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NOTICE: Contempt Warning

Counsel,

It has come to our attention that one of the Carroll County commissioners blatantly defied the Federal District Court's order this morning and opened the board meeting by presenting a sectarian prayer. The commissioner directly stated that she was displeased with the judge's ruling and expressed a willingness to go to jail in protest against it. To demonstrate this willingness, she opened the meeting with a prayer that expressly referred to Jesus as well as Savior.

The seriousness of this gesture, and its brazen disregard for the plaintiffs and others who do not wish to have their government endorsing Christianity to the exclusion of minority religious viewpoints, is difficult to overstate. As a courtesy, we are going to refrain from seeking contempt charges against the commissioner in this one instance, in the hopes that today's behavior was simply an emotional outburst made without the benefit of serious consideration of the rights of plaintiffs and others. She should understand, however, that any continued defiance of the court order will leave us with no choice but to seek a contempt order.

Plaintiffs continue to reasonably assert that government meetings are not a platform for government officials to promote their religious views, and that government speech should not endorse any sectarian view. We appreciate the commissioners' individual religious freedom, and encourage them to worship as they wish in their homes and in their churches. We simply ask that they refrain from using the apparatus of government as a platform for their personal, sectarian religious views.

Of course, it's entirely possible that the commissioner wishes to become a public martyr of sorts for Christianity, a celebrity upon whom religious sympathizers can bestow admiration and encouragement. If that's the case, and if she therefore ignores both the court and this warning, she will no doubt get her wish.

Sincerely,

Monica Miller, Esq.