



OPERATION INCLUSION – SAMPLE LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR

To The Editor:

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* should trouble anyone who values religious liberty.

Earlier this month, the court ruled that municipal governments can sponsor prayers that reflect majority religious views. According to the court, it's OK for the government to favor the religious majority at a public meeting that is meant to represent us all.

It is at odds with the spirit of America to allow the majority to impose its religion on the minority. Our democratic institutions should respect the rights of all belief groups, not just the majority.

Local council meetings are an important time for citizens to come together and have a say in how their communities are run. No one should be pressured or coerced to participate in a religious exercise that doesn't match their own beliefs. Yet that's exactly what could happen as a result of the court's ruling. Religious minorities, including non-believers, are unlikely to be equally represented at these meetings, especially in communities that are heavily Christian.

Town and county councils are the units of government closest to the people. They should strive to be neutral on the subject of religion. Despite the outcome in *Greece v. Galloway*, council members should choose inclusive invocations, if they have invocations at all.

Even if town councils choose to have sectarian prayers, the Supreme Court made it clear that there are limits on the prayer practices. Prayers can't condemn other religions or non-theists, or tell them to convert. What's more, councils can't discriminate against minority belief traditions. That means that if an imam, a rabbi, or a humanist asks to deliver a prayer or invocation, council members can't deny their request on the basis of religion.

America is religiously diverse, and it will become more and more diverse over time. Although the court's ruling is out of touch with that reality, our local governments still have a chance to make sure they respect that diversity and the people they were elected to represent.

Democracy is, after all, about inclusion. I don't want my neighbors to feel like they can't participate in local government because of their religious or philosophical beliefs. That's why I'll be keeping a close eye on my local government to make sure it respects everyone.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME(S)]

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