Federal Judge says National Day of Prayer is “unconstitutional”

Update from Mrs. Shirley Dobson, Chairman of National Day of Prayer

Dear Friends:

I’m writing with a heavy heart to update you on a ruling that has been handed down regarding the National Day of Prayer. As you may have heard, the Freedom From Religion Foundation filed suit a number of months ago contending that the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional. On April 15th, U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb decided in their favor, claiming that this observance violates the “establishment clause” of the First Amendment.

My team and I are grieved that a day honoring our country’s heritage of faith and freedom has come under such blatant and unfounded attack. As Joel Oster, senior counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund, explained:

It’s important to remember this about the National Day of Prayer: It’s America’s heritage, and this day belongs to Americans – the court should not have struck down this statute. ADF urges the Obama administration to appeal this terrible ruling that not only undermines the National Day of Prayer, but the underlying heritage and tradition of the American people which dates back to the nation’s founding.

This beloved observance brings together Americans stateside and around the globe who simply wish to pray for our land. It’s truly shocking that one judge in Wisconsin can hand down a decision that has the potential to curtail this historic and cherished event for millions of people.

The next couple of months are crucial to the future of the National Day of Prayer, and we need you to stand with us. Our Task Force's theme for this year has been "Prayer … For Such a Time as This." This is the time, the very hour, when we must unite our voices against this outrageous and far-reaching move to take away the religious liberties that were so hard won by our Founding Fathers. Let's not let this happen on our watch!

In her ruling, Judge Crabb has completely ignored the truth of our history. In 1789, only a few days after the passage of the First Amendment she cites, Congress asked President Washington to declare a national day of thanksgiving and prayer, and he issued the proclamation shortly after on October 3, 1789. More than 600 public proclamations have been recorded since that time, and 33 of our 44 presidents have made such declarations. In 1952, a bill unanimously passed by Congress was signed into law by President Truman setting aside an annual National Day of Prayer. And, in 1988, legislative steps were taken by Congress and President Reagan to establish the first Thurday of May as the specific day for the observance each year.

We need your help now if we are to preserve this tremendous legacy that is now being threatened. Can we count on you? An appeal must be filed by the Obama administration within 60 days following the issuance of the initial ruling. I strongly urge you to go to our Web site at www.nationaldayofprayer.org for more information on steps you can take. You will see a button on our home page that will direct you to a petition you can sign for President Obama asking him to help save the National Day of Prayer. In just a few days, we have gathered more than 200,000 signatures; please add yours and tell your friends! You can spread the word by joining this cause on Facebook, too. In addition, we've provided contact information so you can make your views known to your elected officials and the White House, which is critical.

May we also ask you to consider a donation to our Task Force at this time? The battle ahead will be a difficult one, and our opponents have already raised $5 million for their efforts. We will continue working diligently through whatever avenues are open to us to reverse this horrible decision, but it takes significant financial resources if we are to be as effective as possible.

On a final note, I want to emphasize that the 2010 National Day of Prayer will continue as planned since the case is stayed pending appeal. Whether it's our national observance on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., or the many thousands of gatherings scheduled elsewhere, we will come together on May 6th for what I'm confident will be a powerful time of intercession. It is our understanding that President Obama will be signing a proclamation again this year, and we are hopeful that governors and government officials will also do so as they have in the past.

Please remain in prayer with us about this extremely critical matter and consider what you can do to become further involved. We know God is in control, and we are deeply committed to stirring the hearts of Americans to prayer and to preserving the National Day of Prayer as a vital expression of our nation's precious religious liberties. Thank you in advance for your partnership in this endeavor.

God bless America!

Mrs. James C. Dobson (Shirley)
Chairman, NDP Task Force