

Lannon, Kurt M.

From: Hirneise, Debra
Sent: Monday, June 27, 2005 10:37 AM
To: Lannon, Kurt M.
Subject: FW: 2nd draft of Invocation Instructional Invitation

From: Donovan, John F. - Commissioner
Sent: Sunday, June 26, 2005 9:42 PM
To: clerks; citycomm
Subject: 2nd draft of Invocation Instructional Invitation

Dear Kurt,

I have read the second draft for the Invocation Instructional Invitation, plus the supporting materials, with appreciation. Thanks for addressing this sensitive matter.

Three possible suggestions came to mind as I read. I'm not yet sure of the best protocol to put forward suggestions that are a bit wordy. So I thought I should just send them along so you, the commissioners, and any others might have a chance to consider them before the meeting. They are as follows:

Suggestion: In criterion #1, because Muhammad is not considered a deity or god by Moslems (but rather God's prophet), the current wording should be changed.

Perhaps something like the following would serve the purpose: "be void of reference to a specific deity, prophet, or religious figure identified with a specific religion (for example, Allah, Brahman, Christ Jesus, Ishtar, Krishna, Lord, Yahweh; or Buddha, Moses, Muhammad, etc.) and void of reference to a specific religion (eg, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Wicca, etc.)."

Suggestion: I conclude from the law cases you provided that the Supreme Court has ruled that the U.S. Constitution does not prohibit public invocations from including various terms referring to a supreme being (eg, God, Source and Sustainer, etc.) as long as this does not serve to promote one faith or doctrine over others. Perhaps we should say so explicitly, with encouragement to sensitivity and consideration for differing views.

Perhaps we could revise criterion #2 to read something like, "use language that respects the diversity of faiths in our community (for example, by addressing the invocation with sensitivity regarding our differing perspectives on a supreme being);"

Suggestion: A minor point regarding criterion #5. I would think the invocation is "directed" to whomever is addressed -- and most frequently, that will be the supreme being or a higher power.

So how about changing the first few words in #5 so the sentence reads, "be for the sake of the Commission or the City, and not focused on particular individuals or agenda items (eg, praying that resolution XYZ passes)."

A couple of other questions:

- 1) I presume that we plan to send out invocation invitations to all possible eligible volunteers. Do we have criteria for who is eligible (for example, someone who is ordained or commissioned in some way by a religious group which is in Gainesville and is recognized by the IRS as a not-for-profit religious organization)?
- 2) At our last City Commission meeting, there was no invocation. Instead the mayor thoughtfully asked for "a moment of silence for reflection and meditation " (or some such invitational words, I believe). Is this to be understood as our fallback position (which would be fine with me) if nobody has volunteered to provide an invocation for that meeting? Do we need to have a formal understanding for this circumstance or is it too rare to worry about?

Many thanks for your attention.
Jack Donovan
City Commissioner, District 3

6/27/2005