



# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 750 • Madison WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • www.ffrf.org

August 7, 2009

Dr. Eugene G. White  
Superintendent  
Indianapolis Public Schools  
120 E. Walnut St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

COPY

Re: Religious Flyers and Open Records Request

Dear Dr. White:

I am writing on behalf of a district resident and taxpayer to alert you to a serious state/church concern. It has recently been brought to our attention that religious flyers were handed out at Indianapolis Public Schools. The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national nonprofit organization, with over 13,700 members across the country, including members in Indiana. Our purpose is to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church.

It is our information and understanding that in May 2009, flyers promoting Youth Fest sponsored by East 91<sup>st</sup> Christian Church were handed out to students in your district. According to the flyer, a copy of which is enclosed for your review, the festival would allow for students and their families to sign up for Vacation Bible Schools and join area churches.

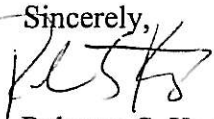
It is unclear to us whether this flyer went through the appropriate approval process before going home with students and whether the district has a policy on take-home flyers. Therefore, under Indiana Open Records Law (*see* Ind. Code § 5-14-3-1 (2008)), we hereby request a copy of any written policy or guidelines the school district has on flyers by third parties advertising community groups, events or activities, that are non-school related.

The practice of distributing religious flyers by public schools is objectionable on many different grounds. First, school-sponsored distributions of religious material carry the stamp of official endorsement. Certainly, small children are apt to confuse official school notices with religious propaganda. Second, even if the school disassociates itself from the religious activity through a disclaimer, the distribution of literature for religious organizations and activities requires the time and resources of paid school personnel. Policies that allow these third parties to distribute their literature forces teachers of diverse views and beliefs to distribute religious promotional materials.

Clearly, this sort of entanglement between religion and government official is unseemly and inappropriate. Many enlightened school districts across the country have sought to avoid this entanglement by prohibiting third parties from using the take home flyers system altogether.

We respectfully request that you amend your take-home flyer policy to restrict this invaluable service to school-sponsored or co-sponsored events. Please notify us in writing about the steps you are taking to end this violation of federal law so that we may notify our complainant. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Rebecca S. Kratz  
Staff Attorney

Enclosure