

Americans United Settles Texas Lawsuit Over Religious Activities In Public School

Settlement In Medina Valley Dispute Requires District To End Promotion of Religion

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Americans United for Separation of Church and State today announced that it has settled a lawsuit over school-sponsored religious activity at the Medina Valley Independent School District in Castroville, Texas.

Americans United filed the lawsuit in May 2011 on behalf of Christa and Danny Schultz, and their two sons, Trevor and Corwyn, both of whom recently graduated from Medina Valley High School. Members of the Schultz family are agnostics and opposed official prayers during the graduation ceremony and other religious activities at the school.

Under the terms of the [settlement](#), district officials, administrators, teachers, staff and other employees will not initiate, solicit or direct prayers; join students in prayers; proselytize or invite others to engage in these practices.

“This settlement brings an end to several practices we believed were unconstitutional and that violated students’ rights,” said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. “I’m glad we were able to resolve this matter out of court.”

Also under the settlement:

- * School district personnel will not display crosses, religious images, religious quotations, Bibles or religious texts, or other religious icons or artifacts on the walls, hallways, and other areas at the school.
- * The district will not invite speakers, including government officials or community leaders, whom it has reason to believe will proselytize or promote religion during their remarks.
- * The Medina Valley High School student handbook will contain a section on students’ rights to religious freedom, including the importance of respect for and tolerance of students from all backgrounds and the specific procedures for registering a complaint with district personnel about violations.
- * The district will provide annual training to all district personnel who interact with students or parents or who supervise those who interact with students or parents. The training will cover a variety of topics related to students’ rights and church-state separation.

AU Senior Litigation Counsel Gregory M. Lipper, who served as lead plaintiffs' counsel, praised the Schultz family for coming forward and challenging the school district's promotion of religion.

"The Schultz family displayed great courage in standing up for religious liberty and church-state separation in the face of intense community opposition," Lipper said. "The significant changes in the Medina Valley School District could not and would not have happened without their courageous efforts."

Under the settlement in the *Schultz v. Medina Valley Independent School District* case, the court will retain jurisdiction to enforce the agreement for 10 years.

Lipper called for members of the community to contact AU if they have any information about violations of the agreement, remarking, "If any Medina Valley students, parents, or staff have reason to believe that the School District is not complying with any of the settlement agreement's requirements, they should not hesitate to call Americans United at (202) 466-3234."

Americans United is a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947, the organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.