

FREEDOM
FROM RELIGION
foundation

METRO DENVER CHAPTER

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: COLORADO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FROM: FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION, METRO DENVER CHAPTER
Claudette St Pierre, Chapter President
SUBJECT: PROTECTING COLORADO PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM COMMON FIRST
AMENDMENT VIOLATIONS
DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 2019

Each year the national office of our organization Freedom From Religion Foundation addresses thousands of state-church violations around the nation, more than half of which involve public schools. Our attorneys have written to Colorado school districts about such violations in the past two school years.

Most recently, The Todd Becker Foundation, a Christian ministry, was scheduled to appear at a Burlington Middle School assembly on Nov. 28, 2018. FFRF sent letters to the Burlington School District and several area school districts that were scheduled to attend the event, warning them that it will involve members of the Todd Becker Foundation reading from the bible and praying with students, which is in violation of the Establishment Clause. The school systems that were slated to be present at the event included Cheyenne County School District, Hi-Plains School District, Kit Carson School District and the Arriba-Flagler School District.

We're sending this memorandum with the accompanying pamphlet "Top 10 Public School State/Church Violations" to help educate district staff on how to protect students' rights of conscience.

FFRF is a national non-profit organization with more than **32,200 members** across the country, including over 600 members in Colorado. FFRF Metro Denver Chapter is a local Colorado chapter of the national FFRF organization. Our charter is to defend and promote the constitutional separation between state and church.

The separation between state and church is one of the most fundamental principles of our system of government. It is well settled law that, as government bodies charged with educating the children of every citizen, public schools may not advance or endorse religion.(1) The U.S. Supreme Court has explained that when a school sponsors religion or a religious message "it sends the ancillary message to members of the audience who are non-adherents 'that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community and accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.'" (2)

That message alienates a rapidly growing population. Overall, 23% of U.S. adults identify as nonreligious. (3) That 15 percentage point jump since 1990 makes the “nones” the fastest growing identification in America. (4)

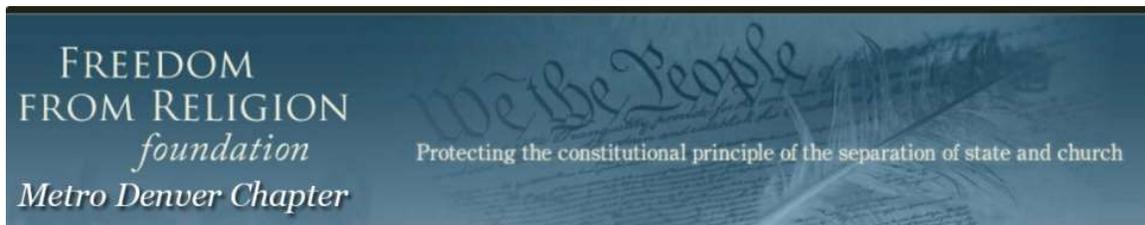
The accompanying brochure summarizes the state of the law on the most common public school Establishment Clause infractions including explanations and citations of case law.

We sincerely hope that your public school district can use this information to benefit students and protect their rights of conscience. This information can better equip faculty, staff and administrators to safeguard a captive audience of students from those seeking to impose their religious beliefs upon them. We hope that your staff will be vigilant in guarding against these impositions.

Finally, FFRF Metro Denver Chapter would be pleased to answer any of your questions or assist in providing attorneys from our national office to conduct an information in-service to your employees.

Sincerely,

*Claudette St.Pierre, Chapter President
Freedom From Religion Foundation Metro Denver Chapter
www.denverffrf.org
www.meetup.com/FFRF-Denver/
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We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit*



- (1) See *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 US 577(1992); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38(1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97(1967); *Sch. Dist. Of Abington Twnshp v Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203(1963); *Engle v. Vital*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962).
- (2) *Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. V. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 309-310 (2001)
- (3) *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center (May 12, 2015)
- (4) Barry Kosmin, National Religious Identification Survey 1989-1990.

Citations obtained with assistance from FFRF National office staff attorneys