

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Blackwell, Morton: Files
Folder Title: [School Prayer: Constitutional Amendment]
Box: 20

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digital-library>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/document-collection>

Contact a reference archivist at: reagan.library@nara.gov

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/citing>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

PENDING REVIEW IN ACCORDANCE WITH E.O. 13233
Ronald Reagan Library

Collection: Blackwell, Morton C.: Files
OA/Box: 9087 *9081*
File Folder: [School Prayer Constitutional Amendment]

Archivist: kdb
FOIA ID: F05-103/1, Haberman
Date: 4/9/07 *gtr 4/30/08*

DOCUMENT NO. & TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
A. memo	Blackwell to Faith Whittlesey re school prayer amendment, 2p	5/25/83	<i>Open</i>
B. memo	Blackwell and Stephen Galebach to Whittlesey and Edwin Harper re school prayer, 5p	5/20/83	<i>OP 3/1/00</i> <i>JK</i>

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 25, 1983

MEMORANDUM TO: Faith Ryan Whittlesey
FROM: Morton C. Blackwell *MCB*
SUBJECT: The School Prayer Amendment

The situation now is critical with respect to the President's Amendment. The Judiciary Subcommittee mark-up is very likely to be tomorrow. Subcommittee Chairman Hatch seems determined to substitute a silent prayer amendment for the President's Amendment. It appears that he will be joined by Senator Grassley.

Senator Thurmond, who might also be inclined towards the Hatch position is more likely to support the President's Amendment rather than Hatch's if properly asked by the White House.

Attached is a survey of major organizational supporters of School Prayer. This survey was conducted by Steve Galebach, Gary Jarmin of Christian Voice and Greg Butler of Paul Weyrich's Coalitions for America.

It is clear that the major supporters of School Prayer will be bitterly disappointed by the Hatch Amendment. They will also be upset if we do not make a fight for the President's Amendment, which they strongly prefer.

Steve Galebach has sent a memorandum this morning to Ed Meese suggesting that he call Senators Thurmond, Grassley, and Hatch in opposition to a silent prayer amendment and urge them to take the course of action the President has recommended:

1. Pass the President's Voluntary School Prayer Amendment.
2. Pass a Bill mandating equal access to public school facilities for student religious organizations.

If Senator Hatch proceeds to vote out his Amendment and not the President's Amendment, my strong recommendation

MEMORANDUM TO: Faith Ryan Whittlesey
SUBJECT: The School Prayer Amendment
DATED: May 25, 1983

Page 2

is that the President publically oppose the Hatch proposal as inadequate to solve the problems caused by the Supreme Court's mistakes regarding school prayer.

Senator Hatch has already alienated much of the Pro-life movement with his amendment which is bitterly opposed by roughly half of the Pro-life activists. He has also aggravated lots of the conservative organizations with his activities on the Criminal Code Revisions, mercifully dropped last year. Most recently, he has enraged Phyllis Schlafly with his intention to proceed with ERA hearings.

I think it is just possible that if Senator Hatch understands that a silent prayer amendment will be repudiated by the President that he will go along with the President's Amendment, at least until the fall.

I don't know if it is necessary to take this up at the Senior Staff meeting tomorrow, but I would hope that our decision-making process could move fast enough that one or more Senior Staff members would contact Senator Hatch prior to any possible mark-up on school prayer tomorrow in Hatch's Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee.

1 Attachment a/s

STATEMENT OF: Marilyn Lundy, President
CITIZENS FOR EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM

There is nothing in the Constitution that prohibits prayer in public places. Certainly our forefathers intended freedom FOR religion not just freedom FROM religion. Therefore, Citizens for Educational Freedom supports the original Prayer Amendment.

STATEMENT OF: John Beckett, President
INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA

Intercessors for America has serious reservations about, and cannot endorse a silent Prayer Amendment for the following reasons:

1. A Silent Prayer Amendment takes the issue out of a historic Judeo-Christian perspective of prayer which has included vocalizing, "calling upon the name of the Lord" and a vocalized offering of "supplication, petition, and intercession," and places "prayer" exclusively in an especially Eastern and occult silent "meditative" religious discipline.
2. Christian "meditation" is the pondering of scriptural precepts and/or the person of Christ. Eastern occultic "meditation" is actually defined by the Bible and by orthodox Christians to be false religion and the conjuring of demonic powers.
3. A Silent Prayer Amendment would positively rule out the predominant and traditional form of Judeo-Christian prayer.

STATEMENT OF: Gary Jarmin,
CHRISTIAN VOICE

While Christian Voice will not publically oppose a Silent Prayer Amendment, it leans strongly against it for two major reasons:

1. Christian Voice prefers the President's language, or at least a modified version which retains the right of vocal prayer; and
2. Christian Voice believes a Silent Prayer Amendment may not stand any better chance of passage than the President's language because opponents will correctly condemn it as being moot/unnecessary and some hard-core supporters of vocal prayer may also vote against it.

STATEMENT OF: Forest Montgomery,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS

As long as there is a continued push of the Denton-Hatfield Equal Access Statute, they would support the Grassley-Thurmond-Hatch. If it was dropped, then they would have to reconsider their position.

STATEMENT OF: Bob Nolte,
MARANATHA MINISTRIES

Does not want silent prayer. Would support Equal Access provision.

STATEMENT OF: Connie Marshner,
FAMILY FORUM

Silent prayer would not achieve same objective as having vocal prayer in schools. Would oppose.

STATEMENT OF: Jerry Falwell
MORAL MAJORITY

Does not think silent prayer good enough and would NOT support until good faith effort made in Congress to pass the President's amendment.

STATEMENT OF: Paul M. Weyrich,
COMMITTEE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF A FREE CONGRESS

Silent prayer gives weak sisters an opportunity to squish-out on school prayer.

STATEMENT OF: Howard Phillips,
CONSERVATIVE CAUCUS

Silent prayer too watered down. Supports the President's Amendment. Would prefer limiting Federal Court jurisdiction.

STATEMENT OF: James Swaggart

Silent prayer too weak. Would support silent prayer only if effort to permit vocal prayer fails.

STATEMENT OF: NATIONAL CHRISTIAN ACTION COALITION

The NCAC much prefers the President's language and would hope, at a minimum, that the full committee will have an opportunity to consider it in mark-up.

