



OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

April 14, 2015

Re: Protecting Religious Freedom from Hostile Threats

Dear Superintendent:

Our office has become aware that several school districts in Oklahoma have been threatened by outside groups seeking to limit religious freedoms. Few things are as sacred and as fundamental to Oklahomans as the constitutional rights of free speech and the free exercise of religion. It is a challenging time in our country for those who believe in religious liberty. Our religious freedoms are under constant attack from a variety of groups who seek to undermine our constitutional rights and threaten our founding principles.

For instance, school districts have received a letter from the out-of-state organization Freedom From Religion Foundation ("FFRF"). Typically, FFRF seeks to use threats of litigation in order to silence American citizens' exercise of their religious liberties in their correspondence. In this instance, their threats revolve around whether Oklahomans have the right to distribute religious literature in a school. I am therefore writing to make clear that it is in fact legal for schools to allow the dissemination of religious literature and that I will take a stand to defend the religious freedom of Oklahomans.

Contrary to any statements made by FFRF, school districts need not enact a policy that completely bans passing out religious literature. Under the United States Constitution, school districts can permit private citizens to distribute to students religious literature, including bibles. To allow private citizens to do so, the school should simply enact a neutral policy that allows equal access for all Oklahomans to engage their free exercise rights. The school board just needs to craft a policy that takes into account several important factors under the law. For example, the policy should address where distribution can take place, whether to allow the literature in all schools or only for certain grade levels, and what time of the day it can occur. Our office is available and willing to help craft such a policy to ensure the maximum level of freedom for the citizens of this State.

Our educational system unfortunately is all too often on the front lines of these attacks. But I write to encourage you and to remind you that Oklahoma teachers, administrators, other school employees, and our children don't surrender their constitutional rights when they become employed by or attend a public school.

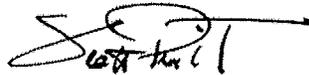
We are aware of a handful of threats from the FFRF and other groups, but are concerned there may be additional threats to our educational system from anti-religion groups who seek to threaten and intimidate educators. Therefore, my office is interested in hearing from you on whether you may be facing other attacks in exercising religious freedom. We are organizing training for stakeholders in our educational system to clarify the laws and how to defend your constitutional freedoms. As we are developing the curriculum, we would like input from you on specific issues which may need to be covered.

Oklahomans do not need to live in fear that their government has become hostile to religion. Schools have a right to enact neutral policies that allow all viewpoints on religion to thrive. As the Attorney General of Oklahoma, I will not stand idly by while out-of-state organizations bully you or any other official in this State into restricting the religious freedom the Founders of this country held dear.

Please contact my office with any additional concerns you may have and your interest in participating in our educational outreach.

Thank you for all you do to benefit the children and families you serve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Pruitt", with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

E. Scott Pruitt