beliefs.

At the time, we gave you the benefit of the doubt on this constitutional issue because you were new to politics, but it appears you are still failing to live up to the oath of office that you swore. We write again to reiterate our concerns and to request that in the future you commit to using your office to benefit all Oklahoma residents, not just those who share your personal religion.

We understand that you are scheduled to speak at Guts Church on September 22, 2019, to a group of "Guts Men."² The church's advertisements for the event make it clear that you will be speaking as Governor of Oklahoma, not as a private citizen; the church website's front page is currently a large image of you with the words "GOVERNOR KEVIN STITT" in large, all-capital font.³ On social media, as well, the church advertises that it is "hosting Governor Kevin Stitt for a Men's event."⁴

¹ Kyle Mantyla, "Gov. Kevin Stitt Plans to Use His Office to Align 'With What God Is Doing in Oklahoma,'" *Right Wing Watch* (Jan. 15, 2019).

² gutschurch.nucleus.church/guts-men.

³ gutschurch.com.

⁴ See enclosed image.

The same social media advertisement states that you will discuss topics such as “serving God.” This is disappointingly consistent with a statement you made during your inaugural prayer service, that you intended to “engage the nonprofits and the churches to really heal and solve some of these social issues county by county that the government can’t do, but our heavenly father can do.”⁵

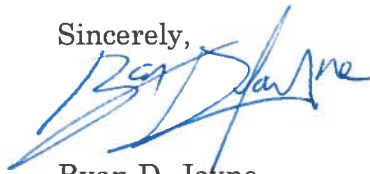
When you speak as governor, you are speaking *as the government*. If you want to address an issue that you think “the government can’t do, but [your God] can do,” then you need to do so *as a private citizen*. Using the Office of the Governor to promote a specific religious mission is unconstitutional and sends a direct message to the 30% of non-Christian adults⁶ who you serve that they have the wrong religion, and that only your personal god can solve Oklahoma’s problems.

Your own website states an objective to “demand accountability in our state government,” which requires government offices to “understand that they exist to serve and answer to the people of Oklahoma.”⁷ We ask that you recognize and remedy the hypocrisy of holding this expectation while leveraging your own taxpayer-funded office to advance your personal religious goals rather than serving the people of Oklahoma in a neutral, secular manner as your oath of office demands.

Finally, it is incumbent on you to ensure that your office does not appear to endorse particular churches or religious messages. If you intend to speak at a church event as a private citizen, you should ensure that the church does not suggest that the Governor’s Office sponsors or endorses the religious event. In this case, you should ask that Guts Church remove all references to your government office from this upcoming speaking event.

It is disturbing that you openly stated an intent to use the governorship to promote your personal religion, and now you appear to be making good on that unconstitutional promise. We hope that you will learn from this second misstep and that in the future you will show that you understand you represent *all* Oklahoma residents, not just those who share your particular version of Christianity.

Sincerely,



Ryan D. Jayne
Staff Attorney

Enclosure

⁵ Adam Troxtell, “Stitt says God called him to run for governor at prayer service,” *The Norman Transcript* (Jan. 15, 2019).

⁶ *America’s Changing Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center (May 12, 2015).

⁷ governor.ok.gov.



Guts Church

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🔥🔥 Hey Tulsa Men!

Guts Church is hosting Governor Kevin Stitt for a Men's event like you've never seen....

Join us Sunday, September 22nd at 7pm and hear our Governor speak directly to Tulsa area men about topics you care about....

Things like leadership, serving God, raising children and much more!

🕶️ Did we mention this event is completely FREE?

Click the "learn more" button and we'll remind you in messenger when the event gets closer!



MESSENGER

FREE Event / Get Reminded In Messenger ➔

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