STATEMENT OF: THE BACK TO GOD MOVEMENT

The National Back to God Movement would only support a Silent Prayer Amendment as a last resort. We strongly support the President's language and hope it will be reported out of the full Committee.

STATEMENT OF: Martha Roundtree, President
LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

The matter of voluntary school prayer is a matter of Constitutional rights of the States to decide what kind of prayer they want, if any. The only thing that Congress could legislate would be to re-affirm the Bill of Rights which states unequivocally, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or for the people."

STATEMENT OF: Phyllis Schlafly, President
EAGLE FORUM

Eagle Forum stands with the President's School Prayer Amendment. Our polls show that his School Prayer Amendment is supported by the overwhelming majority of the American people.

STATEMENT OF: Pat Robertson
CHRISTIAN BROADCASTING NETWORK

Supports the President's Amendment and would use his TV program to oppose silent prayer amendment.

INSERT A

A survey of leaders of most major groups wanting to restore voluntary school prayer was taken after your hearings. These leaders overwhelmingly prefer our proposed amendment over any suggested lesser alternative. I think we must keep the faith with these supporters by bringing our amendment before the full Senate.

May 26, 1983

Dear Strom:

I want to thank you for your leadership on the school prayer issue. I appreciate the fine hearings you have held, both on the constitutional amendment I transmitted to Congress and on the equal access statutory approach.

I am aware of the discussion among advocates of school prayer over the best means to restore freedom of religious expression to the schools. I believe we all share a strong desire to do something effective to reverse the trend of excluding all religious forms of speech from the public schools.

The constitutional amendment we have introduced would undo the damage by reversing the Supreme Court's school prayer decisions of the early 1960s. Polls continue to show broad support for returning prayer to the schools, and we have reason to hope that the amendment can pass as our fellow citizens make their views known to their elected representatives. ~~I would at least like to see this amendment given a chance for a vote before the full-Judiciary Committee.~~

Insert

At the same time, your hearings have called public attention to the need for a bill to guarantee nondiscrimination toward religious student groups in federally assisted public schools. There is nothing in the Constitution or Supreme Court decisions to warrant discrimination against student groups just because the content of their speech is religious in nature. A bill along the general lines of those already introduced by Senators Denton and Hatfield could go far to end such discrimination.

I hope that both our school prayer amendment and an equal access bill can be voted quickly out of committee, and that a floor vote in the Senate can be held as soon as possible after Labor Day, giving ample time for public discussion and expression of citizens' views to their representatives, before a national decision is made on this most important matter.

Thank you for your commitment and assistance in helping to restore voluntary religious expression to our public schools.

Sincerely yours,

The Honorable Strom Thurmond
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON
May 20, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR FAITH RYAN WHITTLESEY
EDWIN L. HARPER

FROM: MORTON C. BLACKWELL
STEPHEN H. GALEBACH

SUBJECT: School Prayer

As you requested, we have investigated the situation on Capitol Hill and among our supporters on the issue of school prayer, and have come up with a strategy for advancing the President's program.

We believe the best course is exactly what the President has already endorsed: the school prayer amendment plus an equal access bill. We need to act, however, to keep these proposals on track in the Senate Judiciary Committee and build up momentum for a floor vote on each.

We are seeking to have Senator Hatch postpone the markup he had scheduled for today, so that we have time to influence the course of events (we are working with Bob Kabel in this regard); but we will need to decide early next week what result we want to emerge from Judiciary.

I. Background

Senator Thurmond is ready to move quickly on the school prayer issue. For a successful outcome in the Judiciary Committee, however, we need to exert some quiet but firm leadership.

Early this month, the Judiciary Committee completed hearings on school prayer, both on the President's amendment and on the "equal access" approach that the President endorsed at the NAE convention. The hearings on equal access got especially good play in the press, with prominent quotes from high school students who testified about discrimination in public schools against religious students who try to meet at their own initiative on the same terms as other students. Typical was Bonnie Bailey of Lubbock, Texas, saying the courts view her as mature enough to get an abortion or use contraceptives without her parents knowing, but somehow she's not considered mature enough to read the Bible or pray together with her fellow students. In the wake of these hearings, we have a basis for successful action on equal access.

At the same time, Christian groups are gearing up to boost the President's school prayer amendment. We still need to overcome a widespread sense that politicians are not really going to push the amendment. But we can certainly do this with a modicum of effort.

Several lobbyists for religious groups had been pushing alternative ideas for amendments different from the President's -- e.g., allowing only "non-sectarian" prayer, allowing only prayers not drafted by state legislatures, allowing only prayers in which the form and content is not influenced by government, etc. -- but each of these groups, when we contacted them, said they want to get behind the President's version if we push it. Each of the proposed alternatives, by the way, creates more problems than it solves; the drafting of our amendment appears to be the best we can come up with.

The major problem we face at this point is a proposal for an alternative amendment by Steve Markman, the Judiciary Committee staffer who has had the lead thus far on this issue. He has been pushing within the Committee, apparently with Senator Hatch's backing, for an amendment that would provide only for a minute of silence and for equal access for all student groups. If this amendment is reported out of the Subcommittee on the Constitution instead of the President's amendment, it would bring our school prayer efforts to an embarrassing halt, since:

- o Few of our supporters on this issue want to go to the great pains of enacting a constitutional amendment that will only give them the right to be silent.
- o The Supreme Court has never said that a minute of silence or equal access is unconstitutional in the first place.
- o We can gain a big victory on the equal access issue if it is approached by statute, but placing the concept into an amendment merely plays into the argument of the ACLU that we need an amendment to make equal access constitutional.

We do not know of any group that supports Markman's amendment over the President's, but the possibility cannot be dismissed that many Senators would go for it as an "easy out" if we do not inform them clearly that it is not an acceptable replacement for the President's amendment.

II. Options

Option 1 -- Do nothing.

ADVANTAGES

- o Avoids possible criticism for anything positive we might do.

DISADVANTAGES

- o Without Presidential leadership, our constituency groups will probably split over various possible courses of action, leading to disenchantment, frustration, and lack of support for us in 1984.
- o To stand back while the Constitution Subcommittee or the full Judiciary Committee reports out an amendment unacceptable to school prayer advocates, would not serve the President's announced goals.

