

Judge Rules in Favor of AZ Officials Who Rejected Satanists' Invocation Request

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A U.S. District judge has ruled against Satanists who wanted to deliver an invocation in front of the Scottsdale, Arizona city council.

It comes after the council members spent **more than \$176,000** to block Satanists from doing what Christians are allowed to do on a regular basis.

All of this dates back to 2016, when the city council **prevented The Satanic Temple from delivering an invocation** at one of their meetings. The reason they gave at the time was that the Temple had no *presence* in the city — the chapter was based in Tucson, not Scottsdale — even though they never asked about that during the application process. So why did that issue come up only *after* the Satanists had been given a green light to speak?

Seemed like a fair question.

The Satanic Temple, months later, sent a letter to the council warning them against further discrimination. This time, **they had some proof** that the council members were actively trying to silence them and that the whole “where are you based?” question was nothing more than a distraction.

Mayor [Jim] Lane and Councilwoman [Suzanne] Klapp made various anti-Satanic comments to the media that indicate that they wish to use the county's invocation practice exactly for such “impermissible government purpose[s]”... For example, **Mayor Lane stated: “In Scottsdale, we’ve decided to keep our traditional invocations and we’ve decided to send this Satanist sideshow elsewhere.”**

Lane For Scottsdale 2016 [link]: **He went on to say, “not on my watch. Not in the best city in America. We’re telling the Satanists, hell no.”**

It didn’t stop there. **Mayor Jim Lane** was up for re-election, and one of his campaign flyers included a line about how he was proudly discriminating against Satanists.

That circled bit says Lane “Stopped so called ‘Satanists’ from mocking City Hall traditions with a ‘prayer.’”

At this point, the city council had two choices: Take back their words and allow the Satanists to speak... or get hit with a discrimination lawsuit.

The city never took that threat seriously, but the Satanists did, and in February of 2018, they **sued the city** over what they claimed was a violation of the Establishment Clause.

The Satanists (including member **Michelle Shortt**) alleged that in the eight years prior to their invocation request, “every invocation given was of the Judeo-Christian faith.” After the Satanists’ request was made, one council member, **Kathy Littlefield**, told her constituents that she did “NOT want the Satanists” speaking and considered their invitation “taking equality too far.”

The lawsuit also pointed out that Lane told his constituents that the invocations were diverse as is, and to prove it, he referred to the “respectful and thoughtful messages from Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and countless other faiths.” That was quite a statement considering that, according to the complaint, “At no time have members of the Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindus faith given an invocation before the Scottsdale City Council.”

The implication was clear: No matter what these people said, they only wanted Christian speakers. Satanists weren’t allowed. It was clear-cut discrimination against a belief

system that the council members didn't like. That's why The Satanic Temple called it a violation of the Establishment Clause and the Equal Protection Clause as well as a violation of the "Toleration of Religious Sentiment" clause of the Arizona Constitution.

Both sides went to court **last July**. Attorney **Stu de Haan** explained that the city filed two motions to dismiss the case entirely, but both were denied. The case eventually went to trial. It's absurd when you think about it: All this controversy over nothing more than a "90-second invocation."

But the city council finally got what they wanted. **Judge David G. Campbell ruled in their favor.**

In essence, Campbell said the city administrator rejected the Satanists because they "lacked any substantial connection to the City." Whether or not that was a city policy doesn't matter then, Campbell said, because it wasn't religious discrimination. The only question he had to answer was the discrimination one.

That also means the council members' personal bigotry is irrelevant because the judge didn't have evidence showing that their comments were the *reason* the Satanists were rejected. He added that the city administrators who said no to the Satanists neither "saw [nor] knew about the emails" regarding the council members' anti-Satanist rhetoric.

Jack Matirko, writing at The Satanic Temple's blog on Patheos, said there's **one positive to come from this decision**: The judge acknowledged that Satanism is a religion. That's no small thing.

The Satanists say they will consider challenging the ruling.

Whatever they do, though, remember this whole thing is about one city council's refusal to hear Satanists speak. (They did, however, **let an atheist speak recently**, and he cited Lucifer in his speech, so there's that.)

It's still an idiotic waste of taxpayer money. It could've been resolved a long time ago if the city council just let them speak. Instead, it took four years of legal battles to get to this point.

(Top screenshot via **Fox 10**. Large portions of this article were published earlier)