



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

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May 4, 2010

**SENT VIA FAX & U.S. MAIL
(850) 847-0801**

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor
Office of the Governor
The Capitol
Tallahassee FL 32399-0001

Re: National Day of Prayer Activities

Dear Governor Crist:

Our national organization, which works to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, contacted you last week regarding the recent ruling declaring the National Day of Prayer unconstitutional. We write again separately because we understand you are participating in National Day of Prayer events in Florida.

It is our information and understanding that you have been actively involved in National Day of Prayer events. In addition to issuing an unconstitutional proclamation designating May 6th as the National Day of Prayer, we understand that you are sending a representative to this Thursday's National Day of Prayer Restoration Dinner at First Baptist Church in Bartow, Florida. Specifically, we understand that Ms. Carolyn King will attend the dinner in your absence.

It is our further understanding that you have taped a "welcome message" for Heal Me Crusade. As you are aware, Heal Me Crusade is a three-day Christian "salvation and healing" event scheduled for May 6-8 in Plant City. This event coincides with the National Day of Prayer, another exclusively Christian event, and the Crusade seeks to "bring glory to God and the Gospel message to the lost." Your welcome message will be played on giant screens during the event. In the videotaped message you apologize for not attending in person and state, "**As governor**, my faith provides a focus for my service. It gives me strength and hope every day." (emphasis added). You also thank Tina and Mike Solomon, organizers of the Heal Me Crusade, for their "work as founders of Heal Me Crusade," and you tell attendees their "faith is impacting the hearts of this community and our entire state."

It is inappropriate for you to issue an annual prayer proclamation, send official representatives to National Day of Prayer activities and to record “welcome messages” for these Christian events. Your participation in and promotion of these events and your recording “communicate the message that the [state government of Florida] endorses prayer and encourages its citizens to engage in it.” *Freedom From Religion Foundation v. Obama*, No. 08-588, --- F.Supp.2d ----, 2010 WL 1499451, 17 (W.D. Wis. 2010). Such action violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which requires government neutrality toward religion.

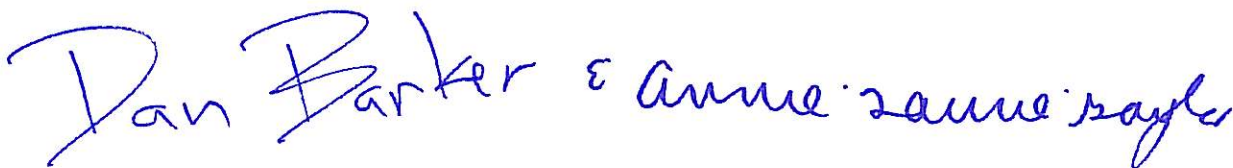
You and the state government cannot engage in any conduct that gives the appearance of endorsing religion. As a private citizen, you have a right to attend prayer events. However, you should not use your office to promote days of prayer, or to send welcome messages promoting such events, or send an official representative to attend “in place of the Governor.” The citizens of Florida have trusted that you will fulfill your duties in compliance with the law.

Furthermore, your endorsement of a faith healing event — complete with promo photos of wheel-bound participants — is nothing short of irresponsible. Children have died in Florida because they were denied health care in the name of faith. We are utterly shocked at the degree of your pandering!

We strongly urge you to consider your status as the highest elected official in Florida and end your formal relationship with this National Day of Prayer event. As noted in our prior letter, James Madison, primary architect of the Constitution, concluded that government prayer proclamations were unconstitutional (Detached Memoranda, 1817). Thomas Jefferson, promoter of the Bill of Rights, likewise opposed the practice when he was President. We ask that you do the same.

May we hear from you about this First Amendment concern at your earliest convenience?

Yours truly,



Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor
Co-Presidents