Option 2 -- Inform Senator Thurmond and Senator Hatch that we want our version of the school prayer amendment, plus an equal access bill, reported out of Judiciary Committee.

ADVANTAGES

- o Our version of the amendment promises the maximum possible unity among pro-prayer groups.
- o If we push for an up-down vote on the President's amendment, and we have a good effort from the groups that support us, we should be able to win a majority in the Judiciary Committee (we are working along with Bob Kabel to get a definitive assessment).
- o Pushing the equal access bill out of committee immediately after the amendment gives our supporters an ideal opportunity to mount public pressure and cast the issue in the most favorable possible terms; an equal access bill would highlight the worst forms of discrimination against religious expression by students, call attention to the unpopular extremes to which the ACLU has gone in these cases, and give people a chance to accomplish something quickly which is of major importance to all the religious ministries in which public school students are involved (e.g., Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, Maranatha, Campus Crusade, etc. -- not to mention groups such as St. Thomas Moore clubs and Hillel clubs that are active in colleges and could be in high schools if equal access became a reality).

- o We are already cooperating with religious media to call attention to discriminations against religious speech; a legislative battle over both amendment and equal access bill would give a renewed opportunity to mobilize elements of our coalition that have declined in activism since 1980.
- o Major religious broadcasters who support school prayer have told us they will support this course of action and rally their people behind it.

DISADVANTAGES

- o We should not get caught in the middle over differences concerning details of an equal access bill -- Hatfield and Denton have introduced differing versions -- but we can avoid this problem by simply asking Judiciary to report out an equal access bill, without mandating which one.
- o While a positive Administration effort for the President's amendment and an equal access bill will mobilize our supporters, it will also bring louder criticism from our detractors -- polls indicate, however, that there is far more potential gain than loss in this issue.

Option 3 -- Push for school prayer amendment only, or equal access bill only.

ADVANTAGES

- o Equal access bill appears more passable -- BUT our supporter groups would be very disappointed if we backed off from an amendment, and the President has clearly stated his intention not to do so.
- o Some New Right theoreticians have at times favored the amendment only approach, fearing that equal access gives moderates too easy a safe base to jump to -- BUT our supporter groups now feel, by and large, that equal access is a tremendous opportunity to build moral indignation and activism among those who favor freedom of religious expression, and that a buildup of publicity on the equal access issue will help efforts for the prayer amendment.

DISADVANTAGES

- o We lose flexibility by picking one or the other measure at this point -- we can always push both measures for now, and make tactical judgments further down the road on which measure to bring up for a floor vote, and when.

III. Conclusion

Option 2 appears far the best. To accomplish it successfully, we need to:

- o Ask Senator Hatch to postpone the markup scheduled for this Friday.
- o Send a letter from the President to Senator Thurmond and another to Senator Hatch, requesting that the Judiciary Committee mark up and promptly approve the President's prayer amendment, as presently worded, and an equal access bill. (Draft letter is attached.)
- o Continue working with Senate staffers on the Judiciary Committee to ensure a favorable vote on each measure (Bob Kabel has been working with Steve Galebach on this).
- o Continue coordinating with pro-prayer groups in their communications efforts on this issue (Gary Bauer is already helping on this -- his letter to local newspapers concerning the Bristol prayer case was a big hit).
- o Send letters to key members in House:
 - Carl Perkins, asking him to hold hearings on equal access approach. (The equal access bill introduced by Lott, Kemp, Hyde, and Dannemeyer was referred to Education and Labor.)
 - Don Edwards, asking him to hold hearings on our constitutional amendment.
 - Republican sponsors of House equal access bill, listed above, commending them for their efforts and urging quick floor action.
 - Bob Michel, asking his support and assistance.

May 18, 1983

Dear Strom:

I want to express my appreciation for the fine hearings you have held on the school prayer issue, both on the constitutional amendment I transmitted to Congress and on the equal access statutory approach. You have successfully framed this issue for the American people by calling attention to disturbing instances of discrimination against religious forms of student expression in our public schools.

I would like to request that you take advantage of the excellent record built by your hearings and report out of committee both approaches: our constitutional amendment to restore the ability of schools and other public institutions to allow individual and group prayer, and a bill to guarantee equal access and non-discrimination for religious student groups in federally assisted public schools.

As you know, various changes have been suggested for our amendment, such as limiting prayers to those that are "non-sectarian" and placing constitutional restrictions on the ability of governmental authorities to influence the form or content of prayers. While these ideas reflect legitimate concerns that will have to be addressed by states and localities after enactment of our amendment, I hope we can avoid getting federal courts into the business of deciding what is a "non-sectarian" prayer.

Further, I would not like to see any additional constitutional limitations on state, local, and federal governmental authorities that might call into question the legitimacy of the chaplains in our armed services, the chaplain of the Senate and House, or the invocations that are often provided at the behest of governmental authorities such as the Supreme Court at the opening of its sessions. Federal prohibition of school authority influence on the "form or content" of religious expression at public schools would endanger the desirable and currently widespread practice of inviting clergy to give invocations and benedictions at graduations, school assemblies, and other school-related events.

As for an equal access bill, I value your judgment and the assessments of your committee members on the best way to frame a bill along the general lines of those proposed by Senators Denton and Hatfield. I believe a statute can go far to ensure that federally assisted public schools not discriminate against religious student groups while routinely permitting all sorts of other groups to meet. Last week's federal court decision in favor of a religious student group that had been denied the right to meet in a Pennsylvania high school confirms that nothing in the Constitution prevents an even-handed policy of equal access for religious and non-religious groups.

We should, in any event, not do anything to support the argument heard from some quarters that only a constitutional amendment can legitimize equal access, or that only silent prayer is appropriate in public schools.

I hope that both our school prayer amendment and an equal access bill can be voted quickly out of committee, and that a floor vote in the Senate can be held as soon as possible after Labor Day, giving ample time for public discussion and expression of citizens' views to their representatives, before a national decision is made on this most important matter.

Thank you for your commitment and assistance in helping to restore voluntary religious expression to our public schools.

