

P R E S S R E L E A S E
September 29, 2006 - For Immediate Release

Mt. Juliet City Commission plans resolution supporting Lakeview Elementary School and Wilson County School System in the face of lawsuit by the ACLU

City Commissioners want to go on record supporting the free exercise of religion; urge Wilson County School System to fight lawsuit that seeks to ban religion from public schools

Mt. Juliet, TN. – Mt. Juliet City Commissioners Ray Justice and Glen Linthicum are co-sponsoring a Resolution of support for Lakeview Elementary School and the Wilson County School System as news spread throughout Wilson County about a lawsuit filed by the ACLU. The ACLU lawsuit, widely reported in newspapers today in Nashville and Wilson County alleges that a student at Lakeview Elementary School suffered damages from the School's endorsement and promotion of the "1) Prayer at the Flag Pole event; 2) the National Day of Prayer event; 3) the "Praying Parents" activities; 4) teacher led classroom prayers; [and] 5) Christian theme and overtly religious songs at a Christmas program."

Commissioner Ray Justice said he is outraged by the ACLU lawsuit, which he called, "an assault on the rights of students and their parents. The ACLU has targeted Lakeview Elementary because they want to banish Christianity from the public schools. Students have the right to pray and they have the right to sing Christmas carols."

Commissioner Glen Linthicum added that "students don't forfeit their rights at the schoolhouse door. A Muslim student, or a Hindu student, or a Jewish student has a constitutional right to pray or to read their scriptures at school on their own time. But so do Christians! It is outrageous that the ACLU would seek to ban Christianity from the school grounds."

The Resolution they are sponsoring urges the Wilson County School System to vigorously defend student's rights challenged by the ACLU lawsuit.

The other three members of the Mt. Juliet City Commission (Mayor Linda Elam, Vice-Mayor Ed Hagerty, and Commissioner Jim Bradshaw) have signed on as co-sponsors.

The Resolution is scheduled to be voted on at the next meeting of the Mt. Juliet City Commission, Monday October 9th 2006 at 7:00pm.

For more information, contact:

Original co-sponsors:

Commissioner Ray Justice 615-593-6862 (cell)
Commissioner Glen Linthicum 615-405-0275 (cell)

Additional Co-sponsors:

Mayor Linda Elam 615-566-4088 (cell)
Vice-Mayor Ed Hagerty 615-969-4769 (cell)
Commissioner Jim Bradshaw 615-545-7784 (cell)

Attached: Text of Resolution

RESOLUTION _____ 2006

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND ENCOURAGING THE WILSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM TO CONTINUE ITS POLICIES RECOGNIZING STUDENTS' RIGHTS TO RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

WHEREAS, the first amendment to the US Constitution states, in part, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof", and

WHEREAS, some Supreme Court decisions on mandated prayer and Bible-reading in public schools have resulted, as Justice Goldberg warned they should not, in a "brooding and pervasive devotion to the secular and a passive, or even active hostility to the religious"; and

WHEREAS, Justice Goldberg stated, "Such results are not only not compelled by the Constitution, but it seems to me, are prohibited by it"; and

WHEREAS, the decisions have been greatly misunderstood and grossly misapplied by some public school boards, administrators, and teachers to mean that the United States Constitution prohibits voluntary prayer and Bible-reading in America's public schools; and

WHEREAS, the free exercise rights of students are not forfeited at the doors of America's public schools; and

WHEREAS, in 1990 the Supreme Court upheld the Equal Access Act which guarantees the constitutional right of public high school students to initiate and lead prayer and Bible study groups before and after school if other non-curricular clubs are also permitted; and

WHEREAS, students and parents of students in the Wilson County Public School System have properly encouraged students to exercise their religious liberties through the nationwide "See You at the Pole" effort and the National Day of Prayer; and

WHEREAS, a recent lawsuit brought by the ACLU has challenged the right of students at Wilson County Schools to the free exercise of their religion,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF MT. JULIET, WILSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE:

1. The Mt. Juliet City Commission supports the constitutional guarantee to all Americans of the right to freely exercise their religion; and

2. The Mt. Juliet City Commission commends the United States Supreme Court's recognition of the right to free exercise of religion for students in our nation's public schools; and
3. The Mt. Juliet City Commission commends and supports efforts by the Wilson County School System, and in particular the Principal of Lakeview Elementary School, to defend the right to the free exercise of religion for students in public schools; and
4. The Mt. Juliet City Commission requests that the Wilson County School System vigorously defend the right of citizens of Wilson County, including students, to the constitutionally protected free exercise of religion.

PASSED:

Linda C. Elam, Mayor

FIRST READING: _____

Ed Hagerty, Vice-Mayor

ATTEST:

Ray Justice, Commissioner

Sheila S. Lockett, CMC
City Recorder

Glen Linthicum, Commissioner

James Bradshaw, Commissioner

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Robert Shearer, City Manager

Leslie Shechter Newman
City Attorney