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Victory for Religious Freedom in Colorado – Colorado Supreme Court Rules that Governors' Proclamations for a State Day of Prayer are Constitutional

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO (November 24, 2014) – Earlier today, the Colorado Supreme Court upheld the right of Colorado Governors to issue proclamations calling for state days of prayer, upholding an earlier ruling by the Colorado District Court, and overturning a subsequent ruling by the Colorado Court of Appeals.

This case began in 2008 against former Governor Bill Ritter by a small group of atheists headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin. Judge Mullins of the District Court in Denver, Colorado, originally dismissed the case on October 28, 2010, declaring “...there is nothing controversial about a restatement of a right protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution...the proclamation [does] not have the force and effect of law, and even if [it] did, the language does not support the foundation for a state religion, but only an acknowledgment of the rights of the citizenry as recognized as far back as the Declaration of Independence.”

“Public officials today should be as free to issue prayer proclamations as the founders of America and Colorado were,” said Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel and former U.S. Attorney for the District of Colorado Michael J. Norton. “State and federal courts nationwide have repeatedly upheld and recognized prayer proclamations as a deeply rooted part of American history and tradition.”

Shirley Dobson, Chairman of the National Day of Prayer (NDP) Task Force added, “I applaud the decision by the Colorado Supreme Court. Since the days of our Founding Fathers, the government has protected and encouraged public prayer and other expressions of dependence on the Almighty. Prayer is an indispensable part of our heritage, and as citizens, we must remain faithful in our commitment to intercede for our states and nation during this pivotal and challenging time.”

In 1952, President Harry Truman signed into law a joint resolution by Congress to set aside an annual National Day of Prayer. Congress amended the law in 1988, which was signed by President Ronald Reagan, specifying that the annual event would be observed on “the first Thursday in May each year.” In April of this year, members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a resolution “affirming the vital role that prayer has played throughout the more than 200-year history of our Nation, strengthening the fabric of our society, and recognizing May 1, 2014, as the 63rd annual National Day of Prayer.”

John Bornschein, Vice-Chairman for the National Day of Prayer (NDP) Task Force commented that, "This is definitely a victory for the free exercise of religion that our Founding Fathers sought to ensure, and we are thankful for the outcome. I can't think of a time in recent memory when it has been more important to pray for wisdom and direction for our state and its leaders."

For more information visit our website at www.nationaldayofprayer.org .

About the National Day of Prayer

The National Day of Prayer tradition predates the founding of the United States of America, evidenced by the Continental Congress' proclamation in 1775 setting aside a day of prayer. In 1952, Congress established an annual day of prayer and, in 1988, that law was amended, designating the National Day of Prayer as the first Thursday in May.