Sincerely yours,

The Honorable Strom Thurmond
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Rev. Robert G. Grant, Ph.D.
Minister
Ted Hurlburt
Minister
Hal Lindsey
Author
Rev. Jess Moody, D.D.
Minister
Robert Morgan, Esq.
Attorney at Law
Rev. Don Sills
Minister

Paul S. Webb, LL.D.
Media Consultant

CONGRESSIONAL ADVISORS

Hon. John Ashbrook
Hon. Skip Bafalis
Hon. Don Clausen
Hon. James Collins
Hon. Philip Crane
Hon. Dan Daniels
Hon. William E. Dannemeyer
Hon. Jack Fields
Hon. John Paul Hammerschmidt
Hon. George Hansen
Hon. Orrin G. Hatch
Hon. James Jeffries
Hon. Thomas Kindness
Hon. Trent Lott
Hon. James McClure
Hon. Larry McDonald
Hon. Clarence E. Miller
Hon. Sonny Montgomery
Hon. Stan Parris
Hon. Ronald Paul
Hon. Norman D. Shumway
Hon. Albert Les Smith
Hon. Gerald Solomon
Hon. Floyd Spence
Hon. Bob Stump
Hon. James H. Quillen
Hon. Guy Vander Jagt

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Rev. Ray Allen
Educator
Dr. David Brees
President
Christian Destiny, Inc.
Rev. Fletcher Brothers
Family and Freedom Foundation
Rev. Karl Coke, Ph.D.
Minister

Leroy Corey
Iowa Conservative Union

Colonel V. Doner
Businessman

Rev. David DuPlessis
Minister

Doris Enderle
Pro-Family Coalition

Raymond Gauer, Esq.
Citizens For Decency Through Law

Hon. James E. Johnson
Former Under Sec'y of the Navy

Rev. Ron Marr
The Christian Inquirer

Brigadier General H. M. Monroe
U.S. Army, Ret.

Mrs. Sheila A. Olsen
Public Relations

Sandra Ostby
American Christian Cause

John Reinholt
Businessman

L. Philip Sheldon
Ex Dir. MACPAC

Rev. Louis P. Sheldon
Minister

Rudy Vallee
Entertainer

Rev. Don Wildmon
National Federation For Decency

Richard Wright
Businessman

Rev. Richard Zone
Minister

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
Gary Jarmin

Christian Voice

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE
418 C Street N.E., "Carriage House"
Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 544-5202

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES
P.O. Box 7061
Pasadena, California 91109
(213) 795-5412

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
P.O. Box 415
Pacific Grove, California 93950
(408) 375-4772

June 13, 1983

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ed Meese, Faith Whittlesey, Morton Blackwell,
Lee Atwater, et. al.

FROM: Gary Jarmin

RE: School Prayer Amendment/Alternative Strategies

Since we could not persuade Hatch and Thurmond to "kill" the silent prayer amendment we are now faced with (a) the likely defeat of the President's language in Committee, (b) the passage of the silent prayer alternative and (c) a fratricidal warfare on the Senate floor between the two alternatives. I think we are faced with a no-win situation regardless of which of the two present amendments is reported out of committee. It is my firm conviction (and has been for several weeks) that the only way a meaningful school prayer amendment can succeed is for both sides to seriously negotiate and support an alternative draft.

Before elaborating on this last point, the following is my assessment of the status of President's Amendment and Hatch's language and the likely scenarios we can anticipate:

President's Language/Committee Scenario- Due to the silent prayer alternative, the President's language has suffered from defections by previously counted on supporters, notably DeConcini, Byrd and Dole. All three have indicated publicly or privately they will support Hatch and oppose the President. Even Thurmond has publicly announced that the President's language does not have the votes in Committee. Assuming Heflin supports the President, we lose 8-10. Even if we can persuade Dole back into our camp, we end up with a 9/9 split (we still lose). The only way the President's language will prevail is for Byrd (and Dole) to vote with us. The prospects for this happening are becoming increasingly dim.

June 13, 1983
page two

Floor Scenario- Even should the President's language prevail in Committee, we are going to face two important problems: First, Hatch and Thurmond will probably only "go through the motions" in support of it. If the President's key sponsors of his bill are going to be "weak sisters" on the bill, our chances of getting two-thirds are very remote. Second, it is very likely someone will offer silent prayer as an amendment to the President's language on the floor. The silent prayer amendment will likely succeed and we will find our "own" prayer supporters badly divided and fighting each other (a prospect which will have liberal opponents chuckling with glee at this fratricidal spectacle).

Conversely, should the silent prayer amendment be reported out of committee, hard-liners may try to amend it with the President's language. Given that silent prayer is more attractive to our "soft" supporters, the President's language will face a humiliating defeat. Our current head count (enclosed) shows we only have 59 or 60 votes for the President's language. However, this head count did not anticipate a silent prayer alternative. Perhaps 10-15 of these votes cannot be counted on, especially if Byrd, Dole, DeConcini, et.al, defect.

Either scenario presents us with a defeat for the President. enhances a silent prayer amendment's passage and leaves our own forces badly divided. In my opinion, no matter who wins, we are all going to lose. There is, however, a third alternative.

Alternative Language- The only real hope for a meaningful Constitutional Amendment to become adopted is for both the Administration and Judiciary Committee leaders to negotiate a compromise alternative amendment which both sides can enthusiastically support. In my opinion, almost any alternative is preferable to a silent prayer amendment. Also, I have always believed some changes in the President's language were necessary to obtain two-thirds in Congress. There is certainly room for changes which could attract the necessary two-thirds votes and still achieve our goal of restoring vocal school prayer.

Based on discussions with Judiciary Committee personnel, Thurmond, Hatch and Grassley would welcome an opportunity to negotiate alternative language both sides could enthusiastically support. The first move in this regard must come from the White House. And it is not too late to accomplish this! One more day of hearings is scheduled for June 21st and mark-up on June 23rd. This gives us more than one week to negotiate alternatives. The hearings on June 21st could be devoted to reviewing this alternative language with both sides praising it and each other for their "statesmanship", etc.. Rather than ending up divided on June 23rd we can have a "love feast" for this proposal and move forward with unity and enthusiasm towards our goal.

June 13, 1983
page three

Even if these negotiations fail to achieve a mutually acceptable alternative, we are no worse off than we are now. We certainly stand nothing to lose by trying. The real disaster is if we fail to try at all.

