



P.O. BOX 56157  
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70156  
P: (504) 522-0617  
F: (504) 522-0618

JOE COOK  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 9, 2007

Ouachita Parish High School  
Attn. Mr. Todd Guice, Principal  
681 Hwy 594  
Monroe, Louisiana 71203

Ouachita Parish School Board  
Attn. Dr. Robert Webber, Superintendent  
100 Bry Street  
Monroe, Louisiana 71201

Attn: Principal Guice and Superintendent Webber  
Via: Certified Mail Nos. 7000-0600-0024-1941-2880  
& 7000-0600-0024-1941-2781  
Facsimile: (318) 338-2221 and (318) 343-9594  
Re: Unconstitutional Prayers at Graduation Ceremony

Dear Principal Guice and Superintendent Webber:

We have received a complaint about sectarian prayers at Ouachita Parish High School's graduation ceremony last year. Specifically, we understand that there was a sectarian invocation given by Rev. Samuel Wheat, and that there was a sectarian benediction given by Reverend Anthony Strawder.

The courts have unequivocally declared that such prayers are blatantly unconstitutional. As you should be well aware, they violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. “[A]t a minimum, the Constitution guarantees that government may not coerce anyone to support or participate in religion or its exercise, or otherwise to act in a way which establishes a state religion or religious faith, or tends to do so.” *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577, 595 (1992). The prayers offered at the Ouachita Parish High School graduation clearly violate the Constitution, as they were sectarian and proselytizing in nature, and were offered in the context of a public school graduation. As further authority for this position, see *Doe v. Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 168 F.3d 806, 818 (9th Cir. 1999) and *Doe v. Sch. Dist. of the City of Norfolk*, 340 F.3d 605, 609 (8th Cir. 2003).

As you are aware, graduation time is approaching again. It is imperative that these constitutional violations not reoccur. To that end, we are prepared to move forward with a lawsuit against the school and the school board on behalf of aggrieved persons.

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We hope to avoid a lawsuit by receiving good faith assurances in writing from you that this situation will not be repeated. **Please contact us by Friday, March 16 with such assurances by phone, and confirmation by fax.** If we have not heard from you by that date, we will move forward with a lawsuit seeking to enjoin this unlawful behavior.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Joe Cook  
Executive Director