



# PRESS RELEASE

Arizona • California • Michigan • New York • Washington, D.C. • (855) 835-AFLC (2352) • Fax: (801) 760-3901

**Contact: Robert J. Muise, Esq.**  
**(734) 635-3756**  
**[rmuise@americanfreedomlawcenter.org](mailto:rmuise@americanfreedomlawcenter.org)**

**For Immediate Release: April 3, 2013**

## **AFLC Files Opposition to New York School District's Motion to Dismiss Lawsuit Challenging Censorship of Christian Teacher**

Buffalo, New York (April 3, 2013) — Yesterday, the American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), a non-profit Judeo-Christian law firm, filed a lengthy memorandum of law in opposition to a Buffalo-area school district's motion to dismiss AFLC's federal civil rights lawsuit filed on behalf of Joelle Silver, a Christian public school teacher who was forced by school officials to censor her personal speech and remove all religious content from her classroom under threat of being fired.

On June 22, 2012, Silver, a devout Christian who has taught in the Cheektowaga Central School District for seven years, received a "counseling letter" in which the School District ordered Silver to remove all religious items from her classroom, including, among other things, a poster with an inspirational Bible verse superimposed over an American flag and a quote from President Ronald Reagan that mentions "God."

The School District also ordered Silver to remove small, personal sticky notes that contained inspirational Bible quotes and religious messages that she kept discreetly on her desk. To add further insult, the School District informed Silver that if she needed "to occasionally glance at inspirational Bible verses between classes during the course of the day," then she should "keep such material in a discreet folder that only [she] will have access to" and only "so long as [she took] precautions not to share it or disclose its content to [her] students or their parents or guardians."

To complete the religious cleansing, the School District ordered Silver "to refrain from all other forms of communication with students during the school day (whether verbal, email, texting, written, etc.) that would conflict with [her] duty to show complete neutrality toward religion and to refrain from promoting religion or entangling [herself] in religious matters."

Robert Muisse, AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel, commented, “The U.S. Supreme Court has long held that neither teachers nor students surrender their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate. In this case, school officials restricted Ms. Silver’s personal, non-curricular speech and effectively ordered her to cease being a Christian while she is on school property in direct violation of the First Amendment.”

According to the “counseling letter,” which was signed by the superintendent and is now a permanent part of Silver’s employment file, failure to follow any of the directions would lead to “serious disciplinary consequences, including the termination of [her] employment.”

David Yerushalmi, AFLC Co-Founder and Senior Counsel, commented, “The School District’s religious cleansing was thorough, complete, and unconstitutional. Contrary to the popular myth perpetuated by secular progressives, the government may not establish a ‘religion’ of secularism in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe. Indeed, the Constitution affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of religion, and forbids hostility toward any.”

The *American Freedom Law Center* is a Judeo-Christian law firm that fights for faith and freedom. It accomplishes its mission through litigation, public policy initiatives, and related activities. It does not charge for its services. The Law Center is supported by contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and is recognized by the IRS as a section 501(c)(3) organization. Visit us at [www.americanfreedomlawcenter.org](http://www.americanfreedomlawcenter.org).

###