"Equal Access" Strategy- Heretofore, we have moved on a two-track approach by supporting both the prayer Amendment and the Hatfield-Denton "equal access" statutory remedy. The idea being that if we fail to pass a Constitutional Amendment, our fallback position is to move on equal access to achieve a sorely needed victory. While this strategy makes good sense, it does not solve our problems regarding the fate of the Constitutional Amendment.

Regardless of what happens to the equal access legislation, we will still have a fight on the Constitutional Amendment in both committee and on the floor. Our first concern must be the fate of the Constitutional Amendment or, more importantly, what kind of Constitutional Amendment. We cannot ignore that the President will likely face an embarrassing defeat on this issue, a bloody internal split amongst our forces and the unfortunate result of a silent prayer amendment being adopted. "Washing our hands" of the Constitutional Amendment and moving on equal access will not remedy this dilemma.

Alternative Amendments- Enclosed are several alternative drafts which may be worthy of consideration should new language becomes seriously negotiated. One or combinations of these proposals are intended to overcome most of the chief objections raised by the opposition. They are not ideal solutions and do raise some potential problems. However, our likely choice now is between an alternative which still allows for vocal prayer or the silent prayer proposal which is the least acceptable.

Rather than elaborate on the rationale behind the language in these alternatives, it is relevant to mention that they have been "bounced off" several swing vote Senators and pro-school prayer conservatives. I have received positive reactions from all concerned. I am convinced two-thirds for a vocal prayer amendment is achievable. Unless we arrange for a compromise amendment, we are going to likely have a silent prayer amendment or none at all.

In conclusion, we have very little time to deliberate on whether to pursue this alternative amendment strategy. There is sufficient time left to achieve a negotiated compromise, but such a decision will have to be immediately. Your thoughtful consideration and response to this proposal is urgently requested. Again, we have nothing to lose by trying.

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Rev. Robert G. Grant, Ph.D.
Minister
Ted Hurlburt
Minister
Hal Lindsey
Author
Rev. Jess Moody, D.D.
Minister
Robert Morgan, Esq.
Attorney at Law
Rev. Don Sills
Minister

Paul S. Webb, LL.D.
Media Consultant

CONGRESSIONAL ADVISORS

Hon. John Ashbrook
Hon. Skip Bafalis
Hon. Don Clausen
Hon. James Collins
Hon. Philip Crane
Hon. Dan Daniels
Hon. William E. Dannemeyer
Hon. Jack Fields
Hon. John Paul Hammerschmidt
Hon. George Hansen
Hon. Orrin G. Hatch
Hon. James Jeffries
Hon. Thomas Kindness
Hon. Trent Lott
Hon. James McClure
Hon. Larry McDonald
Hon. Clarence E. Miller
Hon. Sonny Montgomery
Hon. Stan Parris
Hon. Ronald Paul
Hon. Norman D. Shumway
Hon. Albert Lee Smith
Hon. Gerald Solomon
Hon. Floyd Spence
Hon. Bob Stump
Hon. James H. Quillen
Hon. Guy Vander Jagt

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Rev. Ray Allen
Educator

Dr. David Brees

President
Christian Destiny, Inc.

Rev. Fletcher Brothers
Family and Freedom Foundation

Rev. Karl Coks, Ph.D.
Minister

Leroy Corey
Iowa Conservative Union

Colonel V. Doner
Businessman

Rev. David DuPlessis
Minister

Doris Enderle
Pro-Family Coalition

Raymond Gauer, Esq.
Citizens For Decency Through Law

Hon. James E. Johnson
Former Under Sec'y of the Navy

Rev. Ron Marr
The Christian Inquirer

Brigadier General H. M. Monroe
U.S. Army, Ret.

Mrs. Sheila A. Olsen
Public Relations

Sandra Ostby
American Christian Cause

John Reinhold
Businessman

L. Philip Sheldon
Ex. Dir. MACPAC

Rev. Louis P. Sheldon
Minister

Rudy Vallee
Entertainer

Rev. Don Wildmon
National Federation For Decency

Richard Wright
Businessman

Rev. Richard Zone
Minister

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
Gary Jarmin

Christian Voice

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE
418 C Street N.E., "Carriage House"
Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 544-5202

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES
P.O. Box 7061
Pasadena, California 91109
(213) 795-5412

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
P.O. Box 415
Pacific Grove, California 93950
(408) 375-4772

CONFIDENTIAL

April 21, 1983

Memorandum

1. Changes in President's Constitutional Amendment to Restore Prayer.

Christian Voice and its Project Prayer Coalition have been strong advocates of the President's Constitutional Amendment, S.J. Res. 73. While we are basically content with the Amendment's present wording, we do believe that some of the objections to it are valid and we are open to compromise language changes. With this in mind, Christian Voice has drafted the following alternative Constitutional amendment:

Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group non-sectarian prayer in public schools. No person shall be required by the United States or by any State to participate in prayer. Nor shall ~~the~~ Executive or Legislative branch of any State have the authority to draft or influence the content of prayer in public schools. No public school, which generally allows students to meet on a voluntary basis during non-instructional periods, shall discriminate against any meeting of students on the basis of the religious content of the speech at the meeting.

This language is merely a proposed draft and we are open to any changes which can be constructively offered. The fundamental differences with the President's Amendment and problems we believe this language addresses are as follows:

April 21, 1983
page two

1. Perhaps the most serious and strongest argument against the President's Constitutional Amendment is that it would allow for recitation of sectarian prayers and thus offend members of minority religions. We agree with this objection. Jewish parents, for example, may be very supportive of their child reciting a prayer but could be offended if the prayer was the Lord's Prayer or concluded with "in Jesus' name, Amen". Likewise, Protestants would be offended if the prayer offered was Mormon or Catholic.

To remedy this problem we have defined that the the prayers must be nonsectarian (or nondenominational). With this change, members of minority religious groups would not have to fear that their child would be exposed to a different religion. In addition, the legislative history indicates that virtually all the Constitutional Amendments voted on in the past have defined prayer as "non-denominational". Consequently, Congressional precedent supports the need for this change.

