

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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October 21, 2026

SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: salexander@bergman.k12.ar.us

Superintendent Sarah Alexander
Bergman Public Schools
P.O. Box 1
Bergman, AR 72615

Re: Unconstitutional religious display

Dear Superintendent Alexander:

I am again writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding the religious display in Bergman Elementary School.

On October 12th, we received your email stating that “We have made the following modification to the bulletin board.” You attached a photograph to the email showing that the cross has been removed from the display, but that the words “one Nation Under GOD” still remain. The photo you provided is enclosed below.

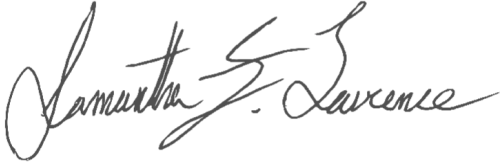
We write again to clarify that the religious display is still constitutionally problematic even with the removal of the cross. The school’s display still prominently cherry picks a single portion of a line from the Pledge of Allegiance proclaiming the existence of a god for all students to see.

Taking a single portion of a line from the Pledge and proclaiming to students that the United States is “One Nation Under GOD” still shows clear unconstitutional favoritism toward religion over nonreligion. *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290 (2000); *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1967); *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962); *McCullum v. Bd. of Ed.*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948).

As we previously explained, courts have continually held that public school districts may not display **religious messages** or iconography in public schools. *See, e.g., Stone v. Graham*, 449 U.S. 39 (1980) (ruling that the Ten Commandments may not be displayed on classroom walls); *Lee v. York Cnty.*, 484 F.3d 689 (4th Cir. 2007) (ruling that a teacher may be barred from displaying religious messages on classroom bulletin boards); *Washegesic v. Bloomingdale Pub. Schs.*, 33 F.3d 679 (6th Cir. 1994) (ruling that a painting of Jesus may not be displayed in a public school). This display is still a religious message given that the district plucked the phrase “One Nation Under GOD” from the greater context of the Pledge, and emphasized “god” by putting it in all capital letters.

To protect students' First Amendment rights, Bergman Public Schools must ensure that this religious display is removed. Please respond in writing with the steps the District is taking to completely address this constitutional violation so that we may inform the person who contacted us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Samantha F. Lawrence". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "S" and a distinct "F".

Samantha F. Lawrence
Staff Attorney
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Enclosure

