

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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

August 4, 2014

SENT VIA U.S. MAIL & EMAIL TO:

hello@breakfastofcourse.com

Mary Haglund
Owner
Mary's Gourmet Diner
723 Trade Street
Winston-Salem, NC, 27101

Re: "Praying in Public" Discount violates Civil Rights Act

Dear Ms. Haglund:

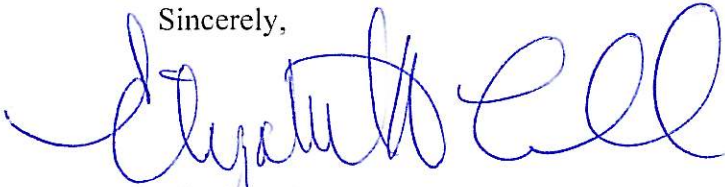
I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to point out the serious civil rights concern with a Mary's Gourmet Diner promotion that was reported to us by local residents, as well as widely reported in the media. FFRF is a nationwide nonprofit organization with 21,000 supporters, including more than 500 members in North Carolina and a state chapter, Triangle Freethought Society. Our purpose is to protect the constitutional principle of separation of state and church and to represent the rights and views of nonbelievers.

We understand that Mary's Gourmet Diner offers a 15% discount to customers who pray over their meals. According to reports, the discount appears on receipts as "-15% Praying in Public," and was explained by Mary's wait staff to one customer, "Just so you know, we gave you a 15 percent discount for praying."

Offering this discount violates the federal Civil Rights Act. The Civil Rights Act states in relevant part, "All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation... without discrimination on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin." 42 U.S.C. §2000a(a). As a place of "public accommodation," it is illegal for Mary's Gourmet Diner to discriminate, or show favoritism, on the basis of religion. *See* 42 U.S.C. §2000a(b) (defining a place of public accommodation as "any restaurant, cafeteria, lunchroom, lunch counter, soda fountain, or other facility principally engaged in selling food for consumption on the premises..."). It does not matter that the promotion is available to customers regardless of which god they pray to. Your restaurant's restrictive promotional practice favors religious customers, and denies customers who do not pray and nonbelievers the right to "full and equal" enjoyment of Mary's Gourmet Diner. Any promotions must be available to all customers regardless of religious preference or practice on a non-discriminatory basis.

We urge you to discontinue this discriminatory discount. If you truly wish to reward gratitude in customers regardless of religion, you must do so in a way that does not single out customers who pray for favorable treatment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Cavell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elizabeth" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Cavell".

Elizabeth Cavell
Staff Attorney