2. Many have also objected (including conservative evangelicals) that the President's Amendment would allow for States to draft prescribed prayers. We agree that "Caesar" should not be in the business of drafting prayers. This language would also overcome these potential problems:

First, the decision as to whether or not prayers in schools are offered should be a local decision. For example, the majority of parents in Bronx may not want prayers said whereas the majority in Buffalo do.

Second, a State drafted prayer would not take into account that the religious composition of students will vary widely from school district to school district. Parents in Beverly Hills, for example, may prefer one kind of prayer while in Barstow they may want another. One school district may desire silent prayer, whereas another may prefer vocal prayer. A State drafted prayer would be insensitive to these differences and desires.

Third, if there were some problems with a prayer, it would be much easier to change at the local level rather than citizens having to redress their grievances at the State level. Also, a State drafted prayer automatically affects all its schools, whereas a local school district prayer (if there were a problem) would be limited in its impact. We can anticipate there will be some experimentation by local school districts to decide what kind of prayer activity it finds the most desirable. In some cases school districts may try several different prayers before deciding on the one they find the most workable. State drafted prayers will make this important experimentation process extremely difficult, if not impossible.

April 21, 1983
page three

3. The last sentence in this proposed Amendment remedies an important problem which the President's language does not address. Some schools and several lower court decisions have prohibited student groups from using school facilities during non-instructional periods for prayer and Bible study. We believe this is an unconstitutional discrimination against free speech. If a school allows other student groups to use school facilities, including "Gay" clubs, etc., then religious groups should be entitled to the same right. Senators Hatfield and Denton have introduced similar bills to remedy this problem. We simply propose that we add their language to the Constitutional Amendment and, thus, solve both the school prayer and "equal access" problems simultaneously.

Conclusion

Again, I repeat that this new language is merely a proposal and we are open to constructive changes. We also ask that the confidentiality of this memorandum be observed. Most importantly, we hope you will give this proposed Amendment your thoughtful consideration, comments, etc.. If you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact me at the above letterhead phone number or address. Thank you.

National Association of Evangelical's Draft

Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit prayer or other religious activity in public schools. Neither the United States nor any State shall require any person to participate in prayer or other religious activity, or prescribe the content of any prayer or other religious activity.

Comment: The chief problem with this language is that it would prohibit a school board from choosing or authorizing that a particular prayer be recited in a classroom. I think the language could be improved if the last phrase read:

"or draft the content of any such prayer or other religious activity."

This would prevent school boards from drafting prayers but still allow them the option to implement a prayer composed by parents or an interfaith panel of clergymen.

Christian Voice Proposal #1

Section 1- Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group nonsectarian prayer in public schools. No person, unit of government or school shall be required by the United States or any State to participate in such prayer. Nor shall the United States or any State draft the content of such prayer.

Section 2- Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit equal access to the use of public school facilities by voluntary student groups based on the religious content of speech.

Christian Voice Proposal #2

Section 1. Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions provided that:

- a) No person shall be required by the United States or any State to participate in prayer.
- b) The opportunities for and conduct of prayer is done in a nondiscriminatory manner (or nonexclusive).
- c) No unit of government or school shall be required by the U.S. or any State to conduct or implement prayer exercises.

Section 2. Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit equal access to the use of public school facilities by voluntary student groups based on the religious content of speech.

Christian Voice Proposal #3

The right of the several states to decide what forms of religious expression should be allowed in its public schools or other public institutions is secured by this Constitution provided that:

- a) No person, unit of government or school is required by the United States or any State to participate in any such form of religious expression;
- b) Such expression is done in a nondiscriminatory manner; and
- c) The United States or any State does not adopt any specific religious doctrine or mode of worship as its own.

SCHOOL PRAYER SENATE TELEPHONE SURVEY (5/25/83)

State/Senator	Assistant	Position
ALABAMA		
Denton	Karl Moore	In Favor
R Heflin	Randall Black	In Favor
ALASKA		
Murkowski	Frederic Hahn	Undecided*
Stevens	Maryann Simpson	In Favor
ARIZONA		
Deconcini	Bob Fiedler	In Favor
Goldwater	Terry Emerson	In Favor
ARKANSAS		
R Pryor	Nancy Dair	In Favor
Bumpers	Bill Massey	Undecided**
CALIFORNIA		
Cranston	Gary Aldridge	Opposed
Wilson	Ira Goldman	In Favor
COLORADO		
Hart	Judy Beals	Opposed
R Armstrong	Debra Buetner	In Favor
CONNECTICUT		
Dodd	Mike Naylor	Opposed
Weicker	Steve Moore	Opposed
DELAWARE		
R Biden	Chip Reed	Undecided**
Roth	Becky McDonald	In Favor
FLORIDA		
Chiles	Connie Hays	In Favor
Hawkins	John Dedinski	In Favor
GEORGIA		
R Nunn	Irene Sanders	In Favor
Mattingly	Woodie Woodward	In Favor
HAWAII		
Inouye	Patrick Delion	Undecided
Matsunaga	Elma Henderson	Opposed
IDAHO		
R McClure	Martha Solodky	In Favor
Symms	Sam Routson	In Favor
ILLINOIS		
Dixon	Sylvia Davis	Undecided**
R Percy	Cindy Oliver	Opposed**
INDIANA		
Lugar	Lynn Daglian	In Favor
Quayle	Jim Wolfe	In Favor
IOWA		
Grassley	John Maxwell	In Favor
R Jepsen	Lilli Dollinger	In Favor
KANSAS		
Dole	Sheila Bear	In Favor
R Kassebaum	Elizabeth Lewis	Undecided*
KENTUCKY		
Ford	Dave Leader	In Favor
R Huddleston	Roger LeMaster	In Favor
LOUISIANA		
Long	Lula Davis	Leaning For
R Johnston	Susan Austin	In Favor
MAINE		
Mitchell	Jeff Nathanson	Opposed
R Cohen	Kim Cortell	Opposed
MARYLAND		
Sarbanes	Judy Davidson	Opposed
Mathias	Mike Cooper	Opposed
MASSACHUSETTS		
R Tsongas	Brenda Wellburn	Opposed
Kennedy	Robert Shum	Undecided

