

AMERICAN ATHEISTS, INC.

<http://www.atheists.org>

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NO MORE GOVERNMENT SPONSORED PRAYER RALLIES - SETTLEMENT FINALIZED IN JACKSONVILLE, FLA. CASE

Final settlement has been reached in a case involving the use of government money to promote and organize a prayer rally in Jacksonville, Fla.

In August, 2006, Jacksonville officials spent approximately \$100,000 of taxpayer money to stage a Day of Faith: Arming Our Prayer Warriors" revival meeting featuring government and police officials, and clergy from the area. The religious gathering was supposedly staged to combat the city's soaring homicide rate. AMERICAN ATHEISTS, a nationwide movement defending the separation of church and state, unsuccessfully tried to stop the event, but has now reached a settlement with the city.

Edwin Kagin, National Legal Director for American Atheists, said that in a public letter, Jacksonville officials have announced that they will pay legal costs incurred by the organization. The City also agreed to provide all municipal departments with a notice stating: "With regard to any program that may be presented... (1) Each program must have a secular purpose; (2) Each program must be one which neither advances nor inhibits religion; and (3) Each program must not foster excessive entanglement with religion."

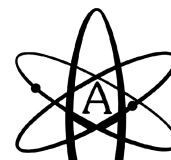
Kagin hailed the settlement as a victory for the First Amendment. "We made a solid case that this event encouraged people to 'prayer warriors' and was used to fund an event saturated with religious slogans, prayer, and clergy."

"You can't use public money to put on a religious event," Kagin added. He added that while city officials were still making statements to news media defending the prayer rally, "I don't think we're going to be seeing this sort of constitutional violation in Jacksonville."

Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists, said: "Despite all of the prayers, Jacksonville's homicide rate remains high. The answer to problems like this is social action -- better schools, jobs and civic institutions. All the praying the world doesn't solve unemployment, lack of education, and other social problems."

For further comment, contact: Edwin Kagin, (859) 384-7000 or Ellen Johnson, (908) 276-7300

AMERICAN ATHEISTS is a nationwide movement that defends civil rights for Atheists; works for the total separation of church and state; and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.



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