

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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July 21, 2026

SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: firechief@dafpd.com

Fire Chief Rebecca Dunn
City of Diamond Fire Department
P.O. Box 461
Diamond, MO 64840

Re: Concerns regarding Christian Flag outside department

Dear Chief Dunn:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding a constitutional violation occurring at the City of Diamond Fire Department. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with over 41,000 members across the country, including more than 400 members in Missouri. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

We've received a report that the Fire Department is flying a Christian flag outside of its station. The person who contacted us states that seeing a fire department flying a religious flag "feels exclusionary" to them as someone who is not religiously affiliated. Please see the enclosed photograph.

The Christian flag, despite its benign origins, has unfortunately become heavily associated with white Christian nationalism and the January 6, 2021 insurrection. As a [joint report](#) by FFRF and the Baptist Joint Commission for Religious Liberty details, the Christian flag was among the symbols of Christian nationalism and white supremacy that insurrectionists displayed as they stormed the capitol.¹

We write to request that the Department remove the Christian flag and refrain from displaying religious symbols going forward.

The First Amendment's Establishment Clause requires government neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion. See *McCreary Cnty., Ky. v. ACLU of Ky.*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 53 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968); *Everson v. Bd. of Educ. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1, 15–16 (1947). By flying the Christian flag on public property, the Department is signalling official favoritism toward religion over nonreligion, and Christianity over all other faiths.

¹ Christian Nationalism and the January 6th, 2021 Insurrection,
https://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/Christian_Nationalism_and_the_Jan6_Insurrection-2-9-22.pdf.

It appears that the Christian flag is currently displayed outside the Department along with the United States flag and the Department's flag. This suggests that the Department is controlling and choosing the flags displayed outside of its building, making the flags government speech. This differs significantly from a 2022 Supreme Court decision regarding Boston's flag policy, which allowed outside organizations to request to fly their flags outside Boston's city hall. *Shurtleff v. City of Boston*, 596 U.S. 243 (2022) (holding that Boston violated the First Amendment when it refused to display an organization's request to fly the Christian flag on public property pursuant to a policy allowing third-party flags). In *Shurtleff*, the Court explicitly stated that "when the government speaks for itself, the First Amendment does not demand airtime for all views." *Id.* at 247–48. Ultimately, the Court found that Boston's flag policy constituted a public forum, explaining "Boston did not make the raising and flying of private groups' flags a form of government speech," and thus Boston's refusal to fly the Christian flag was unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination. *Id.* at 248. In contrast to *Shurtleff*, it seems that the Department owns and controls the flags outside of its building, meaning the flag display is government speech, and the Department may not use its speech to voice official approval for one religion over all others.

The Fire Department knows that citizens interact with and rely on firefighters during some of the most urgent and vulnerable times of their lives. The Department's employees and volunteers are, of course, free to practice their personal religion on their own time. However, minority religious and nonreligious citizens should not be made to feel like outsiders in their own community because the Fire Department flies a Christian flag outside of its building. Flying the Christian flag on Department property needlessly excludes those who are among the 38 percent of Americans who are non-Christians, including the nearly one in three adult Americans who are religiously unaffiliated.²

In order to comply with the First Amendment, the City of Diamond Fire Department must cease flying the Christian flag and refrain from promoting religion going forward. Please respond in writing with the steps the Department is taking to address this matter so that we may inform our complainant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Samantha F. Lawrence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Samantha" being more prominent and the last name "Lawrence" following in a similar style.

Samantha F. Lawrence
Staff Attorney
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Enclosure

² Pew Research Center (2024), <http://bit.ly/3W6Cl3m>.