State/Senator	Assistant	Position
MICHIGAN		
R Riegle	Cindy Jurciukonis	
R Levin	John Sheridan	Opposed
MINNESOTA		
R Durenberger	Tom Horner	In Favor
R Boschwitz	Barbie Thompson	Opposed
MISSISSIPPI		
R Stennis	Jim Kendal	In Favor
R Cochran	Jane Walton	In Favor
MISSOURI		
Eagleton	Glenn Smith	Opposed
Danforth	Ted Blanton	Opposed**
MONTANA		
Melcher	Mary Gereau	Opposed**
Baucus	Mary Troland	Undecided
NEBRASKA		
Zorinsky	Dan Fuchs	In Favor
R Exon	Bill Hoppner	In Favor
NEVADA		
Laxalt	Bill Miller	In Favor
Hecht	Royle Melton	In Favor
NEW HAMPSHIRE		
R Humphrey	David Grey	In Favor
Rudman	Tom Polgar	Leaning Against**
NEW JERSEY		
R Bradley	Marcia Arnoff	Undecided
Lautenberg	Joy Silver	Opposed
NEW MEXICO		
R Domenici	George Romanas	In Favor
Bingaman	Brent Burdowski	Opposed
NEW YORK		
Moynihan	Debbie Alfred	Opposed
D'Amato	Rick Nasti	In Favor
NORTH CAROLINA		
East	Tom Bovard	In Favor
R Helms	Tom Ashcraft	In Favor
NORTH DAKOTA		
Burdick	Leo Wilking	Opposed**
Andrews	Jill Edwards	In Favor
OHIO		
Glenn	Dan Daugherty	Opposed
Metzenbaum	Cheryl Birdsall	Opposed
OKLAHOMA		
R Boren	David Cox	Undecided*
Nickles	Laura Clay	In Favor
OREGON		
R Hatfield	Tom Getman	Opposed
Packwood	Peggy Walkers	Opposed
PENNSYLVANIA		
Heinz	Richard Breyers	Undecided**
Specter	Mary Westmoreland	Undecided**
RHODE ISLAND		
R Pell	Brad Penny	Opposed
Chafee	Annette Frybourg	Undecided**
SOUTH CAROLINA		
Hollings	Ashby Thieft	In Favor
R Thurmond	Eric Holtman	In Favor
SOUTH DAKOTA		
Abdnor	Garrett Fuller	In Favor
R Pressler	Diane Swanson	In Favor
TENNESSEE		
Sasser	Rosemary Warren	In Favor
Baker	Lynne Holmes	Undecided*

State/Senator	Assistant	Position
TEXAS		
Bentsen	Marina Weiso	In Favor
R Tower	Debra Harnsbarger	In Favor
UTAH		
Garn	Joanne Snow	In Favor
Hatch	Steve Markman	In Favor
VERMONT		
Leahy	Ann Harkins	Opposed
Stafford	Mike Francis	In Favor
VIRGINIA		
R Warner	Travis Singer	In Favor
Trible	David Warnick	In Favor
WASHINGTON		
Jackson	Charlotte Tsoucalis	Undecided
Gorton	Maryann McGettigan	Opposed**
WEST VIRGINIA		
Randolph	Ned Massey	In Favor
Byrd	Joan Drummond	In Favor
WISCONSIN		
Proxmire	Morton Schwartz	In Favor
Kasten	Willy Lerkach	In Favor
WYOMING		
R Simpson	Paul Hertz	In Favor
Wallop	Michael Hoon	Undecided*

55 = In Favor

* = Likely vote yes (4)

** = Major Targets

R = Senators up for reelection in 1984

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 6, 1983

Dear Strom:

I want to thank you for your leadership on behalf of the school prayer issue. Your involvement in this important issue has spanned a period of several years. I appreciate the extensive hearings held by the Senate Judiciary Committee, both on the constitutional amendment I transmitted to Congress and which you so kindly introduced, S.J. Res. 73, and on the equal access statutory approach.

I am aware of the discussion among advocates of school prayer over the best means to restore freedom of religious expression to the schools. Above all else, I believe we all share a strong desire to do something effective to reverse the trend of excluding all religious forms of speech from the public schools.

S.J. Res. 73 is intended to reverse the Supreme Court's school prayer decisions of the early 1960's. I am persuaded that this approach carries with it broad support both from many religious groups and the general population. I remain supportive of S.J. Res. 73.

The Committee hearings have also called public attention to the need for a bill to guarantee non-discrimination toward religious student groups in federally assisted public schools. A bill along the general lines of those already introduced by Senators Denton and Hatfield could go far to end such discrimination.

I hope that both the school prayer amendment and an equal access bill can be voted quickly out of committee, and that a floor vote in the Senate can be held as soon as possible after Labor Day, giving ample time for public discussion and expression of citizens' views to their representatives, before a decision is made in the U.S. Senate on this most important matter.

Thank you for your commitment and assistance in helping to restore voluntary religious expression to our public schools.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

The Honorable Strom Thurmond
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May ²⁷ 17, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR FAITH RYAN WHITTLESEY
EDWIN L. HARPER

FROM: MORTON C. BLACKWELL *MB*
STEPHEN H. GALEBACH *SG*

SUBJECT: Follow-Up to Our Memo on School Prayer

Attached is a draft letter for the President to send to Senator Thurmond requesting his support for our strategy on school prayer, as recommended in our memo of yesterday on this topic.

DRAFT PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO SENATOR THURMOND RE SCHOOL PRAYER

May 27, 1983

Dear Strom:

I want to thank you for your leadership on the school prayer issue. I appreciate the fine hearings you have held, both on the constitutional amendment I transmitted to Congress and on the equal access statutory approach.

I am aware of the discussion among advocates of school prayer over the best means to restore freedom of religious expression to the schools. I believe we all share a strong desire to do something effective to reverse the trend of excluding all religious forms of speech from the public schools.

The constitutional amendment we have introduced would undo the damage by reversing the Supreme Court's school prayer decisions of the early 1960s. Polls continue to show broad support for returning prayer to the schools, and we have reason to hope that the amendment can pass as our fellow citizens make their views known to their elected representatives.

A survey of leaders of most major groups wanting to restore voluntary school prayer was taken after your hearings. These leaders overwhelmingly prefer our proposed amendment over any suggested lesser alternative. I think we must keep the faith with these supporters by bringing our amendment before the full Senate.

Your hearings have also called public attention to the need for a bill to guarantee nondiscrimination toward religious student groups in federally assisted public schools. There is nothing in the Constitution or Supreme Court decisions to warrant discrimination against student groups just because the content of their speech is religious in nature. A bill along the general lines of those already introduced by Senators Denton and Hatfield could go far to end such discrimination.

I hope that both our school prayer amendment and an equal access bill can be voted quickly out of committee, and that a floor vote in the Senate can be held as soon as possible after Labor Day, giving ample time for public discussion and expression of citizens' views to their representatives, before a national decision is made on this most important matter.

-2-

Thank you for your commitment and assistance in helping to restore voluntary religious expression to our public schools.

Sincerely yours,

The Honorable Strom Thurmond
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

STATEMENT OF: Marilyn Lundy, President
CITIZENS FOR EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM

There is nothing in the Constitution that prohibits prayer in public places. Certainly our forefathers intended freedom FOR religion not just freedom FROM religion. Therefore, Citizens for Educational Freedom supports the original Prayer Amendment.

STATEMENT OF: John Beckett, President
INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA

Intercessors for America has serious reservations about, and cannot endorse a silent Prayer Amendment for the following reasons:

1. A Silent Prayer Amendment takes the issue out of a historic Judeo-Christian perspective of prayer which has included vocalizing, "calling upon the name of the Lord" and a vocalized offering of "supplication, petition, and intercession," and places "prayer" exclusively in an especially Eastern and occult silent "meditative" religious discipline.
2. Christian "meditation" is the pondering of scriptural precepts and/or the person of Christ. Eastern occultic "meditation" is actually defined by the Bible and by orthodox Christians to be false religion and the conjuring of demonic powers.
3. A Silent Prayer Amendment would positively rule out the predominant and traditional form of Judeo-Christian prayer.

STATEMENT OF: Gary Jarmin,
CHRISTIAN VOICE

While Christian Voice will not publically oppose a Silent Prayer Amendment, it leans strongly against it for two major reasons:

1. Christian Voice prefers the President's language, or at least a modified version which retains the right of vocal prayer; and
2. Christian Voice believes a Silent Prayer Amendment may not stand any better chance of passage than the President's language because opponents will correctly condemn it as being moot/unnecessary and some hard-core supporters of vocal prayer may also vote against it.

STATEMENT OF: NATIONAL CHRISTIAN ACTION COALITION

The NCAC much prefers the President's language and would hope, at a minimum, that the full committee will have an opportunity to consider it in mark-up.

STATEMENT OF: THE BACK TO GOD MOVEMENT

The National Back to God Movement would only support a Silent Prayer Amendment as a last resort. We strongly support the President's language and hope it will be reported out of the full Committee.

STATEMENT OF: Martha Roundtree, President
LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

The matter of voluntary school prayer is a matter of Constitutional rights of the States to decide what kind of prayer they want, if any. The only thing that Congress could legislate would be to re-affirm the Bill of Rights which states unequivocally, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or for the people."

STATEMENT OF: Phyllis Schlafly, President
EAGLE FORUM

Eagle Forum stands with the President's School Prayer Amendment. Our polls show that his School Prayer Amendment is supported by the overwhelming majority of the American people.

STATEMENT OF: Pat Robertson
CHRISTIAN BROADCASTING NETWORK

Supports the President's Amendment and would use his TV program to oppose silent prayer amendment.

POSITION OF: Forest Montgomery,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS

As long as there is a continued push of the Denton-Hatfield Equal Access Statute, they would support the Grassley-Thurmond-Hatch. If it was dropped, then they would have to reconsider their position.

POSITION OF: Bob Nolte,
MARANATHA MINISTRIES

Does not want silent prayer. Would support Equal Access provision.

POSITION OF: Connie Marshner,
FAMILY FORUM

Silent prayer would not achieve same objective as having vocal prayer in schools. Would oppose.

POSITION OF: Jerry Falwell
MORAL MAJORITY

Does not think silent prayer good enough and would NOT support until good faith effort made in Congress to pass the President's Amendment.

POSITION OF: Paul M. Weyrich
COMMITTEE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF A FREE CONGRESS

Silent prayer gives weak sisters an opportunity to squish-out on school prayer.

POSITION OF: Howard Phillips
CONSERVATIVE CAUCUS

Silent prayer too watered down. Supports the President's Amendment. Would prefer limiting Federal Court jurisdiction.

POSITION OF: James Swaggart
THE JIMMY SWAGGART MINISTRIES

Silent prayer too weak. Would support silent prayer only if effort to permit vocal prayer fails.

INSERT A

A survey of leaders of most major groups wanting to restore voluntary school prayer was taken after your hearings. These leaders overwhelmingly prefer our proposed amendment over any suggested lesser alternative. I think we must keep the faith with these supporters by bringing our amendment before the full Senate.

May 26, 1983

Dear Strom:

I want to thank you for your leadership on the school prayer issue. I appreciate the fine hearings you have held, both on the constitutional amendment I transmitted to Congress and on the equal access statutory approach.

I am aware of the discussion among advocates of school prayer over the best means to restore freedom of religious expression to the schools. I believe we all share a strong desire to do something effective to reverse the trend of excluding all religious forms of speech from the public schools.

The constitutional amendment we have introduced would undo the damage by reversing the Supreme Court's school prayer decisions of the early 1960s. Polls continue to show broad support for returning prayer to the schools, and we have reason to hope that the amendment can pass as our fellow citizens make their views known to their elected representatives. ~~I would at least like to see this amendment given a chance for a vote before the full Judiciary Committee.~~

Insert

At the same time, your hearings have called public attention to the need for a bill to guarantee nondiscrimination toward religious student groups in federally assisted public schools. There is nothing in the Constitution or Supreme Court decisions to warrant discrimination against student groups just because the content of their speech is religious in nature. A bill along the general lines of those already introduced by Senators Denton and Hatfield could go far to end such discrimination.

I hope that both our school prayer amendment and an equal access bill can be voted quickly out of committee, and that a floor vote in the Senate can be held as soon as possible after Labor Day, giving ample time for public discussion and expression of citizens' views to their representatives, before a national decision is made on this most important matter.

-2-

Thank you for your commitment and assistance in helping to restore voluntary religious expression to our public schools.

Sincerely yours,

The Honorable Strom Thurmond
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510